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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Airlie Arms Hotel, Kirriemuir on Friday 6<sup>th</sup> May 2005 at 1.30pm

### PRESENT

Eric Baird  
Stuart Black  
Duncan Bryden  
Sally Dowden  
Douglas Glass  
Angus Gordon  
Lucy Grant  
David Green  
Marcus Humphrey  
Bruce Luffman  
Eleanor Mackintosh  
Anne MacLean

Alastair MacLennan  
William McKenna  
Sandy Park  
Andrew Rafferty  
Gregor Rimell  
David Selfridge  
Joyce Simpson  
Richard Stroud  
Andrew Thin  
Susan Walker  
Bob Wilson

### In Attendance

David Cameron  
Kate Christie  
Pete Crane  
Murray Ferguson  
Nick Halfhide  
Andrew Harper

Jane Hope  
Sam Masson  
Fiona Newcombe  
Andy Rinning  
Alan Smith  
Debbie Strang

### Apologies

Basil Dunlop  
Sheena Slimon

### Welcome and Introduction

1. The Convenor welcomed everyone to the Board Meeting, which was the first at Kirriemuir

## **Minutes of Last Meeting – approval**

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (8<sup>th</sup> April 2005) were approved with no changes.

## **Matters Arising**

3. Under Paragraph 8 it was noted that a briefing on forestry for the Board had been pencilled in for July. A further paper on forestry consultations would be brought to the Board in six month's time.

## **An Interpretation Framework for the Cairngorms National Park (Paper 1)**

4. Pete Crane introduced the paper which reported on progress made in developing a Park-wide approach to interpretation. Endorsement was sought for an Interpretation Framework and associated Action Plan. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) Paragraph 19 referred to the organisation of a series of talks, events and presentations around the Park; the target audience was both residents and visitors.
  - b) Paragraph 21 referred to developing and implementing a policy on pre-arrival signage to the National Park. On a point of clarification it was noted that this type of signage was typically the brown signage endorsed by VisitScotland, and used to point visitors in the direction of the Park.
  - c) Paragraph 26 referred to the CNPA working with communities to develop Park branded information and interpretation on existing community information panels and notice boards. The intention behind this action point was to work with what was already in place, and upgrade and improve this where appropriate, and in a way which suited the community's needs.
  - d) The reference at Paragraph 36 to the prevention of wild fires as an element of responsible outdoor access, was welcomed.
  - e) Although the paper referred to the Brand Wheel, it was suggested that the Brand Wheel itself ought to be combined with the paper and with any further presentations on the issue of an Interpretive Strategy. It had been developed early in the life of the CNPA, and underpinned and provided a coherent framework for the Interpretation Strategy.
  - f) The paper had successfully identified the many linkages that needed to be made in an Interpretation Strategy, but one that was not articulated was the linkage between the Cairngorms National Park and other National Parks. This would be an important aspect for engaging with those for whom the Cairngorms was an important and attractive destination simply by virtue of being a National Park.
  - g) Specific attention needed to be given to the targeting of young people in the Interpretation Strategy. Various vehicles already existed for this, for example the Young Cairngorms Website.
  - h) With reference to Paragraph 9, it was noted that judgements on the quality of interpretive material needed to be exercised with some sensitivity. To some extent action point 3 would be the way of dealing with this, since it involved all stakeholders working together to develop a set of criteria including quality standards for developing interpretation.
  - i) With reference to Paragraph 42 on delivering a Park for All, the point was made that interpretive material needed to be clear rather than pretty; this was particularly relevant for those with disabilities.

- j) With reference to Paragraph 33 it would be important in developing and promoting a strand of the Integrated Grant Scheme to allow communities to develop a local interpretation fitting with Park-wide themes, the CNPA liaised closely with the relevant local authorities, as these may already have grant schemes specifically aimed at communities.
- k) It would be important in developing an Interpretation Strategy to avoid being too prescriptive and to not stifle creativity.
- l) The paper was welcomed and commended. It had successfully brought together the many strands of a very complex subject and produced a clear way forward.

**5. The Board endorsed the Interpretation Framework and associated Action Plan as set out in the paper.**

**The Land Based Businesses Training Project: Update (paper 2)**

- 6. Kate Christie and Fiona Newcombe introduced the paper which sought the Board's views on the various options for the future of the project, and updated Members on the progress of the project to date. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) The question was asked what gap in the market this project was filling, and how it avoided duplicating other training programmes. While there was some overlap in some of the courses provided by the LBBT, there was no other organisation providing the whole package which importantly included the identification of course needs, and the development of courses to meet those needs, as well as the organisation of courses that made them accessible for small organisations. In developing the Business Plan for the next year of the LBBT, the focus would be on gaps in the market and avoiding duplication. Discussions would be taking place with partners to ensure this.
  - b) The geographical spread of courses would be important in ensuring that the project was truly inclusive. The project currently had good coverage across the whole National Park, but the project manager was aware of the need to encourage more uptake on Deeside.
  - c) Thought should be given to linking in with secondary education, and raising awareness in schools of the opportunities in land based businesses, and the training that could be provided through the LBBT.
  - d) The LBBT was welcomed as a very good project, providing an excellent service which was one of the keys to its success. The two individuals running the project, Kate Christie and Sam Masson, were congratulated for their personal contribution to the success of the project.
  - e) With reference to Annex 1, the question was asked why it appeared that in an Objective 3 area it costs nearly twice as much to train half the number of people in Objective 1 areas.
  - f) The point was raised that if a decision was made to broaden out the scope of the current LBBT, this might have some impact on the funding that could be levered in from other funders. Further, if the project was operating by setting up courses and using independent trainers, there might be the potential to bring all of those trainers together as a training consortium, and for those trainers to create a business that was free standing of the CNPA.
  - g) The opportunity to link training with the delivery of interpretation (as set out in Paper 1) should not be missed.

- h) The idea of putting more effort into developing and delivering public benefit courses was welcome, but only if these were in addition to, and not a substitute for the other practical training projects.
- i) Extending training courses to the general public might be acceptable, provided that training was clearly helping to deliver the aims of the National Park. Any expansion of the scope of the project needed to be thought about carefully, as the strength of the project to date had been its clear focus and its clear targeting of courses.
- j) Paragraph 38 appeared to hint that if a training culture could be developed then the need for this project would disappear. However, the point was made that the difficulty for businesses was frequently not the existence or otherwise of training courses, but in sourcing, facilitating and organising. The need for those elements would remain. The question was whether it was the role of the CNPA to deliver those.
- k) There was some hesitation over the wisdom of expanding the course into tourism, as there were already plenty of other sources of training for this sector. The need for more emphasis on youth training was supported. In particular, linking this with the development of a Youth Apprenticeship Scheme was endorsed and was more likely to attract additional funding.
- l) The disappearance of the Area Tourist Boards could lead to an increased need for training on such things as marketing and promotion which businesses would now have to buy in for themselves.
- m) In thinking about widening out the topics covered by the LBBT, it would be important to link with the local authority led networks, not least because it was important that the local authorities were aware of the LBBT's existence.

**7. The Convenor summed up the discussion as follows:**

- a) **Kate Christie and Sam Masson were congratulated on an excellent project, and an equally excellent paper.**
- b) **There was support for looking at broadening the base of this project, but any such broadening should be related to the organisation's priorities.**
- c) **By the same token any broadening of the beneficiary base would be determined by the organisation's priorities.**
- d) **The preference would be that the project did not cease to exist, but continued. The CNPA Board would wish to see a business plan, which reflected additional external funding being sought.**

**8. Action:**

- a) **Further paper to be brought to the Board in 2005, setting out proposals for continuing the project, including a business plan reflecting additional funding, and broadening of the project.**

**Update on Developing a Park for All (paper 3)**

9. Andrew Harper introduced the paper which updated Board Members on progress in relation to the CNPA's work on social inclusion issues. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) In response to a question, it was reported that several post bus services already existed in areas of the Park. Nevertheless, in one part of Aberdeenshire the cost of running such a service had been found to be prohibitive at £104 per passenger.
  - b) It was recognised that a lot of work with youth was currently underway and the question was asked whether there could be a presentation to the Board from some of the Youth Groups involved. A media project was currently under way in which young people were putting their views on the National Park onto film and video. There might be an opportunity for a presentation in connection with this. One of the important outcomes would be for the Board to demonstrate directly to those involved how interested they were to engage with young people and their views on the Park. The point was also made that recording young people's on the National Park would over time provide an interesting historical record.
  - c) The question was asked whether sufficient baseline measures were being developed to allow progress to be measured over a lot of different work streams. It was acknowledged that work on the State of the Park Report would need to include adequate indicators on social inclusion.
  - d) In relation to Paragraph 15 attention was drawn to the Cairngorms Partnership's work which should feed into the strategy.
  - e) It was noted and welcomed that the concept underpinning the Park for All was being embedded into the work of all the groups in the CNPA.
10. The Convenor summed up by emphasising that there were two important elements to the concept of a Park for All; on the one hand social inclusion, and on the other hand, the acknowledgement that the Cairngorms National Park must be able to accommodate all interests and all points of view.

**11. The Board noted the paper and the progress made on social inclusion issues.**

**12. Action:**

- a) **Head of Economic and Social Development to consider an appropriate presentation to the Board by youth groups.**

**Entry Point Signage for the Cairngorms National Park (paper 4)**

13. Debbie Strang and Murray Ferguson introduced the paper which reported on the continuing development work for the permanent granite markers, including the revised estimated costs, work on the funding package and the next steps for the project. In introducing the paper the point was made that the interim metal signs were in the process of being installed, the first of these would be the following week just north of Grantown. However, the installation was in the hands of the contractors and while the CNPA continued to press for the urgent delivery, the precise dates were determined by the contractors. In discussion of the paper, the following points were made:
- a) The cost of the granite markers had been revised downwards for various reasons, mainly related to design changes as set out in the paper. Costs could possibly come down further depending on how the granite was sourced.

- b) It was noted that the brand was slightly different on the small and on the large signs. This was simply related to the size of the marker, and therefore the size of the brand that could be accommodated, including wording. The size of the marker was in turn related to the size of the road - smaller roads, with less traffic, would have to have smaller signs.
- c) While the evolution of the project, and the many different reasons for various changes made along the way were understood, nevertheless as the signs currently stood they were quite different from those presented as indicative to the Board. The original indicative designs had been expensive, but recognised as being very high quality and impressive. They had been widely accepted and liked on that basis. The design as currently proposed, while less expensive, would not be as easy to justify to communities on the same basis as before.
- d) The original indicative design which had been seen by the Board a year ago had been part of the scoping study. It had not been intended as the final design. The Board had been asked for, and had given, approval to take the results of that scoping study away and explore further the detail of how this might be implemented. The alternative, which had been simple metal signs and signposts, had been rejected. It had been recognised back in July when the Board considered the schematic design, that work had only just started on developing the brand, and it was recognised that the final design of the entry point markers would have to incorporate that brand which had only been finalised in January. It was important to bear in mind that what was being reported to the Board today was the current state of play in the work undertaken to explore the original design further. It had been, and continued to be, an extremely complex project, with many of the steps dependent upon earlier steps, so that the design was constantly evolving.
- e) It had been clear from the beginning that it was not for the Board of 25 Members to design the entry point markers - a professional designer had been employed for that purpose. What was important was that the process followed throughout this project was robust and defensible. Staff were satisfied that the process was a defensible one; and all the design work had kept to the original spirit of ensuring high quality markers made from local materials.
- f) The complexity of the project was well appreciated. The complexity inevitably made the process a long one, which was difficult to reconcile with the expectation expressed in public meetings that signage was something that ought to appear very quickly. It was important to ensure that we continued the engagement with local communities, and had a clear story to tell explaining the process that was being followed, emphasising that there was a well structured critical path which formed the basis for the project, even though there would inevitably be developments in the design as work progressed.
- g) In a process as complex as this, there was a clear recognition that staff could not come back to the Board at every meeting with more detail. On the other hand, Board Members did need to be in a position to be able to explain to the public how this project was progressing.
- h) Despite the recognised pressure from the public to have entry point markers up quickly, now the decision had been made to put in place the interim signs, the pressure had been alleviated and it would be important to avoid rushing this project.
- i) Although planning permission had been approved for most of the signs, there was still the possibility for some variation. It was pointed out that the planning

process itself had involved communities in being able to comment on the proposed designs.

- j) The branding exercise had involved the design professionals, and despite this some difficulty in incorporating the brand design into the indicative design for the entry point markers.
- k) The original entry point marker project had involved not just signs, but also various other strands of work including information points etc. it was confirmed that work was continuing on a number of fronts.
- l) The process followed by staff in taking forward the work on entry point markers had been robust and was defensible. The problem was not in the process, the problems that were arising were those of aesthetics. At this stage of the process, the design appeared to have drifted too far away from what had originally been conceived, albeit not a detailed or final design. The original indicative design had managed to mirror the landscape of the Cairngorms, and had a degree of "depth" to it. It would therefore seem logical to go back to the designers at this stage and revisit the question of a design which encompassed that depth while also being able to accommodate the new brand.
- m) The designer had already put extensive effort into making the brand work with the original indicative design for the entry point marker, however none of these had appeared satisfactory. The next step should be to invite the designer to come to a Board meeting explain how their process had worked.
- n) In discussion with many of the communities, cost had never been that much of an issue, given that it related to an impressive high quality outcome. Saving money on the product was not necessarily a good idea if it resulted in a significant sacrifice of quality.
- o) There would be a further Board paper in September giving information about funding, and seeking a decision at that point.

**14. The Convenor summed up the discussion as follows:**

- a) **The relevant staff should review with the directly elected Board Members how best to handle the matter of providing clear information to Members and communities on how this process was developing.**
- b) **Staff should review and satisfy themselves that the process followed to date has been robust and defensible, and importantly that the design consultant fully understands the principles as articulated by the Board at the meeting.**
- c) **More regular updates should be provided to the Board - this would not necessarily have to be at Board meetings but could involve information by post.**

**15. Action:**

- a) **A further paper to be brought to the Board in September seeking Board approval of the entry point markers and associated expenditure;**
- b) **The relevant staff should review with the directly elected Board Members how best to handle the matter of providing clear information to Members and communities on the project;**
- c) **Staff to ensure that the process followed to date has been robust and defensible, and importantly that the design consultant fully understands the principles as articulated by the Board at the meeting.**
- d) **Regular updates to be given to the Board on project progress.**

*[David Green and Angus Gordon left the meeting]*

### **Corporate Plan Report: Theme 3 (paper 5)**

16. Andrew Harper introduced the paper which informed the Board of work to date to achieve the third strategic aim of the Corporate Plan ("to support and stimulate economic and social development within the Park that sustains and is sustained by its special natural and cultural qualities") and the plans for future activity. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) With reference to Paragraph 15, the importance was stressed of ensuring that cultural heritage issues were incorporated into the drafting of the Local Plan. While it was recognised that to date the CNPA had not focussed resources on cultural heritage as much as was intended in the future, a number of workshops were planned for June, and these would be key to defining future actions.

### **The John Muir Award in the Cairngorms (paper 6)**

17. Alan Smith introduced the paper which reported on progress made by the John Muir Award (JMA) in contributing to the aims of the Cairngorms National Park. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) It was noted that outreach of the project was extending beyond the boundaries of the National Park and this was welcomed. There might be opportunities for extending outreach by actually taking the National Park out to a wider audience (in contrast to the more usual situation of people coming into the Park and then going away again, with the risk of there being no follow up).
  - b) In response to a question on what the main constraints were on the project, the point was made that this was essentially time input from the single project officer. The success of the project depended upon his being able to engage with other organisations and persuade them to fit the John Muir Award into the activities they were already undertaking.
  - c) All schools had received a mail shot. In keeping with the project Business Plan, those areas where there was no JMA activity were being targeted. Nevertheless, all the schools which had received a mail shot were receiving a follow-up phone call. Since the production of the Board Paper, a further six schools had signed up to the project.
  - d) This project was making excellent progress and was bringing a lot of benefit to many people.

### **AOCB**

18. Eric Baird reported briefly on his attendance at a recent ANPA Conference on the Sustainability of Communities. He invited anyone who was interested in the detail to contact him. But in summary, he pointed to some interesting work reported by the New Economics Foundation, which had looked at sustainability of communities from the point of view of how policies could be put in place to ensure that money invested in an area was recycled within that area rather than leaking out. The New Economics Foundation was prepared to run courses on this issue and it might be interesting to invite them to make a presentation to the Board.



19. The point was made that following BT securing the contract to roll out Broadband across rural communities, the Scottish Executive and the CNPA Board should be applying pressure to ensure that all communities benefited.
20. A brief report was given from the Brand Management Committee. A set of criteria for use of the brand had been developed, and a paper summarising these would be circulated to the Board. Applications to use the brand could therefore now be processed.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

21. Friday 3<sup>rd</sup> June 2005, the Victory Hall, Aboyne