

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

---

### FOR DECISION

**Title:** Programme of Board Meetings 2007

**Prepared by:** Jane Hope, Chief Executive

#### **Purpose**

To seek members agreement to the schedule of Board meetings and Planning Committee meetings for next year

#### **Recommendations**

Following the Board's agreement in June 2006 to a new format for dealing with formal Board business, that Members agree:

- *Dates:* the proposed dates for Board meetings and Planning Committee meetings;
- *Venues:* that monthly consideration of planning determinations by the Planning Committee alternate between Ballater and Grantown, with all other meetings (formal Board meetings and informal Board discussion sessions) rotate round the Park, using venues known to be accessible;

And further, that Members:

- *Discussions:* offer suggestions for use of the discussion sessions (i.e. topics for discussion, subjects for briefing, or possible site visits);
- *Open Evenings:* review arrangements for "open evenings", usually held prior to Board meetings, for Members and staff to engage informally with local communities.

#### **Executive Summary**

A programme of board meetings is proposed which implements the decision made in June to re-organise the monthly cycle of formal Board business. Members are asked to agree and note the proposed schedule of dates, and to offer suggestions (now or in the future) for topics for discussion/briefing, or visits. Similarly, Members are invited to consider whether the "open evenings" prior to Board meetings should continue in their present format, or be refreshed.

---

**Board Meetings 2007**

## Background

1. At the 30 June meeting, the Board agreed a new approach to formal Board business (essentially Planning Committees and Board Meetings). This paper proposes a schedule of meetings for 2007, **shown at Annex 1**, which implements that new approach. There will continue to be business of some sort every 2 weeks under the new arrangements. But this will be based on a two-monthly cycle as follows:
  - planning call-in decisions will continue to be every 2 weeks;
  - Planning determinations will take place every month;
  - Board meetings will be every 2 months;
  - Once every 2 months there will also be an opportunity for an informal session, either discussion, briefing or visit.

## Issues/Discussion

### *Venues*

2. I suggest we keep to the principle adopted at the inception of the CNPA of holding meetings around the Park. However, in practice, we have found the number of venues which are suitable (i.e. accessible and practical) is quite limited. There is the added difficulty for planning determinations of trying to ensure that each case is heard/decided at a meeting close to the site in question, in the interests of minimising the travel for applicants and objectors.
3. Taking those factors into account, the attached schedule proposes that the planning determination meetings alternate between Ballater and Grantown(or possibly Aviemore) - this will ensure that at the very least, that cases will be considered at meetings on the appropriate "side of the hill", and at venues with good facilities. Further to this, I suggest that the Board meetings are held at venues still to be arranged, but with one in each of the following areas of the Park: Angus Glens, Strathdon, Marr area (probably Braemar), Tomintoul, Dalwhinnie/Laggan, and Aviemore.
4. **Are Members content with the proposed approach to arranging venues?**

### *Discussion Sessions*

5. Every two months there will be an informal session (following the usual call-in session, which will last about three quarters of an hour). This can be used as Members wish. Formal Board meetings are generally focused on decisions based on papers which set out all the relevant factors that bear on the decision, but in reality, many issues are complex, and the opportunity for discussion and briefing on background and related issues all helps towards a fuller understanding and better decision in the long run. So these day-long (11.30-3.30 or so) informal sessions are a good opportunity to: go into some issues in more detail; to reflect on some of the more strategic issues which loom in the future, but on which there is no requirement for a decision yet; engage in some "blue sky" thinking to generate ideas; engage with

other people/organisations and possibly visit sites and projects in the Park (more likely in the summer).

6. Two ideas have emerged as possible areas for discussion:
  - how we (all) engage better with stakeholders and partners, i.e. how do we become more outward facing, and better organised to engage in the right way with the right people. This is particularly pertinent as we move towards implementation of the NP Plan.
  - the next 5 years: what are the big issues (policy and strategy issues) facing the Park at EU and Scottish level, as well as any other issues which Members think might impact on our collective ability to deliver the NP Plan.
7. **It would helpful if Members could offer suggestions on possible subjects for discussion, briefing, or visit.**

### *Open Evenings*

8. As a way of maximising opportunities for local communities to engage with the CNPA Board, and vice versa, and alongside the policy of holding Board meetings at different venues around the Park, we have for the last 3 years always held an “open evening” immediately prior to each Board meeting. We always aim to advertise in the local press, as well as within the local community.
9. The principle of endeavouring to make ourselves available for local communities to engage with is a sound one – the question for Members to consider is whether this mechanism of “open evenings” is the right one. Reflecting on the last three years, I am left with the impression that open evenings in the early days were well attended, possibly because people were curious or worried about the National Park and the CNPA; three years on, attendance at the meetings is relatively sparse. One can argue whether this is a good sign (no real serious concerns), or a bad one (no-one really interested). In practice, it seems likely that given the huge amount of consultation we have undertaken in the last 3 years on the local plan, NP Plan, Outdoor access, housing, coupled with the large number of meetings we hold on a wide range of topics, many people do not feel the need or desire to come to yet more evening meetings.
10. It seems inherently right that the Board Members should make themselves available, on an informal basis, for local communities to engage with directly. Clearly this already happens in many other ways already, through the activities of local members, and attendance at community councils. It is not clear whether the Open Evenings add something useful to this.
11. Issues to consider are:
  - Open evenings are relatively resource intensive, but we could get more efficient in limiting the number of Members and staff who attend, and adopt a stricter approach to operating a rota so no one Member has to attend more than one or two a year.

- Making the evenings more of an “event” and more attractive: we could try making them more enjoyable social occasions by providing some modest food and drink.
- We could start each session with a short talk, in order to make each evening more interesting. Even if people have no burning questions, this would make the event worth turning up for. Members as well as staff, might lead off these mini talks.
- Holding the open evenings less often (once every 2 months, rather than every month) would place less of a strain on staff and members.

12. **Members are asked to offer views on the future of “open evenings”.**

## **Implications**

### ***Financial Implications***

13. There should be some efficiencies in terms of staff time in adopting the new arrangements, but as importantly, the “service” to public (in terms of dealing with planning applications) and the Board (in terms of staff being able to focus and prepare more effectively for meetings) should be improved.

### ***Presentational Implications***

14. There may be some perception that we are putting less time into our Board and planning meetings - this is not the case and the total time input is unchanged; merely scheduled in a different way, and the amount of business dealt with will be the same.

### ***Implications for Stakeholders***

15. None obvious, although if some of the informal discussion sessions are used to engage with other partners, for example by inviting them to participate in a discussion on a particular topic, or through a visit, this is likely to be beneficial for building good relations and getting a better understanding of others’ perspectives.

**Jane Hope**

**20 September 2006**

**janehope@ Cairngorms.co.uk**

SUMMARY OF BOARD MEETING DATES 2007								
		10.30am -11.30am	11.30am - 12.30pm	Lunch	1.30pm - 2.30pm	2.30pm - 4.00pm	7.00pm - 8.30pm	Location
Jan	12	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Grantown
	25						Open Evening ?	
	26	Planning: Call-in	Discussion Session		Discussion Session			
Feb	9	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Ballater
	22						Open Evening ?	
	23	Planning: Call-in	Board Meeting		Board Meeting			
Mar	8							
	9	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Grantown
	22						Open Evening ?	
	23	Planning: Call-in	Discussion Session		Discussion Session			
Apr	6	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Ballater
	19						Open Evening ?	
	20	Planning: Call-in	Board Meeting		Board Meeting			
	3							
May	4	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Grantown
	17						Open Evening ?	
	18	Planning: Call-in	Discussion Session		Discussion Session			
	31							
Jun	1	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Ballater
	14						Open Evening ?	
	15	Planning: Call-in	Board Meeting		Board Meeting			
	29	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Grantown
Jul	13	Planning: Call-in						
	27	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Ballater
Aug	9						Open Evening ?	
	10	Planning: Call-in	Board Meeting		Board Meeting			
	24	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Grantown

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Paper 2 6/10/06

Sep	6						Open Evening ?	
	7	Planning: Call-in	Discussion Session		Discussion Session			
	21	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Ballater
Oct	4						Open Evening ?	
	5	Planning: Call-in	Board Meeting		Board Meeting			
	19	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Grantown
Nov	1						Open Evening ?	
	2	Planning: Call-in	Discussion Session		Discussion Session			
	16	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Ballater
	29						Open Evening ?	
	30	Planning: Call-in	Board Meeting		Board Meeting			
Dec	14	Planning: Call-in & Determinations						Grantown
	28	Planning: Call-in						Ballater