
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Newtonmore Village Hall, Newtonmore on Friday 7th April 2006 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Nonie Coulthard
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Lucy Grant
David Green
Marcus Humphrey

Bruce Luffman
Eleanor Mackintosh
Anne MacLean
Willie McKenna
David Selfridge
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Ross Watson

In Attendance:

David Cameron
Murray Ferguson
Bob Grant
Nick Halfhide
Andrew Harper
Jane Hope

Don McKee
Sandra Middleton
Fiona Newcombe
Andy Rinning
Francoise van Buuren

Apologies:

Angus Gordon
Alastair MacLennan
Sandy Park
Andrew Rafferty

Gregor Rimell
Andrew Thin
Sue Walker
Bob Wilson

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Deputy Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting and in particular the two newly appointed Board Members, Nonie Coulthard and Ross Watson.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting of the 10th March 2006 were approved subject to two changes:
 - a) Paragraph 9 (e): this paragraph needed to be reworded slightly to avoid any misunderstanding of the phrase “considerable inefficiencies could arise through the use of public transport”. The point being made at the meeting had been that because of the limited availability of public transport in rural areas such as the Cairngorms, travel by public transport inevitably could take a long time, leading to inefficiencies in the use of time by individuals.
 - b) Paragraph 10(b): the phrase “cost effectiveness” needed further explanation to make its meaning clear, namely that priority should be given to those activities which would yield the greatest gains relative to the input of staff time.

Matters Arising

3. None

Operational Plan 2006/2007 (Paper 1)

4. Jane Hope introduced the paper which presented the coming year’s Operational Plan and associated resource allocation for delivering the goals set out in the 2005/08 corporate plan. The Board had discussed the Operational Plan at its previous meeting, and agreed that more resources should be devoted to delivering the seven priority goals. The current paper set out the consequences of that decision, by setting out the resource allocation across all the remaining goals, as well as the outputs planned for delivery during the Operational Plan year. The Board was asked to endorse the Operational Plan as the right balance of delivery across all the 20 goals.
5. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Once the 7 priority goals had been delivered, in particular the National Park Plan and the Local Plan, considerable resources would be freed up and this was likely to be in 07/08 and beyond. The issue was therefore less about making any changes to the Operational Plan for 06/07, and more about starting to think about changes in future years once these resources had been freed up. For example, there was an argument for devoting more resource in the future, to transport, to young people, and to good schemes such as the Youth Apprenticeship Scheme, and the Land Based Business Training Project.
 - b) Decisions made about commitments to future funding needed great care. For example, an earlier decision on 100% funding of the Speyside Way was not necessarily wrong, but clearly carried great implications for the CNPA’s budget. Such decisions on major expenditure should quantify these implications and the Authority should be seeking partnership funding.
 - c) Some concern was expressed about needing to put more resources into an improved visitor experience, including dealing with such issues as litter, viewpoints from lay-bys, dykes falling down, roadside verges. It was recognised that many of these issues, litter collection in particular, were the direct

responsibility of the local authorities. The Park Authority had good liaison with the local authorities on these and other matters. The National Park Plan which would be published for consultation on 11th April, provided the obvious vehicle for the Park Authority to work with all its partners in identifying the priorities for resources in the future. Whether or not there was a need to devote more resources to issues such as litter collection needed to be flagged up as an issue for discussion in putting together the National Park Plan, which would set out the priorities for the whole of the public sector within the Park.

- d) The increase in resource being allocated to goals 12 and 13 (land management) was welcomed. This was clearly an issue of considerable importance and complexity with implications well into the future, and it was right to devote time now to developing policy within the National Park.
- e) Some concern was expressed about the lower levels of resources being allocated to goal 16 (sustainable tourism) and goal 18 (raising awareness of the CNPA and CNP). The point was made that the Operational Plan in question merely reflected one year; considerable resource had been put into goal 16 in the previous year with very good results and the achievement of the European Charter on Sustainable Tourism. The resources allocated to this goal in 2006/07 were appropriate, and were focused on developing work on performance measures. This work was vital, and would give a strong steer as to what needed to be done in future years, and what resources would be needed. In respect of goal 18, the emphasis in the current Operational Plan on completing the National Park Plan and the Local Plan would of itself raise awareness of the Park and the CNPA, so to some extent the effort devoted to raising understanding and awareness was spread over a number of other goals.
- f) In respect of goal 19 (transport/access ability) it was confirmed that the Audit of Transport was looking at both sides of the equation, namely provision and need. It was intended to pick up the perspective of both the visitor and the local communities.
- g) In respect of goal 18, there was a danger that the activities listed could be misconstrued as being too focused on the CNPA delivering messages, and not enough on listening. However, the point was made that many of these goals could not be seen in isolation but had to be viewed in conjunction with other goals; in this case goal 5 provided for considerable effort focused on community engagement.

6. The Board endorsed the Operational Plan for 2006/07 as presented.

Core Path Plan (Paper 2)

- 7. Bob Grant and Sandra Middleton introduced the paper which informed the Board of the statutory duties on the Park Authority in relation to core paths planning and sought approval of the proposed process and time line for delivery of these duties within the National Park. In addition, the Board's advice was sought on how best to focus the consultation to ensure that the final plan both met people's aspirations and was affordable.

8. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) During the consultation with stakeholders, it was essential to engage with the All Abilities Network, and not just communities, to ensure that the needs of the less abled path users were taken into account.
 - b) There was some discussion about how extensive the core path network would be. It should satisfy the basic path needs of local people and visitors for recreation and getting about, and provide key links to the wider path network – many of the paths in the core path network would already exist. The extent of the network would depend to some degree on what emerged from the consultation, which would reveal what people wanted. The core paths plan referred to the plan consultation process and the outcome from this; the core path network referred specifically to those paths identified as satisfying the requirements as set out in the Land Reform Act. The core path network would be developed through the core paths plan.
 - c) Clearly the core path network itself carried implied costs of upkeep and maintenance. There were dangers of having a too ambitious a plan which would then inevitably lead to an expectation of a core path network being implemented and funded completely by the CNPA. It was essential that the consultation process should not just lead to a wish list and should be used to manage expectations. In practice there would be a whole range of tools for implementing and maintaining a good core path network. It was essential that the CNPA should not be left shouldering the full burden of financial responsibility for a path network which could consume all its resources.
 - d) There were some good examples already in existence of the various mechanisms that could be used to implement and maintain paths. For example, providing capital equipment to local communities who could then deliver the maintenance through local volunteers. Ranger services were also a possibility; land management contracts also provided some potential opportunities. The possibility of setting up a trust was being investigated given that this would provide the opportunity to tap into other sources of funding which the CNPA could not.
 - e) It was recognised that for this consultation there was an audience beyond the Park boundaries. However, the pilot in Newtonmore had revealed that it was very difficult to engage with some visitors especially cyclists to the area, about path issues. Recreational NGOs might have a role in the forthcoming consultation although once again there were some difficulties as membership only accounted for about 30% of those people using paths. The CNPA was working with its Community Liaison Officers to try and identify groups with an interest in walking.
 - f) The example of UDAT (Upper Deeside Access Trust) was well known as a success story. Part of the success had been because of the European money available, which would not be available in the future. Groups of communities might be able to band together in the future to attract funding. There was no doubt that maintenance was a huge financial problem for the future of a core path network.
 - g) One of the conundrums to be dealt with during the consultation was whether it was right to raise awareness and popularity of all paths given that greater use inevitably resulted in more wear, and greater financial consequences.

- h) It was difficult to gauge the likelihood and the consequences of a public local inquiry (PLI). However, it was noted that a PLI was only likely to happen if there were substantial objections to a core path network on the basis of lack of inclusiveness. Hence the plan built in plenty of scope for discussion in the hope that this would prevent the need for a PLI in the future. There was no money in the budget at the moment for a PLI; a clearer judgement could be made on the possible need for this following the first consultation.
- i) Before embarking on a public consultation, it was vital to have done some preliminary work on what a core path network might look like and what the associated costs might be. Some desk modelling work could be undertaken, which included some assumptions about extent of path networks and costs of maintenance which in turn could provide a system of prioritising particular paths for inclusion in the network. This work needed to be done in advance of the consultation rather than afterwards. It was noted that there could be thirty two other local authorities also competing for additional monies for core path networks, at the same time as the CNPA; similarly all could be facing a PLI at the same time. It was therefore important to move ahead with the core path plan quickly.
- j) It would not be sufficient to simply consult with communities on the basis of what they would like to see by way of paths in the vicinity. Once there was some indication of a likely path network and communities' wishes, it would be important to then monitor use and make some estimates of the costs of maintaining paths that were more frequently used. That would then provide a much sounder basis for confirmation of the final path network. This should be done at the end of the first consultation.
- k) It was important in identifying a core path network to take account of how paths would integrate with the public transport system, and also create links between communities.
- l) The CNPA was already working closely with the five neighbouring local authorities and had established a cross-border working group. Amongst other things this provided a mechanism for dealing with paths which crossed boundaries between other local access authorities.
- m) It was noted that water ways could also be core paths; demands for this also needed to be exposed in the consultation process.
- n) The core path network needed to take account of the responsibility to recognise heritage paths such as drove roads.

9. The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) Noted the statutory requirements that arise from the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 with regard to core paths planning;**
- b) Approved the process and time line which will ensure a comprehensive and effective engagement with all relevant communities; and**
- c) Agreed the formation of a steering group, to include Board Members. Board Members should indicate to Bob Grant their wish to be included on this group.**
- d) Asked for an informal discussion session to enable the Board to make input on some of the main issues raised by the paper, prior to the start of the consultation.**

10. Action:

- a) Board seminar to be arranged for further discussion; Bob Grant to inform Board Members accordingly.
- b) Board Members to indicate to Bob Grant whether they wish to sit on the steering group.
- c) Interim proposals on core paths planning to be brought back to the Board in February 2007.

[David Selfridge left the meeting]

Brand Management Group Update (Paper 3)

11. Andrew Harper introduced the paper which updated the Board on the work of the Brand Management Group, sought a decision on Board representation, and sought a steer on the use of Gaelic in conjunction with the brand. He noted that there was a typographical error in paragraph 22 which should refer to the options in paragraphs 20 and 21, rather than 15 and 16.

12. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) Forty businesses, tourist and community associations and events had been accredited to use the brand. It was essential to have appropriate monitoring in place to ensure that the quality associated with the brand was being maintained.
- b) Regarding the use of Gaelic, there were times this would be appropriate and other times not; any policy on usage needed further thought. The Gaelic language plan might be the best way of developing this.
- c) Good progress had been made on developing criteria for use of the brand; however a lot of work was needed to increase uptake of the brand. The proposal for additional support on the group was welcomed.
- d) Whether or not Gaelic should be used in conjunction with the logo may be driven by practical considerations associated with the physical limitations of incorporating Gaelic wording alongside the logo. However, there were other issues to consider such as what the brand stands for and whether or not the inclusion of Gaelic might be a useful marketing device. There were questions on whether Gaelic was always appropriate to use in conjunction with the brand logo. For example, it would probably not be seen as appropriate to use Gaelic on road signs on the east side of the Park.
- e) If Gaelic were to be used in conjunction with the brand, it was important that individuals could pronounce and explain it.
- f) The recommendation at paragraph 19 was considered sensible, namely to develop a policy in conjunction with the development of a Gaelic language plan for the Park.
- g) A cultural heritage audit was currently being conducted to identify the cultural assets of the Park area. Languages would form part of that. Once this audit was completed, the next step would be to consider how best to celebrate those assets. In respect of Gaelic, it had to be noted that a Gaelic Language Act now existed

which set out statutory duties in respect of properly incorporating the use of Gaelic.

- h) The attention of the Board was drawn to annex 2 setting out a communications plan in respect of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism and the use of the Cairngorms Brand.
- i) It was important to be setting more meaningful and specific targets in respect of the brand. These needed to be described in terms of outcomes. In the short-term, the performance measures were simply in terms of numbers of businesses using the brand; in the longer term the success measure would be the delivery of Park Plan outcomes. It was noted that on the 26th May there would be a Board seminar to discuss further the National Park Plan outcomes.
- j) The CNPA needed to consider what actions it was taking as an organisation to support the Cairngorms Brand values (for example through its purchasing policy).

13. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) **Noted progress made by the Brand Management Group in developing and promoting the brand, and requested that further work on targets and outputs be reported back to the Board in due course;**
- b) **Agreed an increase in the number of Board Members on the group to 3 and agreed that Board Members should indicate to Andrew Harper their interest in sitting on this group;**
- c) **Agreed that the issue of the use of Gaelic in conjunction with the Brand should be addressed, when the Authority's Gaelic Language Plan is developed.**

14. Actions:

- a) **Board seminar on the 26th May to discuss National Park Plan outcomes;**
- b) **Andrew Harper to bring a further report to the Board in due course on targets and outputs in respect of the Cairngorms Brand;**
- c) **Issues relating to the use of Gaelic in conjunction with the brand to be resolved through the Authority's Gaelic Language Plan which will require future Board approval.**

[David Green left the meeting]

Remit and Membership of Committees (Paper 4)

15. David Cameron introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval to a number of changes to remit and membership of committees.

16. In discussion it was noted that the timing of most committee meetings (9am in the morning) presented a difficulty for a number of members attending committees. It was agreed that this would be looked at further in the context of rescheduling Board meetings and Planning Committee meetings.

17. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) Approved the revised terms of reference for the Audit Committee as set out in Annex 2;
- b) Approved the appointment of Andrew Thin to the Finance Committee;
- c) Agreed that the two newly appointed Members would consider possibly serving on the Audit Committee following further discussion with the Chief Executive; and
- d) Ratified the Chairs of the Committees as set out in paragraph 17.

Corporate Plan Update, Theme 5 (Paper 5)

18. The Board noted the paper.

AOCB

19. The Board was reminded that on the 19th May, following the Planning Committee in the morning, there would be a special Board meeting to consider one item, namely a paper on housing. On the 14th June there was to be a joint meeting with the Cairngorms Housing Group to consider this paper which set out the preferred strategic direction of the Board, alongside the National Park Plan Priority for Action on "Making Housing Affordable and Sustainable.

Date of Next Meeting

20. Friday 5th May 2006, at Panmure Arms Hotel, Edzell.