
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Royal Jubilee Arms Hotel, Dykehead on 7th May 2004 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Peter Argyle
Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Angus Gordon
Mrs Lucy Grant
Bruce Luffman
Eleanor Mackintosh
Anne MacLean

Alastair MacLennan
William McKenna
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Andrew Thin
Susan Walker
Bob Wilson

In Attendance:

Danny Alexander
Peter Crane
Murray Ferguson
Jane Hope
Andy Rinning
Kristin Scott

Apologies:

David Green
Andrew Rafferty
Bob Severn

Welcome and Introduction

1. Andrew Thin welcomed everyone to the meeting and invited Ken Slater and Mick Pawley of Angus Council to give a short presentation on the Angus Glens.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (12th March) were approved with no changes.

Matters Arising

3. All action points from the previous minutes were in hand or had been dealt with. Two additional points were made:
 - a) In response to a question it was confirmed that the State of the Park Report contract had been awarded to the consultant John Grieve of the Rural Development Company.
 - b) The Board had received that afternoon a leaflet updating everyone on the future of the Affordable Health and Fitness Project. The Board recorded its thanks to Judith Turner who had been the coordinator of the project and who had now departed.

Implications of Land Reform Legislation (paper 1)

4. The report was introduced by Kristin Scott. The paper sought the Board's approval for three items:
 - A programme of work, including six workshops to be held in September 2004 that would lead to the establishment of one or more local access forums for the National Park in early 2005;
 - The development of an outdoor access strategy for the Cairngorms National Park;
 - A proposed response to the Scottish Executive's consultation on draft guidance for Access Authorities under Part 1 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.The Paper also drew the Board's attention to the establishment of a new national access forum and highlighted the implications for the National Park Authority.

5. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The paper represented a lot of work, for which the Access Working Group were to be congratulated.
 - b) There was some question as to how much flexibility there was in the setting up of local access forums, given that the Scottish Executive had still not issued its guidance. There was a potential danger if the Park Authority went too far in taking this work forward, that it would end up contravening guidance from the Scottish Executive. However, the guidance was not due until after the recess, still in time to feed into the workshops proposed by the CNPA in the autumn. It would be important for the CNPA to keep a weather eye on the guidance from the Scottish Executive, however it was also important to make progress on this important issue. In practice, it was more logical that the discussions being taken

forward by the CNPA should feed into that guidance rather than the other way round.

- c) On the question of preparing an outdoor access strategy for the National Park, the question was raised as to what constitutes outdoor access. Would the strategy look into questions such as marketing, promotion, etc? The Chair of the Access Working Group (Joyce Simpson) suggested that the specifics of the contract for this work still had to be worked out. However, the aim was to be visionary for this piece of work and the scope would therefore be very wide. It was also pointed out that this work should also be informed by the thinking going on in other working groups on tourism strategy, branding etc. It would be vital to pick up the linkages.
- d) Murray Ferguson reported back on his attendance at a meeting to discuss the National Access Forum, which had been convened by SNH. There had been wide attendance at the meeting, although not from the tourism agencies or the enterprise networks. The meeting had discussed which public bodies should sit at the new National Access Forum. In short SNH had suggested there should be six spaces for public bodies on the National Access Forum, with one of these being taken by CoSLA and one for SNH. That would leave four places with the suggestion that these were distributed among five main sectors, land management, water management, recreation/sport management, tourism management, and the National Park Authorities. As things stood, the National Park Authorities would not have a seat on the National Access Forum. Discussions would continue with SNH on this point, as there was a strong argument for ensuring that someone to represent the two National Park Authorities was a member of the forum.

6. The paper's three recommendations were agreed as follows:

- a) Members agreed the proposals put forward for establishing one or more local access forums;**
- b) Members agreed in principle expenditure of up to £25,000 for the preparation of an outdoor access strategy for the Cairngorms National Park;**
- c) Members approved the proposed response to the Scottish Executive's draft guidance to access authorities.**

7. Action:

- a) Kristin Scott to take forward proposals for establishing one or more local access forums as outlined in the paper;**
- b) Kristin Scott to take forward the work on preparation of an outdoor access strategy for the Cairngorms National Park;**
- c) Kristin Scott to write to the Scottish Executive as approved in response to its consultation on guidance;**
- d) Jane Hope to discuss further with SNH the possibility of the Cairngorms National Park Authority attending the National Access Forum.**

Revised Corporate Plan (paper 2)

8. Jane Hope introduced the paper, which sought the Board's approval to a revised Corporate Plan, following confirmation from the Scottish Executive of the CNPA's funding for the following two years.
9. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) It was extremely important to find effective ways of publicising the work that the CNPA was undertaking and how it was deploying its funds. Formal Corporate Plans and Annual Reports were not always an easy read, and it was important to find an easily accessible and succinct way of giving the wider public a quick review of the past year and also an easily understood look forward to what the Park Authority was hoping to do in the years ahead.
 - b) Some areas of the National Park were particularly isolated and the local media were not always well aware of the CNPA's activity.
 - c) It might be possible to use the Park Authority's newsletter "Park Life" to convey this sort of information. It might also be possible to buy editorial space in key newspapers. The important point was not just transparency of the CNPA's activities, but accessibility of information about this.
10. **The paper and the revised Corporate Plan were approved.**
11. **Action:**
 - a) **Convenor to submit finalised Corporate Plan to the Scottish Executive;**
 - b) **Head of Communications to consider how best to publicise and publish the Corporate Plan to make it readily accessible.**

Delegated Authority: Systems of Policy and Financial Approval (paper 3)

12. Jane Hope introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval to a system under which authority was delegated to staff for spending money and implementing policy on behalf of the CNPA.
13. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Paragraph 7 line 2 should refer to long-term resource implications as well as presentational or policy implications. The consequence of this change would be that the first sentence of Paragraph 7 read as follows: "Generally, Board or Board Committee approval would not be sought unless an operational matter had significant presentational, long-term resource, or policy implications."
 - b) It was clarified that in Paragraph 11 references to policy papers could include operational policy.
 - c) In Paragraph 11 there was some discussion on the best way of ensuring monitoring operational expenditure. The point was made that the Finance Committee met quarterly specifically to take reports on updates on expenditure versus budget. Finance Committee papers should be copied to members of the Board for information, given the importance of financial monitoring. Finance Committee papers were also in the public domain. Subject to any further comments by Board Members, that process of quarterly monitoring by the Finance Committee should

be adequate. However, it was acknowledged that performance monitoring would need to be built in to these reports in due course. It was always open to Board Members to raise questions on issues in Finance Papers in the main Board if they so wished.

- d) It would be helpful for Members to know what consultation papers had been received by the Park Authority and whether it was proposed that the Park Authority should respond. A running list of consultation papers received was already in hand and this would be circulated monthly to Board Members.
- e) The system of financial delegations set out in Paragraph 17 implied that members of staff would have delegated to them decisions on expenditure below £10,000. It was important to have in place systems for dealing with situations in which either staff or Board Members had an interest in the outcome of such a delegated decision. It was proposed that in such cases of potential conflict or perceived potential conflict, a decision that had been delegated to staff would require a counter signature by the Convenor (or Deputy Convenor in cases where the Convenor had an interest).

14. The paper was approved as a basis for delegation of functions to staff, subject to two amendments:

- a) A modification to Paragraph 7 as discussed above;**
- b) An additional point that in situations of delegated authority, where the staff or a Board Member had an interest in the outcome of a decision, that decision would require the countersignature of the Convenor. If the Convenor had the interest, the countersignature would be required from the Deputy Convenor.**

15. Action:

- a) Jane Hope to ensure that all members of staff understood the scheme of delegation.**

Updated Programme of Board Meetings for 2004 (paper 4)

16. Jane Hope introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval to the updated programme of Board meetings in 2004. The paper drew particular attention to the 10th September, the date scheduled for the election of the CNPA Convenor and Deputy Convenor.

17. The paper was agreed.

AOCB

Standards Commission

18. Board Members had been advised recently that the Standards Commission had issued a dispensations note for councillors who were also members of the CNPA. This guidance settled the issue which had been preventing the CNPA from offering comments to a

council on a planning application which had not been called in, as set out in the paper put to the Cairngorms National Park Authority Planning Committee on the 12th March. It was felt important that awareness should be raised widely that this problem had now been solved, as it had attracted some adverse publicity in the past couple of months.

Action:

- a) **Jane Hope to write to the relevant local authorities clarifying the position. The point should also be recorded in the minutes of the Planning Committee. Head of Communications to consider issuing a press notice.**

Appraisal

- 19. Andrew Thin reported that all Members were undergoing individual appraisals at present, as required by the Scottish Executive for all members of Non Departmental Public Bodies. He would attempt to produce some general conclusions and send these to the Scottish Executive. Further to this, he suggested that Members might meet to consider how well the Board had performed collectively over the last year. It was proposed that there should be a meeting of Members on the 17th May in Ballater, and in Grantown-on-Spey on the 13th May.

Paths for All Partnership

- 20. It was reported that the Paths for All Partnership were holding a meeting in the Park on the 23rd of June. All Board Members who might be interested were invited along.

Gaelic

- 21. The point was made that the Gateways Group had been meeting, and would soon need a policy decision on the use of Gaelic on signage at the entrance to the National Park. The point was made that this was a politically sensitive issue. It would be important to get a feel from the communities, and this may not be a uniform view across the whole of the Park. There would be a paper coming to the next meeting of the Board on the issue of the CNPA's policy on Gaelic. It was seen as important that this paper adequately assessed all the facts, such as where the pockets of Gaelic speaking existed within the Park. Information on this would be available from the last Census, but it would also be possible to seek views in the forthcoming consultation on the Local Plan and the National Park Plan.

Action:

- a) **Head of Economic and Social Development to bring a paper to the next meeting of the Board on the issue of Gaelic in the National Park.**

Date of Next Meeting

- 22. 4th of June at Ballater.

