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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

held at the The Retreat, Glen Esk  
on Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2013 at 10.30am

### PRESENT

Peter Argyle  
Duncan Bryden (Convener)  
Angela Douglas  
Dave Fallows  
Katrina Farquhar  
Jeanette Gaul  
David Green  
Kate Howie

John Latham  
Bill Lobban  
Eleanor Mackintosh  
Willie McKenna  
Fiona Murdoch  
Gordon Riddler  
Gregor Rimell  
Brian Wood

### In Attendance:

David Cameron  
Will Boyd Wallis  
Lynn Anderson (Minute Taker)

Hamish Trench  
Grant Moir  
Bruce McConachie

### Apologies:

Mary McCafferty  
Martin Price  
Gregor Hutcheon

### Welcome and Introduction

1. Duncan Bryden welcomed everyone to the meeting at Glen Esk. He told the Board Members present about the useful meeting there had been the previous evening with Nigel Don MSP. Although he has only a small part of the Park in his constituency he is very interested in what the Park is doing.
2. Nigel has agreed to attend the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary event on 25<sup>th</sup> June in the Scottish Government building. Nigel also commented that the best way to let MSP's know what is happening is to send a brief note, rather than masses of information.

## **Minutes of Last Meeting – Approval**

3. The minutes of the meeting on 12th April were approved.

## **Matters Arising**

4. Paragraph 21 Peter Argyle had agreed to become the CNPA Board liaison contact between the Board and the Cairngorms Business Partnership Board and as such will attend the next CBP board meeting.

## **Declarations of Interest**

5. Brian Woods declared an indirect interest in Paper 3, in reference to Braemar Castle who may receive shovel ready funding.
6. Bill Lobban declared an indirect interest in Paper 3, being an advisor to one project and Director of another project who may receive shovel ready funding.
7. Eleanor Mackintosh declared an indirect interest in paper 2 being part of a family business who were in receipt of funding from SRDP.
8. The Board Members present felt that as these interests were indirect those Board Members could remain for the duration of the discussion.

## **CNPA Land Management Support (Paper 1)**

9. The Convenor introduced Bruce McConachie to the Board. Bruce is a land management officer within the CNPA, part of his role is to provide advice and support to land managers and farmers.
10. The Convenor then explained that land management is a complex area and this paper is about the need to restructure our support and engagement with land managers. It is clearly a crucial area within the Park and a lot of what we get involved with relates to how the land is managed and we need to ensure we engage with the key people involved.
11. Will Boyd Wallis introduced this paper, the purpose of which is to refresh the package of land management support to help deliver the National Park Partnership Plan and capitalise on the forthcoming Rural Development Programme.
12. This paper feeds directly into pushing Cairngorms Nature forward and pursuing the Park Plan. On a national scale this paper also is driving forward the land use strategy for Scottish Government and crucial to all of this is the Scottish Rural Development

Plan (SRDP). Everything mentioned in this Paper is targeted to try and use SRDP to best effect in order to help deliver Cairngorms Nature and the Park Plan.

13. It is recognised that land managers are fundamental to help deliver the long term outcomes listed in the National Park Plan and CNPA must make sure they work very closely with them to make this happen.
14. The Key Principles in Paragraph 9 of the paper highlight the importance of the diversity across the Park, the mix of land and the active land management which helps support this diversity. CNPA must ensure that they are responsive to current trends and be opportunistic in the way in which land managers deliver, helping them make the most of new opportunities which may arise, this in turn will help deliver the National Park Plan and ensure they remain thriving businesses.
15. The new SRDP programme begins in 2015 and CNPA recognise that the opportunity is there to get land managers and land owners as ready as they can be, to be able to apply early for SRDP funding with some good, strong applications which will deliver for the Park
16. In order to help achieve this, this Paper particularly focuses on 3 areas which are Advice and Support, Training and Skills and Communications and Networks. Annex 2 of the Paper gives more details on these 3 areas of work. Annex 2 highlights the type of support proposed, the priorities and targets, and the implications this programme of support will have on CNPA staff resources and financial budget.
17. There are a number of ways proposed to help deliver Advice and Support and these may involve the use of “call off” contracts which involve calling in expertise to help farmers pick out the best things in SRDP which will help them and help them deliver.
18. Training and skills builds on the training which is currently being delivered within the Park. The bespoke training courses mentioned in Annex 2 will be more targeted towards the delivery of certain aspects of the National Park Plan and the Cairngorms Nature Plan. Annex 2 also stresses the importance of volunteer co-ordination, engaging people and getting them involved
19. Communications and Networks is about building positive relationships and having good communications with the land management community. This may involve one to one discussions with land managers, which is useful in getting to grips with their problems.
20. CNPA staff will continue to be involved with Forums and Advisory Groups and Partnerships with external organisations, including the Catchment initiatives which have been hugely worthwhile and innovative.

21. Finally, social media is an increasingly used medium and time should be spent encouraging land managers to make full use of this to help improve communications across the Park.
22. Will concluded his presentation by stressing that in terms of advice and support there is the opportunity to fill the gap, where things are not happening, which will help deliver the Park Plan and Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.
23. The Chief Executive highlighted the table in Paragraph 6 of the paper which shows the projected value of rural development contracts (RDC) to 2015 which amounts to approximately £20m. The importance of this Paper is to make sure the next £20m is spent on the priorities as set out in the Partnership Plan and Cairngorms Nature Plan
24. The Convenor stressed the importance of hitting the ground running and delivering the Park Plan outcomes. One of the important roles in this is about bringing people together, to make something happen which might not normally, which adds value within the Park and about making sure we have the resources and skills in place to deliver this.
25. In discussion the following points were made by Board members present:
  - a) A board member welcomed the Paper and the wide range of activities listed. This board member asked where the Park was in terms of relationships with land managers and land owners and what progress has been made. Will stated that recent feedback received was fairly positive and relationships have improved through the 1 – 1 meetings. Time had been spent making sure the forums are relevant to land managers and more tailored to their needs.
  - b) This Paper felt like there was a sense of a new beginning which builds on what has been done over the last 10 years.
  - c) A Board Member felt it was important that the land management support officer does not duplicate or replicate the work of other advisors. The Board Member also stressed the importance of touching base with NFU Scotland and SRUC. The Chief Executive mentioned that for the first time the National Park was represented on the CAP Strategic Board within Scottish Government.
  - d) A Board Member was concerned that progress had been made with Estates but they could see no progress being made in building relationships with Farmers. Concern was also raised that in the case of individual farms it felt as though the contents of this paper meant CNPA would be stepping on consultants and advisors toes. The Board Member thought CNPA's role should be more about influencing these consultants to help recognise and help deliver the Park priorities into their existing work. The Chief Executive acknowledged this was a difficult issue however there needs to be mechanisms in place to help make things happen.

Hamish explained that if a good application is going to happen through an existing adviser there will be no need to become involved. CNPA involvement would be, in most cases, to offer information to existing advisors and agents on good opportunities which can help deliver our priorities and match the targets these applications will be assessed against, to help these applications get through.

Inevitably however there will be a handful of really good opportunities where we will need to become more involved in order for these to happen.

- e) A Board Member voiced concerned that in the 7 months since the appointment of the Land Management Adviser they felt there had been no improvement in the relationships with Farmers. Hamish explained that part of Bruce's role is to help establish these relationships by going out to farms and speaking to Farmers to build these relationships.

Bruce acknowledged the problems and was fully aware of the lack of identifying with Farmers however he is spending time visiting farms, attending farming events and talking to the Farmers to build these relationships. He did acknowledge it may not look as though much has happened in the first few months, however these months had been about spending time identifying the problems and creating a strategy to overcome these problems.

- f) The Convenor felt it was important that actions are drawn out of this discussion in terms of setting sub targets in regards to progress around relationship building and numbers attending farmer forum events within a certain time period.
- g) A Board Member wondered if it would have been helpful in Annex 2 to link the priorities and targets to the National Park Partnership Plan 5 year indicators and some cross references to the key work packages.
- h) A Board member expressed concern in regards to Farm Audits whether it is value for money in setting up these "call off" contracts. The Chief Executive explained that a contract would be issued for a 3 year period to an advisor and once appointed, these advisors can be used as often or as little as required based on what the priorities are against budget.

Hamish explained that in terms of resources, capacity and skill it is important there is a list of people who can be consulted, when there is a need for specialist help

In addition, it was explained to Board members that these call off contracts will be subject to the public sector procurement process, time will be spent looking at the advisor roles which may be required, little point in setting up contracts which may never be used.

- i) A Board member was concerned that they did not see any real outcomes in this paper. It was explained that this paper delivers the mechanisms to help land managers deliver some of the targets and indicators in existing Plans including the National Park Plan and Nature Action Plan. However the Chief Executive did agree to distribute a Paper to the Board which sets out the main items in the different action plans and what they hope to deliver.

26. **The Convenor summarised the Board's recommendations as follows:**
- a) **Content to approve Paper 1 subject to the following 4 refinements:**
    - i. **Building better relationships with farmers, and a timescale agreed to help deliver this.**
    - ii. **Index this paper back to outcomes**
    - iii. **Update on the progress towards outcomes, and reporting back on what is changing as a result.**
    - iv. **Identify a list of existing agents and consultants with the appropriate skills who can target the outcomes set out in our Partnership Plan.**

### **Scotland Rural Development Programme: Stage 1 Consultation (Paper 2)**

27. Hamish Trench introduced this consultation paper which highlights the key headline questions which will form part of the joint response with Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park to the Scottish Government consultation on the Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP).
28. The purpose of this discussion today is to hear the views and opinions of Board Members to these questions, which will form part of the response to Scottish Government.
29. The consultation document itself asks 29 questions and CNPA have focused on the questions which are of particular relevance to the Park area.
30. Hamish showed a presentation which highlighted the headlines of SRDP 2014-20, as well as the issues associated with the current programme.
31. The consultation paper highlighted some of the key issues contained in the consultation document, these include:
- a) **Prioritisation of funds – what funds should be prioritised (Q3)**
  - b) **Targeting of Funds – geographically targeting support, making biggest contribution to Priorities (Q4)**
  - c) **LEADER – ensuring there is a Cairngorms LEADER 2014-20 programme (Q5)**
  - d) **Regional administration and budgets – simpler administration through disbanding RPACs (Q7/18))**
  - e) **Support and assistance – more targeted advice and support for Land Managers (Q19)**
  - f) **Third party applications and collaboration – proposed scope for third party applications for landscape scale projects and support for collaboration (Q's22-24)**

- g) Whole farm reviews – proposes broadening scope of reviews and a continuation of funding. (Q25)
32. Of these key questions the CNPA response will focus on:
    - a) Targeting investment to priorities
    - b) Proactive advisory service
    - c) Landscape scale applications
    - d) LEADER
  33. The Convenor asked those present for comments on the paper and presentation.
  34. A Board member questioned how third party applications would be delivered. The Chief Executive explained that there was not enough information on this at the moment and this was a question to be asked of Scottish Government.
  35. A Board member felt that we should include a response to the issue surrounding administration and budgets (Q7) and in particular the proposed abolition of Land Managers Options (LMO). The Chief Executive explained that we can put in a response to the other key questions and in the case of (Q7) the CNPA would be supportive something in place which is easily accessible however at this moment there was no indication as to what this could be.
  36. The Chief Executive mentioned that funding to the SRDP programme will be significantly reduced in the next programme.
  37. A Board Member mentioned that this was a complex area but these 2 papers showed that CNPA were keen to get it right for delivery of the next SRDP programme.
  38. A Board Member stressed the importance of keeping the LEADER programme within the Park. It was explained that work is currently progressing on an “Expression of Interest” to Scottish Government for a continued LEADER presence in the Park for the 2014-20 programme.
  39. A Board member questioned whether a joint response with Loch Lomond weakened the Park’s uniqueness in having a LEADER programme. It was explained that this response would ensure this was not so and the “expression of interest” from Cairngorms LAG would also make a very strong case for its continuation.
  40. A key consultation proposal shown in the presentation was the replacement of the Skills Development Scheme with an Innovation Challenge Fund and a Board member questioned whether there was an opportunity for the Park to influence what form this might take.

41. In conclusion the Board Members present were happy to recommend the proposals set out in this paper with four points being raised:
  - a) **Third party applications – more information needed**
  - b) **LMO's – would like to retain in some form**
  - c) **LEADER – lobby hard to retain in the Park**
  - d) **Innovative Skills - make some comment on how these might fit in with the Challenge Fund.**
42. A Board member asked whether the consultation response could be circulated to the Board. The Chief Executive agreed that the final response could be circulated to the Board.
43. The Convenor suggested that if any Board Member had any additional comments or concerns to these proposals they should contact Hamish directly.
44. Hamish agreed to circulate copies of the presentation to Board Members.

### **2013/2014 Capital Allocations (Paper 3)**

45. David Cameron introduced this paper which is an update to the Board on the capital funding allocations made available by Scottish Government for the 2013/14.
46. David explained that over the past 2 years the Park Authority had successfully bid for capital funding from Scottish Government and around £2m has been spent on projects. For the year 2013/14 a further £1.46m of funding has been secured, this paper sets out the projects and activities where this money could be used.
47. It has been accepted that the timetable to bid for these extra resources is very short which means there is no time to bring proposals and suggestions as to how this money could be spent to the Board for discussion by the Board.
48. It is recognised that there is a need to establish a forward investment strategy which will focus on what forward investment we need to see in the Park to help deliver the strategies and outcomes as set out in National Park Partnership Plan.
49. This Paper sets out suggestions as to how best we come together when these opportunities for additional funding arise, given the short timescale to respond, so that Board members know what is being proposed. The Paper also proposed that a “task and finish” group is set up which will involve some members of the Board and Senior Managers to work on the forward investment strategy programme.
50. A Board Member expressed his unhappiness with the overall governance of these project, they felt that discussions over the spending of this money should be at Board level or at the very least Finance Committee level.



51. The Board Member mentioned that they would have preferred the table in paragraph 5, showing the proposed capital allocations for 2013/14, be further broken down to show the actual amounts being spent on each individual project. The Board Member went on to question why some of these projects were selected in the first place, as some were relatively unknown.
52. David agreed to circulate to Board members the grant allocations proposed for each project listed, but stressed, these amounts were not confirmed as projects were still refining costs.
53. The projects themselves were selected through information received from Programme Managers and Development Officers working in the Park, delivering their Partnership and Corporate Plan programmes.
54. In regards to governance the projects were selected for potential funding because they deliver against pre-existing Board level agreed strategies and policies. The paper does acknowledge however that it is not ideal.
55. A Board Member mentioned how important it is to make sure there is a flow of good applications and ideas from community groups, make sure these groups know the Park is keen to support and develop these projects in whatever way they can, so that if “shovel ready” money becomes available to these projects they are in the position of being able to happen.
56. In conclusion the board members felt this extra money was a “good news” story for the Park.
57. The Board Members present noted the recommendations set out in the paper.
58. The Convenor concluded the discussion by stressing the importance of being clear in the process of how bids are submitted and projects approved.
59. The Convenor asked for any Board members expressing an interest in being on the “Task and Finish” Group to email him, copying in the Chief Executive.

## **AOCB**

60. The Chief Executive circulated copies of the draft board programme for the remainder of 2013/14. This programme will be on the CNPA website for all Board members to access. This programme will be updated regularly.
61. The Chief Executive highlighted the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Celebration being held in the Scottish Parliament, on 25<sup>th</sup> June. The event is being hosted by Dave Thompson MSP to which all Board members are invited.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

62. The next formal Board meeting will be held on Friday 27<sup>th</sup> September with an evening presentation on Thursday 26<sup>th</sup> September, venue to be confirmed.

Meeting ended at 12.50pm

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