
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Lonach Hall, Strathdon on Friday 7th October 2005 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Angus Gordon
Lucy Grant
David Green
Marcus Humphrey

Eleanor Mackintosh
Anne MacLean
Alastair MacLennan
Sandy Park
Andrew Rafferty
David Selfridge
Richard Stroud
Susan Walker
Bob Wilson

In Attendance:

Will Boyd-Wallis
Rita Callander
David Cameron
Murray Ferguson
Nick Halfhide

Andrew Harper
Jane Hope
Fiona Newcombe
Andy Rinning

Apologies:

Bruce Luffman
William McKenna
Gregor Rimell
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Andrew Thin

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Deputy Convenor welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies as above.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting of 23rd September 2005 were approved with no amendments.

Matters Arising

3. Matters arising were:
 - a) Paragraph 5(a): a note on the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism had been circulated to all members.
 - b) Paragraph 37(a): a progress report on the extension of the Speyside Way was in hand and would be brought back to the Board in due course.
 - c) Paragraph 37(b): members had been circulated with a copy of the letter of response to Alvie Estate.

The CNPA's Role in Cultural Heritage (Paper 1)

4. Rita Callander introduced the paper which set out the CNPA's role in relation to the cultural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park area, and proposed a framework of actions for taking this forward. The paper proposed three guiding principles for the framework, leading to the identification of six main strands to the CNPA's current and developing role. This in turn led to eight proposed actions. The Board was asked to endorse the overall framework, tasks, guiding principles, strands and actions as set out in the paper.
5. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Rita Callander was congratulated on producing an excellent paper.
 - b) It was noted that the Scottish Parliament had recently considered a report published by the Cultural Commissioner. The level of endorsement was not clear, and the response of Scottish Ministers was awaited. It would be important for the CNPA to keep a watching brief on progress of the report and note any implications for the proposed role of the CNPA in cultural heritage within the National Park.
 - c) Linkages with the community planning process should not be overlooked, and should extend over the Park boundary.
 - d) Even as defined in the National Parks Scotland Act, cultural heritage was potentially very wide in its scope. Precisely because of this, it would be quite easy to endlessly record and audit items of interest while the real need was to push forward with action. The recently launched CNPA Integrated Grant Scheme would be helpful in making things happen and raising awareness of what was happening. The main role of the CNPA would therefore be to clearly define priorities for work and identify the focus for activities. The Integrated Grant Scheme should be used to promote activity in those communities who give life to cultural activities.
 - e) There was some discussion on the interpretation of Paragraph 19(a) of the paper which referred to the principle of concentrating the CNPA's work on those aspects of cultural heritage that "are unique and special to the Park area". This reflected the point made above about the need to prioritise and focus cultural heritage activities. Choices would have to be made, and for example, one might

respond to a local curling group with a different priority to a local football group within the National Park. The way in which different aspects of the cultural heritage fitted together was as important as individual elements on their own.

- f) There were many groups within the National Park area already pursuing lots of good activities on the cultural heritage front. The CNPA's role should be to support those, but ensure the work had the appropriate focus. The CNPA's role should be to help and stimulate existing groups and their work.
- g) It would be important to avoid focussing only on structures in the Park which were unique; it would be a mistake to ignore something just because it was an example that could also be found elsewhere.
- h) Interpretation of the cultural heritage was crucial. Paragraph 29, Action 3 should also include a reference to the interaction of the cultural heritage with the natural heritage in respect of interpretation.
- i) Paragraph 40, Action 6: it was important to include references to involving schools and young people in the cultural heritage and its interpretation.
- j) Actions on the cultural heritage should not be seen in isolation; it was important to make the linkages with other sectors.
- k) The cultural pledge should not be overlooked.
- l) More work was needed to refine the costings associated with the work set out in the paper.
- m) The CNPA's role was likely to be a mixture of leading and enabling. The work set out in the paper needed to be developed with more emphasis on prioritisation and including a clear time frame for actions.
- n) It was important to build on the information that already existed and not spend a lot more time on getting yet more and more information. It was noted that many of the CNPA Board Members had a lot of valuable local knowledge. The CNPA staff were already in discussion with Historic Scotland and the RCAHMS, collating existing data which was all in different formats and in different places. A lot of work was needed to bring all of this existing information together in a coherent manner. There was, of course, scope for communities to undertake some of the additional work which might be necessary in respect of surveys etc. In Strathdon a listed building survey was currently underway by Historic Scotland.
- o) An important role of the CNPA would be to seek out and remove barriers – physical, intellectual, and financial – to people engaging with the cultural heritage.
- p) Paragraph 48 referred to the need for additional funds. This was a reference to drawing in funds from other bodies to supplement the funding from the CNPA's own funds. As always, the emphasis would be on partnership working and partnership funding.

6. The Board approved the paper and the proposed framework, task, guiding principles, strands and actions proposed.

A Draft Priority Statement for Land Management Contracts in the Cairngorms National Park (Paper 2)

- 7. Fiona Newcombe and Will Boyd-Wallis introduced the paper which sought comments from the Board on a draft priority statement for land management contracts in the Cairngorms National Park, prior to submission to the Scottish Executive. The

development of the draft priority statement for the Cairngorms was an immediate opportunity to feed into the Scottish Executive's thinking on the future of land management contracts from 2007. The paper built on earlier work, including the LBAP, the work on defining public benefits, and recent consultations. It was noted that the Scottish Executive were not deciding on exactly what form land management contracts would take until February 2006. The CNPA were therefore working somewhat in the dark in putting together the priority statement, but this was a good opportunity to influence the Scottish Executive's thinking, and the draft priority statement for the Cairngorms would undoubtedly need further refinement at a later date. It was important that the priority statement for the Cairngorms reflected the special qualities of the Cairngorms National Park, and local consultations had been held with a wide range of stakeholders in order to achieve this.

8. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Rotational cropping systems had been seen as important in two stakeholder meetings; this should be added to the priority statement.
 - b) Annex 2 referred to threats to agriculture; it was important to include under this heading a mention of the reformed CAP which could remove the need to farm with consequent implications for diversity.
 - c) Page 12 of Annex 2 referred to the possibility of a local advisory group to provide advice to the public agency running the land management contract. It would be important to avoid a proliferation of groups and in this respect it was noted that there was already in existence an integrated land management advisory forum.
 - d) Annex 2, at the top of page 15, referred to introducing land management planning "across the unit". The point was made that land managers generally do plan holistically, and it was public agencies who tended to split holdings up.
 - e) Paragraph 2.7 of Annex 2 referred to the use of advisors in the implementation of land management contracts. It would be essential to ensure that these advisers were properly integrated with the existing suite of advisers, and avoid undue proliferation of sources of advice.
 - f) The priorities set out in Annex 1 would benefit from being set out under strategic headings. For example, under landscape one could refer to the landscape corridors along road routes. These were important in driving the economy of the Park, and one could improve the landscape along such routes through screening of housing etc. A second strategic heading might be climate change given that as climate change starts to bite, one might consider specific management practices (such as grazing and planting regimes) which could help ameliorate the effects. Under the heading of cultural heritage, it would be important to get a reference to vernacular buildings, and possibly also a reference to traditional breeds of livestock. The areas around settlements could be considered to be gateways into the countryside and managed accordingly to provide play areas for example.
 - g) There was currently no reference to soils and nutrient status. A high nutrient status could mitigate against growth of wild flowers, leading to a proliferation of weeds.
 - h) The heading of communication should include a more strategic element. The current description only listed formal interactions, whereas the key was likely to be better informal discussion and communication between estate managers and communities.

- i) Land management contracts did not currently apply to common grazings for crofters, although SEERAD had suggested that in the future this would be changed.
- j) One of the key difficulties facing farmers and crofters was the large number of agencies they were required to deal with. A big step forward in respect of land management contracts would be a requirement for all agencies to join together in their dealings with land managers.
- k) Land management contracts, and the paper, were to be welcomed as moving support away from directly farm related activities to a much wider base. Annex 1 which set out the priority statement for land management contracts in the Cairngorms National Park needed to be double checked to ensure that it was not too specifically focused on just farms; what was needed was something more generic.
- l) The key objective in the National Park was *integrated* land management. However, there was nothing specifically relating to this in the Priority Statement and some consideration should be given to this.
- m) Page 12 of Annex 2 referred to the establishment of a Local Advisory Group. While this was welcome, if the CNPA were not the lead agency, it would be important to ensure that the aims of the Park were reflected in decisions made by the LAG.
- n) The paper was welcomed as a distillation of the huge number of discussions which had been going on for the last eighteen months. Land managers were a great resource for the Park and they needed to be enabled to deliver the Park aims. The huge amount that could be done was well demonstrated by the priorities set out in Annex 1. Prescriptions needed to be flexible, so that land managers could respond to changing circumstances. For example, while not feasible at the moment, support for creation of habitat to attract the Corncrake might be feasible one day soon, and it would be important to be able to respond to that change.
- o) Under the heading Biodiversity in Annex 1, there needed to be mention of an intermediate zone. The point was made that we should encourage the boreal forest and the zone between woodland and moorland. We should aim to restore a natural tree line.
- p) In Annex 1 under the heading Views/landscapes, there should be a reference to controlling tree growth where this was obscuring views and control of natural regeneration of exotic species.
- q) In Annex 1 under the heading Biodiversity, there should be some reference to control of weeds (Ragwort, Bracken, River bank weeds}.
- r) Page 8, Annex 1 includes a heading of Housing. The term "local resources" should be taken in its widest sense to include human resources, namely the use of local builders.
- s) In Annex 1 under the heading of Renewable Energy it was important to explain more fully that there was a need to strike a balance. While the growing of biomass was good for the local economy, and was good for counteracting fuel poverty, there were counter arguments about the increasing use of heavy lorries for transport which affected the local community. That balance of argument needed to be reflected in Annex 1.
- t) It would be important in Annex 1 to avoid apparently supporting competing demands. For example, control of ticks was mentioned in one paragraph, and mountain hares (commonly thought to be carriers of tick) mentioned in another

paragraph. It would be important to avoid being too prescriptive as effects of one species could have knock on effects to other species.

- u) There was some inconsistency throughout Annex 1 and Annex 2; in some cases references were to farmers and crofters only, and in other cases to a much wider group.
- v) The reference at page 11 Annex 2 paragraph 1.3, was to land managers not being Park rangers. This reference was questionable, and needed some explanation/justification.
- w) In Annex 1 under the heading of Housing, there was reference to making better use of the existing housing stock. This reference needed to be expanded to make clear that it was essential within the National Park to look at renovation of the existing vernacular housing stock.
- x) The paper was commended and the authors congratulated

9. The Board approved the recommendations as follows:

- a) Noted the process in developing the draft Priority Statement;**
- b) Offered comments as noted above on the draft Priority Statement prior to its submission to the Scottish Executive;**
- c) Noted the next steps as being that the paper would be amended, sent to the Scottish Executive, and circulated to Members.**

10. Action:

- a) Fiona Newcombe to amend the paper and submit to Scottish Executive by mid October;**
- b) Copy of the final version to be circulated to Board Members;**
- c) A further paper to be brought to the Board in November setting out the longer term objectives in the CNPA's work towards integrated land management.**

[Lucy Grant, Andrew Rafferty, David Green, Bob Wilson left the meeting]

Corporate Plan Theme 4 (Paper 3)

11. Nick Halfhide and Don McKee introduced the paper which informed the Board of work to date in delivering the 4th strategic aim of the Corporate Plan, "to ensure our commitment to future generations we will look beyond the horizon and put in place plans to guide and coordinate the long term integrated management of the Park. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) Clarification was sought in respect of paragraphs 14 and 15. The draft Local Plan was just about to go out for consultation, but housing numbers had not yet been finalised pending further work on population and household projects from GRO. Site allocations in the draft Local Plan had been informed by the landscape capacity study already completed. The Heriot Watt work was being concluded on numbers of houses. The only real unknown was the up to date population and household projects for the area within the National Park. The GRO had no capacity for this work and consequently were giving us the raw data and we were commissioning a consultant to analyse this to quantify the affordable housing needs. The intention was for the Local Plan to focus on needs identified rather than simply on trends based on historical figures. Before the final deposit version

of the Local Plan next spring, the Board would need to have a thorough debate on the whole issue of housing needs and provision within the Local Plan.

- b) The Board expressed its appreciation of all the work done by staff on the Local Plan, which had included a lot of after hours work at local community meetings.

Operational Plan 2005/06: Quarter 2 Updated (Paper 4)

12. The paper was introduced by David Cameron, presenting a review of progress on the delivery of the Operational Plan. Of the 20 goals in the Corporate Plan progress on 17 remained broadly in line with intentions set out in the Operational Plan. The remaining 3 goals were identified as affected by some changes to the timetable and/or intended delivery plans. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Three actions were highlighted as red. Work on the Comparative Report with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority relating to the pan Park Visitor Survey had been dropped for the moment as being relatively minor, and not deliverable with existing priorities. The development of a network of community businesses and/or development trusts had been put on hold for the moment for reassessment in the light of the emerging Park Plan. The proposal to hold an annual Cairngorms lecture had been put on hold until next year following the arrival of the new Head of Communications.
 - b) Core staffing levels remained under the target of 50 full-time equivalents agreed when considering the Corporate Plan in February.

Draft Accounts 2004/05 (Paper 5)

13. David Cameron introduced the paper which presented, for information, the draft Accounts for 2004/05. The Board was requested to note the accounts as set out in Annex 1 to the paper, as recommended by the Finance Committee. In summary, expenditure for the year had been 3.3% below the total resources made available by the Scottish Executive for the year. Following a bid to the Scottish Executive, it was likely that the CNPA would be able to carry forward much of this to the following year, so it was not lost. It was also noted that in addition to the Grant-in-Aid from the Scottish Executive, approximately £800,000 had been attracted in from other sources. The chair of the Finance Committee recommended the Accounts, and commended the work of the Finance Team.

AOCB

Opinion Polling

14. Following a request at the previous Board meeting, a draft report had been circulated to Members showing the outcome of some baseline opinion polling work set in train earlier in the year. The circulation of the report, which was not yet finalised, was purely for information at this stage. One of the priorities for the new Head of Communications would be to consider the report and provide advice on how to interpret this, as well as what further work, if any, should be taken forward.

Ceilidh

15. The Board offered thanks to all staff concerned with organising the recent Ceilidh and raising money for local charities. The amount raised by way of a raffle was £195 and the money donated to the Tomintoul and Kirkmichael Children's Christmas Party Fund.

Date of Next Meeting

16. Friday 4th November, Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie.