
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

APPROVED MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held in the Cairngorms NPA Dee & Spey meeting rooms Grantown on Spey on Friday 7 December 2018 at 10.30am

PRESENT

Peter Argyle
Dr Rebecca Badger
Geva Blackett
Carolyn Caddick
Dave Fallows
Pippa Hadley
Janet Hunter
Douglas McAdam
Eleanor Mackintosh

Xander McDade (Convener)
Willie McKenna
Ian McLaren
Fiona McLean
William Munro
Anne Rae Macdonald
Dr Gaener Rodger
Derek Ross

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development,
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services,
Pete Mayhew, Director of Conservation & Visitor Experience,
Gavin Miles, Head of Planning & Rural Development
David Berry, Planning Manager (Forward Planning & Service Improvement)
Andy Ford, Head of Conservation
Matthew Hawkins, Landscapes & Ecology Manager
Alan Smith, Outdoor Learning Officer
Andy Wells, Cairngorms Nature Chairman
Lindsay Coleman, Minute Taker.

Apologies:

John Latham

Dr Judith Webb

Welcome and Introduction

1. Xander McDade, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting in Grantown-on-Spey.
2. Apologies were noted for both John Latham and Judith Webb and the Convener wished them both speedy recoveries.

Declarations of Interest

3. Declarations of interest were invited. A number of members indicated interests over specific sections of Paper 4 (LDP). It was agreed to take specific declarations of interest as the Board went through each section of this paper.

Minutes of Last Meeting held on 28 September 2018 – for approval

4. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 28 September 2018 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters Arising

5. There were no matters arising.
6. **Action Points Arising: None**
7. It was agreed to take Paper 2 before Paper 1 to give time for Eleanor Mackintosh to arrive.

CEO Report (Paper 2)

8. Grant Moir, Chief Executive introduced Paper 2 which highlights the main strategic work streams that are being directed by Management Team. CEO explained that these are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver National Park Partnership Plan priorities. He highlighted the following areas:
 - a) The successful Dark Skies event held last week. Despite poor weather, 200 people were in the marquee at Tomintoul, Gordon Buchanan and the Royal Astronomer of Scotland were also there. There was a lot of press and radio coverage and the event was extremely well organised by both volunteers and rangers. CEO feels that this project will become a legacy for the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership.

- b) The Wild Scotland AGM and the Mountain Biking Conference were concentrating on the link up of tourism and conservation and were both very good events. The Wild Scotland meeting had around 60 businesses in attendance.
 - c) The Scottish Government budget is considered in Parliament on the 12th December and we will then know the high level budget for National Parks and we will find out the breakdown between CNPA and Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park.
 - d) Three of the community drop in meetings to explain direct elections to Board and answer any questions from potential candidates have taken place in Grantown, Ballater and Newtonmore and the next will be in Tomintoul and Aviemore. They were not highly attended but went well.
9. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) The question was asked as to whether there was any conclusion at the biking event regarding the control of paths that are appearing everywhere. CEO explained that there is new guidance by the National Access Forum for land managers to refer to should paths appear on their land and for bikers to consider. It is hoped that biking apps can provide information to bikers about such matters as where to go, time of year etc. Director of Conservation & Visitor Experience added that there is a very positive attitude amongst bikers to work with them and build communication with the biking world.
 - b) A member asked for an update regarding the A9 dualling project and Transport Scotland. They have been discussing Killiecrankie and the objection with Historic Scotland regarding road alignments and the battlefield. Director of Planning & Rural Development added that regarding the objection to proposed works near Aviemore and Carrbridge, he will be attending a meeting with Transport Scotland in mid-January.
 - c) A member asked for an update on Cairngorm Mountain. CEO outlined that administrators have taken over from Natural Retreats but HIE are hopeful that will be concluded next week. The report on the funicular is now expected to be issued on the 17th December and HIE will get a report from the engineers which will go to Highland Council for checking. Solutions and costs can then be discussed. The discussion around the Uplift Review and future infrastructure is linked to the outcome of the funicular. There is another meeting on the 19th December and then there will be fortnightly meetings thereafter. Willie McKenna added that there was a generally positive attitude at the public meeting the night before.

- d) Geva Blackett had been at the Aberdeenshire Tourism Awards where the Snow Roads project had won an award. She wanted to say a huge thank you to Peter Crane for his work.
- e) A member asked for clarification about the CATERAN Ecomuseum. Janet Hunter explained that it is a museum without walls located along the CATERAN Trail that leads into Glenshee. It covers cultural heritage in the outdoors and aims to promote the visitor experience on the eastern side of the Park and ties in well with the Snow Roads project.
- f) A member raised concern at a proposed wind farm project at Clash Gour which may cause lighting issues around the Dark Skies area. He felt this may merit investigation by experts.
- g) A member asked about the free space at the Ballater office. CEO explained that this will become a visitor centre focussing on land management over the next year.
- h) A member asked about the Additional Leave and Staff Volunteering policies. Director of Corporate Services explained that it originated from the Make a Difference Staff Scheme which has been running for a few years. Staff can request in Oct/ Nov to buy additional leave for the following year. Additional leave must be requested for specific dates. This allows staff to spread the cost of the leave across the year and allows management to ensure the leave will be acceptable. In 18/19 there were 9-10 applications which were all agreed. Applications are currently being submitted for the next year. Volunteering is another new HR policy enabling staff to take 3 days off for volunteering.

10. **The Board noted the Paper.**

11. **Actions: None**

12. Eleanor Mackintosh arrived at this point.

Paper 1 - Election of Board Deputy-Convener and Planning Committee Deputy-Convener (Paper 1)

- 13. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, as the Authority's nominated Proper Officer, conducted the election for the positions of Board Deputy Convener and Deputy Planning Committee Convener.
- 14. Director of Corporate Services invited the Board for nominations for the Board Deputy Convener position. Carolyn Caddick was nominated by Ian McLaren and seconded by Dr Gaener Rodger. Geva Blackett was nominated by Willie McKenna and seconded by Dave Fallows. Judith Webb was nominated by Janet Hunter and

seconded by Rebecca Badger. Carolyn Caddick and Geva Blackett gave their statements and Director of Corporate Services read a statement from Judith.

15. **The Board entered into a vote. The results were as follows: Geva Blackett 8 votes, Judith Webb 6 votes and Carolyn Caddick 3 votes. As per Standing Orders a second round of voting was then undertaken. The results were as follows: Geva Blackett 10 votes to Judith Webb 7 votes. Therefore Geva Blackett was elected as Board Deputy Convener for a term to last 3 years.**
16. Director of Corporate Services invited the Board for nominations for the Planning Committee Deputy-Convener position. Dave Fallows was nominated by Geva Blackett and seconded by Willie McKenna. Peter Argyle was nominated by Carolyn Caddick and seconded by Derek Ross.
17. **The Board entered into a vote. The results were as follows: Peter Argyle 9 votes and Dave Fallows 8 votes. Therefore Peter Argyle was elected as Planning Committee Deputy-Convener for a term to last 3 years.**
18. The Convener congratulated both Geva Blackett and Peter Argyle on behalf of the Board.
19. **Action: None.**
20. It was decided to take Paper 3 after Paper 9. The meeting paused for a short comfort break.

Proposed Local Development Plan 2020 (Paper 4)

21. David Berry, Planning Manager, introduced Paper 4 which seeks the Board's agreement to publish the proposed Local Development Plan 2020 and associated Action Programme for a period of public comment.
22. Declarations of interest were made by:
 - a) Rebecca Badger declared a Direct Interest in relation to the Carrbridge HI site as a current resident and owner of property near to this site. Rebecca Badger left the room when the Carrbridge HI development was discussed.
 - b) Xander McDade declared an indirect interest as a local councillor in Highland Perthshire who had responded to the earlier Main Issues Report consultation. He also declared an indirect interest as he owned a small area of land outside of Pitagowan (which is not in the settlement boundary or proposed for zoning). As a result of declaring these indirect interests he did not feel it was appropriate

for him to chair the meeting during the discussion of Blair Atholl, Bruar/Pitagownan, Calvine and Killiecrankie and therefore Geva Blackett, Deputy Convener chaired the discussion of these settlements.

- c) Derek Ross declared an Indirect Interest in the Aviemore sites as his wife owns a property there. As this interest was indirect he was able to remain present for all the discussions on this paper.

23. The Board considered the detail of the paper and discussed the following points:

- a) A member asked for a point of clarity asking how much change can be made after the consultation. It was confirmed that minor changes can be made after consultation, but that making more significant changes would result in having to re-consult on a revised proposed LDP.
- b) Concern was raised that CNPA may be pushing forward with next stage in the consultation but without listening to other opinions. Planning Manager stressed that people had been listened to at the earlier Main Issues Report (MIR) stage. This stage of the consultation process was focused more on ensuring there were no significant issues which had not previously been uncovered. The Reporter may yet raise concerns which must be adhered to.
- c) The Convener of the Planning Committee emphasised that members must ensure they are content with these policies as they will be the driving force behind planning decisions over the next 5 years. She stressed that it is unfortunate that the newer Board members have not been part of the earlier discussions around the emerging LDP.
- d) It was asked by a member whether any thought had been given to recommending new schools being built rather than just expanding existing, possibly already over-crowded schools. CEO confirmed that the provision of education facilities is the remit of Highland Council.
- e) In Policy I a discussion took place about the possibility of extending the 45% provision of affordable housing to all areas. Head of Planning & Communities stated that there is evidence that 45% will work in Aviemore and putting all areas at 45% may risk a rejection of the entire policy and everywhere may then fall to 25%. A member requested that more research is done and evidence collated over this next period.
- f) Regarding the Ballater HI proposal, a member mentioned that there was a possible issue with the Ballater Games Committee but this can be resolved at the detailed master-planning and at the planning application stage. Also, he requested that the picture of Braemar (bottom left) was changed.
- g) Regarding Braemar and H4, Chapel Brae, a member voiced concern about the outlook of the development. Planning Manager agreed to add text in the allocation stating that development must be designed to reflect the topography of the site.

28. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following issues:
- a) A member asked if buses could be included due to their role within the Park. It was noted that buses form an important part of public service provision in the Park but their management is already catered for through arrangements with local authorities and transport partnerships.
 - b) A member requested that there should be more emphasis on the importance of the natural environment to the economy of the Park.
 - c) CEO noted that further work was required on the proposed actions as some are still rather vague. In addition, more accountability is required from partners as to what they are going to do to deliver the Plan.
 - d) A member asked what more can be done to retain young people and whether other partners such as UHI can become actively involved. Director of Planning & Rural Development confirmed this issue had been significant theme of discussion with existing partners and that UHI, HIE and others had already done useful work on this. The proposed Youth Council for the Park may also have useful role to play.
 - e) Wording on page 9 needs to be changed to say the Fife Arms in Braemar has now opened and also an update the information about the ski areas.
 - f) More mention of young people is required – i.e. p7, policy3.1a
 - g) More information about the Highland Mainline Community Partnership – p13, infrastructure.
30. **The Board approved the Cairngorms Economic Action Plan 2019 – 2022 for consultation subject to the issues outlined above.**

32. **Actions: None.**

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019-2024 (Paper 6)

33. Andy Ford, Head of Conservation and Andy Wells, Chair of the Cairngorms Nature Steering Group introduced Paper 6 which requests approval of the final draft of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019-2024.
34. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) A number of changes have been made since the consultation to reflect comments and discussion with the Steering Group.
 - b) A request was made to add in the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership onto page 36. Head of Conservation agreed this could be done.

- c) A member asked if we respond to comments that we receive. Head of Conservation confirmed that they respond to the key partners but not to the 80 individuals.
- d) A request was made for a different picture on the front cover.
- e) It was asked why beaver is mentioned in the report when they are not currently resident in the Park. Head of Conservation explained that there is a strong demand to be seen to be proactive in terms of partnerships and mitigation against damage for when beavers do naturally arrive.
- f) A suggestion was made to apply for national awards for this collaboration.

35. The Board approved the final draft of the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan 2019-2024 subject to the following amendments:

- a) **Front cover image to be changed**
- b) **Reference to East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership to be added to page 36.**

36. Actions:

- i. **Change of picture on the front cover**
- ii. **Add East Cairngorm Moorland Partnership onto page 36**

Cairngorms National Park Youth Council (Paper 7)

37. Alan Smith, Outdoor Learning Officer, introduced Paper 7 which seeks the CNPA's support for the development of a Youth Council in response to the EUROPARC Youth Manifesto.

38. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) The Convener suggested that anyone who would like to be the Board contact with the Youth Council should speak to him after the meeting.
- b) A member questioned why the age range had been set at 16-30 year olds. Outdoor Learning Officer explained that primary school children have the John Muir project, secondary school children have a ranger scheme so then this Council progresses naturally as the next stage. It would reach up to 30 years old and would cover people starting careers etc.
- c) A member questioned whether the budget of £5-£10k funding from CNPA would be enough to make a meaningful difference. CEO confirmed this budget had not yet been finalised but that this was adequate initial funding and in future

years the Youth Council may wish to distribute funding through a grant scheme or something similar to youth groups in the Park. Director of Corporate Services added that Cairngorms LEADER through Cairngorms Trust can possibly help with set up costs and administration.

- d) Peter Argyle requested an electronic copy of the paper for him to circulate to local authorities.
- e) It was suggested that there could possibly be a youth representative at the funicular meetings. Willie McKenna said that Euan Baxter was attending these already.

39. The Board agreed to the recommendations as set out in the paper.

40. Actions:

- i. Electronic copy of the paper to be emailed to Peter Argyle.

Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report (Paper 8)

41. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 8 which presents the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report to the Board.

42. Dave Fallows Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee said a few words:

- a) The relationship with the external auditors had been good.
- b) Some of the findings were slower to implement but this was a reflection of the huge pressure staff have been under, for example, managing and coordinating the Europarc Conference and office extension and fit-out projects.

43. The Board considered and noted the report.

44. The Convener thanked the Audit & Risk Committee on behalf of the Board.

45. Actions: None.

Strategic Risk Management and Monitoring Corporate Performance (Paper 9)

46. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced this paper which presents an update on the Authority's performance to date in working towards delivery of strategic objectives established in the 2018 to 2022 Corporate Plan.

47. The Board considered the detail of the paper and made the following comments and observations:
- a) A member noted that there was no monetary value on the risk register as regards the potential liabilities to the Authority of acting as Accountable Body for grant programmes. Director of Corporate Services explained there is a maximum penalty of €0.25m which all of our internal controls aim to mitigate against.
 - b) The liability for managing budgets and financial control for the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Landscape Partnership (TGLP) was less clear, although there remained a risk that the Authority could be exposed to financial over-runs by the TGLP Programme.
 - c) It was asked if there have been any risks that have become issues and whether there is an issue register. Director of Corporate Services confirmed there is no separate issues register. Everything remains on the strategic risk register for the period over which it is deemed to be a significant and strategic risk, requiring mitigation action. Once risks declined in likelihood and/or impact to an acceptable level they were removed from the register, ensuring that the focus remained on live risks and their management.
 - d) A member asked whether Brexit would cause LEADER funding to be cut. David explained the current funding will remain to December 2019 and hence this remains as a level risk. CEO added that should LEADER go, there may be another source of community funding available, although this would have to come from the overall financial response to EU Exit by the UK and devolved governments.

48. **Actions: None**

Board Member Committee/ Group Membership & Governance (Paper 3)

49. Grant Moir, CEO introduced Paper 3 which asks the Board to agree Board membership of Committee and Groups for the next year and to agree to the changes to the governance arrangements of the Authority as explained in the paper.
50. The Board considered the current membership of the Groups and Committees and made the following comments and observations:
- a) CEO suggested there needs to be more consistency in attendance at Community Councils and there needs to be a point of contact for CC's with a member of the CNPA Board. A member expressed concern that we don't take away the empowerment that directly elected members have been given by their local communities.

- b) It was suggested that if a broader range of Board Members can be contacted, this is better.
- c) A member suggested that we have a Board member on the Cairngorms Business Partnership Board. It is for the CBP to decide who should sit on their board but CEO said that Director of Planning & Rural Development meets regularly with the CBP after their own Board meetings; and the Convener and CEO of the CNPA have a regular meeting with their equivalents in the CBP.
- d) Eleanor Mackintosh requested that her name is removed from no.16, The Farmer and Land Management Events and no20, the Association of Cairngorms Communities (AOCC) and is replaced with Planning Committee Convener as it was in that capacity that she sits on those groups.
- e) The Convener tabled an updated committee membership taking into account the increase to six members and the addition of a deputy chair for each Committee.

51. **The Board agreed the memberships of the Groups/ Committees and to the changes to the governance arrangements of the CNPA.**

52. **Action Points Arising:**

- i. **Replace ‘Eleanor Mackintosh’ from groups 16 and 20 and replace with ‘Planning Committee Convener’.**

AOCB

53. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services mentioned that Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development had written to members to seek their requested confirmation that they had appropriate arrangements in place to support home working. Board members are designated as having their homes as their places of work in terms of assessing the status of their travel and subsistence expenses. Director of Corporate Services asked that members who had not already done so respond to the Head of Organisational Development’s letter, which will support the Authority’s position with HMRC on the tax status of these payments.

54. **Action Points Arising:**

- i. **Board Members to respond to the letter from Head of Organisational Development.**

Date of Next Meeting

55. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 29 March 2019, Blair Castle, Blair Atholl.
56. The Public part of this meeting concluded at 3pm.