



Minutes of the Board Meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown on Spey

In Person

8 September 2023 at 9.30am

Present

Sandy Bremner (Convener)

Eleanor Mackintosh (Deputy Convener)

Bill Lobban

Kenny Deans

Paul Gibb

Russell Jones

Lauren MacCallum

Dr Gaener Rodger

Dr Fiona McLean

Geva Blackett

Xander McDade

Chris Beattie

Steve Micklewright

Hannah Grist

John Kirk

Peter Cosgrove

Ann Ross

Doug McAdam

In Attendance

Grant Moir, CEO

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services & Deputy CEO

Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development

Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change

Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning

Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services

David Clyne, Head of Heritage Horizons Programme

Mariaan Pita, Executive Support Manager

James Ade, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Derek Ross



Welcome and introduction

1. Sandy Bremner, the Board Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

Approval of minutes of previous meetings

2. The draft public minutes of the last meeting held on the 23 June 2023 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters arising not covered elsewhere

3. The Board Convener provided an update on the action points from 24 March 2023 minutes:
 - a) Para 8i: Director of Planning & Rural Development to speak to Eleanor Mackintosh and Geva Blackett about potential projects in the short and long term in the Donside area of the Cairngorms National Park - Complete
 - b) Para 12i: The CEO to add a review for support mechanisms for farming to the paper – Complete.
 - c) Para 20i: Director of Corporate Services to write paper presenting possible voting arrangements for forthcoming elections - Complete

Declarations of interest

4. Bill Lobban declared interest in item 11 for transparency and will not be taking part in the conversation.
5. Sandy Bremner declared an interest in item 11 as it influences him as Convener, he will be leaving the room and Xander McDade will chair the meeting.
6. Eleanor Mackintosh declared an interest in item 11 as it influences her as Deputy Convener and will be leaving the room.

CEO Report

7. Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced the paper which was to highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by the Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver (with partners) the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.



8. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) Integrated wildfire management plan was discussed, and the CEO confirmed we now have a good format and work is continuing on it.
 - b) The ranger services in the Angus Glens were highlighted as there has been some challenges, we will revisit our current approach and see how we can take that forward in the future.
 - c) Smaller birds were raised and what we as an authority were doing to look after them. Director of Nature and Climate Change confirmed that we are doing a lot of work on waders and our focus is on the rare and endangered species identified within the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan. .
 - d) Inward investment was mentioned and to include this in the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan.
9. The Board noted the Paper. The Convener thanked the Chief Executive and all staff on behalf of the Board.
10. Action Points Arising: none.

National Park Partnership Plan Annual Update

11. Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning introduced the paper which summarised the monitoring framework for the National Park Partnership Plan and which identifies some of the key areas where indicators show progress or where officers expect progress to be demonstrated in future after the first year of delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan.
12. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) Questions were asked on where we are with the study on herbivore grazing. Director of Nature and Climate Change confirmed that we are in the process of establishing the baseline as we are working with the three Deer Management groups in the south of the Park, through Cairngorms 2030 and Nature Scot to make sure all the data gets fed in.
 - b) A member brought up the housing crisis in the Braemar area. The Head of Strategic Planning said the key is to create more affordable housing that does not



go on the open market and identifying the right sites with the right development is what the Local Development Plan could help with.

- c) Director of Planning and Rural Development met with the Board of Cairngorms Business Partnership and reported a view that the business community is really taking a lead on the housing issue. A few members noted that they had reservations on this.
- d) A member raised that within Perth and Kinross Council they have a policy to prioritise keyworkers within housing allocations .
- e) The CEO confirmed that the key issue is that the vast majority of new built housing should be affordable. Cairngorms Business Partnership housing initiative was raised again and members asked about the numbers of houses that could get built. The CEO confirmed that we will speak with Cairngorms Business Partnership and discuss their long-term plans and come back to the Board with an update.
- f) Members suggested a workshop for the Board to brainstorm on housing and an opportunity to discuss direction through the planning process we can take; define what we mean as keyworkers and affordable; consider what we want to achieve; and make sure that the Board has a united voice.
- g) Woodland creation not meeting its goal as part of the nature delivery was highlighted. Director of Nature and Climate Change confirmed that there is ongoing discussion on Scottish Forestry Grant scheme as they consider changes to the scheme, and we will keep a close eye on this.

13. The Board noted the progress summarised in the paper and associated Annex 1.

14. Action Points Arising:

- i. The CEO confirmed that we will speak with Cairngorms Business Partnership and discuss their long-term plans and come back to the Board with an update.

Corporate Performance 2022/23 Update

15. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, introduced the paper which presents a review of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Corporate Performance over 2022/23 financial and operational year.

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



- a) A member questioned why the rating of cyber security has increase on the risk register. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that it reflected the general trend that all organizations are seeing more varied cyber attacks. We have been changing our operational platforms and taking other remedial approaches to address this risk. However, the risk rating is increased to reflect the increased threat and likelihood of this risk.
- b) A member highlighted that an option of a cyber security course for the Board would be beneficial. The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that the staff do have a training course that they have to complete, and it could possibly be rolled out to the Board if they wish.
- c) It was noted that planning should be added to the register due to staff shortage at this time and there is a risk that limited staff resource availability will damage our planning service. The Deputy Convener requested a meeting with the CEO, Convener and Head of Strategic Planning to discuss this.
- d) The CEO confirmed that there are complex issues within Scotland around the national shortage of planners and we would be looking to take a paper to next Resources Committee to discuss the key issues we have and how to address them. This follows up previous discussion by the Resources Committee on this subject.
- e) A member highlighted that artificial intelligence is on the rise and will change the way we work; do we have any policy on this. Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that there is no policy, but we will give it consideration on the change of our content and format of risk register.
- f) The breakdown of investment into the Park over the last 20 years was mentioned and a member said that they would be keen to see the breakdown. Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive confirmed that he could ask the finance team to look into that.

Recommendations

The Board is asked to:

- a) Review the update on the Park Authority's corporate performance over 2022/23 presented with this paper.
- b) Discuss any matters of significance arising from this corporate performance update for 2022/23 to the Park Authority's ongoing performance in delivery of the



organisation's strategic objectives as set out in the agreed Corporate Plan for 2023 to 2027.

- c) Consider the coverage of the Park Authority's current strategic risk register.

17. Action Points Arising:

- i. Meeting to be set up with CEO, Head of Strategic Planning, Convener and Deputy Convener to discuss the shortage of planning staff.
- ii. Proposed paper to go to Resources Committee regarding recruitment options for Planners.

Capercaillie Conservation

18. Andy Ford, Director of Nature and Climate Change introduced the paper which sets out the next steps in capercaillie conservation following on from the Park Authority Board discussion last year and the Minister's response to the advice provided by Nature Scot and the Park Authority. It is a high-profile area of work with reputational and resource implications, therefore Board were asked to consider the plans and to guide forward direction for staff in shaping work as it goes forwards.

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

- a) A member asked how we will maintain momentum to ensure that we see greater improvement. Director of Nature and Climate Change confirmed that a workshop was held on the 16 August to bring back all the partners that worked with us and with our collaborative approach we have brought a range of stakeholders with us. The emergency plan will address this with clear actions to take and cost involved identified, along with the longer-term resilience work.
- b) A member requested that there be consideration for this paper to be a decision paper and not for discussion. The CEO confirmed that we need complete the Pine Marten population study as per the direction from the Minister to better understand the issue, and as there is nothing to decide at this point the paper was a discussion to allow the board help direct forward action by the staff group.
- c) A question was raised on the quiet spaces for nature: would that influence people's right to responsible access? Director of Nature and Climate change said that in the first instance we will look at a voluntary approach that will not affect peoples access rights and will work with different user groups. In essence we are asking people at certain times of year to avoid certain areas. This will be kept under review to see if it is successful.



- d) It was also noted that Nature Scot would need to be very clear on messaging and what that would mean for communities as there is some concern at the moment.
- e) Members agreed that a paper coming forward once the survey is completed would be a good idea.
- f) The Convener added an additional action that all strategic aspects of the plan come back to the Board for approval and Performance Committees for regular updates, this was seconded by Gaener Rodger and Doug McAdam.

20. The Board noted the Paper.

21. Action Points Arising:

- i. Strategic aspects of the plan come back to the Board for approval and Performance Committees for regular updates, this was seconded by Gaener Rodger and Doug McAdam.

Managing for Visitors in the Cairngorms

22. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Rural Development, presented the paper which seeks the views of the Board on potential options around managing for visitors in the Cairngorms National Park. Officers are seeking a steer on the options that the Board would like staff to do further work on, to help with the preparation of the Active Cairngorms Action Plan which will be brought back to the Board in November 2023.

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

- a) Members raised strong concerns over the lack of resources being committed to Glenmore by Forestry and Land Scotland, voicing concerns from the community over how the site is being managed. The Director of Planning and Rural Development informed the Board that Forestry and Land Scotland Managers have identified Glenmore as one of six national priorities and are investing more resources there than ever before. The Convener reassured the Board that the Convener and Officers will be seeking an urgent meeting with Forestry and Land Scotland to discuss resourcing as it is currently inadequate and gave assurances that the Convener and Deputy Convener will be at that meeting.
- b) The Deputy Convener asked how the Park Authority is going to keep the community around Loch Morlich involved and informed. The Director of Planning and Rural Development responded that communication with the Community



Council and Community Trust has already begun, and they will be informed of the outcome of this meeting.

- c) A member asked if there were data from Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park on fixed penalty notices. The CEO responded that if a bylaw is in place, it gives clarity of message, but needs enforcing. If the Board agrees that they would like Officers to present a paper on introducing a bylaw, this paper will explore whether the Park Authority has the resources to enforce a bylaw across the park and whether this would make a significant difference. A subsequent paper would therefore pick up on the intent of this question.
- d) The CEO also informed the Board that part of Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity is that bylaws in National Parks are to be enforced under a fixed penalty notice system. Members agreed that Officers should bring back a paper with more information for the Board to consider.
- e) A member raised that there should be national consistency in messaging around fires. The CEO responded that the Park Authority have raised this with Scottish Fire & Rescue Service, who should be leading on national messaging.
- f) The Deputy Convener queried whether Aberdeenshire Council rangers are able to issue fixed penalty notices. The Director of Planning & Rural Development responded that that was the information he had been supplied by Aberdeenshire Council, but he is happy to check this.

24. The Board noted the Paper and considered the options set out within it, agreeing a steer for staff on which ones to investigate further.

25. Action Points Arising:

- i. The Board agreed that Convener and Officers arrange a meeting with Forestry and Land Scotland to discuss resourcing at Glenmore.
- ii. The Director of Planning and Rural Development to check whether Aberdeenshire Council rangers can give fixed penalty notices.
- iii. The Director of Planning and Rural Development to communicate with the Community Council and Community Trust the outcome of this meeting.
- iv. Paper on potential bylaw implementation across the park to be presented to a future meeting of the board.



Standing Orders: Election of Planning Committee Convener and Committee Membership Substitutions

26. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive, presented the paper which notifies the board of the Planning Committee Convener's upcoming end of term of appointment and of the election process for this role. The paper also follows up the Board's discussions at its meeting in June 2023 on the quorum for Committee meetings and capacity for Committee members to nominate substitutes for meetings.
27. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) The Deputy Convener asked if the election would be delayed if the appointment of new Ministerial Board Members was delayed. The Director of Corporate Services informed Members that the Scottish Government were aware of the upcoming elections and were confident of the time scales. Should any delay arise, he will inform the Convener.
 - b) A Member questioned how substitutes would be secured. The Director of Corporate Services suggested the board portal be used and the Clerks to the Board would distribute information to Members of how this would work.
 - c) A member reflected that substitutes were permitted in other organisations up to a point immediately before a meeting. The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive explained that the proposals put forward reflected members' responsibilities under the Code of Conduct to be prepared for meetings, and therefore sought to ensure appropriate amount of time was available to any member attending as a substitute to become familiar with the subject matter and ask any questions of detail or context prior to the meeting.
28. The Board agreed the process for election of the Planning Committee Convener, as set out in this paper. Additionally, the Board agreed the provision of substitutes for Committee membership and attendance, as set out in this paper.
29. Action Points Arising:
- i. The Clerks to the Board to distribute information to Members of how substitutes for committee meetings are to be secured.



Board Member Fee Policy

30. Xander McDade presented the review of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Board Member Fee Policy undertaken by the Board's Resources Committee at its meeting of 25 July 2023. The paper seeks approval from the board of decisions taken by the Committee on the management of members' time available for Park Authority business and associated payment of board fees.

31. The Board considered the detail in the Board Fee Policy Review and discussions took place around the following:

- a) Russell Jones seconded the proposal.
- b) The Deputy Convener asked for clarification on whether if a board member only attends all required meetings they get paid in full. Xander McDade clarified that if members only attended all required meetings they would get paid for 32 days, including 10 days prep time, but would not receive any top up days.

32. The Board noted the Board Fee Policy Review, agreeing the increase in base level time input by Park Authority Board and automatic deductions to fee payments.

12.31pm Sandy Bremner and Eleanor Mackintosh left the board room.

33. The Board considered the detail in the Conveners Allocation Review and discussions took place around the following:

- a) A member questioned how the decision for both the increased number of paid days for both Deputy Convener and Convener had been reached. Xander McDade responded that, while both roles reflect more work than the number of paid days proposed, the increase reflects a better balance and would make the roles for people with caring commitments, for example, more realistic.
- b) A member raised concerns over the number of days the previous Convener was required to work as it seems excessive compared to other similar organisations. Xander McDade responded that this is in part due to the size of the Board and an element of the amount of work the Convener wants to do. The CEO, added that members add to the workload through the amount of email traffic between meetings that is not always necessary.

34. The Board noted the Conveners Allocation Review, agreeing the changes in base level time input by Park Authority Board Convener, Deputy Convener and Planning Convener.



35. Action Points Arising: None

12.45pm Sandy Bremner and Eleanor Mackintosh re-entered the board room.

Minutes from Committee Meetings

36. The Convener introduced the paper that presents the draft and approved minutes of the Formal Board, Audit and Risk Committee, Resources Committee, Performance Committee and Governance Committee.

37. The Board noted the Paper.

38. Action Points Arising: None

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39. Grant Moir, CEO, informed the Board that on 7 September 2023 the Strategic Framework for Biodiversity consultation was launched by the Scottish Government. The Board will be having a discussion on this at the end of October.

40. The Convener informed the Board that the next Board Visit, in October, would be to the Angus Glens.

Date of Next Meeting

41. The date of the next meeting is Friday 24 November in person.

The public part of this meeting concluded at 12.50pm.