
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Victory Hall, Aboyne on Friday 8th October 2004 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Eric Baird	Andrew Rafferty
Duncan Bryden	Sandy Park
Sally Dowden	Gregor Rimell
Douglas Glass	David Selfridge
David Green	Sheena Slimon
Bruce Luffman	Richard Stroud
Eleanor Mackintosh	Andrew Thin
Anne MacLean	Susan Walker
Alastair MacLennan	Bob Wilson (present for Paper 2 and AOCB only)
William McKenna	

In Attendance:

Danny Alexander	Jane Hope
Murray Ferguson	Fiona Newcombe
Nick Halfhide	Andy Rinning
Andrew Harper	Kristin Scott

Apologies:

Stuart Black	Lucy Grant
Basil Dunlop	Marcus Humphrey
Angus Gordon	Joyce Simpson

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

1. The minutes of the previous meeting (10th September) were approved with one change. At Paragraph 5(b) the reference to the election of a new deputy chair for the committee was corrected to refer to the need to elect a chair and deputy chair for the committee.

Matters Arising

2. Paragraph 7: the action was in hand

Operational Plan - Update to End of Quarter 2 (Paper 1)

3. Jane Hope introduced the paper. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) The question of balance of activity between the six themes in the Corporate Plan was raised. It was felt that this was reasonably even, but the point was noted that Theme 2 (To encourage enjoyment, understanding and appreciation and the special qualities of the area) appeared to have fewer activities than the other themes. However, this was more a reflection of a considerable overlap between Theme 1 (A park for all) and Theme 2, and the fact that many activities which could quite easily fit under Theme 2 had in fact been shown under Theme 1.
 - b) The work shown in the Operational Plan represented a balance between those activities with relatively quick outcomes and those that were focused on much longer term strategic planning where the outcomes would not be realised for some considerable time.
 - c) It was important to let people know about all the work in progress, particularly with the long-term strategic work where the outcomes would not be realised for some time. The newsletter "Parklife" was being published three times a year and was focusing on informing people about progress.
 - d) Action 35 referred to the Land Based Business Project, encouraging land based businesses to embrace training. The project was going well and was well supported. Some additional funding had been secured for this project to continue next year and the outcome of applications for further funding was awaited. The outcome would be known by the end of the year. A list of all the training schemes running under this project was requested by Members.
 - e) It would be helpful when reporting on progress in the Operational Plan to give a considered report, more than simply "in hand" for example. It would be better to explain what was actually happening on particular activities. While Members and staff within the CNPA might understand such shorthand, the outside world may not.
 - f) Actions 24 - 27 referred to work with young people. A number of activities were being taken forward and the communications group which involved pupils at the seven secondary schools in the Park was a key activity for youth involvement. The point was made that there was no activity which directly and clearly linked young people in the Park with the activities of the Board, and this would be considered at the next meeting of the Youth Communications Group in November. Some Members had had an informal meeting with the Scottish Youth Parliament earlier in the year which had been very successful. The point was made that the onus was on the Park Authority to create an environment which encouraged young people to engage.
 - g) The actions listed in the Operational Plan appeared to have little reference to older people, who represented a huge capacity in communities which the Park Authority needed to tap into. The All Abilities Communication Network did address some of the issues of concern to older people. In addition, a considerable amount of work was being done on capacity building in communities (Actions 47 - 50) and while there was no specific reference to older people, this should be built into this work on capacity building. This point should be accommodated in the drafting of the National Park Plan.

- h) While the newsletter "Parklife" was an effective way of communicating with residents in the Park, it was important to make sure that this was fully accessible to all by making sure that the newsletter was available in other forms such as audiotape for example. Along side this, the organisation needed to build up a list of those people who would like to receive the "Parklife" in this alternative form.
- i) A considerable amount of work was currently underway by staff in the Park Authority and they were congratulated for this.

4. The Board noted with approval progress with the Operational Plan

Speyside Way Extension - Proposal (Paper 2)

- 5. Kristin Scott introduced the paper, with assistance from Jim Strachan, the Route Manager from Moray Council, seeking the Board's approval to the Park Authority taking the lead on behalf of the partners of the Speyside Way Management Group on a consultation on the preferred route for the extension of the Speyside Way. In introducing the paper, the point was made that 15 different route options had been investigated and as a result of a structured scoring system, one route had emerged as a clear front-runner. The Speyside Way Management Group had therefore concluded that the next step would logically be to consult on this preferred route and that this consultation should aim to gauge the level of public support for both the rationale that was used to identify this preferred route, and the line of the preferred route itself. It was recognised that a number of individuals had already expressed concern about the proposed line but that the proposed consultation would be the appropriate mechanism for examining any such concerns in detail.
- 6. The point was emphasised that the Board was being asked to agree to a consultation exercise and was not at this stage being asked to have a detailed discussion on or make a decision on the route itself. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The route between Kincaig and Insh was not following the Badenoch Way as this was not felt to be the optimum line, given the associated expense. The proposal was for the Badenoch Way to stay as it was, which when used in conjunction with an extended Speyside Way, would provide for a circular route.
 - b) Traffic noise arising from the A9 running close to the proposed route at various points was not considered to be intrusive.
 - c) Consultation would need to be wide, not only with landowners but users as well. The question on how best to consult the potential users was raised. While it was difficult to target users precisely, the intention was that the consultation should engage widely with communities, ramblers groups, community councils etc, and in this manner would expect to pick up potential users. The point was made that some consultation responses might usefully be sought through the Speyside Way Website.
 - d) The preferred route was not chosen as the least cost option. A range of criteria had been employed in reaching the conclusion, and of these capital cost was only one. The criteria for evaluation were listed at Paragraph 6 of the paper.
 - e) There was some discussion of the criteria that had been used and their weighting in the selection of the preferred route. The process adopted had been based on a structured scoring system. A table had been drawn up showing all the criteria and the scores of the various route options. It was considered important that consultees could examine this and comment on it if they wished. It was important to dispel

any perception that the selection of the preferred route had been based on any single factor, for example, least cost. Paragraph 8 of the paper made clear that the consultation would aim to gauge the level of public support both for the rationale that was used to identify the preferred route and the line of the route itself.

- f) It would be particularly important in a consultation on a single preferred route, to make clear that the consultation was genuinely open to suggestions and to alterations to the proposed route. If the consultation was to extend over Christmas and New Year, additional time ought to be included to account for this.
- g) There were many techniques that could be employed to make this an effective consultation. It was no longer the case that public meetings alone would suffice. A consultation plan was being developed. In practice there would be a three-month window of opportunity in which to consult widely with all those individuals and groups who might have an interest. The interest would extend from local to national and even to international.
- h) Consultees should include not just walkers, but also riders and other potential users of the long distance route. Specialist journals might be a useful way of seeking views from these groups, and particularly engaging with a wider national interest.
- i) The question was raised as to whether there was a long-term expectation that the Speyside Way long distance route would meet up with the Great Glen Way. The Speyside Way had always been designed as an easy long distance walk and having adopted this approach, the view had been taken that it would be irresponsible to make sections of the route much more challenging, and potentially inviting people to embark on more risky ventures than they realised. (Linking Newtonmore with the Great Glen Way would require a walk over the Corriearick Pass which would be a significantly more challenging walk than the rest of the Speyside Way). The point was made that it would be important to develop good networks between paths which would not necessarily be long distance routes.
- j) The proposed consultation on the preferred route and underpinning rationale would not include issues of management of the route. This might need to come at a later date, but it was felt that consultation at this stage might simply confuse the main issue which was the line of the route.
- k) Thanks were expressed to Alastair MacLeod, the Development Officer employed to carry out the initial investigation which had commenced in April that year, leading to the paper before the Board. He had done an excellent job, and there have been very positive feedback from those with whom he had dealt.
- l) The Convenor noted that there had already been some extremely robust expressions of discontent with the proposed consultation made to particular members of staff. He emphasised that the Park Board would not tolerate staff being treated abusively.

7. The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) that a consultation exercise should take place to gauge the level of public support for both the rationale used to identify the preferred route and the line of the route;**
- b) that the CNPA lead the consultation on behalf of the Speyside Way Management Group.**

Leader+: Admin Contribution for 2005-07 (Paper 3)

8. Nick Halfhide introduced the paper, which sought approval to the CNPA's contribution to administration costs of LEADER+ and to their providing in-kind costs.
9. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme had been very successful in funding projects. The spend of grant had been front-end loaded, and consequently the programme was already well committed for this year. The CNPA was hoping to bid successfully for further money for the following year. However, the point was made that even after decisions on allocating grants funding were complete, the need for administration would continue, in particular to monitor progress with funded projects. The paper in front of the Board assumed no further increase in grant in future years.
 - b) The figures in the paper showed that the CNPA was contributing around £50,000, or 14.4%, to the total administration costs, which in turn were in effect leveraging in around £2.4 million of grant.
 - c) Increased contributions for administration costs were also being sought from partners. While these contributions were not yet confirmed, they had been discussed at a recent meeting of the Local Action Group and all indications from funding partners were positive.

10. The paper's recommendations were approved as follows:

- a) **that a contribution of £40,500 over the three calendar years of 2005-2007 be made towards the administration costs of the Cairngorms LEADER+ Programme, and provision of accommodation and other in-kind support be continued.**

Advisory Forums (Paper 4)

11. Jane Hope introduced the paper which sought approval of the Board to membership, chairmanship and remit of the CNPA Advisory Forums was welcome.
12. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The proposal of Peter Argyle as chair of the Social and Economic Development Forum was welcomed.
 - b) It was noted that the Local Access Forum had a slightly different remit and basis from the other proposed advisory forums, given that its origins lay in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003. The feedback from a number of recent public meetings was being drawn together, and would be presented to the Board at its next meeting as a proposal for taking forward the CNPA's statutory duty to set up one or more local access forums for the Park area. Current thinking envisaged one forum, and the mechanism for deciding on chairmanship would need careful thought and would be the subject of the forthcoming paper. It was still expected that the Local Access Forum/Forums for the Park would be in place by early in 2005.
 - c) There was some discussion about the particular role of the Advisory Forum on Joined up Government (known as the Panel on Joined Up Government). This

panel engaged Chairs, Chief Executives and other senior officials of all public agencies and local authorities with a significant role to play in delivery of the National Park Plan. It was important to engage fully with the members on this panel, to ensure that partners understood how the thinking was developing on the production and subsequent implementation of the National Park Plan. It would be essential to make sure that partners were fully participating in the process; and equally the Park Authority needed to be central to the thinking of partners. Of particular importance was the agreement and understanding by all concerned of the criteria that would be used ultimately to measure and assess the delivery of the National Park Plan. While recognising the importance of the Panel, equally the CNPA had to recognise that such meetings were quite a demand on senior executive's diaries. The very first meeting of the Panel in May 2004 had asked for no more than one meeting a year. In practice the next meeting was likely to be around May 2005, at which point there would be some significant pieces of research to discuss with partners, including the health indicators that had emerged from the State of the Park Report. It was also pointed out that on a day-to-day basis involvement between CNPA and all other partners was developing from the bottom up, as individual staff contacts developed. It was important that engagement took place at all levels throughout organisations.

13. The paper's recommendations were agreed as follows:

- a) that the proposals in the paper for remit, membership and chairmanship, as a basis for setting up the Advisory Forums agreed in August, with the caveat that chairmanship should be for two years;**
- b) that within this framework the chair and staff be given discretion to take forward the establishment of the Advisory Forums as quickly as possible, with the aim that all have their first meeting by the end of January;**
- c) that in setting up the forums, staff would keep all Board Members informed (by email or paper copy) of proposed membership and meeting arrangements. Once forums were up and running, meeting agendas and papers would be sent to all Board Members for information;**
- d) that these forums were essentially for discussion and communication of ideas, and that any Board Member may attend, but would let staff know which meetings they wish to attend on a regular basis; and**
- e) that although a range of staff may be involved servicing forums one member of staff would be identified as the lead for each forum.**

AOCB

Report Back from Europarc Conference

14. Eric Baird reported on his visit to the Europarc conference in Catalonia, a semi-autonomous region, which was looking back at its heritage as well as forward to the future. He noted that as an organisation, Europarc had quite a strong sense of establishment, and noted that it may take the Cairngorms National Park Authority some time to become a fully participating and recognised member. It might be appropriate to actively promote the Cairngorms National Park at a future meeting. The theme of the

conference had been NATURA, the Network of European Protected Sites, but with a particularly strong communities interest running through the conference. There had been general agreement that the "business as usual" approach was no longer tenable, against a background of agricultural restructuring and other changes in legislation. All this was seen as presenting opportunities for communities although these were generally not specifically identified (but were likely to flow from work in the area of natural heritage, visitor management etc). A particular example of the sorts of benefits that might flow from being in a designated site was the development of a junior ranger programme. Farmers were expected to remain farming, but with additional opportunities for them to become in additional natural heritage managers and by implication would develop new approaches and new skills.

15. Overall, the Europarc conference was a valuable opportunity to build links with other National Parks in Europe. There were things that we could learn from other Parks and vice versa.

Aviemore Orbital Footpath

16. Member's attention was drawn to a recent article in the Badenoch and Strathspey Herald about the Aviemore Orbital Footpath. There had been disappointment that the orbital route had not been completed. It was noted that the ongoing consultation on the Local Plan provided a good opportunity for local interest groups to make clear where they felt the orbital footpath should go. The best way of dealing with this issue was to ensure that the footpath was firmly on the agenda of the Local Plan. There would in addition be the consultation on the core path network which the CNPA would be initiating as the access authority in 2005.

- 17. Action: Kristin Scott and Willie McKenna to liaise on the role of the CNPA in respect of the Aviemore Orbital Footpath.**

Voluntary Fire Service in Badenoch and Strathspey

18. A consultation on the auxiliary fire services was expected towards the end of the year.
- 19. Action: Peter Cosgrove to provide a short briefing note to the Board at the appropriate point. Willie McKenna and Angus Gordon to be kept informed.**

Date of Next Meeting

20. Friday 5th November, Boat of Garten