

Cairngorms National Park Authority Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum

9th May 2006, Lonach Hall, Strathdon

DRAFT MINUTES

Present

David Bale, Will Boyd-Wallis (Minutes), Kate Christie, Richard Cooke, Ian Francis, Helen Geddes, Lucy Grant, Chris Hewitt, Frank Law, Thomas MacDonnell, Alastair MacLennan (Chair), Davie MacLeod, Fiona Newcombe, Steve North, Adam Smith, Eoin Smith, Hamish Trench, Mark Young.

1. Welcome and Apologies

1.1. The chairman welcomed everyone and noted the following apologies:

1.2. Alister Laing, Andy Wells, Anne Rae, Calum Kippen, Colin Shedden, David Balharry, Drennan Watson, Edward Mountain, Helen McDade, James Innes, Jeremy Usher Smith, Johnnie Grant, Kathy Peebles, Kenny Taylor, Marina Dennis, Roy Dennis, Nicola Abrams, Simon Thorpe, Vicky Thomson, Sandy Park, Ross Watson.

2. Minutes of last meeting (6th March 2006)

2.1. Johnnie Grant via email recollected that at the last meeting it was recommended that an advisory leaflet be produced on “best practice in the management of heather moorland in the Cairngorms”. The reminder of this suggestion was welcomed by the forum.

3. Matters Arising

3.1. Will Boyd Wallis forwarded a comment made by Jim Innes: He wanted assurance that comments on the draft Park Plan made in the forum would feed into the consultation process. Hamish trench assured the forum that this is indeed the case.

3.2. Jim Innes also highlighted the point that, in defining public benefits provided by land managers in the Cairngorms, CNPA must not lose sight of the fact that food production is an often overlooked, but fundamental public benefit. He also raised concerns about any running down of the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme.

3.3. Richard Cooke expressed concern that with many people being absent the Forum may not be fully representative of the cross section of land management interests within the CNP. Will Boyd-Wallis assured everyone that minutes and papers are

widely circulated and anyone wishing to raise issues to be passed on to the Forum can do so.

4. Cairngorms National Park Plan Consultation - Priorities for Action

- 4.1. This item was run as a workshops session. The workshop report is attached separately with these minutes.

5. Land Based Business Training Project

- 5.1. Kate Christie (LBBTP Manager) provided an update on the project and asked for ideas for further developing the project.
- 5.2. The aim of the LBBTP is to help businesses within the National Park become more viable, more competitive and more able to deliver public benefits. The project helps to first identify training needs and then deliver training by co-ordinating courses with a range of providers, organising venues, publicising and a making arrangements for participants.
- 5.3. The project provides up to 50% of the funding to cover the costs. This is particularly beneficial to small businesses that might otherwise have a small budget fro training employees. "Public benefit courses", e.g. managing for waders, wildflower identification etc., are provided *free* to help businesses to enhance the environment and offer more services to visitors.
- 5.4. Some courses may be arranged following a specific request, others are already arranged by partners such as Mearns and Angus Services, SAC, FWAG etc.
- 5.5. In the last two years the project has expanded from delivering courses to 400 people (64 businesses) in 2004 to 700 people (132 businesses) in 2005. The bulk of the funding (£200,000 in 2005) comes from the European Structural Fund, 20% from CNPA.
- 5.6. Kate was congratulated on the success of the project which is greatly valued by land based businesses in the Park. It was suggested that the project might also cover courses at a managerial level e.g. on subjects such as working time regulations, whole estate studies, management planning, etc.
- 5.7. It was suggested that courses be deliberately aimed at promoting the aims of the National Park. It was also suggested that employees could be trained as assessors in certain skills so that the benefits of the course could be broadened. Other ideas for courses included word processing, spreadsheets, mapping/GIS/GPS software.

6. Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework

- 6.1. Will Boyd-Wallis informed the forum that an update of the Cairngorms Forest and Woodland Framework has been commissioned by CNPA. The update takes account of existing and emerging policies that were not in place when the original document was written. The new draft takes account of the National Park (Scotland) Act 2000, the draft National Park Plan, the draft Scottish Forestry Strategy, the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan and local authority Indicative Forestry Strategies.
- 6.2. The map section of the Framework has been supplemented by the latest habitat modelling technology. BEETLE (*Biological and Ecological Evaluation Tools for Landscape Ecology*) are used to show the potential for species to disperse within and between separate forest habitat networks within the National Park. This has the potential to assist forest planning by providing guidance on where habitat networks may most effectively be enhanced.
- 6.3. The Framework is not only of relevance to those interested in the management of forests and woodland; it is of much wider importance. It relates to integration with other land uses, access and recreation, tourism, housing, renewables, climate change, health, community development and social justice.
- 6.4. It is intended that the draft be made available to the public via the CNPA website and distributed to a wide range of individuals and organisations with an interest in all aspects of land management within the National Park. The update will be finalised and completed as an integral part of the National Park Plan.
- 6.5. It was suggested that in the Framework the importance of research should not be underestimated.

7. The Cairngorms Brand

- 7.1. Will Boyd-Wallis will give a brief update on progress on the Cairngorms Brand.
- 7.2. The Brand Management Group (comprising representatives from the Cairngorms National Park Authority Board and staff, the Association of Community Councils Group and the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce) has developed eligibility criteria for use of the Cairngorms Brand in the following areas:

Tourism Businesses

Eating Establishments

Outdoor Activity Providers

Wildlife Operators

Golf Courses

Events

Community/ Tourist Associations

Non Edible Produce

Edible Produce (selected)

7.3. The Brand is intended to become synonymous as a “kite mark” of quality and positive environmental management. There is no charge for using the brand but criteria have been developed to set a standard for use. Criteria for all sectors will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, with a view to improving standards.

7.4. Applications for use of the brand need to be made to the Tourism Marketing officer, Ruathy Donald. The forum briefly discussed the criteria for edible produce (attached to these minutes). The discussion centred on the need to ensure that the brand clearly demonstrates added value and therefore must not be too easy to attain. It also needs to carry sufficient credence to encourage overall improvement in products and a wide take up.

8. Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group

8.1. Fiona Newcombe informed the forum of the newly formed Deer Advisory Group which met for the first time on 25th April. The forum brings together a wide diversity of interests in deer management. Its remit is to act as sounding board and source of advice to the deer industry and public agencies on deer management and related issues in the National Park. In particular it will focus on:

- the National Park Plan Priority for Action on Sustainable Deer Management;
- the development of a Strategic Deer Management Plan;
- better communication and information provision to the wider public;
- emerging Deer Management Group plans;
- the development of agencies thinking on deer, for example the DCS’s longterm strategy; and
- improved marketing of deer related products.

8.2. CDAG will also act as an inclusive means of communicating developing thinking on deer management issues to a wider audience.

9. Any other business

9.1 Frank Law suggested that at future meetings, held outside in the sunshine, we could perhaps periodically rotate the seating in order to achieve a more even suntan! Otherwise there was no other business.

10. Date of next meeting

10.1 8th August 2006.

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ITEM 4: Cairngorms National Park Plan Consultation - Priorities for Action

WORKSHOP SESSION

For the workshop, the Forum broke into three groups.

Group 1: Adam Smith, Alastair MacLennan, Ian Francis, Eoin Smith, Kate Christie,

Group 2: Lucy Grant, Richard Cooke, Thomas MacDonnell, Steve North, Davie Macleod.

Group 3: Will Boyd-Wallis, Mark Young, Helen Geddes, Chris Hewitt, Frank Law.

Each group spent approximately half an hour discussing each of the following Priorities for Action in the draft Park Plan:

Conserving and Enhancing the Park's Biodiversity and Landscapes. (Led by David Bale)

Developing Sustainable Deer Management. (Led by Hamish Trench)

Supporting Integrated Land Management. (Led by Fiona Newcombe)

The following points are a collation of the notes taken from each of the three groups. All of the comments expressed by individuals within each group will be considered as part of the overall draft National Park Plan consultation:

Conserving and Enhancing the Park's Biodiversity and Landscapes.

GROUP 1

- a) There is a need for more collaboration between estates. e.g. birds nest in one area and feed in another, appropriate management needed in both.
- b) Collaboration between estates requires financial incentives.
- c) There needs to be enhanced public support within the National Park.
- d) Whilst it may be favourable to increase the habitat in one estate, the impact over the National Park as a whole needs to be carefully managed.
- e) The decline in the active management of heather moorland needs more recognition, with added incentives to maintain burning regimes.

GROUP 2

- a) We need to ensure that the land management sector can continue to deliver biodiversity and landscape benefits.
- b) Can we aim to remove things that detract from experiences of wild land and actively manage the land in some areas to enhance that experience?
- c) Land managers need enhanced incentives for providing public benefits.
- d) Management prescriptions need to be flexible to provide benefits on any particular piece of land. They need to be objective led rather than prescription led.

- e) Make sure existing land management plans work better.
- f) Instead of providing a list of priority habitats, why not look at what is on the land and ensure that what we have good remains in good condition.
- g) All management objectives are equally valid as long as they are not damaging.
- h) We need to be forward looking.

GROUP 3

- a) CNPA should build on existing work carried out by SNH on landscape character assessments.
- b) There needs to be more emphasis on the economic aspects of landscape protection.
- c) The lists of key partners for many of the actions need to be more carefully put together to reflect both the range of interests and their particular roles in achieving objectives.
- d) There is a need to gauge public opinion on landscape priorities.
- e) There needs to be more clarity on what is meant by 'favourable condition' in relation to habitat quality.
- f) When one habitat expands another one contracts. There need to be clear targets set for habitat management.
- g) There needs to be more of a focus on research.
- h) CNPA should consider setting targets for individual threatened and or iconic species.
- i) The Local Biodiversity Action Plan is critical and is underplayed in the draft.
- j) Farmers and crofters play a vital role in supporting habitats and species. Ensuring continued habitat management through agriculture needs to be made more explicit.
- k) In order to be effective there is a need for Land Management Contracts to be more site specific rather than have generic set conditions. The park plan should provide some leadership on this.
- l) 'Sustainable deer management' should be a stand alone priority.

Developing Sustainable Deer Management.

GROUP 1

- a) Why have a stand-alone priority on deer, when grazing by livestock, wild goats and rabbits is also of great significance?
- b) The deer species are iconic, owned by no one and with an entirely different regulatory framework to other grazing animals.
- c) The need for more detailed research into habitat condition throughout the park should be a priority (perhaps within conserving and enhancing biodiversity) in order to clarify the reasons for habitat decline in some areas.
- d) It is not appropriate to use a single species as a 'barometer' for habitat condition.
- e) Deer management has become highly politicised and needs to be a priority in order to encourage rational debate over important issues affecting the Cairngorms.
- f) The word sustainable in this context must be clarified. It is not clear whether sustainable refers to habitats, species or economics.
- g) The park plan must ensure that there is respect for a range of land management activities across the park, and not simply target 'fewer deer equals more trees'.

- h) The park plan should encourage greater co-operation between land managers on the marketing of deer related products.

GROUP 2

- a) Ensure 'habitat' is defined as broader than woodland- it is about moorland as well;
- b) Is there a need for a Strategic Deer Plan- what will it do?
- c) Is deer management not more about site specific management than a strategic plan?
- d) Research and filling data gaps is key to taking it forward.
- e) 'A little information can be a dangerous thing'- concerns about public/community involvement.
- f) There are some things wrong at present, and some things that can be done better.
- g) The substance of the deer management priority is broadly positive and needed
- h) A change in emphasis is needed to indicate that management is not necessarily unsustainable at the moment, but it should be presented positively to avoid reinforcing common view of deer as a problem.
- i) Addressing deer management is a current issue that has largely been overcome; the plan should identify the likely future problems- particularly water management.
- j) The debate about seasons should continue; seasons are unhelpful and managers should be able to plan their management within bounds of welfare.
- k) The out of season licences are too restrictive.

GROUP 3

- a) There is a need to clarify what is meant by 'sustainable deer management'
- b) Deer are a tourist asset, but can have both a negative and a positive impact on the natural heritage.
- c) Sustainability means: in the long-term, deer numbers need to be consistent with natural heritage habitats
- d) It is very important that deer management is targeted differently for different areas within the Park; not one culling regime across the whole Park.
- e) There needs to be an emphasis on, "retaining a population for both tourist qualities and economic development".
- f) There are positive benefits to having a higher deer population in some areas.
- g) The actions are very general, more about process than product; clearer outcomes needed.
- h) It needs to be clear that "strategic" does not mean "the same across the Park".
- i) Baseline data is needed on habitat condition and evidence of negative impacts.
- j) In certain cases funding support may be required to assist deer management groups to obtain baseline information.
- k) An action plan is required to control Sika deer, which should be labelled as an alien species.
- l) Actions such as "supporting the marketing of venison" need to be taken on as serious initiatives and not just a "throwaway comment".

Supporting Integrated Land Management.

GROUP 1

- a) There needs to be some form of visitor payback from tourism directed towards land management.
- b) It is the diversity/variety of landscapes within the CNP that make it special.
- c) In general, tourists are more interested in this diversity than in any one specific landscape.
- d) People want to see a “living landscape” being actively managed.
- e) It is easier for larger estates to achieve integrated land management; co-operation between smaller units needs to be encouraged.
- f) Marketing using a brand is complicated and difficult to ensure that it indicates a ‘cut above the rest’.
- g) It is very important that methods of direct marketing are supported and encouraged in order to promote market fidelity.
- h) The National Park attracts more people, therefore deserves greater funding.
- i) The Park Plan must be clearly linked to the Scottish Rural development Plan.
- j) There is not enough reference to the importance of economic activity.

GROUP 2

- a) There is a need for diversity across the park, not just one model of land management.
- b) For CNP to be a success there needs to be a ‘can do’ attitude amongst officers in all the agencies.
- c) We must avoid re-inventing the wheel.
- d) Grant funding needs to be managed so that it is easier for the applicant and more suited to promoting and entrepreneurial approach.
- e) The Park Plan must be clearly linked to the RDR and linked to the business sector.
- f) The Park Brand needs to be ‘policed’ by surveying it.

GROUP 3

- a) There is an urgent need to clarify what public benefits land managers are providing in order to secure funding to ensure they can continue to deliver.
- b) There is not enough on economic activity in this section.
- c) The park plan needs to define more clearly the public benefits special to the Cairngorms.
- d) The priority section of the plan needs to be realistic not just aspirational.
- e) The simple existence of the land management sector provides a public benefit in itself.
- f) The Park Plan needs to identify exactly how public benefits distinctive to the Cairngorms will be identified.
- g) It is the blend/mix of activities that makes the Cairngorms special.
- h) The Park Plan cannot achieve everything, it needs to be aspirational, but realistic.
- i) The aims of the moorland project were great, the sites chosen were appalling.
- j) CNPA could lead on providing training and advisory services linked to the SRDP.
- k) Land managers need to be added to the list of key partners under “Mechanisms for upland management support”.

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WORKSHOP SESSION

Summary

The broad range of views expressed above will feed into the process of ensuring the National Park Plan best reflects the aims of the National Park. There are a number of themes that cut across all three of the priorities discussed. The diversity of landscapes, habitats and land management practices is obviously of great importance to the National Park. There is a need to ensure that this diversity continues and this can only be achieved through truly integrated land management. Estates need to collaborate to ensure that across the park as a whole there is a net gain in biodiversity and continuation in the existing practices that make the National Park special. The public benefits that are special to the Cairngorms must be clearly defined. There must be sufficient public support secured to enable land managers to continue to deliver these benefits. To be most effective in this, the National Park Plan must be clearly linked to the different axes in the Rural Development Regulation.

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ITEM 7: The Cairngorms Brand

Current criteria for the use of the Cairngorms Brand in promoting selected **edible produce** of the National Park. Criteria for all sectors will be reviewed on an ongoing basis, with a view to improving standards.



Beef & Lamb

- Obtained from livestock *born, reared* and *finished* in the Cairngorms National Park.
- Obtained from a producer registered as a member of the *Quality Meat Scotland Farm Assurance Scheme*.
- Obtained from land where the producer demonstrates a commitment to positive environmental management through involvement in **one or more** of the following schemes:
 - *Linking Environment and Farming Marque Scheme*
 - *Cairngorms and Straths Environmentally Sensitive Area Scheme*
 - *Rural Stewardship Scheme*
 - *Habitats Scheme*
 - *Organic Aid Scheme*

Wild Venison

- Obtained from any species of *free ranging deer* shot within the Cairngorms National Park.
- Satisfies the standards of the *Scottish Quality Assured Wild Venison Scheme*.
- Obtained from deer managed and culled in accordance with the *Best Practice Guidance* published by the *Deer Commission for Scotland*.

Fruit, Vegetables and Cereals

- Crops grown within the Cairngorms National Park
- Cereals must satisfy the standards of *Scottish Quality Cereals*.

Crops are obtained from land where the producer demonstrates a commitment to positive environmental management through involvement in **one or more** of the schemes required for beef & lamb producers.