



## Minutes of the Performance Meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown on Spey

Hybrid

09 June 2023 at 2.15pm

### Present

Doug McAdam (Chair)

Xander McDade

Janet Hunter

Kenny Deans

Ann Ross

Chris Beattie

Steve Micklewright

### In Attendance

Grant Moir, CEO

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO

Colin McClean, Head of Land Management

Andy Ford, Director for Nature and Climate Change

James Ade, Clerk to the Board

### Apologies

None.

### Welcome and introduction

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Performance Committee including new Committee Members Chris Beattie, Steve Micklewright and Kenny Deans.

### Declarations of interest

2. Doug McAdam noted for transparency the existing entries in his register of interest but would still participate in discussions with a bearing on the following items:
  - a) Paper 1 - Independent Chair on the South Grampian Deer Management Group.
  - b) Paper 2 - sits on the Capercaillie Board as a Cairngorms National Park Authority Representative.



## Minutes of Previous Meetings & Matters Arising

3. The minutes of the previous meeting, 10 March 2023 held in person, were approved.
4. Action points arising from previous meetings:
  - a) 11 February 2022
    - i. **Para 19ii)** - Report relating to Visit Scotland funding to be brought to the Committee.
    - ii. **Para 19iii)** - Look at Green Funding Particularly via Heritage Horizons. Ongoing.
  - b) 25 November 2022
    - i. **Para 8a)** - For future reporting, ensure within the RAG rating system the colour is written on top of the colour for DDA compliance and explanation of RAG rating system.
  - c) 24 March 2023
    - i. **Para 11i)** - Director of Corporate Services to circulate audit report on the Peatland Programme. Closed.

## Cairngorms Peatland Action Programme (Paper 1)

5. Colin McClean, Head of Land Management, introduced the paper which presents an update on the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Peatland Action programme for 2022-23 and progress to date in 2023-24.
6. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:
  - a) The Chair questioned whether there are issues around agency led projects. The Head of Land Management responded that agencies are a key part of scaling up, however restoration is at capacity and increasing private sector capacity will take time. Andy Ford, Director for Nature and Climate Change, added that although contractor capacity has grown, contractors are frustrated by the lack of and inconsistency of contracts. The Park has to find ways to keep contractors engaged especially as contracts can be high risk for small contractors.
  - b) A member raised the importance of the skill of contractors and wondered how the Park would manage agent led projects and if there is a focus for agent led work. The Head of Land Management replied that Park staff will initially have a lot of input until there is confidence in a contractor's work. He also confirmed that the Park Authority encourages contractors who are newer to the sector to take on



easier, lower elevation projects where there are fewer access issues and fewer deer. The Director for Nature and Climate Change added the Park Authority is involved in signing off the grant so there is clear accountability for public money in testing competence of contractor has been established through procurement processes..

- c) Grant Moir, CEO, informed the committee that he was meeting with delivery partners and would circulate the outcomes of the meeting.

7. The Committee noted the paper.

8. Action Point Arising:

- i. CEO to circulate outcome of the meeting with peatland delivery partners.

## **Cairngorms Capercaillie Project (Paper 2)**

9. Andy Ford, Director for Nature and Climate Change, introduced the paper which presents the latest delivery updates on the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project.

10. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:

- a) Members discussed the trend in population numbers of capercaillie and whether genetic diversity was a driver of the decline. Director of Nature and Climate Change explained that there has been a 50% decline in population in the past five years, however, genetic diversity has not declined and the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland report says it is not a driver of decline. Though environmental and human impacts need to be addressed first, people will call for an increase in genetic diversity as it is seen as an easy win. The Park Authority and Project will need to have a strategy to release the information as a positive story and will meet to engage with stakeholders through workshops.
- b) A member questioned whether lekking sites were restricted from public access. The Director of Nature and Climate Change responded that staff are focused on peer to peer engagement and this was a big part of the work of Active Cairngorms. The Park is engaging with stakeholders to discuss the idea of limiting access at specific areas at specific times. The times are well known, however the locations are less so and a focused plan is needed.

11. The Committee noted the paper, thanking the Director for Nature and Climate Change and his team.



12. Action Point Arising: none.

*Janet Hunter left the meeting at 2.30pm*

### **Cairngorms Nature Festival (Paper 3)**

13. Andy Ford, Director for Nature and Climate Change introduced the paper which presents an overview of the Cairngorms Nature Festival (CNF), a summary of activity for the event in 2023 and an assessment of performance against strategic aims and objectives.

14. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:

- a) The Chair asked if an explanation could be given as to why the objectives in the performance dashboard were rated amber. The Director for Nature and Climate Change explained that there had been a loss of relations during Covid and some partners who had had previously held events did not redo them. There is a plan to review this. Additionally, there could be more community engagement and support for more local involvement in running events. Furthermore, engagement with smaller business could be improved and there was no data collection on bed nights during the festival.
- b) A member raised that, while it was good that the festival was spread out around the Park, there was a feeling from communities that it could be advertised better. The Director for Nature and Climate Change answered that although this is an ongoing issue the communications team do a huge amount of work advertising with a particular focus on social media and local radio stations.
- c) A member wondered whether there had been any discussion on holding the festival at different times of the year. The Director for Nature and Climate Change responded that there is a steering group for the festival that provided direction, and the key drivers include the focus to build activity in the shoulder seasons. The summer is already busy, and the festival is used to launch the summer and is not moved for stability. The member observed that they do not consider May to be a shoulder season and it is the third busiest month of the year. The Director for Nature and Climate Change assured the member that he would feed this back to the steering group.

15. The Committee noted the paper.



16. Action Point Arising:

- i. The Director for Nature and Climate Change to feedback to the festival steering group members comments on timing.

## **Cairngorms Leader and Community Led Local Development Funding (Paper 4)**

17. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, presented the latest delivery updates on the Cairngorms LEADER Programme and voluntary and charitable giving activities as managed by the Cairngorms LEADER Local Action Group Trust (Cairngorms Trust). This update focuses on the ongoing work to seek replacement for previous LEADER funding to support Community Led Local Development (CLLD).

18. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:

- a) The chair raised that having a deadline to spend money secured through the fund does not encourage best practice. The Corporate Service Director and Deputy CEO agreed that it does not help with step-change scale actions, nor allowing the whole project to be completed in one go. Grant Moir, CEO, added that the key for the Park is securing a multi-year fund of a level equivalent to previous LEADER Programmes, valued at around £60m, and how much of the potential future programme of finance still flows down as it is crucial communities have good funding for their local initiatives.
- b) A member raised while it is a big issue for communities within the National Park it is bigger outside the Park, due to the Park's other funding streams. The Director of Corporate Services agreed that the situation in the Cairngorms is one to be celebrated compared to other local areas. It is now a model that is being recognised more widely, with other places looking at a governance structure like that in the Cairngorms where a charity has been established which, if funding can be secured, allows for multiyear project spending commitments rather than a deadline of 31 March each year.
- c) The CEO noted that the Highland Council are keen to take forward a visitor levy. Discussions highlighted that this will not come into practice until 2026 while there are questions around: how it will look; how the levy proceeds would be dispersed; and what it can be spent on. Other members raised that there are mixed feelings in other councils.



- d) A member raised concerns around the amount of paperwork involved in grant applications and ensuring money is being well spent so that communities can access funding in a manageable way. The Director of Corporate Services responded that the Park Authority and Cairngorms Trust has strived to take as much of the audit and admin burden away from the applicant, both previously during the LEADER funding period and in designing new grant funding approaches within new approaches to CLLD funding.

19. The Committee noted the paper, thanking the Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO.

20. Action Point Arising: none.

## **AOCB**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

21. The date of the next meeting is Friday 8 September 2023 in person.

The meeting concluded at 3.23pm.