
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the Village Hall, Braemar on Friday 9th July 2010 at 11am

PRESENT:

Eric Baird	Eleanor Mackintosh
Stuart Black	Anne MacLean
Duncan Bryden	Alastair MacLennan
Dave Fallows	Ian MacKintosh
Lucy Grant	Andrew Rafferty
David Green(Convener)	Richard Stroud
Drew Hendry	Sue Walker
Mary McCafferty	

In Attendance:

Clare Muckart	Jane Hope
Don McKee	Karen Major
Francoise van Buuren	Murray Ferguson
Hamish Trench	

Apologies:

Bob Kinnaird	Jaci Douglas
Fiona Murdoch	Marcus Humphrey
Geva Blackett	Peter Argyle
Gregor Rimell	Willie McKenna

Welcome and Introduction

1. David Green welcomed everyone to the meeting, with a special welcome to Francoise van Buuren who had returned to the staff of the CNPA as the new Head of Communications and Engagement. He also noted that on the previous day members of staff and Board had a visit around Invercauld Estate, one of the remotest parts of the Cairngorms. Thanks were extended to Simon and Geva Blackett and all the staff of Invercauld Estate who had given up their time to provide a very interesting and informative day.
2. The Convener also noted that the climate change discussion which had been planned as part of the day's Board meeting was unfortunately postponed because of the late unavailability of contributors from UHI. [new date to be confirmed]

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

3. The minutes of the previous meeting (14th May 2010) were approved subject to one addition to Paragraph 10 (h) to the effect that in addition to the point being made that the cost of the Speyside Way Extension was considerable, the point had also been made that the cost of the proposed route appeared to be more than the alternatives.

Matters Arising

4. Further to Paragraph 37 it was noted that the CNPA's Supplementary Guidance on carbon emissions was currently being redrafted following the Scottish Government's withdrawal of their Planning Advice Note. The intention was to seek Board approval for consultation on this and other phase 3 Guidance in January 2011, followed by consultation in February to April, with the planned adoption of phase 3 Supplementary Guidance in June 2011.
5. In relation to Paragraph 43 an update was requested on how proposals were developing to take forward the work of the Land Management Support Officers Project. Staff are currently developing a brief for contracting specialist support to work direct with land managers where there are particular opportunities to deliver Park Plan priorities. The Farmers Forum remains a key part of the support network and for at least the remainder of this year will continue to be co-ordinated by Gordon McConnachie.

Declarations of Interest

6. None.

Status of the National Park Plan and Emerging Local Plan in the Decision Making Process (Paper 1)

7. Karen Major introduced the paper which advised Members on the materiality of the National Park Plan and the emerging Local Plan in the making of decisions on planning applications. Following the Local Plan Inquiry Report and the Consultation on Post Inquiry Modifications, the emerging Local Plan now had considerable relevance and materiality in respect of Planning decisions and the purpose of the paper was to clarify this with Members.
8. Importantly, the report from the Local Plan Inquiry had provided greater clarity on the role and status of the National Park Plan. The Reporters had concluded that the National Park Plan provided the overarching context for Development Planning and management within the National Park. The Local Plan then set out detailed policies to guide development in ways that contributed to the strategic objectives of the National Park Plan. The Reporters had concluded that the National Park Plan was a material consideration in all planning decisions. It therefore followed that in making all planning decisions, whether called- in or not, it was the National Park Plan that set the Strategic Guidance. Members could therefore expect to see more references to the National Park Plan in the advice provided on planning applications. The Strategic Guidance provided by the National Park Plan would be read with the Local Plan to provide a comprehensive link between the aims of the Park, its Strategic Objectives, and the detailed policies provided in the Local Plan.

9. In its current state, the Cairngorms Local Plan took on board the most up to date thinking on planning matters and as such it was appropriate that officials now used the emerging plan. Advice on planning applications would reflect a careful consideration of the relevant policy in the existing as well as the new Local Plan. Care would be needed in decisions on which policies applied, and this would have to be made on a case by case basis, and highlighted to the Planning Committee to ensure complete transparency on how the Plan and its policies were being used.
10. Paragraphs 12 and 13, and the attached table, showed the timetable of key dates for the emerging Local Plan, the new Local Development Plan, Supplementary Guidance, and the new National Park Plan. Once the consultation on the Post Inquiry Modifications was complete on the 23rd July, this would be followed by advice to the Board on the consultation responses on the 20th August. At this point it should be clear whether or not there remained a need for a second Local Inquiry. If there was none, adoption could follow on 29th October.
11. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The table after paragraph 13 did not show any provision for informal discussion on the Local Plan. The table only showed key dates; in the event of further discussion being needed, this could be timetabled.
 - b) The materiality of the Local Plan between now and the 29th October was not affected by the fact of the Supplementary Planning Guidance not being adopted. All the policies in the emerging Local Plan stood alone and while the Supplementary Planning Guidance helped, it was not necessary for the interpretation of policies in the Local Plan.
 - c) It was essential that Officers as well as Members in the Local Authorities of the Cairngorms National Park were fully aware of the emerging Local Plan and were using it along with the National Park Plan in the same way as the CNPA in determining Planning Applications. Planning Officers in the Local Authorities were clearly aware and there was already plenty of dialogue with CNPA; Members were likely to be less aware but the expectation was that they would be advised by Officers in the usual way. It was noted that it might be helpful to send copies of the consolidated version of the emerging Local Plan to Local Authorities.
 - d) If there were to be a second PLI timing was entirely up to the Scottish Government. However, a second inquiry would only be on a specific policy or policies and the rest of the Plan would remain material in the same way as at present.
 - e) Further to paragraph 16, the point was made that the approach to policies by the CNPA and Local Authorities needed to be consistent. For example Highland Council's housing policy considered that affordable housing could be provided off site, where as this was not the CNPA policy. It was essential to be pro-active with Local Authority contacts to ensure that they were having regard to the relevant policies in the National Park Plan and Local Plan.
 - f) It was noted that consideration of planning applications and the use of Local Plan policies would be monitored from now on. Where appropriate, the CNPA were helping Local Authorities with pre-application discussions. The delivery team on housing was also helping to ensure that the relevant connections were being made, and delivery teams were helpful in ensuring that an overview was taken on how policies were being delivered.

- g) It was noted that a formal report to either the Board, Planning Committee, or Audit Committee on monitoring of the delivery of the Local Plan policies would be useful.
- h) The timetable for Supplementary Planning Guidance Phase 3 indicated that this should be adopted around June 2011. This reflected a delay on our original intentions, and in particular the fact that the Scottish Government's Planning Advice Note on Carbon Emissions had been recently revoked, meaning that the CNPA had been required to revisit the guidance it already had in preparation. The delay was disappointing given that the CNPA had intended to be at the forefront with this guidance. The delay reflected the realities of limited resources and priorities; but on the plus side the removal of the Scottish Government's Carbon Emissions Guidance provided the opportunity for the CNPA to develop broader guidance, albeit on a slightly longer timescale.
- i) The point was made that the current period up until the adoption of the emerging Local Plan provided a complex policy context against which to make decisions on Planning Applications. Care would be needed over the wording of recommendations and also on conditions, and the Committee would need to consider very carefully any changes it proposed in the course of a Planning Committee meeting. Members were urged if they had points of clarification, to speak to Planning Officers in advance.

Joint Working Between the National Park Authorities (Paper 2)

12. The paper was introduced by Jane Hope in the absence of the author, David Cameron. The paper updated the Board on progress with the joint working between the two National Park Authorities, which had been a requirement emerging from the Strategic Review of National Parks. There were three strands to this work:
 - a) Sharing Corporate Services;
 - b) Joint working on a limited number of policy areas where there were clearly common interests;
 - c) Developing a set of common messages about the value of National Parks to Scotland and their contribution to sustainable economic growth.

13. The work on sharing Corporate Services focused on harmonising pay terms and conditions, HR policies, pay remits, sharing services on finance, procurement, IT etc. It also involved aligning the preparation of end year accounts, and agreeing a common set of KPIs for reporting on the delivery of Scottish Government outcomes. There was a clear work plan and this was overseen by a working group involving both Chief Executives, Head of Corporate Services and Head of Business Services. The work was essentially about ensuring efficiencies, but also making sure that both organisations were less vulnerable to the upheavals caused by staff illness, departures. The CNPA Head of Corporate Services was now also acting in an advisory capacity for Loch Lomond and the Trossachs NPA, an arrangement for which the CNPA was reimbursed. This arrangement was working well and was greatly helping the alignment and sharing of services. It was important to note that all the results of bench marking studies suggested that the two Park Authorities were relatively efficient in their corporate services; so the sharing of services was as much about reducing the vulnerability of small organisations to vagaries of staffing and other external events, as it was to increasing efficiency.

14. On policies, the two organisations had a joint Management Team twice a year to discuss these issues. A limited number of issues had been identified on which there would be genuine joint working (as opposed to simply sharing updates on what each NPA was doing which already happened). These issues were:
- a) Land management and SRDP.
 - b) Policies on renewable energy.
 - c) Timetable for the National Park Plan. The timetable, and the relevant Scottish Government outcomes would be common to both, while the plans themselves were likely to be quite different reflecting the very different priorities in each Park.
 - d) Climate change/low carbon Park. The CNPA had been more interested in pursuing this topic jointly than Loch Lomond and the Trossachs; however there were now plans to have a joint stand at the Sustainable Scotland Network Conference.
15. The two National Parks had quite different challenges and therefore different priorities. Nevertheless, they had a common basis in legislation and were created for essentially the same reasons. It was important to develop a common set of messages about the value of National Parks for Scotland, as awareness still seemed to be relatively low. The trick would be to acknowledge the strength of a model which allowed for differences between Parks but still be able to show why and how National Parks added value for Scotland. This was currently work in progress, and would be brought back to the Board at the appropriate point.
16. In conclusion a number of points were made, all indicating that while it was important the two NPAs worked together, there would always remain differences between them in their priorities. The climate change agenda was extremely important and Members urged this to be done jointly; the importance of good communications between the two NPAs was also stressed. The value and quality of the work in Corporate Services was acknowledged.

AOCB

Update on Park Extension

17. The relevant Designation Orders and Election Orders had been placed before Parliament to provide for the extension of the boundary and changes to the Board. The Parliamentary process would not be fully complete until the end of September. Meanwhile, it was noted that the last CNPA Board meeting with the existing Board would be on the 1st October at Mar Lodge where there would be a number of useful discussion topics, including one to consider the progress of the CNPA over the previous seven years, and a look forward to the next seven. A brief outline was also given of the work in hand at official level to smooth the transition to the enlarged Park on the 2nd October.

Cairngorm Mountain

18. Murray Ferguson updated the Board on the announcement made earlier in the week in respect of changes in the operation of Visitor Management Plan on Cairngorm Mountain. Cairngorm Mountain Limited were undertaking a trial of a new arrangement under which passengers who had travelled up the mountain in the funicular, would be able to pay for a ranger guided walk at the top. This trial would start from 17th July, and prior to this the CNPA had been invited to send a participant to a trial walk on the 14th, for which

places were limited. Alongside this trial, CML were doing a consultation on more general aspects of the closed system arrangements at the top of Cairngorm Mountain. The CNPA may wish to respond, and it was proposed that Bob Grant would prepare a paper which Members would have the opportunity to input to and discuss. The closing date for the consultation was the last day of August.

Housing Expo

19. Members were encouraged to indicate whether they would like to join a tour of the Housing Expo site on Friday 13th August. This was an excellent exhibition with 52 houses to visit, and would be of considerable interest to Members of the CNPA.

Climate Change

20. Hamish Trench gave a verbal update on climate change work highlighting:

Policy/Baseline

- a) Joint work with SAC to establish an analysis of potential carbon savings continues with the intention of holding a second partner workshop by the end of the year.
- b) The Lake District National Park Authority is also implementing a low carbon National Park project, much of which complements the work CNPA is carrying out at present, with potential to share approach and resources.
- c) Renewable Energy and Carbon Emissions guidance are now in preparation for consultation at the start of 2011.

Mitigation

- a) Woodfuel Acton Plan will be launched by Richard Lochhead at Grantown Show.
- b) Electric car continues to run successfully and negotiations to secure a buyer for the vehicle to continue its current use beyond the end of the clim-atic project are in hand.

Adaptation

- a) Work on land manager responses to flood management is underway through the Spey catchment management group, to inform the Scottish Government on practical implications and incentives required to promote sustainable flood management. CNPA is represented on a Scottish Government task and finish group looking at this issue.
- b) The clim-atic project 'stay and play' using Bluetooth technology to provide information to visitors when there is insufficient snow for skiing came to an end due to technological limitations. The CBP are now looking at alternative technological opportunities.

Europarc Conference

21. The Convener reported that the Europarc Conference being held in September, had asked the CNPA to offer a contributor to make a presentation and share a workshop. The intention was that Eric Baird should attend.

Finance

22. Jane Hope updated Members on the guidance which was being received from the Scottish Government on public expenditure. All public bodies were being urged to pay very careful attention to any further recruitment as well as look for savings across their running costs, particularly admin and staff costs, use of consultants, travel costs, accommodation, hospitality. In keeping with this the CNPA would be looking for ways of changing its operations to save expenditure. The full extent of budget cuts would not

be known until later in the year; meanwhile any staff vacancies arising would probably not be filled, and with some consequences for the speed of delivery. Once the extent of budget cuts was known, clearly the Board would wish to revisit the Corporate Plan and the organisation's priorities.

23. The Convener reported on his attendance at the Highland Show; a presentation to the All Party Parliamentary Group on Sustainable Tourism in the Westminster Parliament; chaired a Steering Group in preparation for the ATTA Conference (Adventure Tourism Travel Association, meeting in Aviemore in October).
24. Richard Stroud reported on his involvement in the Junior Rangers week. This had involved 14 to 15 year olds and demonstrated an impressive level of engagement.
25. Dave Fallows and Eleanor Mackintosh had attended the Sustainable Tourism Workshop on the 23rd June.
26. Eric Baird reported the following: Bio Buzz day photoshoot on Deeside (good collaboration with other agencies and Ranger Services); Annual Macaulay Lecture (Macaulay important partner in Land Use/Access/Climate Change work); Young folks ceilidh in Ballater at end of workshops (precursor to this summer's ceilidh trail); Junior Ranger presentation; RHS stand (important audience- Central Belt, rural industries: need to give feedback to Françoise on this); Aberdeen Uni Teacher Training (they are interested in community placements for trainee teachers within the Park: have passed them on to Pete Crane/Claire Ross).

Date of Next Meeting

27. Friday 3rd September 2010, Albert Hall, Ballater.