

**JOINT MEETING OF
CONSERVING & ENHANCING THE PARK &
LIVING AND WORKING IN THE PARK
ADVISORY FORUMS**

**9 October 2008
12:30-4pm Talla-na-Ros, Kingussie**

Draft Minute of Meeting 9 October 2008

Present

Alistair MacLennan – CNPA board member
Sue Walker – CNPA board member
Eleanor McIntosh – CNPA board member
Anne MacLean – CNPA board member
Stuart Black – CNPA board member
Andrew Rafferty – CNPA board member
Duncan Bryden – CNPA board member
Gavin Miles – CNPA
Hamish Trench – CNPA
Stephanie Bungay – CNPA
Will Boyd-Wallis – CNPA
Chris Bremner – CNPA
Fiona Munro – CNPA
Fiona Chalmers – CNPA
Flora Grigor-Taylor – FWAG Grampian
Stuart Benn – RSPB Scotland
Steve North – SNH
Ian Hope – DCS
Derek MacDonald – Aberdeenshire Council
James Scott – BASC
Fiona Murray – FCS
Judy Aylett – MAP
Simon Thorp – Heather Trust
Thomas MacDonell – Glenfeshie Estate
Hebe Carus – Scottish Environment Link &
MCofS

Apologies

Adam Smith – Game and Wildlife
Conservation Trust
Ivor Soutor – Highland Council
Mags Duncan-Stirling – Highland Council
Willie Ferguson – Lantra Scotland
Bell Macaulay – ACC
Roger Knight – Spey Fishery Board
Lucy Grant – CNPA board member

Welcome

Alistair MacLennan welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Introduction to hill and upland discussion – Alistair MacLennan

The aim of the meeting was to consider the recent reports of the Royal Society of Edinburgh's Inquiry into the Future of Scotland's Hills and Islands; Scottish Agriculture's College 'Retreat from the Hills' and NFUS Manifesto from the Hills; specifically to identify issues and recommendations of particular relevance to the National Park, and those that present opportunities for the Park.

The meeting will inform a discussion at the Park Authority's board meeting on 31st October about the opportunities for the Park from these reports. The RSE committee are also holding a meeting to discuss their recommendations on the evening of 12th November at Tomintoul.

Information on the Scottish Government's Rural Land Use Study – Hamish Trench

The Scottish Government recently launched the Rural Land Use Study, a programme of work to look at the existing and potential capability of land to deliver a range of benefits for Scotland. The government are commissioning a series of work programmes to gather an evidence base of land capability for uses such as energy, forestry, carbon management, biodiversity.

General discussion

- There was a general consensus that the National Park presents opportunities to explore many of the issues contained in the reports further and trial solutions.
- Given the four aims of the Park there is an opportunity to identify the linkages between issues and set discussion on upland land use and hill farming in the broader context of sustainable communities. There was a impression from communities that the RSE report did not reflect the importance of communities in rural areas.
- There is an opportunity to use the National Park, or parts of it, as case studies to explore the issues further.
- References to other National Park examples were made including Exmoor, and the Peak District.
- Many of the issues in the reports are considered to be threats to the delivery of the vision for the National Park, therefore it is right to address them in the context of the National Park Plan.

Discussion on specific recommendations of RSE Inquiry into Future of Scotland's Hills and Islands

SRDP/agriculture and the environment

- There is concern that SRDP is not meeting the needs of rural communities. It was agreed that the Park is a good place to collate evidence on what SRDP is and is not delivering – and that this is part of the role of CNPA’s Land Management Support Officers.
- This is another opportunity to press the case for a single RPAC for the National Park and better targeting of the priorities already agreed in the National Park Plan for the area.
- Case studies could be established to ascertain what managers want to do and map that against current support available to highlight shortcomings of current support systems or other barriers to management.
- The Park is a place where a longer term approach to support could be trialled – to provide long term consistency – although this should not become so inflexible as to prevent responses to changing circumstances.
- There is some support for a more proactive approach to grazing management, particularly identifying areas that need grazing to be maintained – however, there is caution against this being applied in a top-down directive by agencies. The emphasis should be on enabling management.
- Government can do some things but there should also be an emphasis on encouraging the ambitions of farmers and land managers to address the challenges.

Food

- Recommendation 45 regarding provision of local abattoirs and meat processing facilities would only be possible if there was a change in government legislation.
- Concern over the marketing of the National Park brand was expressed – it was suggested that there needs to be more proactive marketing of the brand to establish its values and build a customer base. There was general recognition of a good opportunity for CNP branded food and drink.

Energy

- The National Park is a good place to promote appropriate renewable energy projects. It was suggested that CNPA needs to set out a more positive and proactive approach to renewable energy projects in order to help deliver government ambitions.

The need for affordable housing

- One option in terms of lack of affordable housing in the Park is to work more closely alongside land managers to look at the options available in terms of their land and holdings.

- There is concern about the status of the Park when it comes to residents applying for grants or projects as they must apply as part of their LA, rather than a NP. Anne MacLean informed the meeting that this was an issue the board was raising during the quinquennial review.

NFU of Scotland's Manifesto for the Hills

The policy matrix contained in the NFUS manifesto was discussed with a view to understanding the implications and potential policy directions.

The general view was that the first set of options based on no government intervention are unlikely to deliver our aspirations for the Park, so the focus should be on appropriate government intervention to maximise positive impacts on the economy, environment and communities. The implications of the policy options laid out were discussed and it was suggested that any case studies established in the Park could help to clarify these implications and provide an evidence base.

Conclusions

- The focus on issues of hill and upland communities and economies brings an opportunity for the Park.
- The reports deal with issues that threaten delivery of the National Park Plan.
- They also highlight recommendations that could help take forward many aspects of the National Park Plan.
- The Park is well placed to be a focus for case studies to explore the issues further and trial solutions.
- CNPA has a leadership role to play but it is also an opportunity to encourage others to use the Park as a place to take forward action in these areas.

Date of next meeting: To be agreed