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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## APPROVED MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held in Blair Castle, Blair Atholl on Friday 9 December 2016 at 10.30am

### PRESENT

Peter Argyle (Convener)  
Rebecca Badger  
Angela Douglas  
Dave Fallows  
Jeanette Gaul  
Kate Howie  
Janet Hunter  
Gregor Hutcheon

Bill Lobban  
Eleanor Mackintosh  
Willie McKenna  
Fiona Murdoch  
Gordon Riddler  
Gregor Rimell  
Judith Webb  
Brian Wood (Deputy Convener)

### In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,  
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services,  
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development,  
Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation & Visitor Experience,  
Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Experience  
David Berry, Planning Manager (Forward Planning & Service Improvement)  
Heather Trench, Sustainable Tourism Officer  
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board.

**Apologies:** Paul Easto Katrina Farquhar  
John Latham

### Welcome and Introduction

- I. Peter Argyle, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting in Blair Atholl.

2. The Convener expressed his sadness regarding the recent death of Alex Johnstone, Scottish Conservative MSP at the age of 55. He had been an MSP since 1999 and had made a significant contribution to farming and rural affairs.
3. The Convener said that interesting discussions with Jo Blewett, Transport Scotland, Philip Smith, Glenshee & Strathardle Tourist Association and Tom Flanagan, Perth & Kinross Council focussing on Tourism and Visitor Experience on the Snow Roads Scenic Route and the A9 had taken place the previous evening.
4. The Convener made special mention of the two projects: the Speyside Way extension and the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Regeneration Project both of which had received national awards recently.
5. The Convener congratulated Board Member John Latham on becoming a grandfather the previous night.
6. Apologies were received from the above Members.

### **Minutes of Last Meeting held on 30 September, 2016 – for approval**

7. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 30 September 2016 were agreed with (the) no amendments.

### **Matters Arising**

8. The Convener provided an update on the Action points from the minutes of the meeting on 24 June 2016:
  - Action Point at Para 12 (i.) – Closed – ‘Make it Yours’ campaign update annexed to Paper 1 CEO Report on today’s Agenda
  - Action Point at Para 17 (i.) – Closed – Additional Management Principle added to the strategy subject to all Partners agreeing to the addition
  - Action Point at Para 19 (i-iv.) – Closed – Board members have joined groups.
  - Action Point at Para 35 (i.) – Closed – Peter Ferguson, Harper McLeod briefed on Declarations of Interest and Role of Convener guidance to be in the position to support the Planning Committee Convener when required.
  - Action Point at Para 42 (i.) – Closed – Informal Board Discussion on the future of the Economic Forum has been scheduled in Spring 2017.

### **Declarations of Interest**

9. No interests declared.

## CEO Report (Paper I)

10. Grant Moir Chief Executive introduced Paper I which highlighted the main strategic work streams that are being directed by Management Team. Grant explained that these are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver National Park Partnership Plan priorities. He highlighted the following areas:
- a) The Scottish Government Spending Review will be announced next Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2016. He advised that the budget would then be taken to the Finance & Delivery Committee and then onto the Board in March 2017.
  - b) Funding had been secured from Scottish Enterprise to start preparation work for the Braemar to Invercauld Bridge section of the Deeside Way. .
  - c) Funding had been secured from Sustrans to upgrade the section of the Speyside Way from Nethy Bridge to Granttown-on-Spey.
  - d) Following a recent Staff Consultation stemming from the departure of the Head of Rural Development post, it was confirmed that from the 12<sup>th</sup> December Pete Crane would manage the Tourism team and the Community and Economic Development streams would be managed by Gavin Miles. Agreed to circulate the new organogram to Members.
11. The Board discussed the detail of the Paper and the following points were raised:
- a) The importance of ensuring the paths on the Speyside Way/ Deeside Way are suitable for people to travel between communities and not just for visitor use.
  - b) Suggestion that building a bridge on the route from Dulnain Bridge to Granttown-on-Spey was more of a necessity given that there is no safe route for walkers or cyclists at present. Pete Crane advised that Transport Scotland and the promoters of the steam railway extension to Granttown hold the key to making this happen.
  - c) Recognition that the success of the North 500 route was largely attributed to the businesses and residents who claimed ownership of the route.
  - d) Query regarding the current recruitment of three new posts at a time of reductions in budgets? Grant explained that the funding for these posts were covered by external funding sources as part of projects, while the consultation on the Head of Rural Development not being replaced highlighted the ongoing drive to reduce financial commitments, including staffing, funded from main grant.
  - e) Had the Scottish Government bought into exploring mapping methods for natural flood management that would be done as part of the Catchment Partnerships? Hamish advised that the initial point of the Catchment Partnership

was to bring together the appropriate agencies to build on the processes SEPA currently use and to ensure the money is spent wisely.

- f) Plea not to lose sight of the section of the Speyside Way from Cromdale to Ballindalloch. Grant agreed and confirmed that he would talk to Highland Council about this section as it was out with the Park.
- g) Eleanor Mackintosh reminded members that she had attended the National Farmers Union (NFU) Autumn Conference and asked if staff had been made aware that the future use of the Uplands would be high on the Scottish Government's agenda? Grant advised that he was aware that SNH had been asked to look at the potential for an Upland Strategy and that the National Park Authority has been involved in initial discussions. Topics within it would be interlinked with Board discussions at different stages as they came about.
- h) Confirmation was sought that the Authority had links with Regional Forestry Forums. Hamish confirmed that this was the case with regards to both the Highland and Grampian regional forums.
- i) Query as to what the key points from Scottish Natural Heritage's (SNH) recent review of Deer Management report were. Grant advised that it was an interesting report and that there were differing views from stakeholders on the findings. He explained that the report found that the voluntary system had improved planning for deer culls and there were useful graphs in the back of the report that shows data relating to deer management groups within the National Park area. However, the report also showed that the delivery of action was still not sufficient to meet 2020 targets. He added that the report findings would be useful for consideration when developing the issues of deer in the forthcoming National Park Partnership Plan.
- j) Building Stronger Communities Project – further details on this were requested. Murray confirmed that Lee Haxton was leading on this work and, following the planned feedback events for the communities involved, members would receive an update.
- k) The Convener thanked Eleanor for her contribution to the Paper and encouraged Members to contribute to future Papers when prompted.
- l) Suggestion was made to forward the CEO report paper to Members of Scottish Parliament (MSP's) regularly.

**12. The Board noted the Paper.**

**13. Actions:**

- i. **New staff organogram to be circulated to Members.**
- ii. **Discussions with Highland Council to be organised to progress the section of the Speyside Way from Cromdale to Ballindalloch.**

- iii. **Building Stronger Communities Project update to be scheduled for Members.**
- iv. **CEO to consider what information and in what format to circulate to MSP's following each Board meeting.**

## **National Park Partnership Plan Consultation Report (Paper 2)**

- 14. Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience introduced Paper 2 which provided the Board with an analysis of the consultation responses to the National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022. He thanked David Berry and team for pulling the report together. He confirmed that Board discussions had been scheduled for January to March 2017 to take forward the emerging Plan.
- 15. The Convener praised the Consultation report and concluded that no particular surprise issues had come out of the consultation.
- 16. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) Collective praise for an excellent report.
  - b) Recognition that Community Development Officers play an important role in delivery mechanisms.
  - c) The need to ensure the land use issues and solutions that complement each other, such as flood management, deer management and moorland management, are not compartmentalised in the final Plan. Hamish confirmed that these would be brought together in the final plan.
  - d) Questions on the role of CDAG in contributing to the consultation and recognition of the significant data and science available about deer biology but challenges in implementation. Hamish highlighted the common desire in responses for clarity on the public interest outcomes expected from deer and moorland management and that the plan is well placed to articulate this. Also that the plan will need to address implications and changes in the current economic model of deer management as well as the natural heritage/deer biology considerations. Importance of rural transport was highlighted as an issue. Grant confirmed that it would be handled under the visitor experience section and be National Park specific. He added that there were a number of existing delivery mechanisms for transport and that we needed to be clear what was needed in the National Park Partnership Plan. David Cameron pointed out that rural transport is one of the priority themes in the Cairngorms Local

Development Strategy thus already highlighted and promoted at this level, and supported by funding opportunities.

- e) Importance of maintaining contact with those who had responded to the Consultation. Agreement to send courtesy email to respondents thanking them for their response and directing them to the Consultation Report found in the Board Papers section of the website.
  - f) Suggestion that the meeting note of the discussions that took place at the Housing Conference be circulated around Members. This was agreed.
  - g) Courage and confidence to be bold and to avoid middle of the range solutions in the National Park Partnership Plan whilst building in flexibility into policies to allow different solutions in different areas of the National Park.
  - h) With reference to page 95 on the annex to the Paper, the percentage of Local Authorities is 3% but the number in the table is 0. David Berry agreed to look into the figures.
17. Hamish advised that the next step would be meetings with the key Partners to discuss the direction of the Partnership Plan. He added that they intended to use social media to keep people informed.
18. **The Board noted the Consultation Report for the National Park Partnership Plan 2017-2022 and considered the issues raised during the consultation.**
19. **Actions:**
- i. **Courtesy thank you email to consultation respondents to be sent with a link to the Board Paper and Annex.**
  - ii. **Housing Conference meeting note to be circulated around Board Members.**
  - iii. **David Berry to check and amend if necessary the pie chart and data on page 95 of the Consultation Report (Annex 1).**

### **Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan (Paper 3)**

20. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development introduced Paper 3 which sought the Board's approval of the Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan for submission to Europarc as part of the re-evaluation process for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. Heather Trench gave a presentation

about recent marketing and photography work with Cairngorms Business Partnership and VisitScotland and made a plea for communities to share photographs and stories.

21. The Board considered the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Congratulations for getting VisitScotland on board.
  - b) Concern that VisitAberdeenshire were not specifically mentioned in the document. Grant confirmed that they were part of the CTP and that this was referenced in the document but that there should be a small section setting out membership of the CTP. Agreed that this should be done.
  - c) Clarification sought as to the copyright guidance in relation to the new photographs. Heather confirmed that the Authority had paid for them, that they were available for use by the Authority and partner organisations and the copyright acknowledgement would be VisitScotland.
  - d) Clarification as to who the target audience is for the plan. Murray advised that it would be used as a tool to hold the Tourism Partnership to account.
  - e) Reassurance requested to ensure that the targets in the Action Plan would be SMART. Murray confirmed that they were.
  - f) Suggestion made to provide the Board with annual monitoring updates of the Tourism Action Plan. Agreed.

**22. The Board agreed to approve the Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan for submission to Europarc subject to explicitly listing the names of the members of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership (CTP) in the document.**

**23. Actions:**

- i. Membership of CTP to be set out in Action Plan.**
- ii. Annual updates on the Tourism Action Plan to be circulated to the Board.**

### **Strategic Risk Management and Monitoring Corporate Performance (Paper 4)**

24. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 4 which presented an update on the Authority's performance over the first half of the 2016/17 financial and operational year, the second year of the current Corporate Plan and the last year of the current five-year Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan.

25. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Query in relation to the significant increase in Freedom of Information (FOI) requests and Environmental Information requests (EIR) and reassurance sought that the Authority had the ability in staff resource to meet the demand. David confirmed that they do use up significant staff resources, particularly if a few requests come in at once. While we seek to be as efficient as possible in handling requests the peaks and troughs in numbers of information requests do make the process difficult to manage.
  - b) Suggestion to incorporate social media comments from a few active people impacting on the Authority's reputation as a risk on the risk register given recent experienced. David agreed.
  - c) Query as to why under rural development had tourism only been mentioned? Grant confirmed that the cover paper highlighted only some of the areas of work and that work was progressing on Broadband and Community Development as summarised in the annexes. David added that the timetable associated with the Board Papers drafting did not fit in with the Cairngorms LAG meeting and suggested providing the Board with an annual update on that subject one year into the Programme at the March 2017 Board meeting.
  - d) Agreement that the Strategic Risk Register was well-presented and clearly demonstrates the trends in strategic risk management. Praise to the Management Team and the Audit & Risk Committee for getting it into that format.

26. **The Board noted the update.**

27. **Action:**

- i. **Cairngorms LAG update to be brought to the Board at their next meeting on 10<sup>th</sup> March 2017.**

## **AOCB**

28. Grant announced that discussions were taking place with Europarc with a view to hosting their 2018 Conference which will be the Year of Young People. He advised that it would impact on the Authority's staff resources but it was hoped to secure partner funding. . He added that the Conference would be held in Aviemore as this was the only place that could host that amount of people.
29. Pete Crane announced that a second prestige event, the European Heritage Interpreters are looking to hold a conference in October 2017 in Inverness and have

approached the Authority to work up two field visits to the Tomintoul & Glenlivet Project and Cairngorm & Glenmore.

30. The Convener reported that he had met with the new Chair of National Park's UK in Edinburgh recently. He reported that the organisation was at a crucial juncture and that NPUK would be looking at redrafting the business plan and restructuring the organisation at their next meeting in February 2017 in York.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

31. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 10 March 2017, The Pagoda, Grantown-on-Spey.
32. The meeting concluded at 12.30.