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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## **APPROVED MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING** **held in the Pagoda, Grantown-on-Spey** **on Friday 10 March 2017 at 11.00am**

### **PRESENT**

Peter Argyle (Convener)  
Rebecca Badger  
Angela Douglas  
Paul Easto  
Dave Fallows  
Jeanette Gaul  
Janet Hunter

Gregor Hutcheon  
Eleanor Mackintosh  
Willie McKenna  
Fiona Murdoch  
Gordon Riddler  
Judith Webb

### **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,  
Adam Streeter-Smith, Outdoor Access Officer  
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board  
Dougie Baird, Chief Executive, Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT)  
Ian Moffat, Chairman, Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT)

### **Apologies:**

Kate Howie	John Latham
Bill Lobban	Gregor Rimell
Brian Wood (Deputy Convener)	

### **Welcome and Introduction**

1. Peter Argyle, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting in Grantown-on-Spey.

2. The Convener said that interesting discussions with Barbara Smith, CEO, The Royal Zoological Society of Scotland and Daska Mackintosh, Head of Business Operations & Visitor Services at Highland Wildlife Park focussing on the HLF bid and the proposed redevelopment of the HWP. He added that, subject to the HLF bid, it would be helpful to visit the Wildlife Park as a Board to gain a better understanding of the business and the proposed changes.
3. The Convener praised the venue for the meeting and asked the Clerk to the Board to thank them after the meeting.
4. Apologies were received from the above Members.

### **Minutes of Last Meeting held on 9 December, 2016 – for approval**

5. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 9 December 2016 were agreed with no amendments.

### **Matters Arising**

6. The Convener provided an update on the Action points from the minutes of the meeting on 9 December 2016:
  - Action Point at Para 11 (i.) – Closed – New staff organogram circulated to Members on 13 January 2017.
  - Action Point at Para 11 (ii.) – Open – Discussions with Highland Council to progress the section of the Speyside Way from Cromdale to Ballindalloch will be completed by next meeting.
  - Action Point at Para 11 (iii.) – Closed – Building Stronger Communities Project updated circulated to Members on 12 January 2017.
  - Action Point at Para 11 (iv.) – Closed – CEO advised that there is already a quarterly update that goes out to MSP's, MP's and other from the Convener that incorporates information from the CEO report. Anything over and above that social media and press would be used to disseminate the information.
  - Action Point at Para 17 (i.) – Closed – Courtesy thank you email to National Park Plan Consultation respondents sent in December 2016.
  - Action Point at Para 17 (ii.) – Closed – Housing Conference meeting note circulated to Members on 22<sup>nd</sup> December 2016.
  - Action Point at Para 17 (iii.) – Closed – Pie chart and data on page 95 of the Consultation report corrected and updated December 2016.
  - Action Point at Para 19 (i.) – Closed – Membership of Cairngorms Tourism Partnership (CTB) set out in Action Plan in January 2017.
  - Action Point at Para 19 (ii.) – In hand – Annual updates on the Tourism Action Plan to be circulated to the Board, scheduled for quarter one in 2018.

- Action Point at Para 23 (i.) – Closed – Cairngorms LAG update on today's Agenda.

## 7. **Action:**

- Dunkeld Housing Conference meeting notes to be circulated to Board Member, Willie McKenna.**

## **Declarations of Interest**

- Janet Hunter declared an interest in:
  - Papers 2 & 4 - Is a Director of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT)
- Eleanor Mackintosh declared an interest in:
  - Paper 2 - Is a Board member of Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership (TGLP)

## **CEO Report (Paper 1)**

- Grant Moir Chief Executive introduced Paper 1 which highlights 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:
  - With reference to Moorland Management on page 1, the application for Environmental Co-operative Action Funding (ECAAF) was withdrawn by Scottish Government (SG) as the fund did not meet audit requirements. Meanwhile we are looking what we can do in current budgets with current staff and we will apply again when the new scheme is up and running.
  - With reference to Peatland restoration (page 1), SG funding through Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) had become available which allowed us to increase the hours of our Peatland Restoration officer and to fund further restoration projects.
  - With reference to page 4, 'Make it Yours', a sponsor had been found to fund the 'Tear off maps'.
  - Election packs went out this week for the Aberdeenshire Council by-election of which there are five standing.
  - The pre-election period will begin on 13 April for the election on 4<sup>th</sup> May 2017 and thereafter we will see who the councils nominate for our Board.

11. The Board discussed the Paper and made the following comments and observations:
  - a) Suggestion made to apply to the under-committed Scotland Rural Development Programme's (SRDP) Cooperation Fund as an alternative to ECAF. Grant agreed to look into it.
  - b) Clarification was requested regarding the delay in the Heritage Lottery Funding bid for the Capercaillie project. Hamish advised that the project board had agreed to delay the project until sufficient match funding is found. He added that they were still confident they would get a Heritage Lottery Funding bid in this year. He confirmed that there would be an information meeting with the Carr-bridge community on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2017.
  - c) Concern was raised with regards to the Building Stronger Communities Project. Murray advised that the project was fully funded through LEADER and that the director of the company who had been contracted to carry out the facilitation work had apologised for the work undertaken in 2 of the communities. This has resulted in work being curtailed in those 2 communities and a follow up with the company had been put in place..
  - d) The Board engagement evening in Carr-bridge had taken place last Wednesday evening. Grant advised that the next one was scheduled to take place in Glenshee in May 2017.
  - e) Had there been many suggestions for sites as part of the Call for sites and Ideas work? Murray advised that over 100 responses had been received.
12. **The Board noted the Paper.**
13. **Action:**
  - i. **Grant to look into the appropriateness of applying to the SRDP Cooperation Funding.**

## **2017/18 Budget and Operational Plan (Paper 2)**

14. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 2 which sets out the Authority's financial position for the 2017/18 financial year. The paper presents the proposed financial allocations for 2017/18 for core income and expenditure, together with intended operational plan investment, and seeks Board's approval to the budget and Operational Plan for 2017/18.
15. The Convener reported movement on the subject of Board fees; he explained that they will be based on attendance at formal meetings and committees most likely across a quarter rather than on a monthly basis. The procedure for starting on 1 April 2017 was currently being worked up.

16. Grant added that the new method of calculating Board fees based on attendance gave an estimated saving of £10,000 per year which had been taken into account in the budget figures presented here. He added that there would be a specific list detailing which formal meetings and committees in the protocol once drafted and that this would be circulated to Board Members in advance of the new financial year.
17. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Suggestion was made to reduce catering and accommodation costs at board meetings. David confirmed that it could be looked into at the beginning of next financial year. He stressed that approving the budget for the year was only the first step in managing the Authority's finances for the coming year. Adaptations to policies and consequential financial implications could be dealt with as the year progressed.
  - b) A wider discussion on the function and role of the Board was called for. The Convenor noted that a discussion would be held amongst board members during the summer.
  - c) Clarity sought around the increase in office running costs. David advised that as a result of the new extension the increase in cost in this part of the budget was a result of a provision for the increase in rental costs, as previously agreed by the Board when approving the business case for the office extension. The increase related to an estimated three months of the year with the extension complete. This may prove high as there had been some slippage in plans with delay in completion of some site preparatory works.
18. Janet Hunter left the room for the duration of the discussion on the following points:
- a) With reference to Priority 4 Governance support to COAT (page 10 of the Annex) clarification sought as to what we would be getting in return for the £33,500. David advised that it was the cost of staff time in supporting COAT's governance through his time as a director of the trust, developing strategic plans, corporate plans and through providing corporate support, financial management and HR management and advice. He confirmed that supporting COAT in this way underpins its effective functioning.
  - b) Concern raised around providing substantial governance support given that COAT were proposing to have less of a Cairngorm focus. Grant advised that he had written to COAT's Chairman before Christmas 2016 and advised that if COAT were to become more Scotland wide focussed then the Authority would only support Cairngorms specific activity. He added that it is detailed in the Memorandum of Understanding that we are only supporting the work in the Cairngorms. David added that it was likely the budget line for staff support would decrease over time should COAT become more Scotland wide.

19. Janet returned and the Board continued their discussions. The following observations and points of clarity were raised:

- a) Clarity sought as to how the staff costs are estimated and the process in place for monitoring delivery effectiveness on a quarterly basis. David advised that these are reviewed quarterly by Management Team and Heads of Service. David advised that one of the mechanisms is the twice a year monitoring reports that are brought to the Board, in June and December. These delivery monitoring reports give an assessment of the progress being made towards the key performance indicators and provide the Board with an opportunity to discuss resource allocations and effectiveness in delivering strategic priorities. Staff time allocations are not monitored in detail in order to avoid significant levels of administration on time recording, although significant projects are expected to develop more detailed and monitored plans for requirements on staff time.
- b) Suggestion made to include the actual operation plan budget and staff involvement from year to year in the budget.
- c) Confirmation sought that £55,900 was the multiplier being used to estimate one members of staff's time and a question was raised around the fact that not all members of staff would be on that level of salary. David explained that this figure is not the salary cost but is all core costs divided by FTE staff to give an average total salary and non-allocated running cost expenditure per staff member.
- d) Suggestion made to see the actuals versus the budget on one sheet for the couple of previous years to enable the Board to easily identify trends. David agreed to pull it together for the current year and the last two years and to take it to Finance & Delivery Committee in the first instance before appending it as an annex to the next Board delivery update paper scheduled for June.
- e) Acknowledgement that the current grant aid budget having stayed static endorses the positive work of the Authority.
- f) Clarity sought regarding the leverage levels expected this year against what they were last year. Grant advised that this was variable across the different projects across the organisation. Grant agreed to provide leverage rates for specific projects for Board before the next meeting. David referred to figures for three large projects previously reported to Board where the leverage was around 1:12.
- g) What was the reasoning behind the increase in IT and professional support? Grant advised Geographical Information Services (GIS) officer for the Authority had left the organisation and the post was not being replaced. The increase in IT costs was the GIS call-off contract that we have now in place.
- h) With reference to enforcement (page 5) could it be argued that not enough was being done in that area? Murray advised that a Paper on Service Priorities which

encompassed that was being brought to the next Planning Committee meeting on 24<sup>th</sup> March 2017.

- i) Suggestion made to add the word 'system' after Uniform under e-planning on page 5 to make it clearer.
- j) Clarification as to how ongoing commitments are monitored.. Grant advised that most of the large commitments have come through in the form of Board papers for Board decision thereafter the Finance & Delivery Committee has an ongoing commitment to monitor commitments. David noted that the level of commitment was not surprising going into the third year of a three year Corporate Plan.
- k) Willie McKenna stated that he was uncomfortable with the decision to calculate board fees on attendance.

20. **The Board considered the budget proposals for 2017/18 and approved the financial allocations for 2017/ 18.**

21. **Actions:**

- i. **David to pull together the budget versus the actuals for the current year and the last two years and to take it to Finance & Delivery Committee in the first instance before appending it as an annex to the next Board delivery update paper scheduled for June.**
- ii. **Leverage levels of projects for the past two years to be prepared and circulated to the Board before next meeting.**
- iii. **Amendment to operational plan document to clarify a line relates to Uniform e-planning systems.**

22. The Convener advised that Dougie Baird and Ian Moffat had arrived and suggested they take Paper 4 in advance of Paper 3 so that they would not have to wait any longer. The Board agreed.

### **Outdoor Access (Paper 4)**

23. The Convener welcomed Dougie Baird and Ian Moffat to the meeting.

24. Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience introduced Paper 4 which asks the Board to consider the work of CNPA and partners in improving and promoting the path network in the National Park, and to update the Board on the ongoing partnership with the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust.

25. Ian Moffat gave a presentation on their current work and challenges they had identified going forward.
26. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) The need for an ongoing sustainable funding source for path maintenance.
  - b) Had a study of the cultural change of Forestry Commission's method of charging for car parks taken place? Hamish advised that we do not have specific information on that and went on to advise that they were operating successfully in many places. He added that there is significant scope to be more consistent in the way car park charging is undertaken in the Park. Dougie added that he was currently having discussions with the National Trust for Scotland.
  - c) The success of the car parks at Glen Muick and Glen Tanar were because users are clear what the money will be used for.
  - d) Reflecting on the work that has been carried out taking the old logging way as an example where the number of path users is high shows that putting low level paths in the places where people will use them is very positive.
  - e) What was being done to actively pursue visitor giving schemes? Grant advised that conversations were ongoing and that key was transparency in what any money generated in used for.
  - f) Any car parking charges need to be thought about carefully and there is a need to accommodate regular users as well as visitors,.
  - g) An update on the scheme for donating to path work was requested. Dougie advised that it had generated over £10,000 but had not been pursued given staffing constraints. He added that they had planned to try it again as part of the Mountains and the People project.
  - h) Some members were disappointed that COAT is dropping Cairngorms from its name and questions were asked about what this meant for future commitment to the area. Dougie advised that they were motivated to keep looking for ways to maintain the area, any money raised through car parking charges in the National Park would be used to maintain paths in the same National Park. Hamish added that the three year memorandum of understanding sets out collectively what is being worked towards as well as how the current partnership will continue to work.
27. Dave Fallows left the meeting at this point.
28. **The Board noted the update.**
29. **Action:                      None.**



30. The meeting adjourned for lunch.

### **Update on Cairngorms LEADER Programme (Paper 3)**

31. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 3 which presents an update on the development and delivery of the Cairngorms LEADER programme. He highlighted what each of the six priority themes were:

- Theme 1: Build community capacity
- Theme 2: Grow the economy of the Park
- Theme 3: Attract and retain young people
- Theme 4: Improve transport, connectivity and services
- Theme 5: Protection and enhancement of the landscape and heritage
- Theme 6: Excellence in tourism and recreation

32. The Board considered the paper and made the following comments and observations:

- a) Looks as if the Cairngorms LAG is doing exceptionally well in comparison to surrounding LAGs being 50% committed over the course of one year. David confirmed that it had paid off putting additional resource into the team; both Project Development and Support Officers were helping applicants think about how their project could fit and taking them through the process. He explained that there was a risk however that the applicants do not understand the process and are then disappointed with the level of intervention rate.
- b) Comment made that the Audit process can be off putting for community groups so to get so many community based projects to the delivery stage is fantastic.
- c) Is there a need for unsuccessful projects being given a clear steer earlier to avoid wasting time? David reported that across the program they had only had one deferral and one refusal. He added that they would not want to guide a community group down that road unless they had a good chance or the project was a good fit. There was also an early appraisal process in place to consider expressions of interest, at which point applicants received feedback on the suitability of their project ideas.
- d) Could the job creation statistics be made available? David advised that the numbers of jobs intended to be created could be provided but not the actuals as this tended to come towards the end of the funding period. David agreed to provide the job creation data the approved projects have set out to achieve.
- e) Thanks to the LEADER team for their hard work.

**33. The Board noted the information on the development of the Cairngorms LEADER programme and establishment of the Cairngorms Trust.**

**34. Action:**

- i. **David to provide the Board with the intended job creation data.**

**AOCB**

35. Grant asked the Board to agree to COAT changing its name from Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust to Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland. This had been requested by the COAT Board. They are doing more outside the Cairngorms National Park and they believe a more generic name would be useful especially if they own infrastructure in other areas. He added that within the CNP area we would still expect the CNP logo to be used along with the OATS name. This was agreed.

**Date of Next Meeting**

36. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 7 April 2017 The Albert Hall, Ballater. Members encouraged to attend and to note the earlier start time of 9.30am.
37. The meeting concluded at 13.50.