



Minutes of the Performance Committee Meeting

Held at Macdonald Aviemore Resort, Aviemore

In person

10 March 2023 at 02.30pm

Present

Willie Munro (Chair)

Doug McAdam (Deputy Chair)

Ann Rae Macdonald

Willie McKenna

Xander McDade

Derek Ross

In Attendance

Grant Moir, CEO

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services

David Clyne, Head of Heritage Horizons Programme

Colin McClean, Head of Land Management

Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services & Active Travel

Andy Ford, Director for Nature, and Climate Change

James Ade, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Ann Ross

Janet Hunter

Welcome and introduction

1. The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Performance Committee.

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 4 - sits on the Capercaillie Board as a CNPA Representative.



Minutes of Previous Meetings & Matters Arising

3. The minutes of the previous meeting, 25th November 2022, held in person, were approved.
4. Action points arising from previous meetings:
 - a) 11 February 2022
 - i. **Para 19i)** - Audit of Footpath Maintenance to come back to Committee at some point in future. Closed.
 - ii. **Para 19ii)** - Report relating to Visit Scotland funding to be brought to the Committee.
 - iii. **Para 19iii)** - Look at Green Funding Particularly via heritage Horizons. Ongoing.
 - b) 13 May 2022
 - i. **Para 16a)** Transfer of the 'Design & Build' Service into the private sector over time should be reviewed regularly. Closed.
 - c) 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.
 - ii. **Para 14)** - Director for Nature and Climate Change to prepare a single page briefing on project aims. Closed.

Heritage Horizons Programme Update (Paper 1)

5. David Clyne, Head of Heritage Horizons Programme, introduced the paper which presents the Q4 2022 delivery update on the Heritage Horizons: Cairngorms 2030 Programme and the planned development work to end March 2023.
6. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:
 - a) The Deputy Convener noted the submission date extension to 17th August and asked for clarification on whether spend on the development phase had also been extended to 17th August. Head of Heritage Horizons Programme confirmed that the spend on the development phase has also been extended.
 - b) The Convener asked for clarification on future funding profile and how risk of inflation was being assessed. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, responded that the projects will be consolidating their budgets together, taking into consideration value of staff; contracts and services; and other expenditure,



and put some inflation assumptions against these to workout what is needed for an inflation contingency. From here other assessments will then be carried out to look at affordability and unplanned expenditure. Grant Moir, CEO, added that if projects coming out of development stage potentially needed additional funding over and above that allocated in the delivery phase then the Cairngorms National Park Authority will look at other funding sources for these projects.

- c) The Deputy Convenor noted the issues flagged up in the risk register around Sustrans. The Head of Heritage Horizons Programme responded that work is being done to bring the main two funders who have different project approval time scales.
- d) The Deputy Convener enquired if community engagement had created awareness of projects in the community. The Head of Heritage Horizons Programme responded that it had raised awareness but there was still more work to be done. A key learning point from the development stage is to keep the management of community engagement in house and we will be upping staffing levels for the delivery stage to address the issue.

7. The Committee noted the paper.

Action Point Arising: - none

Cairngorms Peatland Action Programme (Paper 2)

8. 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 program for 2022-23.
9. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:
 - a) Grant Moir, CEO, highlighted that at a national level the Cairngorms National Park Authority is ahead of most other places in terms of peatland restoration. Members asked why peatland restoration was more successful in the Cairngorms than elsewhere in Scotland. The CEO responded that some of the factors were the quality of the Peatland team in the Park Authority and also the scale, size and staff capacity of landowners in the Cairngorms. The Head of Land Management added that around 60% of eroded peat is held on 12 estates with which we have good relations with the owners.



- b) A Member questioned given that the project is underspent will this be a claw back. The CEO responded that any underspend on peatland projects will be returned to SG. However, the National Park Authority is on a multiyear system and would receive further funding next year.
- c) A Member asked if sheep wool was being used to cover bare peat to stop drying out and help stabilise the surface. Head of Land Management replied that this approach is being trialled within the park.
- d) The Deputy Convener questioned why there was a focus on drain blocking over eroded peat and how much of the target drain blocking can meet. Additionally, the Deputy Convener asked for clarification on types of peatland restoration and deer densities. Head of Land Management stated that quite a lot of eroded peatland restoration was being carried out though deer densities do limit it in certain places. We are using drain blocking in areas with high deer densities to protect public money, with some eroded peatland restoration between these drains which we are monitoring.
- e) A Member questioned if drain blocking continued at its current rate how long it would be until all the drains are blocked. Head of Land Management responded that if at the current rate in roughly five years they would all be blocked.
- f) Members questioned if you could cover more hectares of peat erosion through drain blocking or peat erosion techniques. CEO clarified that area in hectares is a proxy for reducing carbon emissions and therefore doing less hectares might capture more carbon depending on the type of restoration being undertaken.
- g) A Member questioned the cost per hectare difference between drainage restoration and dealing with bare peat. Head of Land Management responded that both are variable, but we work on an average of £1400 per hectare for drainage projects compared to an average of £4500 per hectare for eroded features.
- h) Members asked whether the increased use of private sector agents adds risk to the National Park Authority. Head of Land Management clarified that while there is risk in using private contractors, we assign one of our peatland officers to have some supervisory oversight. This is a new model, and we will approach slowly, though it has begun and been successful. Likely we will need to use agencies to meet targets.
- i) A Member queried contractor capacity. Head of Land Management replied that there are increasing number of contractor willing to take on peatland restoration though there are still problems ahead with contract capacity.



10. The Committee noted the paper.

11. Action Point Arising:

- i. Director of Corporate Services to circulate audit report on the Peatland Programme – Closed.

Cairngorms Footpath Maintenance (Paper 3)

12. Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services & Active Travel, introduced the paper which presents an overview of the approach being developed to prioritise maintenance of the National Park's path network.

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

- a) A Member questioned whether the National Park Authority had influence over other land managers who maintain the paths within the National Park. Head of Visitor Services & Active Travel confirmed that the Park Authority does have some influence with a variety of partners and the rangers raise issues of path maintenance with landowners. Andy Ford, Director for Nature and Climate Change, added that the National Park Authority is pulling together major landholders to encourage the creation of a visitor management plan to get clear direction with a better relationship in Glenmore.
- b) The Deputy Convener questioned whether there was any engagement from Cairngorms National Park Authority rangers with landowners prior to path surveys being carried out. Head of Visitor Services & Active Travel agreed this could be done.

14. The Committee noted the paper.

15. Action Point Arising: - none

Cairngorms Capercaillie Project (Paper 4)

16. Andy Ford, Director for Nature and Climate Change, added that the National Park Authority introduced the paper which presents the latest delivery updates on the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project.



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

- a) A Member questioned whether there was any further information on genetic testing within the Capercaillie population of the National Park. Director for Nature and Climate Change responded that preliminary test results show good diversity with five main genetic groups. As there remains a robust population, there is no mandate for reintroduction.

[Since the date of the performance committee, the results from a study of Scottish populations have been compared with the genetic diversity of other European populations. The average across Europe is fifteen haplotypes, except for one population in the Pyrenees, which has fewer than five. This new information suggests that, in the context of European populations, the genetic diversity of the Scottish population is not good or robust]

18. The Committee noted the paper.

19. Action Point Arising: - none

AOCB

20. Xander McDade noted that it was Willie Munro's and Anne Rae Macdonald's last Performance Committee, thanking them both for their contributions and Willie for his chairing of the Committee. The Deputy Convener will become acting chair until the Board votes.

Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting is Friday 9th June via Teams.

The meeting concluded at 03.55pm.