
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held by telephone/ video conference on Friday 25th March at 1.30pm

PRESENT

(By video conferencing unless stated otherwise)

Xander McDade (Convener)	Douglas McAdam
Geva Blackett	Eleanor Mackintosh
Peter Argyle	Willie McKenna
Carolyn Caddick (Deputy Convener)	Ian McLaren
Deirdre Falconer	Dr Fiona McLean
Pippa Hadley	Anne Rae Macdonald
Janet Hunter	Dr Gaener Rodger
John Kirk	Derek Ross
John Latham	Judith Webb

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services & Deputy CEO
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Place
Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change
Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board

Apologies: Willie Munro

Welcome and Introduction

1. Xander McDade, Board Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.
2. The Convener acknowledged the huge fire in Braemar which was a great loss to that community and the wider National Park. He extended his thoughts to Ukrainian colleagues at this time.

Declarations of Interest

3. The Board Convener invited Declarations of interest. There were no interests declared.

Minutes of Last Meetings held – for approval

4. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 10th December 2021 were agreed with no amendments.
5. The draft Minutes of the meeting held on 25th February 2022 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters Arising

6. The Board Convener provided an update on the Action points from previous minutes:
 - a) 11 June Minutes - At Para. 16(i) - **In Hand**- Board Business session around reducing wildfires will be scheduled, wildfire was discussed as part of the NPPP.
 - b) 11 June Minutes – Action Point at Para 21(iv) – **In Hand** – The Director of Corporate Services will talk to the Board Convener about bringing the ongoing review of strategic risk back to the Board via the Governance Committee. Internal audit review of organisation wide assurance commissioned which will then form basis for discussion on risk appetite and risk management in tandem with development of next Corporate Plan.
 - c) 10th September Minutes – Action Point at Para 13(i) – **Closed** - Director of Nature & Climate Change agreed to collate the monitoring results for some not all the species could be obtained over the last 5-10 years but not for individual estates and send it to the Board. Members were informed of the most up to date information as part of the NPPP evidence review.
 - d) 10 Sept Minutes – Action Point at Para. 13(ii) – **Closed** - David Hetherington, Woodland Officer gave Board Member John Latham a call to discuss woodland riparian schemes on Donside prior to the Christmas recess.
 - e) 10 Sept Minutes – Action Point at Para. 13(iii) -**In Hand**- Peatland Board visit to be organised for the Spring of 2022 - will be part of the summer visits.
 - f) 10 December Minutes – Action Point at Para. 12(i) – **In Hand** - Out of meeting discussion by Head of Visitor Services about the muddy long distant route the responsibility of the Highland Council.

- g) 10 December Minutes – Action Point at Para 17i) – **In Hand** – Director of People and Place to organise site visit to look at a path condition in key areas of Glenmore and Speyside Way with Willie McKenna and Deirdre Falconer.
- h) 10 December Minutes – Action Point at Para 31i) – **Closed** – Members of the Board with any questions about the committee minutes to please take up with committee chairs, vice-chairs, or Board Convener.
- i) 10 December Minutes – Action Point at Para 37i) – **Closed** - Director of Corporate Services arranged for the documents relating to the new code of conduct to be issued to the Board.
- j) 10 December Minutes – Action Point at Para 37ii) – **Closed** - Board Convener to write a letter of thanks to staff before the Christmas recess.
- k) 10 December Minutes – Action Point at Para 37iii) – **Closed** – Aviemore Highland Resort Meeting, Members to contact the Board Convener with any concerns or points.

8. Action Points Arising: None

CEO Report & Board Convener Update (Paper 1)

- 9. Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced Paper 1 which was to highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed, to deliver with partners the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan. He specifically brought the following to the Board's attention:
 - a) Cairngorms Nature Big Weekend taking place weekend 13th to 15th May 2022 with a combination of online and face to face events.
 - b) This was the first formal Board meeting since the successful National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) Consultation which received 1400 comments. In due course a formal consultation report will be produced and the revised NPPP would go before the Board in June 2022 for approval.
 - c) Another batch of Seasonal Rangers had recently taken up their positions, a full complement of 11 for another busy season.

- 10. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) With regards to Strategic routes, mention of a potential new route from Aviemore to the Moray coast, could more information be provided? CEO advised that Sustrans were looking at National Cycle routes and advised that the Director of Planning & Place would give the Member the detail on that after the meeting.

- b) Thanks, given for the full report, clarity sought around the Edinburgh declaration fund, what was it likely to include? CEO advised that it was linked into nature restoration. Director of Nature & Climate Change explained that it would be a nature restoration fund targeted at public bodies and that he was waiting to see further information on what that might mean for the National Park.
- c) Clarity sought around the peat land restoration mapping, did the data provided include peat depth or is that something we get from NatureScot? CEO explained that the peat maps showed erosion features and drainage but not peat depth.
- d) On the topic of woodland creation, did we have a rough idea of the total area of schemes that were in development for woodland expansion in the National Park at present. CEO advised that there was approximately 10k Ha of woodland creation schemes at different stages.

11. **The Board noted the Paper. The Convener thanked the Chief Executive and his team on behalf of the Board.**

12. **Action Point Arising:**

- i. **Director of People & Place to give Board Member details surrounding Sustrans new route from Aviemore to the Moray Coast.**

2022/23 Budget Development (Paper 2)

13. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 2 which presents the Cairngorms NPA's proposed budget for the 2022/23 financial year. The paper presents the Cairngorms NPA's expected income for the year from core sources, comprising Scottish Government resource and capital grants together with generated income. The paper sets out the planned deployment of those resources across "core" organisational investment on staff and support services together with operational plan investment on project delivery. The paper also presents the transitional investment plan for 2022/23, setting out the strategic objectives and work packages delivering against those strategic objectives in the coming year. This approach accords with the transitional arrangements in developing corporate plans agreed by the Board in December 2021.
14. The Convener added that it had been a very successful budget round with the CNPA being awarded its largest budget in CNPA history, including an extra £500k for

visitor management. He congratulated the Director of Corporate Services and the wider Executive Team for this tremendous work.

15. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Comment made that it was a very good report and praise for bringing in additional funding. In challenging economic times, with pressure on public and private finance and on staffing workloads there is some recognition that delivery risks will fall more on the capital programme delivery: could reassurance be provided that there were mitigation measures in place ensuring the delivery of the capital part of the plan? Director of Corporate Services advised that he was conscious of cost pressures, with current inflation rates rising to 6%, cost pressures will fall on resources and capital side of budget and significantly impact the budget. There had been discussions on pay negotiations at the Staff Consultative Forum (SCF) and very pragmatic responses received. He provided the reassurance that the aim was always to come back with a balanced breakeven net outturn while accommodating variations over the course of the year. This included capital programme delivery. The Director of Corporate Services confirmed he would be keeping oversight of the Strategic Risk Register throughout the year, with the Senior Management team and through Audit & Risk Committee and with any escalation points back into Board if required. He confirmed at this stage the Management Team have set out budget with best possible forecast we can.
 - b) Recognition that pressure on materials and contractors and other providers may be an issue for peatland restoration work in the National Park. Director of Corporate Services provided reassurance that the risks were being managed and that on procurement the most recent evidence has been more encouraging with the number of contractors applying for tenders increasing. Cost pressures were noted, while there was some confidence at this stage the budget could be managed to accommodate increases in procurement costs.
 - c) Question around having shovel-ready projects on the back burner while recognising there was already huge pressures on the team. Director of Corporate Services advised that the staff would look to develop potential shovel-ready projects should the opportunity arise during the year.
 - d) Concern that there was not sufficient resource against IT. Director of Corporate Services advised that they were currently implementing the service transition from outlook into 365 as a cloud system and working with the external supplier. The CNPA has increased the staff and financial resource against IT. Any issues would be reported back to the Resources Committee and / or Audit and Risk Committee at appropriate times.

- e) Comment made about the move away from over programming to a balanced position. Reassurance was sought that the Authority were content with the move from over programming. Director of Corporate Services advised that he was content with the position to bring it to the Board and that this followed on from the direction the Board wanted in the prior year. More detailed delivery and financial phasing plans will be developed with senior managers across the organisation to enhance internal management reporting and accounting arrangements, with reports in due course to Resources Committee and if required to the Board thereafter.
16. **The Convener thanked the Director of Corporate Services and his team and noted the complexity of the work that goes into this, whilst recognising this being a transitional year which makes it more challenging than usual.**
17. **The Board noted:**
- a) **Agreed the proposed budget allocations for 2022/23;**
 - b) **Considered the proposed transitional investment plan for 2022/23;**
 - c) **Agreed the transitional investment plan for 2022/23 as presented;**
 - d) **Identified strategic risks or implications posed for the Board's delivery of its strategic objectives as covered in the discussion, while noting the additional management action in place to mitigate those risks.**
18. **Action Points Arising: None.**

Strategic Risk Management and Monitoring Corporate Performance – (Paper 3)

19. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 3 which presents an update on the Authority's performance to date in working towards delivery of strategic objectives established in the 2018 to 2022 Corporate Plan. The paper focuses on delivery against the Key Performance Indicators adopted as measures of performance in delivery of our Corporate Plan, bringing oversight of the delivery against the current Corporate Plan to a conclusion, while highlighting by exception any significant constraints, risks, or shortcomings on planned delivery. The paper also presents the latest version of the Strategic Risk Register, following ongoing review and mitigation action by the Management Team and review by the Audit and Risk Committee.
20. The Convener on behalf of the Board thanked the Governance and performance Manager Vicky Walker for coordinating this work.
21. **The Board:**

- a) **Reviewed the update on corporate performance and strategic risk management set out in this paper**

22. **Action Point Arising: None**

CNPA Consultation Response to Draft National Planning Framework (Paper 4)

23. Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning introduced Paper 4 which provides a brief overview of the draft National Planning Framework 4 for Scotland and sets out the proposed CNPA response for agreement by the Board.

24. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and the following comments and observations were made:

- a) Question around policy 16 on Sustainable Tourism, suggestion made to make reference to responsible tourism.
- b) Comment made that there was no mention on monitoring it and what process they would adopt for that.
- c) Comment made that it was a good response. Question around the concept of 20min neighborhoods, concern raised that the concept in a rural setting is hard to define and suggestion made to say something about that about providing clarity around how it should be interpreted in rural areas like the National Park. CEO advised that the principal is promoted in NPPP but that there was a need to ensure that it is applicable in a rural setting. Head of Strategic Planning agreed to expand on it in the NPPP.
- d) With regards to item 12 could it be explained what it was with the language used and policies that could be misinterpreted? Head of Strategic Planning explained that the difficulty was with certain terms that were too broad, and words like 'unacceptable', which did not have a clear definition, He further explained that SG planners understood what they are trying to do, and they have now involved Local Authorities to help further explain their terminology.

25. **The Board:**

- a) **Noted the scope of the draft NPF4; and**
- b) **Endorsed the proposed CNPA response to draft NPF4 contained in paragraphs 4-15 of this paper.**

26. **Action Point Arising: None.**

Code of Conduct (Paper 5)

27. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 5 which presents the revised Model Code of Conduct for Non-Departmental Public Bodies (NDPBs) issued by the Standards Commission for Scotland, together with updated guidance accompanying the Model Code. The paper seeks the Board's agreement to adopt the revised Model Code as the Code of Conduct for the Cairngorms National Park Authority.

28. The Convener added that the Code of Conduct had been discussed and approved by the Governance Committee and Board members had been sent it for information.
29. **The Board approved the adoption of the revised Model Code of Conduct for Non-Departmental Public Bodies in full and without amendment as the Cairngorms NPAs Code of Conduct.**
28. **Action Point Arising: None.**

Draft Minutes of Committee meetings 11th February 2022

29. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the following draft minutes dated 11th February 2022 of public meetings were presented to the Board but not yet in the public domain:

Draft Resources Committee Minutes
Draft Audit & Risk Committee Minutes

He reported that once the Chairs and Vice-Chairs of the Governance Committee and Performance Committee had signed off their respective minutes, these draft minutes would be circulated to the remainder of the Board.

30. **The CEO reminded members of the Board if they had any questions about the minutes to please take up with committee chairs, vice-chairs or himself.**
31. **The Board noted the draft minutes of the Board Committees**
32. **Action Point Arising: None.**

AOCB

33. There were no items presented.
34. **Motion to move to confidential session for Governance Discussion.**

Date of Next Meeting

35. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 10th June 2022.
36. The public part of this meeting closed 14.30.