
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Village Hall, Laggan on Friday 10th August 2007 at 11.30am

PRESENT

Eric Baird	Eleanor Mackintosh
Geva Blackett	Anne MacLean
Duncan Bryden	Alastair MacLennan
Basil Dunlop	William McKenna
Nonie Coulthard	Sandy Park
Angus Gordon	Andrew Rafferty
Lucy Grant	David Selfridge
David Green	Sheena Slimon
Marcus Humphrey	Richard Stroud
Bob Kinnaird	Ross Watson
Bruce Luffman	Bob Wilson
Mary McCafferty	

In Attendance:

David Cameron	Jane Hope
David Bale	Colin McClean
Fiona Chalmers	Claire Ross
Kate Christie	Francesca Scott
Pete Crane	Francoise van Buuren
Elsbeth Grant	

Apologies:

Stuart Black
Susan Walker

Welcome

1. The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that this was the last Board meeting for the five members who were departing namely Basil Dunlop, Sheena Slimon, Angus Gordon, Bob Wilson, and David Selfridge. The departure of Gregor Rimell was also noted following the National Park Elections and subsequently the local council nominations. The Convener acknowledged the tremendous contribution of all six

members to the first ever National Park Board for the Cairngorms, and wished them well for the future.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The Minutes were approved with a number of minor amendments:
 - a) Paragraph 4(k) – last sentence should refer to “England where national parks had been in existence for fifty years”.
 - b) Paragraph 12(f) – second last line to say “should await the decision of the Board”.
 - c) Paragraph 15(b)(i) – word “clarified” to be amended to “changed”.

Matters Arising

3. None

Declarations of Interest

4. None.

Point of Entry Marker, Drumochter (Paper 1)

5. Pete Crane introduced the paper which reviewed the proposed installation of a permanent entry marker at the Pass of Drumochter in view of the recent commitment made by Scottish Ministers to review the boundary of the Cairngorms National Park as part of the quinquennial review. In addition it was noted that Transport Scotland had expressed a desire to upgrade the layby at Drumochter, regardless of any decision about an entry point marker. Taking these factors into consideration, it was felt prudent to delay the installation of the granite marker until the outcome of the boundary review was known; to do otherwise risked incurring wasted expenditure on moving the marker. The confirmation from Transport Scotland of the recognised need to upgrade the layby at Drumochter provided an opportunity to invest some money in ensuring that this upgrade was of the highest quality and also the opportunity to provide information to visitors.
6. The Board were therefore asked to agree the postponement of the installation of a permanent entry point marker at Drumochter, and to reallocate the expenditure to contribute to the upgrading of the layby and the provision of visitor information.
7. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) There was some discussion as to whether allocation of funds for upgrading the layby and providing visitor information as detailed in the paper, represented value for money. On the one hand it was argued that the installation of the layby was being undertaken in any event and there was no need for the CNPA to contribute. If there was a chance that Drumochter would not be the entry point, then the CNPA should not be investing money, given that the original objective had been to provide entry point markers with associated landscaping and information provision. The counter argument was that without the investment

from the CNPA the layby upgrade would provide a functional layby; the CNPA investment would just provide additional landscaping hence a much more attractive end product. The Drumochter pass was a layby of significance in its own right; an area at which visitors would stop regardless of where the boundary of the National Park lay.

- b) The proposal to delay the installation of the entry point marker was in no way second guessing any decision. It was merely prudent given that Ministers had made the commitment to review the boundary as part of the quinquennial review (expected in 2008). There was therefore a distinct possibility that the boundary could move, and given that the cost of removal of the marker could be in the region of £75,000 taking that risk with public money was not justifiable. The CNPA's objectives had not changed; what had changed was the explicit commitment from Ministers to review the boundary as part of the quinquennial review.
 - c) Several members acknowledged that the current layby at Drumochter was a mess and was badly in need of improvement regardless of whether or not the entry point marker was eventually installed at Drumochter. The opportunity should also be taken to improve the clutter of signage on the road in the Pass of Drumochter and discussions should be held with Highland Council to this effect. The existing temporary sign was not ideally placed (on the wrong side of the road, attached to the back of another sign). It was suggested that it could be two or three years before there would be a final decision on the placing of the entry point marker and in the meantime the opportunity should be taken to see whether the existing sign could be re-presented more effectively and for limited cost.
 - d) There was some concern that contributing to the cost of a layby improvement, even where there was not a boundary marker, could create a precedent. The counter view was that no precedent was created; the Drumochter layby was significant in its own right and further to this, decisions would be made by the Transport Authorities as to where there was a need to upgrade laybys and the CNPA would equally make decisions on a case by case basis as to whether these warranted additional funding for landscaping and information provision.
 - e) The point was made that the Drumochter Pass was currently an entry point into the National Park and even if this changed it could be several years before this happened. It remained the case that the entry point as it stood needed to be adequately marked and tidied up.
 - f) The issue of maintenance of entry point markers was discussed. It was noted that some of the granite markers already installed were suffering some lack of impact due to surrounding grass growth. Work was in hand to negotiate with land owners and others to ensure adequate grass cutting throughout the season.
 - g) It was acknowledged a considerable amount of work had been, and continued to be, invested by staff in this project.
8. The Convener summed up by concluding that the balance of opinion was in favour of the proposal representing value for money, that it did not create a precedent, and that the road through the Pass of Drumochter needed tidying up given its significance.

9. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper with one addition as follows:
- a) Agreed to postpone the installation of a permanent entry point marker on the A9 Trunk road at Drumochter until the review of the Cairngorms National Park boundary had been completed;
 - b) Agreed to reallocate expenditure of £65,000 to contribute to the upgrading of the existing layby at Drumochter and the installation of Park-wide visitor information;
 - c) To look at the possibility of re-presenting the existing temporary entry point marker at Drumochter at limited cost, and with the approval of the Finance Committee in the usual way subject to delegated limits

10. Action:

- a) Relevant officers to work with Highland Council on the possibility of de-cluttering the signage landscape at Drumochter;
- b) Relevant officers to consider the re-presentation of the existing temporary entry point marker at Drumochter and seek Finance Committee approval as necessary for any additional work.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority Gender Equality Scheme (Paper 2)

11. Claire Ross, Elspeth Grant, and Fran Scott introduced the paper which sought endorsement of the CNPA's Draft Gender Equality Scheme and Action Plan; the Board was also asked to note the actions required, including an impact assessment and monitoring. It was noted that this was a working document which could be revised, and indeed the intention, as made clear at the April 2007 Board meeting, was that there would be a single umbrella equality scheme to encompass the Disability Scheme, the Race Equality Scheme, and the Gender Equality Scheme later in the year. The paper had been prepared with the benefit of internal and external consultation. The scheme was prepared as a statutory duty which required the organisation to publish an action plan and then report on its implementation and impact.

12. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The scheme and action plan needed to contain a statement about paternity leave.
- b) The scheme should apply to Board members as well as to staff. It was noted in this respect that technically Board members were not employees but it was agreed that this point should be followed up with the Scottish Executive with a query about their policy and practice for Board members.
- c) Paragraph 6 of the paper referred to treating men and women fairly; paragraph 11 also included a reference to transgender people. Definitions were not the issue and it was important that the equality scheme was respectful of the fact that it was dealing with real issues affecting real people.
- d) Where affirmative action was being advocated it was important to have a clear evidence basis for doing this. For example, the graph on page 10 of the annex would only justify action by CNPA if this revealed a difference from the average for the rest of the country. Similarly, comments such as "typically male dominated" needed to be treated with caution, as they did not necessarily reflect

the situation in a particular workplace. Affirmative action, which carried cost implications for the organisation, needed to be justified on the basis of evidence.

- e) The equality scheme was drawn up for the CNPA as an organisation, but provided the opportunity for the CNPA to demonstrate good practice and a lead for others.
- f) There was some discussion about the gender pay gap; on average there was a 14% pay differential between men and women in full time employment. The CNPA had in place a robust recruitment process which aimed to ensure appointment on merit, with no gender bias. Nevertheless, the point of the Gender Equality Scheme was that no organisation could afford to be complacent, and we needed to be aware that subtle inequalities could creep in. For example, long incremental pay scales could inadvertently discriminate against women who tended to have a shorter working history than men. Traditional ways of operating in the workplace could also inadvertently make it difficult for women who had a different work life balance from men.
- g) The CNPA had worked closely with the Highlands and Islands Equality Forum in putting together the draft Equality Scheme.
- h) The introduction of the Scheme reflected a change in emphasis. Previously gender discrimination was dealt with on a case by case basis through a complaints procedure; the new approach was to put the onus on organisations to actively promote a culture of equality.
- i) There was some concern about the cost of implementing the Gender Equality Scheme (paragraph 19). It was noted that the equality scheme reflected a change in thinking and culture; it was not about doing something new, but was about mainstreaming a particular way of thinking.
- j) It was stressed that this was an ongoing action plan which would be reviewed as more evidence was collected.
- k) There would be a cost to the organisation if it failed to deliver the aspirations which lay behind the gender equality scheme (cost of tribunals, cost of adverse perceptions etc.). It was important to be, and to be seen to be, a good employer.
- l) The gender equality scheme was a statutory requirement. Some of the language contained in it reflected that.
- m) Considerable work had gone into the preparation of the scheme and it was commended.

13. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) Noted the actions required in Annex 1, including impact assessment and monitoring of the scheme;**
- b) Endorsed the CNPA Gender Equality Scheme.**

14. Action:

- a) Monitoring of the Gender Equality Scheme to be reported back through the annual "Park for All" Board update paper.**

The Land Based Business Training Project and the Cairngorms Awareness and Pride Project (Public Benefits for All) Progress Report and Forward Look (Paper 3)

15. Claire Ross and Kate Christie introduced the paper which updated the Board on the progress of the Land Based Business Training Project (LBBTP) and the Cairngorms Awareness and Pride Pilot Project (delivering public benefits courses for all – CAP). It also sought the Board’s approval in principle to the continuation of these projects over the period of the next Corporate Plan 2008-11.
16. The LBBT Project was widely acknowledged as extremely successful and had made a real impact with an important group of stakeholders (namely the Land Based businesses) with a key role in developing the National Park Plan. The CAP had developed out of the LBBT and had been launched at the beginning of the year; this too had proved a great success. Both projects were important tools in delivering the National Park Plan, in particular: integrating public support for land management, making tourism and business more sustainable, and raising awareness and understanding of the Park. Crucially, the projects were able to respond quickly to changes in requirements and priorities (for example, the rapid rise in awareness of climate change).
17. The LBBT aimed to help land based businesses operate viable and sustainable businesses, and give people the skills to help contribute to delivery of the Park aims. The project achieved this by in effect brokering training and providing a one-stop-shop. The project officers found courses, spoke to interested businesses, brought trainers into the area at suitable times, and monitored quality. Public benefit courses had no direct commercial benefits but helped land based businesses to deliver the aims of the National Park. There had been increasing interest from the general public in these courses but because of the conditions placed on funding, the courses were only available to land based businesses. So the idea emerged of running courses to engage with a wider group of people and give them a sense of ownership with the Park as well as an ability to deliver the Park aims. Hence the CAP project was born at the beginning of the year, emerging from the lessons learnt from the public benefit element of the LBBT.
18. The appetite for LBBT was not declining. In 2006 over 750 individuals had been trained. There was significant and growing interest in the public benefit courses with 3 courses run in 2004, 10 in 2005, 14 in 2006, and 23 expected in 2007. For the new CAP project, demand and interest had exceeded expectations; people were clearly interested in learning opportunities.
19. The LBBT had undergone two external evaluations which concluded the project did add value to individuals, to businesses and to the Park. So far there was only anecdotal evidence and feedback on the public benefit courses and there was a need for a structured evaluation, which was in progress and would inform future plans. Similarly, while anecdotal evidence in support of CAP was good, a formal evaluation would be conducted starting later in the year.
20. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) All concerned were congratulated on a very well run and effective project. This was seen as one of the real successes of the CNPA, not least because it had engaged very well with land managers who had generally been quite sceptical of the notion of the National Park in its early days.
- b) The key challenge was publicising the courses that were being run. The local press were useful, and extensive use was made of email lists, and flyers made available to local communities. The project manager was also looking at using more bespoke publications to raise levels of awareness.
- c) The suggestion was made that the next business plan should include allocation of resources to making material available on websites for those people not able to go on courses.
- d) The project was absolutely core to the aspirations for the Park involving social change, "place" building and raising people's awareness.
- e) There was interest in seeing the evaluations of the LBBT and it was agreed these should be circulated to interested Board Members. It was generally agreed that evaluation was absolutely crucial and that this should be built into the planning process. It was important to be able to demonstrate that the training carried added value.
- f) Paragraph 5 referred to approximately 60% of the beneficiaries of the LBBTP having attended more than one course. There was some debate about the relative merits of this figure. On the one hand it reflected a developing enthusiasm for training, including from some individuals initially very sceptical. On the other hand it also implied a relatively limited pool of people.
- g) It was agreed that an environmental "twist" could be added to a great many courses by influencing the trainers. For example, courses on use of machinery could incorporate an awareness of impacts on climate change etc.
- h) There was some discussion around paragraph 19 and the question of whether or not it was right to reduce the support for commercial training courses to 40% of its total training budget so that there could be an increase in the delivery of public benefit courses to 60%. It was noted that there was a continuing demand for commercial courses, but it was also noted that at least some of this was for refresher courses. The question was whether after five years this demand should be redirected to other courses not covered by the LBBT. On the other hand, the point was made that one of the key proposed outcomes of the SRDP was commercial viability; indeed the National Park Plan also included this. As part of this discussion it was also noted that it was crucial to increase the capacity of the public to make judgements on priorities within the countryside. The public benefit courses, while laudable in their own right, did not necessarily help with that capacity building. In terms of the long term goal of conserving and enhancing the area, investment in training land managers arguably gave a much more certain return than the public benefit courses, good though these were. It was a difficult decision, given the limited resources, and it was clear that there would not be as much money in the future as there had been in the past. The conclusion was that if the demand for the commercial courses was still there, a ratio of 40:60 (commercial to public benefit courses) should not be artificially imposed. Current plans should keep to the 50:50 split, but the project manager

needed to keep a close check on the level of demand as well as on the funding availability, and then come back to the Board for a decision if necessary.

- i) If the LBBTP was acting as a one-stop-shop, it should not be possible to get a cheaper course elsewhere. It was agreed that in putting together the business plan, regard should be had to the value per person.
- j) The courses were particularly valuable for staff in the context of the delivery of the priorities for action in the National Park Plan.
- k) There was more scope to promote the courses to young people, probably through schools. The LBBT and CAP represented an important way of building capacity. They could be particularly relevant to young people wanting to take on part time work before they had left school. It was noted that there were already some links with the Vocational Training Support Worker working with schools, but it was agreed that more could and would be done in this respect.
- l) It was essential that in taking the project forward there was a clear view of the niche being filled; the project should not be duplicating or substituting for others.
- m) The example was described of students who had been brought in from elsewhere in the UK to undertake environmental survey work in the Cairngorms area. With appropriate training, this was the sort of work that surely could be undertaken by students locally. It was noted that this sort of niche could be filled through the developing SVQ in Rural Skills which was being led by Lantra using the Cairngorms National Park as a pilot. The LBBT project manager was linked into this work.

21. The Board agreed the recommendation of the paper as follows:

- a) Noted the progress of both LBBTP and CAP and their contribution in delivering the priorities for action in the National Park Plan;**
- b) Confirmed its support for both the LBBTP and CAP continuing over the next three financial years subject to the Finance Committee agreeing the specific funding provisions;**
- c) Approved the proposed next steps for the projects, subject to the view that within the LBBTP, support for commercial training and support for public benefit courses should be split 50:50 of the total training budget subject to the project manager checking the demand for commercial courses and the available funding, and to come back to the Board if a change from this ratio was considered justified.**

Stakeholder Engagement and Stakeholder Strategy (Paper 4)

22. Françoise van Buuren introduced the paper which sought agreement from the Board for the proposed Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Strategy. The main thrust of the paper was that the unique role of the CNPA meant that communications in its widest sense had a much bigger role in delivering the organisation's objectives than for most other organisations. As an enabling organisation set up to lead and coordinate the collective delivery of the Park aims, and the National Park Plan, the Park Authority needed to work closely with a wide range of partners and interested parties in order to get things done. Working in partnership required excellent communications to ensure that all understood and supported the overall aims and objectives set out in the National

Park Plan. The importance of this partnership working was reflected in the communications objectives set out in paragraph 7. The paper also stressed the importance of clarifying the key stakeholders, the key messages and the overall approach. Finally, it was proposed that within this framework, there should be a further informal discussion at a later date on the details of how the Board could best support the delivery of the Strategy.

23. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The general approach in the paper was broadly accepted but it was suggested that paragraph 7(a) should refer to “the collective efforts of the CNPA and its partners” to emphasise the partnership philosophy embedded in the overall approach. It was also suggested that paragraph 7 should refer to supporting the vision in the Cairngorms National Park Plan rather than just the Park.
- b) There was some discussion about the key messages set out at paragraph 13. It was suggested these needed to be reframed to cover more than just statements of fact about the National Park. Key messages needed to connect issues with a solution, for example: move from conflict to consensus; deliver ecosystem services; deliver “green medicine”. The messages had to have relevance to individuals and communities. It was noted that messages needed to be targeted to particular audiences and that the key messages in the paper were still subject to that sort of refinement. Key messages depended on what one was trying to achieve with a particular audience – it could be about raising awareness, or it could be about changing behaviour. It was felt that both facts as well as values were legitimate messages. It was suggested that around half a dozen “frames” should be established and then the messages worked up within those frames to suit particular audiences.
- c) There was nothing in the key messages specific to cultural heritage. Likewise there was little in the messages to directly encourage young people into the Park.
- d) Paragraph 27 referred to evaluation. The evaluation needed to determine not just whether people were “enthusiastic and supportive of the Cairngorms National Park” but also why, so that some conclusions could be drawn about what further action was needed as a result. So an effective evaluation needed to probe not just “whether” but also the underlying “why”. The key messages were an opportunity to clearly differentiate between the Cairngorms National Park Authority and the Cairngorms National Park. The National Park Plan was about the whole Park, and the Cairngorms Brand played a critical role in demonstrating that. The Park Brand and everything it stood for was reflected in the Brand Wheel which had been developed early in the process; elements of that were, and would be, reflected in the communication strategy and the key messages.
- e) There was some discussion about the target audiences and stakeholders; this could be seen as being unduly parochial. It seemed to concentrate on internal groupings but said little about tourist and visitors. On the other hand, this was precisely the point of the paper, to emphasise that even though the ultimate audiences could be very wide, the CNPA on its own could not reach all of these itself and relied on the help of the other agencies and stakeholders to do so. Communication about the Park and its values necessitated a joint and collective effort, not just a solo effort by the Park Authority. While this was understood,

the point was made that it might be preferable for the paper to provide a comprehensive list of all the stakeholders, even though at an operational level the immediate target of the CNPA activity was more limited for exactly the reasons just given and as set out at paragraph 2. The rationale made sense and was accepted; possibly more explanation was needed in the paper.

- f) It was noted that there were many other strategies, notably the interpretation strategy for the Park, which related to the communications strategy. The key messages would be shared by all.
- g) The table on page 9 referred to communication activities by stakeholder groups and it was noted the relevance of local businesses in this respect. 80% of businesses were related to tourism, and these businesses would therefore have an important role in frontline contact with visitors. Identifying individual businesses would be a very effective way of cascading the messages along the principle proposed within the paper. This should be coupled with the idea of the account manager system as set out at paragraph 15 (b).
- h) It was noted that some of the comments made by the people attending the open evening on the night before the Board meeting revealed a lack of understanding of what had been happening in the Park over the past four years. It was noted that communicating an understanding and awareness took time. Those sorts of reactions did not mean that nothing was working, merely that the communications job was a huge one and depended on everyone working together. Part of the job of Board Members and of staff was to act as ambassadors for the Park. No one should underestimate the importance of the public meetings held the night before a Board meeting. People seem to appreciate the willingness of the Board to make itself available to the public in this way; and it was a good opportunity to reinforce the key messages.
- i) A plea was made for the use of plain English in all communications.
- j) There was a huge opportunity to tap into the in-house publications of all sorts of organisations who would be very willing to accept articles provided.
- k) Because the Park Board had the important role of a planning authority, unfortunately this tended to colour people's understanding of the Park Authority and its work. Planning was clearly important, but people's perceptions tended to be driven by the fact that every fortnight the Planning Committee met and papers reported on what the Park Board permitted and what it didn't. The public tended to come to the Planning Committee but not to the Board Meetings. There was a challenge to get across the message that the Park Authority did much more than just deal with planning applications. Having said that, the press coverage of planning decisions was a bonus in that it could be used to more fully explained decisions that were of importance locally. There were some very good stories to tell about planning; items that were of importance to the Park were called in and dealt with; a large proportion of these had a positive outcome.
- l) Some of the content of the Park Authority's website needed to be revisited (and one quote in particular) to consider whether or not the detached reader would interpret some of this the way that was intended.

24. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) **Recognised the important role that communication played in successfully delivering the National Park Plan through effective partnership working;**
- b) **Agreed the communications objectives, target audiences and overall approach identified, but with further work to be done on the key messages at paragraph 13 and brought back to the Board for further consideration;**
- c) **Noted there would be a further informal discussion at a later date on how the Board could best support the stakeholder engagement and communications strategy.**

Draft Annual Report and Accounts 2006/07 (Paper 5)

25. David Cameron and Françoise van Buuren introduced the paper which updated the Board on progress with the draft Annual Report and Accounts for 2006/07. Audit Scotland were now content with the accounts, and the Board was asked to give its approval to the accounts, subject to the Audit Committee giving its approval on the 24th August. The Chair of the Finance Committee reported that the Committee had received quarterly reports on the financial position of the CNPA throughout the year and were now content to recommend the accounts to the Board for approval. It was noted that bringing in expenditure on target was always a challenge, and this had been achieved very successfully. It was also noted that the Scottish Executive had imposed a new format on the accounts so comparison with previous years was potentially confusing.
26. On the draft Annual Report text, it was suggested that a “key statistic” for the Theme 4 should not be that 74% of planning applications determined by the CNPA were approved, and that a better key measure was that set out at (d) notably that the Local Plan was being put on deposit in 2007.
27. **The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:**
- a) **Noted the draft Annual Report and Accounts for 2006/07 which had been circulated informally and in confidence;**
 - b) **Agreed the Accounts for 2006/07 following the oral update from the Finance Committee;**
 - c) **Noted that any further comments on the draft Annual Report or Accounts should be submitted to the relevant officer by the 17th August to allow a final report to be prepared for distribution in October, and in particular agreed the change to the key statistic on planning as outlined above;**
 - d) **Noted the process for completing the draft Annual Report and Accounts for 2006/07.**

Election of Deputy Convener – Change to Standing Orders (Paper 6)

28. **The Board agreed the proposed change in Standing Order 4 to allow the election of the Deputy Convener on the 5th October 2007.**

Corporate Plan Report: Theme 2 (Paper 7)

Corporate Plan Report: Theme 4 (Paper 8)

Corporate Plan Update: Theme 5 (Paper 9)

Operational Plan 2007/08, Quarter 1 (Paper 10)

29. Papers 7, 8, 9 and 10 were for information and subject to some minor queries, were noted.

AOCB

30. An update was requested on the recent Gloag case and its implications for the CNPA's role as the access authority. With no previous notification of the item, it was agreed to provide feedback subsequent to the meeting [post meeting note: the Gloag case centred on the amount of ground required around a private dwelling to afford privacy. The Sheriff interpreted the amount required in a similar way to Mrs Gloag's advisors and contrary to Perth and Kinross Council and the Ramblers Association. It is difficult to envisage the case setting a principle as such issues will be very particular to the site in question. The most notable issue arising was how the Scottish Outdoor Access Code was viewed by the Sheriff. Neither the Council nor the Ramblers Association was appealing the decision but there was a suggestion that the guidance for sheriffs on the status of the code might be clarified.]

Date of Next Meeting

31. 5th October 2007 in the Village Hall, Braemar.