
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING **held by telephone/ video conference** **on Friday 11th June 2021 at 10am**

PRESENT

(By video conferencing unless stated otherwise)

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

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,
Andy Wells, Chair of Cairngorms Nature Steering Group Item 3
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services
Dr Peter Mayhew, Director of Nature & Climate Change
Andy Ford, Head of Conservation
Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning
Helen Mason, Minute-taker

Apologies: None.

Welcome and Introduction

1. Xander McDade the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. There were no apologies.

Minutes of Last Meetings held – for approval

3. The minutes of the meeting held on 12th March 2021 were agreed with no amendments.
4. The minutes of the meeting held on 26th March 2021 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters Arising

5. The Convener provided an update on the Action Points from the previous minutes:
 - a) 12 March Minutes - Action Point at Para 14 (i) – **Closed** – CEO circulated the information on the Seasonal Rangers.
 - b) 12 March Minutes - Action Point at Para 21 (i) – **Closed** – Further details on the operation of the Ranger Service and how it would contribute to the Authority's outcomes were to be brought to the Board.
 - c) 12 March Minutes - Action Point at Para 21 (ii) – **in Hand** – The end of season review will include our partners that we work with, private, public and third sector and that will include a wider more holistic review of ranger services. If there are changes to be made we will have resources available in next year's budget to do that.
 - d) 26 March Minutes - Action Point at Para 10 (i) – **Closed** –. Planning Committee Members supplied with hard copy of the adopted Local Development Plan.

6. **Action Points Arising: None**

Declarations of Interest

7. The Convener invited Declarations of interest.

8. Geva Blackett declared an Indirect interest in Paper 2.
Reason: she and her husband involved in the Braemar Housing Project and her husband is Chair of Marr Area Housing Project.

9. Doug McAdam declared an Indirect interest in Paper 3 item 8.
Reason: is a member of the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group.

10. Pippa Hadley declared an Indirect interest in Paper 2.
Reason: sits on Badenoch Great Place Project Board.

11. Judith Webb declared an indirect Interest in Paper 3 item 8.
Reason: is a member of the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group.

CEO Report & Convener Update (Paper 1)

12. Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced Paper 1 which highlights the main strategic work streams that are being directed by Management Team. The CEO 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) Since last meeting the Park Authority have set up and are running the Cairngorms National Park Ranger Service, there are 18 members including 4 kickstart rangers.
 - b) The Visitor Management Group are meeting on a fortnightly basis with numerous partners across the Park.

- c) There is a lot of infrastructure work ongoing including the development of the strategic infrastructure plan as part of the Visit Scotland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF).
- d) There has been significant progress with woodland expansion targets and there is a huge amount of interest in woodland at present across the Park
- e) The Cairngorms Nature BIG Weekend was held in May and was a great success with people on-line and with the resource packs that have been sent out to people. This should allow us to build on this work in future years.
- f) Local Development Plan now adopted and being used to guide planning applications
- g) The work that the Planning Team has been doing to promote the Minecraft work has resulted in significant publicity for the Park and for the innovative approach to engagement.
- h) Then work with GrowBiz Scotland is getting good feedback from people across the park.
- i) A new page has been added to the website showing community owned assets in the Park. . Really good resource
- j) The Green Recovery Fund applications have been assessed and, the applications came in and the assessment was done, the panel has met, the offers are out. Publicity around this next week Good work by the team for turning this round so quickly
- k) The Heritage Horizons bid will be considered by the National Heritage Lottery Fund (NHLF) Board on the 29th June and the CNPA should find out after that whether the bid has been successful.
- l) National Park Partnership Plan development work is ongoing.
- m) On Communications the stats in the paper shows the growing reach we have over all platforms with roughly a 25% increase on the previous year.
- n) Corporate side - there was a huge amount of work going on the business continuity with regard to the new ways of working and the 'new normal' around IT, how people get back into the office and work around recruitment.

13. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) With reference to paragraph 30 on page 7, could more information be given about the Internal Engagement group? CEO said because of remote working they have set up a number internal cross cutting boards to make sure mix of people across different parts of the organization. Climate Change, Green Recovery, Capital and Engagement Groups have been established. Member noted it was an Internal Group with National Park staff.
- b) Woodland creation & expansion in the medium and long term, have we profiled out suitable land and profile against targets and pace of expansion? CEO confirmed this had been done in the Cairngorms Forestry Strategy 2019.
- c) Capercallie project – unlocking habitat is not the right terminology? CEO agreed to change the terminology.
- d) Praise for the good work being done. Comment made that it was good that the heritage lottery fund was being flexible and noted the impressive array of projects. Peatland restoration is mentioned across reports and talk about contractor capacity and mention the problem of reasonable access. Is this going to be a problem across the National Park or not likely again? CEO

explained that they are starting to have discussions with various organisations and the Scottish Government and companies to try address contractor capacity, skills and machine shortage. It is a national issue too. Also, the project not going ahead because of difficult access this was just this individual estate and timings being too short for this peatland work.

- e) With reference to Para. 11 - Tread lightly in the Park: still some irresponsible wild camping which does not comply with the code. Concerns about 15 acres of woodland destroyed in Glenmore. Rangers dealt with about 200 fires over the year so far. Good messaging which is put out about the danger is not likely to be read by people lighting the fires. Soon we will have to have discussion to introduce bylaws about fires. Generally, not in favour of legislation but wild fires will only get worse and we need to deal with it a bit more firmly. CEO explained that the Visitor Management Group had another meeting with the Cabinet Secretary for Economy and Finance & key agencies and local authorities recently.. Mainly around traffic management and fires. Agreed there was a lot being done behind the scenes to try and target the right people with the right messages? A wider discussion about fires will be needed.
- f) A member addressed the Convener about external meetings and were there any outcomes to share? The Convener said the meeting with the previous Cabinet Secretary and Minister in May was more a reflection across 5 years of work across the Environment portfolio. The other meeting with representative of Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) discussed a wide range of topics of work we are doing with HIE, potential work with them including the Masterplan and having a meeting between the two boards at some point after restrictions. Meeting with representatives of the Cairngorm Business Partnership discussed a wide range of topics mainly Covid related and the bounce back from Covid plus the strengthened links over the past year.
- g) A member would welcome a focused discussion on wild fires. Also noted Heritage Horizons Bid and clarification on the reduction of funds available for the HH program. Are we prepared if there is a reduction? The CEO explained the reduction was in the overall pot being applied for and not in the amount of funding that the CNPA have bid for.
- h) Was there a way of reporting to prevent a lot of repetition in the papers under discussion today? The member found the papers repetitive and wasn't sure where to bring up questions. The CEO explained it is the way papers have landed this time, some of the same topics are covered in corporate reporting and the Green Recovery Fund paper. We are trying to be as comprehensive as we can look at ways of streamlining in the future.
- i) Member raised that they had been contacted by a resident about the number of fires at Loch Morlich. Member also asked for clarification about tree planting and wader numbers. CEO agreed people are lighting fires but that the rangers and the police and fire services are working hard to prevent fires being lit and are putting out fires when they are found in inappropriate places. We have to get the message out that fires are not acceptable. There is, as has been said a need for wider conversation.

14. The Convener thanked the CEO for the report.

15. The Board noted the Paper.

16. Action Points Arising:

- i. Terminology ‘unblocking habitats’ to be changed (Capercaillie).**
- ii. Board Business session to be scheduled around reducing wild fires.**

**Strategic Risk Management & Monitoring Corporate Performance
(Paper 2)**

17. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 2 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.

He made the following points:

- a) The paper focuses on delivery against the Key Performance Indicators adopted as measures of performance in delivery of our Corporate Plan, while highlighting by exception any significant constraints, risks or shortcomings on planned delivery.
- b) 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.
- c) Information is presented on delivery against the Corporate Plan only in this paper. Updates on delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan for 2017 to 2022 will be presented at the September Board meeting.

18. The Director of Corporate Services handed over to Pete Mayhew, Director of Conservation and Visitor Services. He noted that the three red items on the Conservation Land Management Section which show we are not meeting these targets.

- a) 1st Red Item – Peatland. Target is 1000HA per annum last year only 130HA because of Covid reasons. This year at 550HA. Good news we are building up a new team with direct funding from ScotGov and we are very confident we will get there in the coming years and will do better and the 3–4-year target is for 1500HA per annum
- b) 2nd Red Item The number of Capercaillie the target is 1200 from the last formal count 2015/16 which estimated 1100 Caper in the park. Hoped to expand target. Next count will be next winter transect count completed 2021/ 2022. Recent lek counts are an indicator that it is likely there has been a decline.. Reasons for decline are many things; habitat, unmarked fences, disturbance, predators etc. Lots going on over the years, the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project is the last of a series of projects over 30 years. Capercaillie extinction in Scotland was predicted for 2010. The reason we still have capercaillies is due to a lot of work which has been going on. They are declining again quite severely. The Cairngorms Capercaillie project is hitting its targets and meeting agreed outcomes, but the scope of the project does not cover all areas and all issues affecting decline. CNPA is coordinating high level discussions about how we take forwards the aspects of capercaillie conservation not included in the project..

- c) 3rd Red Item: Raptors. The target is no incidence of wildlife crime in the park but this is clearly not the case. Working with Police Scotland and NatureScot, but bringing prosecutions to court is very difficult. There will be raptor tagging this year to help pinpoint illegal activity more precisely ScotGov commitment to grouse licensing will be important. Finally conservation team is examining how we can work more broadly on raptors in the Park e.g. how do we shift to a more positive culture around raptors in the Park by working with tourism and schools.
18. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Clarity sought on what impact climate has on declining numbers of capercaillie The Director of Nature and Climate Change said it has a significant effect. It is a cold adapted bird which does better further north, it is more difficult for it in a warmer Scotland. There is evidence suggesting that wetter Junes and a change in April warming may be affecting capercaillie productivity. However, this bird can still survive in a warmer Scotland if other factors are managed to be favourable.
 - b) A question from a member the Director of Corporate Services on report page 7 Section 20 Rural Development- Exception Reporting says no exceptions to report as regard to the construction industry – and the increase in costs which will affect the availability of affordable properties? He replied that there is a risk in the construction industry and supply issues. But in terms of the significant impact on KPIs and Corporate objectives we are not seeing at the moment to flag that at the moment but we need to monitor this. The CEO advised in terms of affordable housing we will be picking that up on National Park Plan and bringing it back to the Board at the September meeting
 - c) In terms of a wider, more positive discussion re raptors in the Park when could the Board expect to get an idea of what these discussions look like? The Director of Nature and Climate Change advised that discussions are being held to look at raptor work going forward and will be part of the NPPP discussions this autumn.
 - d) Risk register – when would the whole Board have a chance to look at the risk register? Query raised around some of the risks – more operational and strategic and would like to have an opportunity to comment. Director of Corporate Services explained regarding the Strategic Risk Register is brought to the Board twice a year. He advised he was happy to talk to members separately. He will call the member separately to cover points, or if anyone has specific points can take them in the meeting today.
 - e) Glenmore Strategy wondered on the timescale of actions in that area? The CEO explained that there was a lot of new work going on potentially new public toilets, new footbridge. It was hoped that traffic management infrastructure would have been done but due to contractor capacity the work has been delayed. . He went on to advise that work was going on speed limit changes etc.
 - f) Marr Area Partnership wondered about the impact of withdrawal of Aberdeenshire Council funding withdrawal?
 - g) With reference to the ECMP what the impact might be of the withdrawal of Invercauld Estate on Peat restoration and habitat monitoring.

- h) With reference to Annex 3. The basic scheme about assets and asset management and maintenance. Given the nature in land ownership in National Park red to amber in last quarter presumably because we are getting an increase in capital for funding? CEO advised that the capital funding from Scottish Government over the next 5 years will allow the CNPA to maintain its current infrastructure and will allow us to invest in other infrastructure. This will be developed as part of the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan.
- i) Footpath quality is important. Do we have a long term maintenance plan? Was capital funding a constraint because it cannot be spent on ongoing repair? Is there any thought on using any of the funding as a grant scheme to match funding to needs not just National Park assets? Director of Corporate Services confirmed that they were looking at the potential of grant awarding capital funds for maintenance of path networks to enhance to lifespan of a project. He confirmed that capital funds could be used for maintenance.
- j) With reference to A17 and A18 which relate to ICT. Has anything significant happened in the last quarter which has shifted it from amber to red? Director of Corporate Services explained on the scale of investment as we emerge from Covid – escalating risk scale of risk of remote working. Cyber security impact is an increased risk with increased Security software costs which is all in hand.
- k) A member with knowledge of the Braemer Housing Project brings the Director of Corporate Services up to date. The Director of Corporate Services will ensure records are updated.
- l) Concerned raised about the peat restoration notes the lack of diggers and digger drivers not helped by lack of housing.
- m) Concern expressed about the Capercallie project. In the 1970s there were huge numbers of Capers, numbers are down and we are losing the battle. The diversity of birds are down and the squirrels are disappearing from bird tables, the concern is the Pine Martens are pushing them out. The member says we need to look at predator control of Pine Martens, Badgers and Foxes and we have to do things as predators are out of hand. The Convener noted members need to be careful about strong language in the discussion. Director of Corporate Services noted the Convener's comment and says need to get into detail about empirical data. CEO noted there is strength of feeling in different directions in this area. He had a meeting last week with NatureScot, Scottish Forestry and others around capercaillie reinforcement, predator control and refuges. Big issues need to have a policy decision. NatureScot are looking to set up a sub-group of their Scientific Advisory Committee to look at the evidence and provide advice. We are also waiting for key bits of information around genetics works to see the genetic makeup of the population and also awaiting the full winter count, which should be available mid-2022. Predator control is one issue but there are differing views with no consensus. We need to work on all issues not just predator control. The Convener summarised the need to look at the evidence and make decisions based on evidence. We will hopefully hear more about in due course.
- n) Regarding Peatland recruitment for new team. What will this new team do? Director of Corporate Services explained that funding from ScotGov was coming direct to the Park, therefore they were setting up a team consisting of a program manager, 4 peatland officers, GIS officer and an administrator doing 1000 plus HA a year. The officers make arrangement with land owner, scope out project, find contractor, monitor project and report back to ScotGov.

Each officer covers 5 projects. Member concerned about how are we addressing lack of contractors? The Director agreed they are working with contractors and with other public bodies to address this issue but won't happen overnight. Money is available year on year for peatland work and that consistency of funding will help attract people into the sector.

- o) Concern raised on the decline of capercaillie, despite ongoing projects. What we are doing was not enough what further mitigation measures should be put in place? Would like to propose some alterations to the recommendations today. Real concern about waiting until next year. Director of Nature and Climate Change explained that the Capercaillie would have gone extinct if we had not done what we have done over the last 3 decades. But there was a real sense of urgency. There are 3 new areas where there will be discussion resulting in action over the coming months: Disturbance and Refuges; Predator Management and Possibility of reinforcement of the population.
- p) Noticed risks been added following risk review. Do these go through Audit and Risk Committee before getting added on to the register? Request made for the Board to have the opportunity to have more of a detailed look at it. In addition were we missing an important risk around public health i.e. ticks and Lyme disease. Should risks to the Public be included on the risk register? Director of Corporate Services advised that the items had been added since the last review. Make sure constant review all have a right to take risks on and off the register. This is overall insurance mapping around strategic risk. Ongoing review of the Strategic Risk Register would be carried out by the Governance Committee going forward. With regards to the query around public health, the risk register looks at our own corporate objectives register not as an area as a whole. He agreed to have a think about the points made around public health.
- q) Comment made around the legal routes to address predators around protected species. Evidence burden was very high.
- r) Concern raised around the Deeside Way Extension funding as planning permission might run out and notes there is funding available through local authorities. CEO approached couple of potential funders and Director of Conservation & Visitor Services is having discussions locally. CEO looking at extending Planning Permission and the funding from Aberdeenshire Council is not something that has been looked at so CEO and Director of Conservation & Visitor Services will look at that.
- s) With reference to page 10 in Annex 3, a risk added by the Senior Management Team clarification sought regarding wildlife crime mitigation. Director of Nature and Climate Change explained they were looking at what powers the Authority have and could use to mitigate further some of the issues around wildlife crime.
- t) The Deputy Convener commented that there was a lot of information in the papers providing a thorough update. Suggestion made to find a way of allowing an informal discussion about the items highlighted in red before coming to the Board at a public meeting. With reference to Capercaillie Paper 2 annex 1. Pages 2&3 one focus is improving & creating habitat. Make sure we don't wait until the end of the year, given the latest information. . CEO made clear that we have to separate the wider caper discussion from the Cairngorms Caper project. Officers will come back to the Board in the Autumn to discuss refuges, predator control and reinforcement following the work of the

NatureScot sub-committee looking at the evidence. This will allow us to consider what work we wish to take forward with partners at a national level that sits alongside the work of the Cairngorms Caper Project.

- u) The Convener explained the National Lottery Funded project had already set agreed objectives a change would be a long process. In terms of speed the CNPA can do this working with partners to get the information to have a proper discussion. Convener getting exact wording to move an additional recommendation.
 - v) Concern raised that we are looking different figures with regard to the Caper project which leaves us in a precarious position. CEO explains the project is doing key issues regarding disturbance, genetics, and habitat and some legal predator control. It is not set up to do reinforcement work nor to make policy decisions around predator management for protected species. That is what the work with the public agencies at a national level is addressing.
 - w) Deputy Convener clarified the need to ensure that the Cairngorms Caper Project and the wider national work come together to ensure that we have the best possible chance of helping the Capercaillie and having a successful project within the Cairngorms.
19. **The Convener put forward a motion to approve the recommendations including the additional recommendation d) and this was seconded by Judith Webb as chair of the Audit and Risk Committee. The Board:**
- a) **Reviewed the update on corporate performance and strategic risk management set out in this paper.**
 - b) **Highlighted any achievements or exceptions which, from a strategic leadership perspective, Board members believe are of particular significance to the delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives.**
 - c) **Reviewed and commented on the risk register for completeness in coverage of current strategic risks and adequacy of mitigation actions.**
 - d) **The Cairngorm National Park Authority will take forward work with key partners to look at the following key issues for capercaillie conservation – refuges and disturbance, predator control and reinforcement and that this work will come back to the Board with the evidence base later in the year so the Board can have a detailed conversation around this and that this evidence base would be passed on to Cairngorm Capercaillie project to inform their future decision making.**
20. Clarification around procedure was sought by a Member regarding her request some time ago for a paper to be brought to the Board on raptors. Could it be explained why was one paper going through as a recommendation whereas her request was put through as an action? Director of Corporate Services explained about the process and the key purpose of the paper is to flag up the Board concerns, to advise officers who will come back to the Board. Whether it was highlighted as an amendment or an action in the minutes, it does not matter as it would have effectively done the same job.
21. **Action Points Arising:**

- i. **The issue of affordable housing would be picked up while developing the next National Park Partnership Plan and would be brought back to the Board through that process.**
- ii. **The Director of Corporate Services will call the member directly who asked about clarifying the Strategic Risk Register.**
- iii. **The Director of Corporate Services will update CNPA records regarding the Braemer Housing Project.**
- iv. **The Director of Corporate Services will talk to the Convener about bringing the ongoing review of strategic risk back to the Board via the Governance Committee.**
- v. **Director of Corporate Services will consider the possibility of including the Public Health Risks to the Register.**
- vi. **The CEO and Director Conservation and Visitor Services investigate possible funding avenues from Aberdeenshire Council for the Deeside Way Extension.**

Cairngorms Nature Action Plan Mid-term Report (Paper 3)

22. Andy Ford, Head of Conservation introduced Paper 3 which presents the Cairngorms Nature Action Plan mid-term report. He introduced Andy Wells Chair of the Cairngorms Nature Strategy Group who together presented the paper the following points were made:
- a) Andy Wells praised the work of the Park Authority and the Cairngorms Nature Team, it was a challenging area with differing views.
 - b) It was set up for people to work together in partnership with key stakeholders. The plan was making good progress.
 - c) Thanked Head of Conservation and team for their work that had been invaluable bringing people together.
 - d) Without working in partnership the Cairngorm Nature objectives would not be achieved.
 - e) Praise for the effort going into building relationships in the Park; collaboration and co-operation, he referred to initiatives listed in the report.
 - f) Head of Conservation recognized the range of work from a wide range of different partners which were working well.
 - g) He added there was still a lot to do. As well as looking at the reds and ambers in the report he highlighted the green items with 80% actions which were green.
 - h) He also noted the success of the Biodiversity Challenge Fund which has drawn over £0.5million into the park over the last 3 years.
 - i) Also, to note the Amber actions are there because of Covid and acknowledge the impact it has had.

23. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) The Convener noted it was good to see 80% was on track.
 - b) A member thanked Andy Wells & Andy Ford and has some observations: When Cairngorms Connect and ECMP are both our partners only Cairngorms Connect got a mention. At the end of video why the pine marten were used not the red squirrel? Which species benefit by rewilding and which by land management. Would ask again to look at key species and look at what impact land management is having on them. Head of Conservation advised in terms of the film, the point trying to get across was conservation in the park sits alongside land management, it is not either/or. We did not mention ECMP as we did not have any specific project or output to point at. But we will focus on ECMP more and more as projects develop and deliver. With regards to the pine marten, they are predators, as are many species, and they are also biodiversity and make nature richer. Bearing in mind the audience, the film was not meant to open a discussion on predator management. Monitoring species – the Cairngorms Nature index will do exactly that with the same indicators across the Park which will include grouse. The project would look at the range of upland species benefit grassland management. The member stated it was not just about birds, it was about different species - moths, rare plants and the whole ecosystem across the Park. Head of Conservation clarified that the project would look at all wildlife groups. Chair of the Cairngorms Nature Steering Group pointed out integrated moorland management was the intended message which involved a range of sporting activities as well as everything else.
 - c) Comment made that it was good to hear about the wide variety of work going on across the Park. With reference to Page 11 of the Annex could more information be given around the impact of decrease in species rich grassland due to the reduction in grazing? How would this impact on key species? Andy Wells advised that with too many grazers the grassland will be grazed out, if too few the rank vegetation would out compete some of the other species. It was a fine balance. In a lot of nature reserves grazers will be delicately controlled in order to manage for particular species. We are at the start of this, identifying what we have got, then the intention was to approach land managers and farmers, if we want to focus on it how shall we work together.
 - d) Suggestion that the information and data is fed into Scottish Government at a higher level.
 - e) Praise given for the excellent paper and strong on collaboration acknowledgement of land managers.
 - f) National Policies and Frameworks. As it is regarding biodiversity and land management, should we have mention future strategy for Scottish Agriculture or/and climate change reports – was this an omission?
 - g) Also mentioned vacancy for the Farm Advisory Post and a Conservation Engagement Officer. Asked to be reassured that we are filling the vacancies as matter of urgency. CEO advised that the interviews for Head of Land Management would take place next week. After we have that post in place, we look at job specification for other posts in the next couple of weeks.
 - e) Concern raised about decreasing and extent of species rich grassland. What was under-grazing and how could this be addressed? With regards to Housing

developments –Should species rich grasslands be looked at in the future? Andy Ford advised that in certain circumstances the reduction in livestock from species rich grassland can result in under grazing. Regarding housing developments he explained that development did include a range of things including sheds and farm tracks as well as housing units. Now there are no woodland sites in next local development plan, future developments might be on grassland. We should know where species rich grasslands are for balanced decisions on planning applications.

- f) Chair of CNSG answers question about species rich grassland – it is about grazing by cattle and sheep but also about changing farm management contributing to such as hay management and ‘flying herds’ where cattle move around.
A member asks does reduction of deer and hare numbers have an impact. Chair of CNSG it is mainly the changes to sheep and cattle grazing is the issue.
- g) A member notes lack of stock and different payment schemes. Caper were successful when cattle used to graze in the woods. RSPB have reintroduced cattle in to woods. Pine martens have an impact on reduction of squirrel.
- h) Head of Conservation explained the under-story management using cattle helps Capercallie and wild life management. Regarding red squirrel, Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrel project annual survey shows population range is increasing, and estimate the population is growing within the Park. .
- i) A member noted there are now red squirrels in Aberdeen as well as pine martens which help get rid of the grey. Huge and important area of work. Different controversies about this work, with a difficult balance. This review shows what good work has been done. No one can please all the people all the time. The project as a whole is vital locally and nationally.

24. The Board thanked Andy Wells and Andy Ford and the teams for this timely, helpful and clear update.

25. The Convener thanked Andy Wells for joining the meeting, said it is an impressive achievement with positive work going on and repeated the member’s thanks, which were formally recorded in the Minutes. He also thanked Judith and Doug for their contribution as part of Cairngorms Nature.

**26. The Convener put forward a motion to approve the recommendations and this was seconded by Carolyn Caddick.
The Board noted the paper.**

27. Action Point Arising: None

The meeting paused for a Short Comfort Break.

Cairngorms Green Recovery Plan (Paper 4)

28. Grant Moir CEO, introduced Paper 4 which updates the Board on the Cairngorms Green Recovery Plan current position and the plans ahead.

29. Grant Moir gave a short introduction and thanked everyone involved. This will be the last update on this specific plan as it will be wrapped up in corporate reporting going forward.
30. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) The Convener noted the usefulness of bringing this plan back of the year and to see the Green Recovery Fund money we have managed to get into the communities since last year.
 - b) Willie Munro, Chair of Finance and Delivery Committee and also the Chair of the Panel noted it was good to see most actions in the plan were moving forward. Trust members did a huge amount of work evaluating the projects. 28 out of 30 projects across the Park which came to the panel received funding. It was a healthy sign.
 - c) A member noted to the Board that the Economic Steering group also had positive meetings over the year. For example the last one we met with The Director of Local Economic Strategies and members of the Well Being Economy Alliance where we had good discussions about the Well Being economy. At the end of the month, we have meeting with the Chair of Countryside Learning, Scotland who develop a program of Rural Skills Pathways which should be constructive for people in the park going forward.
 - d) The Convener confirmed the good reports from the Action group.
 - e) The Convener thanked officers for their work and Willie Munro for his work chairing the panel and Deirdre Falconer for her work chairing the Economic Action Group.
31. **The Convener moved the motion to agree the paper and this noted the progress being made on the delivery of the Green Recovery Plan. This was seconded by Carolyn Caddick.**
32. **Action Point Arising: None**

Cairngorm Estate Masterplan (Paper 5)

33. The CEO introduced Paper 5 which updates the Board about the approval of a Masterplan for the Cairngorm Estate by Highlands & Islands Enterprise (HIE).
34. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A member acknowledged that they would have an engagement with the CNPA advisory panel regarding equality and accessibility.
 - b) A member commented that they had been pleased to see after many requests that a Master Plan approved by HIE was now in place, which was a long awaited development.
 - c) Gavin Miles Head of Planning and Committee made a correction - wording is wrong in one instance. It reads 'a material consideration' but should read

‘relevant consideration’ when determining planning applications. The change was noted.

- d) A member asked would each planning application be given due consideration when they come through? The Convener confirmed it would, with each application judged on its own merits.

35. **The Board noted that Highlands and Islands Enterprise has prepared and launched a Masterplan for Cairngorm Estate which provides a welcome sense of direction for their management of the area.**

36. **Action Point Arising None**

Change to Standing Orders: Implementing Changes to Committee Chair Elections (Paper 6)

37. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 6 which proposes changes required to Standing Orders to implement the changes to the election process for Committee Chairs as agreed by the Board. The paper follows agreement by the Board at its meeting of 28 May 2021 that Standing Orders require amendment.

38. The Convener thanked the Director of Corporate Services for the report.

39. **Willie Munro moved that the Board approve the Changes to the Standing Orders. This was seconded by the Convener.**

40. **The Board:**

- a) **Agreed the amendment to Standing Orders set out in paragraph 3;**
- b) **Noted the Board has agreed to progress the nomination of candidates for election as Committee Chairs in parallel with the process to amend Standing Orders;**
- c) **Confirmed the Board is content that the list of nominations to be declared by 17:00 on 11 June 2021 will be accepted by the Board as the candidates for the election of Committee Chairs.**

41. **Action Point Arising: None**

AOCB

42. The Convener informed the Board that the staff were looking at a board portal for storage of board papers and other functionality. This was a comprehensive platform and it was hoped to roll it out over the summer first for staff then to board members. He added that it does not have to be connected to the internet to work.

43. A member asked what intentions were there to meet face to face again. Were discussion ongoing between Convener, Deputy Convener and Director of Corporate Services? The CEO said it would be based on Scottish Government allowing it. The Authority were looking at hybrid system as rules and technology allows. Board Members would be updated as soon as direction was forthcoming.

44. The Convener thanked Janet Hunter regarding the Green Recovery Plan Update for chairing the tourism response group over the past year,

Date of Next Meeting

45. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 10th September 2021.
46. The public part of this meeting concluded at 12:55