

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK**  
**ENJOYING AND UNDERSTANDING THE PARK**  
**ADVISORY FORUM**  
**Draft Minute of Meeting 10 October 2008**  
**The Lecht Ski Centre**

**Present**

Elma McMenemy  
Pamela Grant           CCC (Minutes)  
Sally Dowden           Chair  
Silvia Woodier  
Tricia Eccles  
Alan Rankin           ACDMO  
Andrew Kirk  
Lorna MacLennan           VisitScotland  
Duncan Bryden           CNPA board  
Bruce Luffman           CNPA board  
Gavin Miles           CNPA  
Murray Ferguson       CNPA  
Chris Bremner       CNPA  
Kate Christie           CNPA (morning only)  
Heather Trench           CNPA (morning  
only)

**Apologies**

Mick Pawley           Angus Council  
Deeside DMO  
Robert Armstrong     Aberdeenshire  
Council  
Colin Simpson       Highland Council  
Bell Macaulay       ACC  
Johnnie Grant       Rothiemurchus  
Estate  
Fiona Murdoch       CNPA Board  
Stephanie Bungay     CNPA

**1. Welcome and remit of advisory forum**

Sally Dowden welcomed everyone to the meeting.

**2. Apologies**

Taken as read

**3. Minutes of last meeting**

The minutes of the last meeting were agreed.

**Matters arising**

1. Discussion took place on how best to communicate the progress of the Advisory Forums. CNPA are working on creating a template that will come out as a report 3 times a year covering all the priorities for action. This will provide a visual check of what is going on. Circulation suggested would be members of the Advisory Forums, CNPA and identified partners.

**Action:** Gavin Miles

2. Provide businesses with training to enable better understanding and use of surveys e.g. BB, STEAM etc. It was agreed that once better understood, and used, this type of intelligence would be very useful for business planning and marketing purposes, however businesses needed to be enthused for there to be real buy in. Forum members agreed that the training was necessary and that it should be taken forward. The question of STEAM's accuracy was discussed, and the usefulness of incorporating other information into a strategic overview e.g. web stats.

The suggestion was made that the main headings should be agreed. Businesses would then be invited to input to the process and agree priorities as not all of them could be taken forward. A baseline measurement needed to be established, and that there was the potential to tap into what was happening at a national level.

**Action:** Heather Trench + CCC & DMO's

3. ACDMO Business Barometer – Last quarter's report circulated. Quarter July – September being surveyed.
4. National Park Plan Monitoring Framework – CNPA are revising indicators. Gavin recapped on talks at the last meeting. Next progress report will include findings and any decisions/information. The forum will be invited to comment. It was suggested that the indicators from community planning be included.

**Action:** Gavin Miles

5. Cancellation of GTBS memberships – being discussed as an agenda item.

6. **Strategic Review of National Parks**

Gavin advised that within the next month or so the report will come out from the Scottish Government with their recommendations. Timescale – report to be substantially complete by end Sept, and should be available and out for consultation within a few weeks. Minister will then propose what should be taken forward, and report should be available for the next Advisory Forum.

Boundary review – consultation ends at the end of October. 3 community meetings have been held in those particular parts of the Park, & were attended by Park personnel. Quality of debate has been very good, though attendance was quite low. SNH are running the consultation, and views were encouraged.

Ministers will table this in parliament, process will then take place, then go back to parliament. No boundary change is expected to be approved prior to the end of 2009. Clarification was sought as to whether CNPA Board members could contribute towards the consultation. Duncan Bryden confirmed this, and also that the factor of Atholl Estates was very positive about the proposed boundary change. Sally Dowden was also able to confirm this through the workings being done within the private sector network.

A question was asked if the southern boundary was the only boundary change. Murray Ferguson confirmed that this is the boundary under review. Other boundary change suggestions have been invited, and would be considered under round 2.

7. Healthy Walking Groups – this was discussed at the last Advisory Forum and raised again for progress update – Murray Ferguson confirmed that there are several initiatives happening throughout the Park, some are working with COAT, some working with other organisations. In certain areas such as Grantown, there is little happening, but in other areas this is working quite well and there's a lot of activity. Level of activity to be quantified.

**Action:** Murray Ferguson

#### **4. Election of Chair**

There being no input, nor nominations, Sally Dowden agreed to Chair the meeting, and asked that the Forum give thought to a Chairperson for the next meeting. Nominations to be sent to Gavin Miles.

**Action:** All

#### **5. Cairngorms Land Based Business Training Project & Cairngorms Awareness & Pride – Paper 1**

Kate provided the meeting with a copy of the courses that had been established and delivered during the duration of the above project, and an outline of what the department provided, in the main land based businesses, in recognition of their very varied and vast training needs, as well as the two strands of delivery.

Kate also explained that over the years there has been considerable interest from businesses other than land based, and residents within the Park. The Cairngorms Awareness & Pride idea had been developed in recognition.

Out of the CAP's 20 subjects, around 30 courses have been delivered, providing residents within the Park with the opportunity to find out more

about the aims of the PP, and provide them with information that can be disseminated to people visiting the Park.

Evaluations have suggested that a small charge should be made, and would be acceptable to course attendees. Historically courses have been delivered mainly in Badenoch & Strathspey due to numbers/critical mass. Through effective marketing, numbers of people attending from the Deeside/Donside area have been very encouraging.

Funding from new Leader will take the project through to end of 2010, thereafter funding will cease. Suggestions for course input was invited.

The Forum asked if the presentations/summary from the courses could be put up on to the CNPA website to follow through and provide people with info.

**Action:** Kate Christie

As some members of the Advisory Forum were unaware of the range of courses available discussion suggested that perhaps the advertising wasn't meeting various interested people. Kate confirmed that the methods to advertise the courses included local media, email to previous participants/expressions of interest, What's On, Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce E-newsletter, Community Councils with flyers.

Uptake in Deeside was confirmed, and in quite large numbers. Confirmation was given that people from outside the Park would be welcome to attend. It was suggested that better use could be made of local networks to improve circulation, with a focus on perhaps providing the target market in the title, make it obvious who it's for, along with brief details, where, when, cost, with links to further information on a website, to reduce the volume of emails/paperwork being sent out.

Information is available on how training relates to economic benefits as a result of being on the training course, which could aid marketing. Kate also confirmed that the interpretation project could be included in this work and that the private sector could input to what courses should be provided.

**Action:** Private sector & Land Based Business Department to work on marketing and distribution of courses, as well as when people want them – weekends, evenings, lunchtimes, season, etc.

## 6. European Charter for Sustainable Tourism

Gavin provided the Forum with a background, and that the overarching strategy now involves the Advisory Forum, CNPA and the Economic Delivery Team.

It was suggested by Bruce Luffman that throughout the document there was the suggestion that there was confusion, and a need for clarity, with regards to private sector & CNPA i.e. is the Park Plan driving the strategy, or the strategy driving the Park Plan as it would seem to be that right through the document CNPA staff understand the strategy, but the deliverers don't understand the actions, and there would appear to be gaps.

Gavin confirmed that the sustainable tourism strategy fed into Park Plan. CNPA staff were then focussed on Park Plan. Heather Trench requested a steer on pulling this together, to get both the strategy and PP in line, as the tourism strategy is 2 years ahead, and suggested that a 1 year delay in re-applying for charter, would reduce time span to 1 year, and aid the two documents to sit together. It was suggested that those on the ground trying to deliver did not fully understand the terminology being used/process, and communication needed to be improved.

Clarification was sought that the strategy is still being driven forward, that the action plan is out of date, and has not been communicated to the business community on a regular basis for 2 years.

Murray confirmed that there is a need for clarity, but that the timing was perfect to drive the tourism strategy forward at the time it happened, and that it should not have been held up waiting for a catch up process. The process had been a bottom up process rather than a top down, which added to the strength of the strategy.

It was agreed that the action plan in its current form should not be sent to businesses, as it's a document for the forum, but bullet points, as an update, and something simple should be sent out to businesses.

Heather Trench reminded the Forum of the booklet that was sent out at the beginning, and suggested perhaps that another, as an update, should be developed. It was suggested that it might be difficult to pull out WIIFM's for business from the action plan, and that it might be worthwhile looking at the content to produce a redraft of what would make a difference to businesses over the next 18 months, tying it in with what's happening for example the previously discussed as a training programme. Businesses could then be invited to input by showing how this can help sustain their business, contribute to the Park Plan, and improve the bottom line.

The report suggested the need for a single umbrella organisation. The WIIFMs would then come from the private sector, and from one body.

It was also identified that there was a need to promote the Cairngorms more effectively, that the web portal should be thicker.

Duncan Bryden suggested that the process was very important, and more important than the accolade of the charter, and that the Forum should be looking at outcomes.

Visitor survey is scheduled to be repeated 09/10, which is perhaps another reason to delay the charter process, as this will provide some of the outcomes being sought as a baseline measurement, and on which future projections can be built.

The Chair then asked 2 questions of the Forum:

1. Should there be a re-application for a sustainable charter?
2. Are the business community being asked to tread water, waiting for catch up with up to a year's slippage?

Discussion ensued that as an external verification process its very useful however, one size doesn't fit all, and the CNP's size makes it more of a challenge.

Alan Rankin asked if this is something that the area can used to demonstrate to the customer the value of achievement as a USP, adding value to the area, the businesses, as a marketing advantage.

The forum also asked about the cost and benefits to Europarc. Europarc is a member organisation – cost for the previous submission was in the main putting together the strategy, of around 10K.

Gavin advised the forum that something needs to be in place as a guide about how tourism is developed in the future. The Charter is the icing on the cake of the process that has to be gone through anyway, with the timing part being critical, when revisiting the PP.

It was then suggested that the charter will make the disciplines quicker. Dropping the charter could potentially drop the stick that drives things forward and addresses any potential slippages.

The development of perhaps a customer facing message for the visitor was also suggested.

Thoughts were invited from the CNPA staff & Board:

- Heather Trench advised that being 3.5 years through the first strategy, is there a role to look at the recommendations and how these can be applied to businesses, then reapply for the Charter.

- Visitor survey will cost around £50K – Scotland wide survey is not envisaged for some time, and should not hold back CNPA visitor survey.
- Slippage of a year inevitable
- Last survey was felt to be very useful and has been used to drive things forward. However, the survey should be used to drive forward what's needed nationally, rather than accept what's given, and a message should be sent to stakeholders that we have a model that works, and that they should be looking at ours.
- Smaller scale PDA research being done to feed in to this, through the DMO's.
- Duncan Bryden felt that the benefits should be talked up, more entries in the Thistle Awards, more buildings with environmental standards, more info that links tourism with sustainable.

Recommendations were then discussed separately.

1. Relationship between different action programmes – forum agreed that the charter should continue to exist and be driven forward from the bottom up, in line with various action plans.
2. It was agreed that regular meetings should be held, that people needed to feel involved, & input should be taken on board. 4 times a year was felt to be appropriate, providing opportunity for small businesses to feel involved on an equal footing, and to engage with larger businesses. It was agreed that there was a need to get businesses enthused & more should be involved, and that the smaller points that have to be raised, are generally the reality questions, and need to be heard. Momentum gained in the Visit Forum would appear to have been lost with the Advisory Forum, there are less people coming to the meeting and the question should be asked why? So much of the agenda crosses over, separation of tourism between forums doesn't help. It was pointed out that agencies that are meant to be helping and enabling are also not attending and question is why the meetings are now so poorly attended. It was agreed that the previous Visit Forum was edgy, people felt they could input, that this worked well and that what worked well with the VF is now broken. A lot of the businesses, some of the main partners, ranger services, LEC's are now not hearing what's being said. Recommendation was that for this to work, CNPA have to go away and come up with a plan = 4 times a year, agencies to attend, for people coming to perceive that it is useful, they are listened to, & whatever the size of business, the agenda has got to be relevant. The lack of continuity from meeting to meeting needs to be rectified so that people are kept informed, and it becomes an automatic part of the agenda. Advisory Forum's are an audit function of the Delivery Teams, and sight of this seems to have been lost.

The question was asked why are there 3 AF's, and not just 1, with the suggestion being to make it a full day, and address everything. Private sector representatives confirmed this would be preferable, and would encourage them to attend. Murray Ferguson confirmed this was being discussed, but that any changes would have to go to the CNPA Board. Other advisory forums such as the Local Outdoor Access Forum are working well, and contributing well to the Park.

**Action:** CNPA to go away and think about this as a revision for the AF's heavily focussed on continuity of audit functions, and tourism.

3. Private Sector is working towards this. Target to get back to the CNPA Board end October.
4. An agenda item 9.
5. Visitor Payback Initiative – starting to look at this in conjunction with the private sector, and looking at schemes that are already happening within the Park. Local lapel pins were put forward as a simple scheme and running in Grantown on Spey.  
Action: Sylvia Woodier to provide Heather Trench with a summary of income has been generated in Grantown on Spey, and how well the scheme has worked. Working group on VPI will report back at the next Advisory Forum meeting.
6. Part of progress update.
7. Part of agenda
8. Work being done with Cairngorms Hostels & Creative Cairngorms - essential piece of work needing done.
9. Agenda item.
10. Cultural Heritage Officer will in post 2009 for 3 years. Events added to project update.
11. Linked to earlier discussions.
12. Discussed already.
13. Happening.
14. Ongoing through private sector work to include BA&TA's.
15. Discussed earlier – report will be available at next meeting of KPI's and visitor survey.
16. Sustainable tourism charter reviewed earlier.

## 7. Cairngorms Web Portal

Last forum viewed the work that had been done on the site, and discussed this in detail. An information paper was presented to the CNPA Board. Comments were fed back from the Board. There was also a detailed discussion about the workings of the private sector network. Web portal is about 85% complete. No prospect for a launch at this stage, until the issues are resolved. Fiona continues with the work on the website, but on a lesser scale. 2 main areas of work are HiArts – effective way to search for events within the CNP; & search facility with visitscotland.com.



Understanding would be that the events engine would be white labelled, so that to the browser, information is drawn into the site being browsed, not that they are routed to another site.

Patricia Eccles reminded the forum that the vs.com option was always an interim short term solution, until a better one was available, and questioned why work is still being done on the accommodation search engine with vs.com.

The forum was advised that there is considerable discussion within the business organisations at the moment, and that the organisations had more than enough information to produce what is needed. All the items raised at the last forum are being discussed, and addressed. No site will be launched until this is resolved. Legal responsibility of online booking was felt not to be fully understood, and the web portal is not aspiring to have an online booking system.

The subject of quality was discussed and how this related to organisations that would link to the portal. For information, the forum were advised that visitScotland.com were minded to remove the link to visitAviemore.com unless members are all QA'd, and similarly with Parki, the TIC's were asking for them but there was an issue with Visit Scotland about advertisers not all being QA'd. The question was asked about sites being linked out from the portal, and whether these would be checked for quality criteria.

Cairngorms Learning Zone was also raised and the question asked if this would be linked from the portal, or kept separate.

Discussion evolved about where does the CNPA sit with all this, is it all raising awareness, is there enough room in the portal to find out about information about all sectors, and other than tourism, as this relates some of the points raised in the report from Richard Denman that there needs to be access on the site for everyone, and information for all. One of the main portal aims was to signpost anyone wanting info on the Park, to what's out there from a single point, and the question was asked, that as this started over 2 years ago, surely there must be a way of fixing this.

It was confirmed that the route in is the contentious bit, that the policy still needs to be written, however, web site is simply pointing. Quality and way this is managed needs to be reviewed.

At this point Alan Rankin was invited to input the outcomes from the previous days visit to visitScotland.com

The group were advised that after a business survey undertaken earlier in the year, a working group consisting of the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, Royal Deeside and the Cairngorms DMO, Tomintoul and

Glenlivet and Aviemore and the Cairngorms DMO had been established. Rather than try to take all of the points, the group agreed to take forward specific issues, on a Park wide basis, and as a result the following had already been achieved.

Guide section which includes 4 themed itineraries (Golf, Castles & History, Wildlife Watching, 4 day drive through).

Screen image gallery with new and improved images.

Complete listing of all towns and villages – pages had been reviewed and updated, working through the DMO's, and new town pages had been written. New images had been provided to run alongside.

A meeting had been held with vs.com on Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> October, where Alan Rankin and Pamela Grant had covered specific issues such as improved mapping amongst other things. Full details of the days outcomes were provided to the meeting.

Issue that had arisen was in professional copywriting skills. Copy written by each area had been reviewed by Alan and Pamela, to ensure consistency, before being presented to vs.com.

There was then a discussion on the Going Green campaign, which it is trying to encourage more people to join, & get involved with GTBS, through an entry level.

**Action:** VS – to circulate info on going green.

## 8. Interpretation guidance

Initiated some time back, the initial stakeholder group consisted of about 22/25 people. 4-5 people formed steering group to take project forward. As the guidance evolved, there had been interaction with a number of groupings and interested people. Two workgroups for end users had been held, a conference with input being invited from individual organisations.

Final draft should be available within the next week or so, as the work is now complete as far as producing the guidance is concerned. Rolling out the guidance will be done through the network of organisations, and include a period of training through most probably the Land Based Business & Cairngorms Awareness and Pride.

## 9. Progress updates – Paper 2

**9.1. Core Paths Plan** – final version will be going to the next Board meeting, which may result in a public inquiry on some of the paths included. Leaflets – only just started, several considerations to be

taken on board. Orkney model was tabled as an example of good practice.

**9.2. National Park Brand** – GTBS will be on the agenda for the next Brand Management Group. GTBS visits not happening, slipping. Points to raise profile have been fed into the Brand Management Group for discussion at the next meeting.

Document produced by Visit Scotland as the business case for QA, could perhaps be used as a model for developing the business case for GTBS to show the economic benefits.

The question as asked about the Park's position with welcome schemes?

**Action:** Sally Dowden to take this to the next Brand Management Group meeting

**9.3. Publications about the National Park** – cover will be around context of CNP. Promotion out with the boundaries was discussed as well as the continued publication through inserts as there was felt to still be a need for leaflet to go into folders out with the Park to raise awareness out with the Park.

**Action:** Murray to clarify whether inserts are still being paid for, now that cover is in place.

**9.4. Entry Point Markers** – almost complete.

Aerial maps – there was about a 2 month delay due to production problems. Maps will be placed at appropriate lay-bys.

Pre-arrival brown signs – CNPA working with local authorities, & partners to establish. Signs should go up as far as Bridge of Brown within the next couple of months.

**Formal Education** – Learning and Teaching Scotland meeting about 10 days ago was very successful. Board were also provided with a very informative discussion. Park can input information into a digital media "GLOW" for schools throughout the country providing access for children to a wealth of information about the Park, encouraging skills development, as well as other material, through an inspiring and relative method of engaging young people.

## 10. AOCB

**10.1. Events Guidance** – significant piece of work had been done to come up with guidance document for events organisers & land managers to bring outside events to the CNP area. Work which

started early 2007, is now almost at the last version and will be presented to the Board 31st October.

**10.2. Advisory Forum members** – discussion was that additional people should be approached, including education. AF members were asked to give consideration to members that could participate.

**Action:** ALL – feed into Gavin.

**10.3. Improve Value of 3 AF's** – Members of E&U AF would like 3 AFs to be joined to one to improve value. CNPA considering options and when paper ready to go to the Board, it will be pre-circulated to the AF.

**Action:** Gavin Miles/Murray Ferguson

**10.4. Opening "Old logging way"** off road route at Glenmore was done by the Minister earlier in the day. Press coverage will be in the papers this week. Multi use route now available to everyone.

**10.5. Royal Society in Edinburgh** ... Copies of the Committee of Inquiry into the Future of Scotland's Hills and Islands report and summary available from the Royal Society of Edinburgh  
[www.royalsoced.org.uk](http://www.royalsoced.org.uk) T: 0131 240 5000

Report makes a number of recommendations, & comments on tourism.

A road show is being established that will include a committee meeting on 12th November in Tomintoul. Question was asked if members of the Advisory Forum would be able to attend. It was agreed that this should be established and communicated to the Advisory Forum.

**Action:** Murray Ferguson.

**Date and place for next meeting:**

Early February 2009 – date, time and venue to be confirmed.

## SUMMARY OF ACTIONS

	Number	Action	Date	Person(s) responsible
1	3.1.	Template that will communicate progress of the Advisory Forums to come out as a report 3 times a year covering all the priorities for action, providing a visual check.		Gavin Miles
2	3.2.	Training for businesses to better understand survey outcomes, and how these can be used for business planning and marketing.	Feedback to be available for next meeting.	Heather Trench Pamela Grant
3	3.4.	NPP Monitoring Framework – indicators – Forum to be invited to comment.		Gavin Miles
4	3.7.	Healthy Walking Groups – quantifiable information on level of activity to be acquired.		Murray Ferguson
5	4.	Election of Chair – nominations to be sent to Gavin Miles	Prior to next meeting	All AF members
6	5.	LBB/CAP presentations / summaries of courses to be put on to the CNPA website.		Kate Christie
7		Marketing, timing and distribution of course information to be improved.		Kate Christie Pamela Grant
8	6.2.	Recommendations – Revision of Advisory Forums – potential to host them in one day, or merge to be explored, for the forums that are heavily focussed on		Murray Ferguson

		continuity of audit functions, and tourism.		
9	7.	Going Green – VisitScotland to circulate information		Visit Scotland
10	9.2.	Park’s Position with welcome schemes to be taken to next BMF		Sally Dowden
11	9.3.	Publications about the National Park – inserts / leaflets for folders out with the Park		Murray Ferguson
12	10.2.	Advisory Forum members – to be expanded – everyone asked to give consideration.		ALL AF members
13	10.3.	Improve Value of 3 AF’s – Members of E&U AF would like 3 AFs to be joined to one to improve value. CNPA considering options and when paper ready to go to the Board, it will be pre-circulated to the AF.		Gavin Miles/Murray Ferguson
14	10.5.	Forum members able to attend Royal Society meeting in Tomintoul on 12 <sup>th</sup> November to be clarified and outcome circulated to AF members.		Murray Ferguson