
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE FORMAL BOARD MEETING held via LifeSize Video Conferencing on Friday 12TH March 2021 at 11.15

PRESENT

(by video conferencing unless stated otherwise)

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

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services
Pete Mayhew, Director of Conservation and Visitor Services
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Rural Development
Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Services
Oliver Davies, Head of Communications and Engagement
Vicky Walker, Office Services Manager
Heather Trench, Sustainable Tourism Officer – agenda item 4 only.
Lynn Anderson, Cairngorms Trust Admin and Support Officer

Apologies: Geva Blackett.

Noted John Latham is experiencing technical difficulties and will re-join the meeting when possible.

Welcome and Introduction

1. Xander McDade, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of last meeting held – for approval

2. The minutes of the last meeting held on 27th November, 2020 were agreed with no amendments.
3. The minutes of the last meeting held on 22nd January, 2021 were agreed with no amendments. However it was noted by some Members present that there had been an expectation that, following the discussion around the provision of a permanent

Ranger service, additional information would be brought to the Board on how this will operate in the form of a formal report for review rather than information embedded in the budget paper.

Matters Arising Not Covered Elsewhere

4. The Convener provided an update on the Action Points from the previous minutes:
 - a) November Minutes – Action Point at Para 14 (i) – **Closed** - CEO to enquire into fencing in Glenmore area with FLS
 - b) November Minutes – Action Point at Para 14 (ii) – **Closed** – Convener note circulated to staff for breadth of work and achievements during lockdown
5. **Action Point Arising: None**

Declarations of Interest

5. The Convener invited declarations of interest.
6. Pippa Hadley and Fiona McLean noted as a point of transparency their role on the board of Badenoch Great Place Project
7. Eleanor Mackintosh – noted as a point of transparency her role on the board of the Tomintoul and Glenlivet Partnership which will come up in discussions.
8. Janet Hunter - noted as a point of transparency her role on the boards of CATERAN Country and Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland.
9. Douglas McAdam – noted as a point of transparency his role on the Cairngorms Capercaillie Project Board.

CEO Report and Convener Update (Paper 1)

10. 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. The CEO highlighted the following areas:
 - a) A piece of work has just started working in partnership with the other UK parks called “Net Zero with Nature”. This work involves seeking private investment for green finance to help nature recovery work and climate change. This work is at a relatively early stage however there is a lot of work ongoing especially on the lead up to COP 26.
 - b) Social Media and engagement: there has been some good growth in this over the past year, in both the amount of people using it but also the visitor engagement rate has been high. One thing to be noted is the website accessibility audit planned for the coming months, discussions on which have taken place with the Equalities Advisory Panel. This will be a good piece of work looking at the website and making it fit for the future.

- c) There is a lot of work by people behind the scenes looking at visitor infrastructure and making sure we have the right things happening at a local and a national level. The visitor management summit takes place on 19th March where all the groups meet and report. Following this summit, further information will come out of that meeting which will be circulated to the Board.

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

- a) A Member asked for it to be noted that Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership had received a good accolade from the Heritage Lottery Fund for a short film they had produced, very quickly, in recognition of their achievements for the last 5 years and the National Park. The Heritage Lottery Fund were so impressed with the film they have circulated the film to all their staff and Board Members. The film had been made by a local resident.
- b) A Member had recently attended a meeting of the Local Outdoor Access Forum and asked for reassurance that should the National Park take any sort of action that could ultimately end up in court or decide to go down the route of bye-laws, would this come back to the Park Board for decision? The CEO confirmed that the Authority were not looking at introducing bye-laws, however any type of action of this nature would have to be consulted on, approved by the Board and ultimately go to Scottish Government for approval.
- c) A Member mentioned a letter that had been received by Board Members and had been published in a local newspaper and asked whether the Park Board were going to respond. The Convener explained that a letter had been drafted however as this pertains to an individual, it was not appropriate to discuss this in a public environment for reasons of GDPR.
- d) A Member commented on the work being done on peatland restoration. Having recently attended a session with representatives of the Heather Trust who mentioned that the majority of contractors carrying out this work came from down south, the Member wondered what availability is there of local contractors and if there is a shortage should we be doing something to address this? The CEO commented that the Director of Planning and Rural Development and Stephen Corcoran, the recently appointed Peatland Action Programme Manager, were due to have a discussion with HIE, Skills Development Scotland and Nature Scot on skills and contractor issues. It is recognised that it is important to have a good contractor base within Highland and Islands as peatland restoration will involve long term work. This meeting is scheduled for 16th April. The Director of Planning and Rural Development is a member of the Economic Steering group who are due to meet on 22nd March, Nature Scot are attending this meeting to talk about their work around green jobs.
- e) A Member expressed concern that, with the easing of restrictions, there will inevitably be an influx of visitors into the Park and they wondered what specifically will be done to stop visitors wandering about in the Capercaillie sensitive areas identified in Carrbridge. The CEO explained that there is a specific ranger post within the Cairngorms Capercaillie project, information notices will be displayed and the newly appointed seasonal rangers will also help with this. The expectation is, it will be a very busy summer with visitors into the

- Park and the aim is to educate people and get as much information as possible out to people in advance.
- f) A Member asked whether a list of seasonal rangers would be circulated to the Board. The CEO confirmed this would be done in due course.
 - g) A Member asked when the non-motorised A9 link from Carrbridge to Aviemore would begin. The CEO explained that there was still work ongoing to identify the final route but that this is linked to that part of the A9 is due to be done.
 - h) A Member thought it good to see in paragraph 34 that there are 4 sub-headings under youth employment and hoped that in time there would be even more employment opportunities for young people in the Park Authority.
 - i) A Member was pleased to see mention in paragraph 2 of mountain bikers beginning to identify ways to improve conditions for Capercaillie. This showed that there is a willingness to change behaviour and raise awareness.
 - j) A Member asked for further information on Ranger services in the Angus Glens. The CEO explained that there are ongoing discussions with 2 estates and Scottish Land & Estates about a seasonal ranger position in that area. The Authority makes a contribution to Angus Alive and it needs to be made clear what coverage there will be from our contribution and what Forest and Land Scotland will cover and identify any gaps.

12. The Board noted the paper.

13. Action Point Arising:

- i. CEO to circulate information on Seasonal Rangers**

Budget – For Decision (Paper 2)

- 14. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 2 which sets out the Authority's financial position and budget for the 2021/22 financial year. The paper presents the proposed financial allocations for 2021/22 for core income and expenditure, together with intended operational plan investment.
- 15. The paper seeks Board endorsement of the budget and Operational Plan for the year 2021/22 as an appropriate deployment of resources to work towards delivery of the Authority's adopted Corporate Plan objectives.
- 16. The Director of Corporate Services highlighted the increase in budget for the year 2021/22 as set out in table one of the paper. This budget increase has come about through discussions and successful bids to Scottish Government. Table 2 sets out the significant changes in operation delivery for the year 2021/22.
- 17. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A Board Member thanked the Director of Corporate Services for the very detailed paper. They mentioned that in the past they would normally see a resource plan in terms of staffing numbers and they wondered when this would

be available. The Director of Corporate services explained this was in hand and updates would be provided to the Board and appropriate Committee when available.

- b) The Board Member wondered if we track the level of inward investment and where it goes. The Director of Corporate Services explained that we do try to keep a track of this although if this does not come into our own accounts and instead into a partner's accounts it can be difficult.
- c) A Board Member asked for clarity around the use of the word endorse and if there are changes in the budget does this come back to the Board or to Scottish Government for approval? The Director of Corporate Services explained that although there are ongoing discussions with our sponsor department around the budget throughout the year this is the Park Authority's budget to approve with any major changes in budget going back to the Board for approval. The Board Member wondered if rather than the using the word endorse the planned resource allocation the word approve or agree should be used instead.
- d) A Board Member thought this a very important paper and very good news for the Park in very challenging times.
- e) Several Board Members thought it strange that they were being asked to agree the establishment of a permanent ranger service in a budget paper, should this not have been a stand-alone paper? The Convener summarised that there had been both formal and informal discussions on this subject and there was now more information provided in the budget paper on the proposed structure. While noting some Members would have preferred a formal, separate paper this format allowed a resourcing decision on ranger services as an integral and necessary part of overall budget considerations.
- f) A Member asked what happens to the peatland restoration money if it is not spent and the impact this might have on the Park. The CEO explained that the Park is in discussion with Scottish Government looking at multi-year budgets. There is a 10 year commitment for this funding across Scotland. There is no question of SG clawing back the money it's more about programming the piece of work to allow for delays. The Director of Corporate Services explained that the funding allocation for the year 2021/22 is not just about cash spend and as long as the funds are committed this will score against this allocation. If there is any slippage the earlier the discussion can begin with SG about managing the flow of activity and resourcing across years the better.
- g) The Member also asked for clarification around the biodiversity fund which not only talks about creating jobs but also training and skills development. Is this only for volunteers? There was a concern that any skills development should not disadvantage those people who were not in a position to volunteer. The CEO explained that the biodiversity funding is for a set of projects working with partners through Cairngorms Nature. The Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience explained that there is a whole host of different jobs attached to this funding and there will be lots of opportunity for young people whether they come from a volunteering background or through apprenticeship: there are multiple routes into this.
- h) A Member asked, if the Board feel they need more information on the proposed 4 permanent rangers, what impact would this have on the ranger provision for this season? The CEO explained any delay would have a huge impact. The volume of work planned for the coming year simply could not happen. The implementation of the ranger posts is an incredibly important piece of the jigsaw,

it would also mean a delay in the whole staff re-structure. Partners were incredibly supportive of a permanent ranger service within the Park. This mixed model now proposed is best for the National Park going forward. Members were being asked to approve the 2021/22 budget for ranger provision as part of the budget paper hence there was no stand-alone paper, however supplementary information has been given in the annexes attached to the budget paper.

- i) A Board Member asked about the possibility of bringing further information about the permanent ranger provision to the Board later in the month. The Member expressed a hope that, with the announcement of the expansion of ranger provision by Perth & Kinross Council and Highland Council, discussions would take place about how the different ranger services across the Park would work collaboratively.
- j) The Convener confirmed that it would be helpful for Board Members to have a more strategic understanding to see how this will work on the ground and how the ranger services will operate. The Convener explained that the ranger provision in Perth & Kinross will be very, very stretched. The Deputy Convener confirmed the seasonal rangers appointed in Highland will not be working in the National Park however they felt discussions should be had so that we are seen to be approach this in an aligned manner. The Authority should be seen as a leader in this. The CEO confirmed the co-ordination of the work of rangers in the Park was already underway and is also happening at a national level.
- k) A Board Member suggested that for the next business meeting of the Board an agenda item should be added seeking clarity on some of the wider work being done on strategic content of objectives for ranger services. The Convener confirmed further information would be sent to the Board on the operation of the ranger service.

18. In conclusion the Convener commented that the Authority has seen a significant uplift in funding in what has been a very difficult year, this is quite an achievement and is a real credit to the staff involved and the Convener thanked them for their hard work.

19. **The Board:**

- a) **Endorsed the planned resource allocation as appropriate budget plans for deployment of available finance to secure corporate objectives over 2021/22**
- b) **Agreed the establishment of a Cairngorms NPA permanent ranger service as set out in this paper as part of a mixed model of employed and grant supported ranger services for the Cairngorms National Park.**
- c) **Considered whether the proposed deployment of resources poses any perceived risks to the achievement of the Corporate Plan objectives by 2022 and agreed any risks posed for subsequent mitigation action by the Chief Executive and Management Team.**
- d) **Agreed any specific aspects of budget allocation and deployment that merit attention by the Board or its Committee in conducting Members' assurance and scrutiny role during 2021/22.**

20. **Action Points Arising:**

- i. **Some additional information will be brought to the Board, within the next couple of weeks, about the operation of the ranger service and how this will contribute to our outcomes.**
- ii. **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 and if there are changes to be made we will have resource available in next year's budget to do that.**

COP26 and our approach to Net Zero (Paper 3)

21. Olly Davies, Head of Communications, introduced Paper 3 which provides an update on the UN Climate Change Conference (COP 26) in Glasgow, as well as a discussion around a CNPA presence at the event. The paper sought to agree targets for the Authority and National Park to achieve net zero emissions.
22. The Head of Communication explained there are 2 aspects to this paper: a for information update on CNPA's role in the COP conference; the second is to follow on from the 6th December, 2019 decision where the Board agreed to establish realistic timescales for the Authority to achieve zero direct emissions as an organisation. Due to the impacts of Covid-19 this follow up had been delayed, but the decision sought today is the result of that process.
23. Table 1 on page 3 outlines the total carbon emissions per year since 2007/08, currently they are roughly half of what they were in the peak period 2010/11 although it is noted the impacts of Covid-19 will have an effect on this.
24. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A Board Member wondered if the second recommendation is too tight a timescale given that it is out with our control? The Head of Communications and Engagement agreed 2030 is an ambitious target however, the eyes of the world will be on Scotland for COP 26 and Scotland should take a lead on tackling the climate emergency, and as the UK's largest National Park it was felt we should be ambitious, yet as realistic as we could be.
 - b) A Member commented on net zero emissions, their understanding is that this is a mixture of reducing direct emissions and off-setting some emissions. It seems we have a good idea of what our direct emissions are but we don't have an idea on how to off-set some of our emissions to achieve a net zero. The Member asked when will we have a better idea of how we can do that so we can have a true measure of when we reach net zero?
 - c) A Board Member commented that they could not see how the Authority could ever achieve net zero, the CEO explained that Scottish Government have given the commitment of net zero emissions by 2045 and we have obligations to work towards that. The national climate change plan was updated in December and the work in the Park contributes to that. It is something all public bodies will have to deliver on.

- d) A Member asked in terms of target 3 how this would be measured to get a true reflection. The Head of Communications explained there is a piece of consultancy work being carried out by a company called Small World, about establishing a framework for measuring overall climate emissions across National Parks and we are exploring how this will fit within a Cairngorms National Park context.
 - e) A Board Member asked, in terms of target 3, is the intention, once the baseline has been established, to look at several pathways to get to the end result. The Head of Communications explained that route mapping structure is part of the Small World model.
25. **The Board:**
- a) **Approved a commitment for the Park Authority to achieve net zero emissions by 2025 at the latest.**
 - b) **Approved a commitment for the Park Authority to achieve zero direct emissions by 2030**
 - c) **Approved a commitment for the Cairngorms National Park to achieve net zero emissions by 2045 at the latest and to review that timescale in light of planned carbon budget work in 2021/22 and include in NPPP.**

Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan – Mid-term Review (Paper 4)

26. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Rural Development and Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Services introduced Paper 4 which reviews progress with the delivery of the Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan and seeks to agree priorities in the years ahead.
27. This paper is being brought to the Board for 3 broad reasons: a commitment to bring an annual paper as part of our accredited sustainable tourism destination under Europarc; it's a good chance to get this information out into the public domain; and there is a very good Cairngorms Tourism Partnership structure and it is important there is a good connection between that and the Board.
28. The Director of Planning and Rural Development highlighted the following key areas:
- a) Annex 1 highlights all the partnership work going on;
 - b) Annex 2 summarises the proposed high level changes to the Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan; with
 - c) Annex 3 summarising at high level the final visitor management work.
29. The Director of Planning and Rural Development highlighted the following key areas:
- a) Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group – formed in March 2020 which initially met weekly reducing to monthly. He thanked Board Member Janet Hunter for all the work done in chairing the Cairngorms Tourism Emergency Response Group.
 - b) #Cairngorms Together Initiative – developed to encourage the return of visitors while keeping local communities and those visitors safe.

- c) Management for Visitors Group – which is all working collaboratively with our partners to take people with us.
 - d) All this partnership work has received interest at both national and international level.
30. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) The Deputy Convener commented on how much collaborative work is going on in the Park and echoed the Director of Planning and Rural Development in thanking Janet Hunter.
 - b) A Board Member asked how completion of the “Snow Roads Scenic Route” and creating something similar along the A9, fits in our journey to Net zero. The Board Member also wondered whether it might be possible to organise some kind of conference, chaired by the Park involving partners and local authorities to share all the good work that is going on. The Board Member suggested that perhaps the conclusions from today’s discussions could be circulated to the Local Authorities. The Director of Planning and Rural Department confirmed they were happy to think about this and would make sure the local authorities are involved in the end of year review.
 - c) The Head of Visitor Services acknowledged that people will drive to the Cairngorms hopefully in sustainable transport however the whole design and promotion of the project is to slow people down, so that they spend more time in the East side of the Park.
 - d) A Board Member asked whether there is an opportunity to develop a bespoke package for businesses and visitor facing people across the Park to ensure consistent messaging across the Park. The Head of Visitor services mentioned the Make It Yours face to face training and sharing the experience with partners which was happening pre Covid and can continue via Zoom calls. However a short video is currently being pulled together which will give our partners more of an insight as to why people come to the Park, what they want to do and share the experiences of where they want to go.
 - e) A Board Member wanted to remind Members that the Park has been supporting sustainable tourism for more than 15 years and this commitment to sustainability is something the Park has been leading on for a long time. Over the past year the Park has been way ahead in dealing with the issues than were going to be faced and this approach has received attention both nationally and internationally.
 - f) A Board Member commented, from an equalities point of view, we need to be aware of the barriers that might stop people visiting the Park. The Director of Planning and Rural Development had attended the last meeting of the Equalities Forum and it was flagged up at that meeting that it would be good to have a specific meeting about tourism issues. There is also an opportunity to talk to the business community about what improvements could be made.
31. **The Board confirmed they were happy to:**
- a) **Note the progress with the programme of work that has been undertaken by partners to date which is delivering both the Tourism Action Plan and key actions in the Cairngorms National Park Plan Partnership 2017-22**

- b) Agree the changes in the Tourism Action Plan which have been considered by the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership.**

Major Projects (Paper 5)

32. Grant Moir, Chief Executive introduced Paper 5 which is an update to Members on the major projects in the Cairngorms National Park where the CNPA is the accountable body or is a major funding partner.
33. The CEO also asked Members to note the leverage rates achieved with partners which has helps to deliver on the Corporate Plan and NPPP. The CEO explained that the report gives information on 5 of the biggest projects in the Park.
34. The Board considered the detailed in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) A Member commented that the amount of money levered into the park is phenomenal and has enabled us to do some great work.
 - b) A Member thanked the CEO for the paper, it was very informative and just what was needed.
35. **Board Members present were happy to note the paper.**

AOCB

36. The CEO informed the Board Members of the death of Ian Findlay the Chief Officer of "Paths for All". Formal condolences were passed on to friends and family and all those that work at Paths for All.
37. The CEO informed Board Members of the death of Joe Porter a great collector of Cairngorms memorabilia. Formal condolences were passed on to friends and family.
38. Motion to move to confidential session for reason of commercially sensitive information to approve minutes of 12th February, 2021
39. Proposed by the Convener, seconded by the Deputy-Convener.
40. The public part of this meeting concluded at 14.15

