
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Village Hall, Braemar on Friday 11th July 2008 at 11.30am

PRESENT

Eric Baird	Eleanor Mackintosh
Geva Blackett	Ian MacKintosh
Duncan Bryden	Anne MacLean
Nonie Coulthard	Alastair MacLennan
Jaci Douglas	Mary McCafferty
Dave Fallows	William McKenna
Lucy Grant	Fiona Murdoch
David Green	Sandy Park
Drew Hendry	Richard Stroud
Marcus Humphrey	Susan Walker
Bruce Luffman	Ross Watson

In Attendance:

Jane Hope	Andy Rinning
Francoise Van Buuren	Fiona Milligan
Andrew Harper	Francesca Scott
Murray Ferguson	Elsbeth Grant
Hamish Trench	
Fiona Spencer, Scottish Government in attendance for Items 1 and 2	

Apologies:

Bob Kinnaird
Andrew Rafferty
Stuart Black

Welcome and Introduction

1. The Convener welcomed to the meeting and noted the previous evenings meeting with members of the community to look at the work on renovating and developing Braemar Castle as a visitor attraction. Various

public sector bodies (including CNPA) have supported the work, but the tremendous input by the community was to be commended, led by Bill Marshall. David Green reported he would be sending a follow up letter of congratulation to everyone involved. Sue Walker reported on some immediate feedback from the local community who had welcomed the opportunity to display what had been achieved through a huge amount of voluntary effort. They had also welcomed the style of meeting which had been conducive to open discussion. Finally, she noted that the work illustrated the importance of the cultural heritage in the Park and the need for the CNPA to take more of a lead on this than had been possible in the past.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. Minutes of the meeting on 16th May, and the special meeting on 13th June, were both approved with no changes. It was noted that in respect of the minutes of 16th May under paragraph 11(a), the Conveners meeting with Fiona Spencer who was conducting the Strategic Review of National Parks, which had also including the CNPA Chief Executive, had been purely informal.

Matters Arising

3. Dave Fallows reported that further to the main paper considered at the meeting of 16th May, he had attended a meeting of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust. He also noted that support from other organisations for joining as affiliate members was looking good.

Declarations of Interests

4. None

Support for Destination Management Organisations (Paper 1)

5. Andrew Harper introduced the paper which sought approval to grant aid two Destination Management Organisations within the Cairngorms National Park. (He noted the error in paragraph 9 which referred to a contribution of £15,000 to the DCDMO 2008/09 business plan – this should have been a reference to £20,000 as per the rest of the paper.)
6. The principle of Destination Management Organisations (DMOs) was that they were business led groupings aimed at driving up the quality of the visitor experience; they have a strong role to play in helping to deliver the objectives set out in the National Park Plan. Following the Board's informal discussion on tourism in March, the feeling had emerged, backed up by a board open evening at Tomintoul around about the same time, that while the business led approach was right, it ran the risk of being some what disjointed across the Park. Work was now under way to

ensure a more co-ordinated approach by the private sector across the Park; the Convener had facilitated several meetings involving the Chamber of Commerce, the ACDMO, DCDMO, Glenlivet and the Cairngorms, and business interests from Angus and Blair Atholl. All these organisations were working together to see if a model could be developed for more collaborative working. The benefits of this approach were set out at paragraph 8 in the paper. The aim was to bring forward a proposal in September

7. The paper sought the Board's approval for the award of grants of £25,000 and £20,000 respectively to the ACDMO and DCDMO. The paper also asked the Board to consider whether in view of the benefits of more collaborative working and in particular insuring good value for public money, the award of these grants should be conditional upon progress being made with the work for more collaborative business working across the Park. The paper also posed the question to the Board as to whether any future CNPA funding should be channelled through such collaborative mechanism. Andrew Harpers advice was that while this might be a desirable outcome ultimately, it was premature to impose such condition at this stage; he suggested that the Board should consider this in the light of the outcome of the work being taken forward, and due to report in September, on a collaborative business working model across the Park.
8. In opening the discussion, the Convener noted that the issues in front of the Board arose from the Boards informal discussion and the public meeting in Tomintoul in March. A clear message emerged that the Board of the CNPA was expected to lead such progress. Nevertheless the CNPA had received clear messages in the previous five years that their role was to facilitate and it was for the industry to lead. With this in mind, the CNPA's role had concentrated in the last few months on helping and facilitating the industry to move towards a more collaborative approach across the Park. The work of the DMOs, and in particular a more collaborative approach, was very much in line with the Scottish Government purpose of sustainable economic growth. There was a balance to be struck between what it was appropriate to do at a local level, and what it was appropriate to do on a Park wide basis. The CNPA certainly did not want to interfere with progress at the local level in delivering the tourism objectives set out in each of the DMOs' business plans. It was not for the CNPA to be prescriptive; on the other hand it was legitimate to seek good value for public money and secure benefits across the whole of the Cairngorms National Park.
9. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Clarification was sought in respect of the ACDMO (annex 1 page 13) on the difference between participating businesses and membership. It was noted that the ACDMO was set up as

membership organisation, but there were certain packages in addition to the basic membership fee in to which members could buy.

- b) It was suggested that there had been some unease in the DCDMO about the difficulties of working pan park and therefore working with the west side of the Park which would imply deploying funding from public sector agencies whose remit did not run to that geographic area. However, it was quite clear from questions posed and answered at a recent public meeting between Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Enterprise (SE), that SE were supportive of an umbrella organisation as an opportunity to provide a single funding route. It therefore appeared that the senior levels of both SEG and HIE were supportive of this general approach.
- c) The more collaborative approach being proposed in the paper certainly provided opportunities in terms of efficiency savings in respect of shared functions such as Corporate Services. But it was also about preventing duplication on other issues as well; relatively high amounts were being paid by both DMOs on staff salaries and there was a danger these would be working in parallel in two different parts of the Park rather than working together. In this respect paragraph 12 of the paper deserved to be strengthened to put more emphasis on collaborative working, not less. It was appropriate to back this up with conditions to ensure better use of what otherwise could appear to be rather disparate approaches to use of public monies.
- d) There were issues of membership in respect of the DCDMO which currently included members beyond the Park boundary. While this was not necessarily wrong, given that activities on the borders of the Park were liable to benefit a National Park as a whole, nevertheless the Board needed to take a clear position on its approach to this question. [Note: The criterion of a 70-30 ratio had been decided by the Brand Management Group, which had delegated authority.] There was always a danger that of the relatively small membership of 24, a very small proportion of relatively big businesses could dominate the organisation, and these could be outside the Park.
- e) The view was expressed that the proposals in the paper were not strong enough and that the current arrangements of disparate DMOs covering only small parts of the Park were divisive. These arrangements were precisely those that one might have expected in the absence of Park/Park Authority; the CNPA needed to show some leadership in creating a much more cohesive approach to the delivery of tourism within the National Park.
- f) The view was expressed that condition (b) in the paper was reasonable, as it was perfectly appropriate to make funding conditional upon progress being made with work on a collaborative business model. However this needed to be given a much clearer

target, the current wording on the condition being rather too ill-defined.

- g) The tourism industry had been left rudderless following the demise of the area tourist boards. The ACDMO had had a difficult start although was now beginning to find its feet and was taking a more inclusive approach to membership. Mechanisms to ensure a Park-focused delivery of the tourism product were important. It was not right to suggest, as at paragraph 12, that the CNPA were 'forcing' industry, and any public body was entitled to ensure best use of public money. Progress may not have been as good or as rapid with the DMOs in recent years as expected but it was still difficult to see a better alternative at this stage. It would be preferable to stick with this model and to make very clear what was expected as part of any further public funding. Condition (b) was appropriate provided the CNPA made very clear that it wished to see positive progress by September; condition (c) was not possible yet.
- h) It was acknowledged that five years ago when the Park was established, the CNPA was given some very clear messages from the industry about not interfering with issues which were best left to the industry to sort out. At that stage, many people were suspicious of what a CNPA would do. However, after five years attitudes had shifted some what, and it was only now that the view was emerging that people expected the CNPA to take a strong hand in causing a more joined up approach to tourism within the Park. As an enabling body, the CNPA had to judge when was the right time to show a lead on certain issues, and the time had now arrived in respect of the co-ordinated approach to tourism across the Park; five years ago there had been little receptiveness to this idea. Further to this, the question was asked about how much support there was from other public sector partners for the current proposals. It was noted that discussions had been held with the other major funders, all of whom saw the advantages of greater collaborative working. The only rider being made by the other funders was that we should not prejudice the delivery plans that were already in train through the DMOs at present, and it was vital that they made progress with this so they could secure more members quickly. So while all appeared to be supportive of some sort of collaborative mechanism, they were wary of explicitly tying their funding to any prescriptive mechanism. It was noted that as a result of the discussions had to date with the DMOs and Chamber of Commerce, the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce were coming back with proposals in September and this would be the opportunity to get the other public sector funding partners to support a specific proposal.
- i) It was noted by some Board members that the ACDMO literature to prospective members appeared to make no mention of the Cairngorms National Park at all even though they were using the family brand. There was also nothing about environmental quality

criteria associated with the brand. It was however noted that the public marketing material produced by the organisation was quite explicit about these things. Even so, it was important that all materials produced by the organisation whether for members or for wider public marketing use, should be very clear in its references to the National Park and the environmental quality criteria. Andrew Harper agreed to take this up with the ACDMO. It was also noted that the objectives for the ACDMO listed in the annex appeared to make no reference to the National Park (albeit the business plan did); while it was acknowledged that both DMOs had signed up to delivering the National Park Plan, references should be rather more explicit.

- j) Condition (b) was a perfectly reasonable condition and while condition (c) was premature there should be a very clear statement of what the CNPA was looking for. Now was not the time to be backing out of support for the DMOs; instead a very clear steer should be given on what was expected in the future from them in return for public support. There was a counter view that the DMO approach was the wrong direction but this was not held by the majority of members.
- k) The relationship between various DMOs and the various public sector funding partners gave the impression of being conducted as a set of entirely separate individual relationships with everyone talking separately to everyone else. There was potential for the CNPA to brigade the public sector together and to use this as a mechanism for steering the private sector towards a particular approach. It was confirmed by the Convener that this had been precisely the aim stated to the private sector in the two meetings that he had facilitated so far. The collaboration was one required between the private sector partners but also between the public sector partners. The expectation was that the paper being prepared by the Chamber of Commerce for September would provide the model for doing this.
- l) It was noted that some caution was required in that the primary concern of the industry would be customers and the National Park was merely a way of enhancing this approach. The public sector needing to ensure that they were not losing sight of the industry's priorities which would be their customers, not the National Park Plan *per se*.
- m) The CNPA (like other public sector bodies) must fund responsibly and not be unduly swayed by needing to "walk on egg shells". In offering support financially and morally to private sector bodies, the CNPA had to give a very clear steer as to why it was giving that support and what it was looking for longer term. It was essential to get these messages across. The language in the paper was somewhat woolly, and would benefit from being more direct in terms of expressing what CNPA sought. This was not about being

prescriptive but was about setting the clear parameters for future funding.

- n) It was pointed out that the membership of the various DMOs totalled a very small number of businesses in relation to the total operating within the Park. The vast majority of tourism businesses were not members of the DMOs. Indeed, the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce had a significantly larger membership than the DMOs.

10. The Convener summed up the discussion as follows. The current DMOs provided a mechanism to work with and all things considered it was best to build on what we have and concentrate on setting clearer and tougher parameters in return for public funding rather than being prescriptive about the precise mechanisms for delivering good value for public money. On this basis the majority view was content with the proposal at recommendation (a) to grant aid the ACDMO £25,000 and the RDDMO £20,000 for 2008/09 but this would be conditional upon a clear proposal from the recipients working in conjunction with the Chamber of Commerce for a collaborative business working model set out in a paper by the end of September. This paper should indicate timescales and how such a model would be implemented. At its heart would be the delivery of the benefits as set out in the paper at paragraph 8. The Board would consider this model and on that basis consider whether the proposal enshrined in condition c was appropriate for future funding.

11. While it was not for the CNPA to be prescriptive about the mechanisms for achieving these benefits, it was appropriate to give a very clear steer about the outcomes required and the parameters. Andrew Harper would take this forward immediately following the meeting. On a similar timescale, CNPA would be discussing with public sector funding partners the proposal to look for a more efficient and joined up way of providing public sector funding; these discussions would be finalised on the back of the proposal brought forward by the industry at the end of September.

12. Two further points were to be factored in; firstly that all the funded DMOs should make very explicit reference to National Park and the quality criteria associated with use of the brand/family brand in all their literature; Andrew Harper would take this work forward. Secondly, it was noted that under the current arrangements there were some parts of the National Park not covered by DMOs. The ongoing discussions were including business representatives from the Angus Glens and Blair Atholl; an important outcome of the discussions was that through these organisations, and/or through the proposed model expected in September, all parts of the National Park were covered by effective tourism delivering arrangements.

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

- a) Approved grant awards of £25,000 and £20,000 respectively to Aviemore and the Cairngorms, and the Royal Deeside and the Cairngorms Destination Management Organisations, tied to specified Park Plan deliverables;
- b) Agreed that this funding for 2008/09 was conditional upon progress being made on a model for collaborative business working across the Park. Specifically, this would require a proposal delivered in the form of a paper by the end of September indicating timescales for implementation, and how the model would deliver the outcomes within the parameters described by the CNPA (the parameters to be communicated by Andrew Harper to the Chamber of Commerce and the DMOs and based on the benefits set out in the paper 1, but without being prescriptive about the mechanism);
- c) Concluded that it was premature to make any firm statement about the CNPA channelling future funding through any collaborative mechanism, but agreed that such consideration should be reviewed once the proposed paper on collaborative business model had been prepared at the end of September.

14. Action:

- a) Andrew Harper to write to the Chamber of Commerce and the DMOs setting out the outcomes which the CNPA would wish to see from a future collaborative mechanism as a basis for co-ordinating and channelling any future funding.
- b) Andrew Harper to take forward discussion with the other major funding partners with a view to brigading the various public sector funding streams together, and tying this in with the proposed model for collaborative business working, ensuring a joined up approach by both the public and private sector.
- c) Andrew Harper to bring further report to the Board for a decision on future funding arrangements in respect of DMOs and tourism.

Stakeholder Engagement Programme 2008/09 (Paper 2)

15. Francoise Van Buuren introduced the paper which sought agreement on the role of Board Members in supporting the Stakeholder Engagement Programme for 2008/09 along with the agreement to the core communication themes and the objectives for the opinion poll survey to be carried out during the year. In particular, members attention was drawn to paragraph 4 and the reference was made to the briefing note on current issues that was being circulated along with a forward look setting out the main stakeholder engagement activities that were taking place. Comment and feedback on these briefing documents were sought in order to ensure they were of maximum value to Board Members.

16. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) It was generally accepted that members had a role as ambassadors for the Park and Park Authority. However, it was noted that attendance by stakeholders at one of the recent advisory forums had not been good and it was important if Board Members were to exercise their role properly that such meetings had a good attendance.
- b) In annex 1, the main contacts for Inclusive Cairngorms should be the Chair, Alex Murray.
- c) The Board had a wide range of expertise and experience among and across its membership which was therefore able to contribute across a wide range of issues. To tap in to this, it was important to ensure some continuity and therefore a more rigorous approach to which events and meetings were attended by which members. The skills matrix recently developed would help to define this. It was noted that with members having many other demands on their time, they were not always available for specific meetings, and therefore considerable forward planning was required to keep some sort of continuity across subject matter.
- d) There was some comment on the wording of the various themes and the examples given of core messages that could be included. The main point made was that in respect of theme one in particular land managers wanted to hear that they are important to the Park. Some of the messages were drafted in a way that sounded rather defensive. Paragraph 9 (e) had it right in concentrating on what value the Park was to land managers. Other core messages needed some subtle redrafting to change the focus away from the CNPA and towards the other stakeholders.
- e) It was noted that the continuity of experience was not necessarily all- important and there were times when having a Board Member attend an event when they had no prior knowledge of the issues could be quite helpful in terms of challenging conventional wisdom.
- f) If the opinion poll survey was to be used by the Scottish Government and not just the Park Authority, it needed to be made clear to respondents.
- g) The importance of the role of Board Members in stakeholder engagements was noted; it was also noted in this context that a reduction in the number of board members would make the job of engagement with stakeholders more challenging.
- h) The recently circulated information sheets were welcomed and very helpful.
- i) There were some suggestions made in respect of the opinion poll survey objectives as set out in paragraph 12. Asking partners if they were 'committed' was liable to attract a very predictable response in the affirmative without giving any really useful information. It would be more helpful to seek here some measurables to indicate the level and extent of that commitment. It would also be worth

adding to the questions asked whether or not people felt that the CNPA made a difference.

- j) The mechanisms proposed for evaluating the effectiveness of our engagement with stakeholders would be constantly monitored; the work by Macaulay Institute was particularly valuable in this respect.
- k) The various groupings and meetings attended by Board Members were all very different; Board Members were sometimes there of right, sometimes there to contribute, sometimes there simply to observe. It was important to make clear the basis on which Board Members were attending such events.
- l) The ambassadorial role was clearly seen as important for Board Members, but it was vital that it was done in a way that added to the work of staff rather than duplicating it. Subject to the various comments made, the recommendation of the paper was agreed.

17. The Board agreed the recommendations of the papers as follows:

- a) Agreed the role played by the Board to support the Stakeholder Engagement Programme for 2008/09 as set out on pages 2-3;**
- b) Agreed the core communication themes as set out on pages 3-5;**
- c) Agreed the objectives for the opinion poll survey to be carried out in 2008/09 set out on pages 5-6.**

Cairngorms National Park Web Portal (Paper 3)

18. This paper was for information. The following comments were made:

- a) Concern that CNPA officers appeared to be undertaking the role of running the proposed Cairngorms National Park Web Portal. The resource implications of doing this as well as the marketing and promotion were likely to be extremely high. This needed further thought.
- b) Paragraph 9 (f) referred to opportunities to maximise efficiencies. It was noted that a certain amount of generic information was needed on the site referred to in order to enthuse people – simply providing information in relation to events would not be sufficient.
- c) It was essential to have a discussion before the launch of the website to ensure the Board was content given the huge number of challenges set out in the paper. There appeared to be no obvious solution to the tensions set out in the paper and it was therefore vital that such a discussion was held involving the Board before any launch.
- d) It was suggested the launch of the website should take place when the time was right rather than at some arbitrarily determined point as proposed in paragraph 15. A judgement needed to be made in September whether or not the website was right for launch. It was also suggested that a wider board discussion was needed to consider in much more depth the future of several interrelated

issues – web portal, DMOs, etc- and the park Authority's role in taking these forward.

19. Action:

- a) Further paper/discussion to be held with the Board before the launch of the National Park web portal.**

The Cairngorms National Park Authority's Work Addressing Climate Change (Paper 4)

20. This was an information paper. There were no comments other than to compliment Gavin Miles on a useful and informative paper.

The Cairngorms National Park Authority's Annual Equality Schemes Update (Paper 5)

21. This paper was for information. There was no further discussion other than to compliment the authors (Fran Scott, Claire Ross, Elspeth Grant) on all the work behind the scenes to deliver this.

AOCB

22. A number of brief items were reported as follows:

- a) The first annual report on progress with the National Park Plan was going to press shortly and copies were available for members.
- b) Nonie Coultard gave a brief report as the CNPA member on the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum. The CLOAF had met on 20th May and papers were available on the CLOAF website for anyone who was interested. An outdoor access event was being held on 27th September at Braemar for the general public. She also noted that there were a number of new members of the Forum taking up office shortly.
- c) Fiona Murdoch reported on a SRDP training event which she attended recently and noted the complexity of the SRDP application process which was currently only available online.
- d) Eric Baird did the opening address at the Mountain Woodland Launch [need to check details]
- e) David Green reported that he and Alistair MacLennan had officially represented the CNPA at the Highland Show in June. David Green had taken part in a meeting of the JNCC (Joint Nature Conservation Committee) at Glenmore recently. This group of experts had been impressed with work taking place within Cairngorms National Park.

Date of Next Meeting

23. Friday 5th September, Dalwhinnie Village Hall.