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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> August 2006 at 1.30pm

### PRESENT

Eric Baird	Anne MacLean
Stuart Black	Alastair MacLennan
Duncan Bryden	William McKenna
Basil Dunlop	Sandy Park
Angus Gordon	Andrew Rafferty
Douglas Glass	Sheena Slimon
David Green	Andrew Thin
Marcus Humphrey	Susan Walker
Bruce Luffman	Ross Watson

### In Attendance:

Kate Christie	Jane Hope
David Bale	Claire Ross
Bob Grant	Fran Scott
Nick Halfhide	John Thorne
Andrew Harper	Francoise van Buuren

### Apologies:

Nonie Coulthard	David Selfridge
Lucy Grant	Richard Stroud
Eleanor Mackintosh	Bob Wilson
Gregor Rimell	

### Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

1. The minutes of the last meeting held on the 30<sup>th</sup> June 2006 were approved with no changes.

### Matters Arising

2. All actions were in hand; there were no further matters arising.

## Timetable for the National Park Plan and Local Plan (Paper 1)

3. Nick Halfhide and Don McKee introduced the paper which set out a joint timetable for completion of the National Park and Local Plans and the process and timetable for feeding back to those who have contributed to recent consultations. The paper proposed that the original target of submitting the National Park Plan to Ministers around Christmas 2006 was still achievable, and should remain the target. However this was very dependent on securing the support of partner organisations, which was crucial to having a meaningful plan for the next five years. The Local Plan had been an early priority for the CNPA, and a lot of work had been done over the last few years. It was crucial that the Local Plan was soundly based on good evidence, and able to withstand scrutiny. Equally important was establishing very clearly the relationship between the National Park Plan, Structure Plans, and the Park Local Plan – while the CNPA, and the Scottish Executive were clear on this, there was still much work to be done to ensure local authorities were also clear. Because of that relationship, the conclusion had been drawn that the National Park Plan needed to be in place before the Local Plan was put on deposit. This, combined with fact of the elections in May 2007, had led to the recommendation that the local plan was not put on deposit until late May/June 2007, after the elections.
4. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) The importance of stakeholder support was discussed. Meetings with stakeholders had been continuing, and it was crucial in submitting the final plan to Ministers, that the support of all the key public sector bodies could be demonstrated. The intention was to show this by placing all the logos on the cover of the document. Discussions with the Scottish Executive were also continuing. On the Local Plan, consultations with communities were continuing which enabled feedback to be given on an iterative basis as the Plan was revised. A meeting was planned with the ACCC in September which would enable feedback to be given on housing. The point was made that businesses as well as Community Councils should be included in the discussions on housing.
  - b) There was some concern about the consequences of delaying the completion of the Local Plan. The longer the delay, the more chance there was for confusion and delay in the planning system. It was important that the CNPA established clarity on what the final Plan would look like, not least because the Plan could have large consequences on the infrastructure services which had to be supplied by the constituent councils. While this point was noted, it was also suggested that precisely because of these consequences it was essential that the Local Plan was robust and able to withstand scrutiny – this argued for taking more time not less. The point was also made that the recent refusal of the housing development at Boat of Garten had resulted in an appeal which in turn revealed a lot of local requests for affordable housing in the area. The slight delay in the Local Plan timetable should be used to build on that debate about where development should go and where affordable housing was needed.
  - c) There would always be a tendency to argue for more time on these difficult documents, and it would be important to be precise about when the Plan was now expected. This was set out in the table at paragraph 27 which made quite

clear that there was no question of an indefinite postponement, and the timetable was very clear that the Local Plan would be put on deposit in June 2007.

5. **The Board approved the recommendations as follows:**
  - a) **Noted the arrangements in place for delivering the final phases of the two plans and providing feedback to consultees;**
  - b) **Reaffirmed their wish to submit the Park Plan to Ministers by the end of 2006; and**
  - c) **Agreed to postpone putting the draft Local Plan on deposit until Ministers had approved the Park Plan and the May elections had taken place, in practice this meant June 2007.**

### **Learning and the Cairngorms National Park (Paper 2)**

6. The paper was introduced by Claire Ross and Andrew Harper who made clear that paper 2 was purely for information, and was intended to set the scene for papers 3 and 4. A number of strands of work were taking place which could be badged as “learning” and the paper clarified what “learning” meant in the context of the Cairngorms National Park. It was not proposed to make learning a driver in itself for the CNPA’s activities, but to recognise that learning provided an important vehicle for delivery, and was a powerful tool for changing people’s perceptions. There was no intention to focus on learning as an end in itself, but as a delivery tool, and to that end it would be embedded within the National Park Plan. This provided the context for considering papers 3 and 4 about vocational training support for young people, and the Land Based Business Training Project.

### **Vocational Training Support for Young People (Paper 3)**

7. Claire Ross and John Thorne introduced the paper which reported on work taken forward following the Board paper in July 2005 on establishing enhanced vocational training support arrangements for young people in the National Park. The proposed actions were set out in the table at paragraph 17 of the paper.
8. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) The project was currently focused on young people defined as between 16 and 24 years old. While eventually it might be a good idea to expand the age range in the future, bearing in mind the national approach to life long learning, in the early years it was important to keep the project quite clearly focused. The proposal was also to keep the project focused for the moment only on the residents within the Park. The aim of the project was to increase vocational training – there might be the opportunity in the future to look at developing a more traditional apprenticeship as opposed to the modern apprenticeship scheme.
  - b) The paper was commended as containing good practical projects and activities and the approach of identifying gaps and then designing projects to fill these was welcome.

- c) The idea of bursaries was welcome (the top line of the table in paragraph 17) and for these to be a success money should be contributed by a wide range of partners, not just the CNPA. It was important to maximise the leverage created by the CNPA offering funding.
- d) One of the attractions of training courses was to get young people out of their usual environment and seeing new places. Some thought should be given to combining with other National Parks and operating exchange visits. While it was recognised that the project needed to be kept small and focused initially, this might be something for the future.
- e) On the matter of funding from partners, it was probably a case of demonstrating in the first instance that these ideas will work, and then getting additional funding in the future on the back of this demonstrable success.
- f) The possibility of excellence awards was raised.
- g) The question was asked about the impact of seasonal EU migrants. No work had been done on this within the National Park.
- h) One of the benefits of the proposed vocational training support was that young people would be enabled to find work and stay within the Park rather than needing to leave in order to develop careers. There was some discussion therefore as to whether the skills focus should be limited as set out at paragraph 15 to those skills and employment sectors that contribute to the Park's aims. Again the point was made that in the early days of such projects that it was important to have a clear focus.
- i) The question was asked about whether the £32,000 funding mentioned in the paper was proposed to come from Scottish Executive. It was confirmed that LANTRA had been asked for this funding and it was hoped that they would supply the money. The question was also asked about SQA's apparent lack of enthusiasm for the proposals, and whether other educational institutions had been approached. SQA are now being a little more responsive, and officers are also working closely with Sector Skills Councils and colleges.
- j) The question of success measures for the various projects was raised. While these had not yet been developed, it was acknowledged this would need to be done. In particular, it was noted that there would need to be an assessment of how the selection of sectors (at paragraph 15) helped to support the delivery of the Park's aims.
- k) The CNPA needed to be talking to Learning and Teaching Scotland who were clearly wanting to build links on training provision and may well be looking to help share and develop appropriate schemes for delivery of training in particular skills.
- l) The question was asked as to what the benefits were to businesses from such initiatives as work placements given that there was no guarantee that young people would not move on once trained. There was no clear answer to this issue – there was never any guarantee that individuals would stay in a work place for any particular length of time. The hope was that in selecting young people for various training schemes, there would be an attempt to filter those who wished to stay in the area. In addition, the CNPA were working with the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce to minimise the bureaucracy associated with the proposed actions set out at paragraph 17.

- m) There were arguments for and against keeping the proposed projects focused on young people. The point was made very clearly that the whole idea at the outset of this series of projects had been to make sure that young people had the opportunity to stay and work in the National Park if they so wished. Inevitably some would move away, but it was equally important that they knew that they could come back and settle down later.
- n) The idea was floated of getting businesses together so that apprentices could move round between businesses within one sector.
- o) The point was made that any apprenticeships needed to be giving work experience that was meaningful.
- p) The point was made that the fourth line in the table at paragraph 17 when referring to MA in rural skills was referring to a modern apprenticeship, not a Master of Arts. Some caution was expressed in respect to getting involved in this, given that the setting up of a new MA was a huge undertaking. It made sense to do more to utilise existing courses rather than designing a new one.

**9. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **Noted the preparatory work and research that had informed the paper;**
- b) **Agreed the breadth of the skills base that was to be addressed (as set out at paragraphs 15 and 16);**
- c) **Agreed to the progression of the collective package of proposed actions as set out at paragraph 17, but noting some caution in how the potential MA in rural skills was taken forward.**

**The Role of the Land Based Business Training Project in 2007 (Paper 4)**

10. Kate Christie and Claire Ross introduced the paper which outlined the proposed role of the Land Based Business Training Project (LBBTP) for 2007, and sought agreement to the CNPA's continued support and financial contribution to the project for this period. The project had been very successful to date, and had demonstrated a very effective model for provision of training. The project was potentially a good vehicle for delivery of the National Park Plan. Current funding through the European Social Fund was due to come to an end at the end of 2006 and initial indications were that a new European Programme would be available but only from the autumn of 2007. Informal feedback indicated that the principle of the LBBTP may be supported through the new programme, but there was clearly a gap in the availability of European funding for most of 2007. Other potential funding sources were being investigated and early indications were favourable. Given the possible twelve month funding gap, the paper outlined three options for the LBBT and sought the Board's agreement to one of these.

11. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The question was raised as to whether, if Option 2 was followed, (introducing a new strand to the training), this would require the omission of current strands of the project in order to fund the new courses. In the short term, over the next year

LBBT would need to be less flexible in relation to commercial courses in order to expand the public benefits courses being proposed.

- b) The point was made that any decision by the Board on the possible options was subject to funding being obtained and the normal CNPA procedures for agreeing this through the Operations Plan/Finance Committee.
- c) The question of making a certain number of places available for young people on LBBT courses was raised – this was possible, and was covered by Option 4 (snapshot training) of the paper on Vocational Training for Young People.
- d) The Land Based Business sector considered the project extremely valuable, and there was strong argument for continuing the project. The difference between Option 1 and Option 2 (both of which provided for the project continuing) was the funding being provided by the CNPA. As with previous projects, while it was right that the CNPA should express a view that a project was worth pursuing in principle and was prepared to put some funding in itself, this should provide a catalyst for obtaining funding from other partners, in this case UHI, the LECs, etc.
- e) There was a strong argument in favour of expanding the public benefits side of the project, in order to help deliver the aims of the National Park.
- f) If funding for the project was tight, the debate for continuing the project was essentially one between commercial interest versus public benefit. The feeling of the Board was that in this situation more emphasis should be put on the public benefit provision. But before the decision could be made, there needed to be a clearer indication from officials as to what other funding might be available.

**12. The Board agreed the recommendations as follows:**

- a) **Agreed to the continuation of the LBBT during 2007 and to the pilot of a new “Public Benefits for All” strand to the project subject to additional funding being found from other key partners. In the absence of sufficient additional funding, the focus of the CNPA funding should be on public benefit courses.**

**13. Action:**

- a) **Against the background of this agreement in principle, future funding arrangements and implications for the delivery of the LBBT to be approved through the Operational Plan, and the Finance Committee as necessary.**

**Response to Consultation on Visitor Management Arrangement at Cairngorm Mountain (Paper 5)**

14. The Convener declared an interest in the subject and left the meeting; the chair was taken by the Deputy Convener. The members of the Highland Council present at the meeting noted an interest but concluded this was not significant or sufficient for them to depart the meeting.
15. Bob Grant introduced the paper which sought the Board’s agreement to the CNPA response to the consultation being conducted by SNH and the Highland Council on proposed changes to the Visitor Management arrangements at Cairngorm Mountain. Two changes had been proposed by Cairngorm Mountain Ltd to the visitor management

arrangements, and SNH and Highland Council were conducting a consultation on these as required under the Section 50 Agreement; the final decision on any changes rested with SNH and the Highland Council.

16. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) A monitoring system was in place and would enable any detrimental effects of the proposed changes to be picked up. It was noted that the windy ridge footpath already existed and adding this to the list of preferred paths in the Visitor Management Plan would not be expected to make a huge difference. It was noted that it would have been preferable if in launching the consultation, SNH had provided some prior analysis of the data collected through the monitoring system over previous years in order to inform the consultation.
- b) The letter of application from CML indicated that they expected the diversion of walkers onto the Windy Ridge footpath would actually reduce the impact on Natura sites. It was felt that the effects would be unlikely to be significant either way and it was certainly difficult to argue that the effects would be positive.
- c) There was some considerable discussion as to whether or not there were adequate mechanisms in place for dealing with any negative impacts of the proposed changes if the monitoring system revealed these. The point was made that once the proposed change had been made it would be difficult to revert back to the previous situation and it was not at all clear how this could be handled both practically and presentationally. The point was made that SNH and Highland Council would have uppermost in their minds that no changes should be made unless the likely impact was minor and therefore the likelihood of having to retrench was very small. Nevertheless there was some feeling that there was insufficient information available to enable a decision to be made and that it was not clear how the situation would be handled if the monitoring arrangements showed that the changes were having an adverse impact. However, the decision was for the Section 50 signatories, namely SNH and the Highland Council; not the CNPA. It was suggested that paragraph 2 of the proposed response covered the point. There might be some question as to how the CNPA would be perceived if the proposed changes were seen as having a negative impact; however the other side of the question also needed to be considered, namely how the CNPA would be perceived if it were seen to be responding negatively. All the issues needed to be considered in the round.

17. The proposal was made (Douglas Glass) and seconded (Susan Walker) to approve the consultation response as set out in the paper. A proposal to amend this (Anne MacLean) was not seconded.

18. **The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **The Board approved the consultation response as set out in annex 1 of the paper.**

19. **Action**

- a) **Officials to submit the consultation response to SNH.**

*[David Green and Marcus Humphrey departed the meeting]*

## **Contribution Towards Work Programme Delivered by Upper Deeside Access Trust 2006/07 (Paper 6)**

20. Bob Grant introduced the paper which detailed the proposed programme of work for 2006/07 and sought Board approval to fund the programme. The scale of the financial contribution required both Board and Scottish Executive approval.

21. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The table at annex 1 showed at the bottom of the table "income generation by UDAT", and the question was asked as to why this appeared below the total expenditure budget line. It was explained that the line was there to reflect the income generated from projects which were now continuing to fund capital works on an on-going basis. These amounts were based on projected income such as the Glen Muick car park, and no funding was sought from partners to contribute to these projects.
- b) The figures in annex 1 appeared to be suggesting £126,000 worth of overheads to generate only £60,000 worth of delivery – this was a very high ratio. The point was made that the figures did not explain the whole story, and reflected the fact that some other work was being carried out by UDAT under the ECAP Project and there was hence some "cross fertilisation" occurring. The figures probably needed to be represented to make this clear.
- c) The timing of the withdrawal of funding by SEG was unfortunate, but the figure contributed by the CNPA had been calculated before the withdrawal of the SEG funding. There was no suggestion that the proposed funding should go through any further changes to reflect this withdrawal.
- d) It was emphasised that the decision in front of the Board was relating purely to the year 2006/07, and was not related to the longer term judgement on how to best provide a mechanism for dealing with path repair in the future (as considered at the previous Board meeting). The point relevant to the current discussion was that UDAT had proven themselves highly effective and the CNPA could have a high degree of confidence that they would deliver in the year 2006/07 what the funding was being provided for.
- e) In this context, it would be more appropriate if item 4 in the table (the consultancy fees on development of the UDAT Business Plan) appeared below the line which indicated total capital revenue expenditure on joint agency projects.
- f) While the good work done by UDAT was well understood and appreciated, the question was asked as to whether any other group would be likely to come along and ask for similar funding, using the current paper as a precedent. While this was possible, there were no other known examples which were likely. In any event, the Outdoor Access Strategy was being developed so that the priorities across the whole Park could be considered. There would be a paper coming to the Board in due course on the options for Park-wide arrangements.



- g) There was a view of several Members that the table at annex 1 did not provide a clear representation of what monies were buying. The table needed to be re-presented to make this clearer and tease out the effects of cross funding. The Board was supportive of the principle of contributing to UDAT funding for 2006/07, but felt that the table needed reworking in the interests of clarity, not least so that the Scottish Executive approval could also be given. Given the time constraints, it was proposed that the Convener and Deputy Convener should agree the reworked table to allow the approval to be progressed with the Scottish Executive; the Board would have the opportunity of ratifying this at the next meeting. The process would minimise any cost to UDAT of a cash flow difficulty.

**22. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **The Board approved in principle the funding of £100,000 towards the 2006/07 programme of works being delivered through the Upper Deeside Access Trust. However, the Board was concerned that the table at annex 1 was not clear enough about what the funding would purchase and agreed that the Convener and Deputy Convener would approve a representation of this table which the whole Board would be able to ratify at its next meeting.**

**23. Action:**

- a) **Bob Grant to rework the table at annex 1, and seek approval of the Convener and Deputy Convener.**
- b) **Subject to a, submit the proposal for the approval of the Scottish Executive.**
- c) **Represent the annex 1 table to the Board for ratification at its meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> September.**

**Corporate Plan Report: Theme 2 (Paper 7)**

24. Noted.

**Corporate Plan Report: Theme 1 (Paper 8)**

25. One point of correction was made to paragraph 5 of this paper; this noted that the Ballater All Abilities Path was not complete. This was not quite the case yet although was expected to be so very soon. The question was raised as to why there was no reference in the paper about the interpretation work associated with the new entry point markers. The question was also raised about Sustrans and whether it was feasible for the entry marker point sites to be multi-use. It was indicated that Sustrans is willing to fund a feasibility study at this stage and this can be assessed at a later date. The question was also raised about whether Sustrans would have a say in which route will be most satisfactory to their needs, but it was confirmed that the path was restricted to the existing route. Under paragraph 4d, it was noted that the casework was prioritised and the more straight forward ones were being dealt with using for example ranger services. The case load did flag up a number of common issues, for example golf courses with often raised common policy issues rather than individual ones.

## **Operational Plan 2006/07, Quarter 1 (Paper 9)**

26. Some corrections were made to the recommendation section of the paper. It was noted that there was little to report after only one quarter of the Operational Plan, and that two goals had been identified as affected by some changes to the timetable and/or delivery plans. One of these was goal 3 relating to the Local Plan, and this had been discussed earlier in the meeting. The other was goal 13 which related to communication and consultation by land managers on delivery of public benefits. Overall the operational plan for 06/07 was progressing well.

## **Election of Convener and Review of Committee Membership (Paper 10)**

27. This paper was for information and set out the process and timetable for election of the new Convener, and annual review of committee membership. Both of these would take place at the next Board meeting on the 8<sup>th</sup> September.

## **Any Other Business**

28. It was noted that this would be Andrew Thin's last Board Meeting (although he would be chairing the Planning Committee on the 25<sup>th</sup> August). The Board's appreciation of Andrew's leadership as Convener over the first three and a half years of the CNPAs existence was recorded with thanks.
29. The Convener noted that today was the last meeting for Nick Halfhide (Head of the Strategic Policy and Project Management Group) who was departing on secondment to be the Acting Director at the Deer Commission for Scotland. The Board wished him well.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

30. Friday 8<sup>th</sup> September at Kingussie.