
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

APPROVED MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held in the Albert Hall, Ballater on Friday 11 December 2015 at 10am

PRESENT

Peter Argyle (Convener)
Rebecca Badger
Angela Douglas
Paul Easto
Dave Fallows
Katrina Farquhar
Janet Hunter
Gregor Hutcheon

John Latham
Bill Lobban
Eleanor Mackintosh
Willie McKenna
Fiona Murdoch
Gordon Riddler
Judith Webb
Brian Wood (Deputy Convener)

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services,
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Rural Development,
Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience,
David Watson, Economic Development Manager,
Adam Streeter-Smith, Outdoor Access Officer,
Sarah Jones, Community Broadband Scotland,
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board.

Apologies:

Kate Howie
Gregor Rimell

Jeanette Gaul

Welcome and Introduction

1. Peter Argyle, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting in Ballater.
2. The Convener said that an informative presentation had been given by Heather Trench on the Visitor Survey and implications for Tourism in the Park at a meeting the previous

evening. This had been followed by positive discussions on tourism and Snow Roads Scenic Routes. Stephen Archer, Aberdeenshire Council, Federica Bertolini, Highlands Hospitality and Angus McNicol, Invercauld Estate had all attended.

3. Apologies were received from the above Members.

Minutes of Last Meeting held on 13 November, 2015 – for approval

4. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 13 November 2015 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters Arising

5. The Convenor provided an update on the Action points from the meeting on 25 September 2015 that were postponed at the last meeting:
 - a) Action Point at Para 13 (i.) – Open - the scale of CO2 equivalence still to be circulated.
 - b) Action Point at Para 13 (ii.) – Closed - Board invitations to the UK National Parks Tourism Officers visit on 7th/ 8th October 2015 emailed on 2 October 2015.
 - c) Action Point at Para 24 (i.) – Closed - changes to Board Membership of Committees and Groups made.
 - d) Action Point at Para 24 (iii.) – Review underway and paper clarifying the role and purpose of the Land Managers Forum, CDAG and Farmers Forum will be taken in March 2016.
 - e) Action Point at Para 24 (iv.) – Closed - The Cairngorms National Park Strategic Delivery Group has been renamed as the Cairngorms National Park Delivery Group.
 - f) Action point at Para 24 (v) – Closed - Minutes of the meeting of the Cairngorms National Park Delivery Group circulated to the Board.
 - g) Action Point at Para 24 (vi.) – Closed - Cairngorms National Park Delivery Group Terms of Reference circulated to the Board.
 - h) Action point at Para 24 (vii.) – Ongoing - Councillors and Directly Elected Members for relevant areas agreed to meet to agree which areas they would cover to ensure even coverage where their areas crossed and to come back to the Board with a list of who would cover which area.
 - i) Action Point at Para 33 (i.) – Closed - The Audit Committee has been renamed the Audit and Risk Committee.
 - j) Action Point at Para 33 (iii.) – Closed - The current Risk Register has been included in Paper 4 on Agenda.

- k) Action Point at Para 37 (i) – Closed - The results of the Visitor Survey were sent to businesses early November to coincide with the Cairngorms Business Partnership Annual Conference and the Tourism Partnership meeting.
- l) Action Point at Para 37 (ii) – Closed - The link to the marketing segmentation approach circulated to the Board.

Declarations of Interest

- 7. Brian Wood declared an interest in:
 - a) Item No. Paper 5 -Indirect interest – Member stated that he was a member of Cairngorms Local Action Group (CLAG) which has been approached to consider possibility of setting up a sub-group to take forward the development of broadband in more remote communities. Board noted interest and agreed this did not require the member’s exclusion from the item.
- 8. Paul Easto declared an interest in:
 - a) Items No. Paper 5 - Indirect interest – Member works with an organisation that takes an interest in, and potentially would receive benefit from, improved broadband in the Park. Board noted interest and agreed this did not require the member’s exclusion from the item.

CEO Report (Paper I)

- 9. Grant Moir, Chief Executive introduced Paper I which highlights the main strategic work streams being directed by Management Team. Grant explained that these were areas where significant staff resources were being directed to deliver National Park Partnership Plan priorities. He highlighted the following areas:
 - a) Deer management – Meeting recently held with Mar Lodge, Glenfeshie and Atholl Estates. Was a relatively positive and worthwhile meeting. There will be a follow-up meeting at officer level in January and then another main meeting in Feb/March time to get a way forward and hopefully get a Deer Management Agreement set up - still a lot of work to be done in this.
 - b) Corgarff works on the Snow Road are in place – also Tomintoul Quarry and Devil’s Elbow work coming forward in New Year.
 - c) Autumn Marketing campaign now finished – good stats and very successful campaign. Now working on 2016 Spring Campaign looking at Cairngorms Nature Festival, Snow Road Scenic Routes, and the Year of Innovation, Architecture and Design. Visitscotland, CNPA and CBP working on this and it links in to getting the Regional Marketing Strategy finalised for the CNPA.
 - d) LEADER - Small Grants Programme had now started with funding from the CNPA to let this progress.

- e) Staff survey results will be taken to staff next week. There had been extremely positive results over all factors, and CNPA got into the “Star” category of organisations so best survey results so far since this survey first used in 2009.
- f) Spending review taking place on 16 December.
- g) Thanks to Paul Easto and Becky Badger for providing their updates.

10. The Board discussed the following:

- a) “Transformational opportunity” phrase used in report – need to be careful using phrases like this. People of Braemar welcome positive change in Braemar such as the Fife Arms hotel improvements, they do not, however, want the village to change drastically so need to be careful about language used.
- b) Scenic Routes Map – it had previously been agreed that the Snow Road did go to Ballater but this not shown on the map, can this be corrected?
- c) Moorland Partnership and role that CNPA would play in making an application through the Environmental Cooperation Fund. Would this require any underwrite by the Park Authority. Grant Moir said that there would not be any underwrite.
- d) Association of Community Councils - good that the study of Micro Hydro potential being looked at across the park, and being taken forward by AoCC.
- e) Peatland Restoration – Member asked if local contractors could undergo a training day re moorland restoration as it was felt that they could take on this work. A presentation on peatland restoration will be given to the Board in the New Year.
- f) Nature of Scotland Awards – Congratulations were forwarded to the team for winning the award.

11. The Board noted the Paper.

Planning Committee (Paper 2)

12. Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced Paper 2 which asked the Board to choose which Planning Committee structure it wished to operate. Grant highlighted the following points

- a) Originally there had been differences of legal opinion as to whether the CNPA could legally establish a Planning sub-committee. The Designation Order was changed in 2010 and having checked with Harper MacLeod, Solicitors, CNPA had been assured that it was within their gift to change the Planning Committee to a sub-committee if the Board wished to do so.

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

- a) In general members did not think that there should be a change from the current planning committee set-up. There were a number of reasons given for this:
 - i. Members did not agree with the idea that reducing numbers would have a significant reduction in costs or revenue or carbon footprint as meetings would still be held in various different areas of the Park and there would always be Members who would need to travel.
 - ii. Members felt that the breakdown of who would sit on the sub-committee in Option 2 seemed to put Members into different levels with all the directly elected Members sitting on the sub-committee, when in actual fact they might not be interested in Planning. Grant clarified that this was to ensure a geographic focus so that someone would be on the committee from each of the 5 areas of the Park.
 - iii. The applications that are called-in must be of significance to 4 aims of Park, and in the case of MSC Matters Specified in Conditions applications these sometimes can be very large and complex so should not be delegated. As we cannot have a Local Review Body, any decision that was taken under delegated powers would go to the Reporters' Unit at Scottish Government. Members felt that this would not speed up decisions.
- b) Members discussed making better use of Planning Committee days, especially as fewer applications were now being called-in and brought to Committee. In the past there were more site visits, this would be good to set up again letting Members look at different applications and designs which would help them increase their skill sets. CEO and Convenor to consider the use of planning committee days.
- c) The Government are holding a Planning Review consultation and Grant Moir said he had put together a response to this. Members felt that if CNPA powers changed as a result of this review then that was when changes to the Committee structure should be looked at.
- d) One Member put forward that there was some merit in looking at size of the Planning Committee. When the Authority was put in place it was important for the Planning Committee to be made up of all the Members of the Board, but now as mature Committee perhaps need to look at this again and decide how to divide up the responsibilities of the Members. Should be looking at what Board did overall and not just in respect of planning.
- e) A member suggested that perhaps the decision should be deferred until further discussions on Board responsibilities and roles on other committees could be discussed in more depth, and also see what emerged from the Planning Review.

This was supported by members. Grant pointed out that Members are contracted for 2 – 3 days per month, at the moment they are doing the maximum three days. Members sat on 26 groups or committees for the Authority. This was something that might need to be looked at in the round.

14. The Board agreed to keep the status quo at moment. Best time for change to happen would be if bigger changes had to be made after the Planning Review. Broader discussion of what Board does and how they spend their time should be held, including the Planning function. Informal sessions will be focused on the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) until March. Once NPPP is agreed, then a session should be organised to talk about what Board do and how they do it, taking on board points made around the table.

15. Actions:

- i. Board will review this at a suitable point next year.**

Review of CNPA Support for Ranger Services (Paper 3)

16. Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience, introduced Paper 3 which looks to bring to a conclusion the CNPA's review of support for Ranger Services undertaken over the course of a year in order to enhance delivery of National Park Partnership Plan priorities.

17. The review focused on the capacity of the Ranger Services and looking at future needs and how CNPA might address those. Paper sets out some of the principles for continuing that partnership approach and looking at steps in developing a Volunteer Ranger Service.

18. The Board considered the detail in the Paper. Members were supportive of the approach outlined in the paper. A number of points were raised in discussion:

- a) A member asked where the volunteers would be drawn from. Hamish Trench clarified that volunteers would be drawn from communities around the Park, and that there were already people volunteering for schemes such as Health Walks and Cairngorms Nature.
- b) A Member asked about the Volunteer Co-ordinator post and Hamish clarified positive discussions with the LEADER team on potential for match funding had been held.
- c) COAT's HLF funding have volunteer monies included in their package, could this be used to work alongside CNPA service? Hamish confirmed that this might be the case as this would be the type of collaboration that was hoped for.

- d) Paragraph 9 – stated that in Eastern Cairngorms the current level of ranger provision is about right. Request for clarification on this.
- e) Hamish clarified that it was felt the existing provision in the Eastern Cairngorms was adequately dealing with visitor numbers and issues so service provided seemed to be at the correct level. It was felt in Badenoch and Strathspey however there was clear evidence that there were gaps in the service and so there was a need to improve the service in that area.
- f) With regards to the discussions with Aberdeenshire and Highland Councils on the withdrawal of funding for Ranger Services, both councils said that they wish to continue to work in partnership. Highland Council are at the moment carrying out a complete review of their service with all of their rangers having been put at risk due to the review.
- g) Real opportunity to use volunteering as an engagement tool. Lots of work and opportunities in the Park up till 18 years old. This gives an onward pathway and experience in other National Parks suggests that getting volunteers should be feasible.
- h) A Member appreciated the statement made at the beginning saying that this project needed to be carefully managed and felt that it was very reassuring that staff were willing to look at and explore different options.
- i) A presentation on a recent visitor survey had been given the previous evening to the Board, and the point was made that more than half of the visitors interviewed in the survey said they would be willing to help or pay a donation towards the work of Park. This is something which could be taken advantage of.
- j) Gregor Hutcheon had in the past worked with volunteer organisations and it was suggested that a Board Member, possibly Gregor, be appointed to work closely with staff on this project.
- k) Would there be an opportunity within this scheme to set up a volunteer ranger apprenticeship scheme, with the apprentice moving around different estates? Adam Streeter Smith replied that there was an opportunity with modern apprenticeship schemes and funding available to set this up and the CNPA would welcome the opportunity to support the Ranger Managers to apply for such funding. This would be a great opportunity for young people and would be good on their CVs.
- l) A Member felt that there was a very fine line between the success and failure of such a volunteering scheme. He pointed out that although £22,000 was being redirected into this scheme from Local Authority Ranger funding, there was still another £30,000 to be found to fund this scheme. He hoped that this extra funding was available and that the CNPA were sure that it would be enough to run the scheme.
- m) Corporate volunteering should be kept in mind as there could be some real opportunities there. Need to keep up the strong links already established with

Aberdeenshire and Highland Local Authorities and keep them informed of what was going on with this scheme in the future.

20. The Board agreed that CNPA's support for ranger services follows the principles below:

- a) We continue to condition our grant support so that Ranger Services operate to the National Ranger Policy developed by SNH and CNP Ranger Framework.**
- b) We continue our partnership approach targeting our grant support for ranger services to deliver elements of Active Cairngorms, Cairngorms Nature, Learning and Inclusion programmes.**
- c) We continue to recognise and value the inputs of ranger managers to the partnership and celebrate the effectiveness of locally managed services supporting both National Park aims and local outputs.**
- d) We look to increase the provision of rangers in the western Cairngorms to allow for increasing visitor numbers, increasing residents and our commitments to conserve and enhance the natural heritage.**
- e) We work to maintain the provision of rangers in eastern Cairngorms looking for opportunities to make that provision more effective.**
- f) We work to further improve collaboration and professionalism amongst all the ranger services.**

19. The Board also agreed to reallocate the grant currently paid to Highland Council and Aberdeenshire Council amounting to £11,000 per service from April 2016 towards development of a volunteer ranger network.

20. Actions:

- i. Gregor Hutcheon to become Board champion for cause.**

Strategic Risk Management and Monitoring Corporate Performance (Paper 4)

21. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 4 which outlined approaches being taken on corporate performance monitoring and risk management to underpin delivery of the Authority's Corporate Plan for 2015/18.

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

- a) A member queried whether a KPI could be added or changed around moorland management. David Cameron clarified the KPIs reported on in the annex were ones which appear in current Corporate Plan and were agreed by Board and subsequently by Scottish Ministers already. There is flexibility however for internal reporting to develop project specific indicators.
- b) Members were also reassured that individual projects have agreed KPI's where necessary that are more detailed.
- c) Member referred to section regarding Audit on page 7 – wondered if the bar should be set a bit lower than the limit of 2 recorded high priority audit recommendations. After discussion it was agreed that it should be set at “1”.
- d) Human Resources reporting – a Member asked if benchmarking was done where comparisons were made with other organisations as paper highlighted how CNPA performed internally but not in comparison with others. David confirmed that this was done and reported to Staffing and Recruitment Committee. In future he would look to give highlights of this in the cover paper to Board.
- e) Members asked about “near misses” on health and safety matters and how they were reported and recorded as these could be a good indicator of organisational behaviours. David assured Member that staff were encouraged to record and report near misses and that Management Team use these to learn from and tighten up Health and Safety so that they do not happen again.
- f) Member asked why in Annex 2, some of the KPI's aren't reflected in same way as in Annex 1. David explained that the Corporate Plan KPI's and NPPP KPI's have different baselines. The member also asked if there was any way of tracking progress at each Board meeting. David said it was his intention to bring to the Board twice a year. However, some of the Corporate Plan KPI's cycles do not make them suitable for quarterly or twice yearly reporting.
- g) Grant said that with the development of the new National Park Partnership Plan that he hoped to be able to bring both the Corporate and Park Plan KPI's together so that only one set of information needed collecting.
- h) Board Member suggested that every quarter they pick a theme and talk about what they have learned over that period as a Board, admitting when they have got something wrong but also celebrating when things have gone right.
- i) Risk register – a Member felt that the Crown Estate devolution was a risk to the HLF project and that in the short-term should this be added. David said that he was more than happy to discuss with Hamish and others to see where that point should be added in the short-term.
- j) A member highlighted that it may be appropriate to increase the ongoing risk of shortfall in financial resources even after mitigation. David agreed to revisit this.

23. **The Board discussed the proposed Corporate Plan Performance Monitoring Framework and Strategic Risk Register, and agreed that David should make the minor modifications suggested and take a report back to the Board twice a year.**
24. **The Board noted the progress to date in delivery of the Corporate Plan 2015/18 presented in the paper.**
25. **Actions:**
 - i. **David Cameron to bring report to the Board twice a year.**

Delivery of Superfast Broadband in the National Park (Paper 5)

26. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Rural Development introduced Paper 5 which provided an update on the delivery of Superfast Broadband in the Cairngorms National Park and set out the proposed approach to addressing provision in those homes and businesses that were hardest to reach. David Watson gave an overview of lessons learnt from a recent visit to Argyll Islands to see how a similar scheme had been planned. Murray introduced Sarah Jones, Community Broadband Scotland, who would be able to answer questions on behalf of CBS.
27. The Board considered Paper 5 and the following points were discussed:
 - a) A Member said that although he strongly supported this project he hoped that it would provide a decent service that would prove to be reliable and increase broadband speed. He queried para 5 of the paper which said that several communities in the Park were due to have fibre broadband installed by end of 2016 which was back a year from original date of 2015. David explained that the end of 2016 was the final end date for the whole project.
 - b) The point was also put forward that the lack of decent internet speed was not only frustrating but caused major problems for business throughout the area. This needed to be addressed immediately. Murray replied that the paper acknowledged these challenges but need to look at influences the Authority had and what could be done to help as resources were limited. Funding had been provided to help support the Cairngorms Business Partnership to host networking events to allow direct communication between businesses and those who were responsible for allocating funding to the roll-out of superfast broadband. CBP are also acting in an advocacy role which CNPA do not fund directly.
 - c) Grant Moir pointed out that there are problems at the moment but there was a massive public investment in the Highlands and in the rest of Scotland and should be recognised as such. Within the next year or so there will be a network of

relatively good broadband across a huge swathe of the area including the proposed aggregated project and this should be looked at as a good news story.

- d) In Paragraph 5 of the paper the point was made that people can gain £1064 being an online user and this was queried by a Member. Murray said that this was taken from a study as part of wider programme of work about digital inclusion which estimated this to be the social value of an individual getting online access. .
- e) The question was asked as to whether State Aid might be a real threat to this Project? Sarah Jones stated that there would require being a specific State Aid consultation, targeted at commercial providers, to address this issue.
- f) A Member suggested that the 4th Aim of the CNP cannot be delivered without the correct broadband and mobile infrastructure and that this should be taken to Ministerial level as it is such an important issue.
- g) Peter Argyle pointed out that the main problem was that there was no universal service obligation and this had to be worked round by encouraging the community aspect. Broadband service is essential for the Park and this is something that he and Grant will discuss with the Minister in the future but felt that other organisations such as Highland Council, Aberdeenshire Council were better placed to speak with Ministers and HIE regarding this. Board Members should also raise this issue with people who have influence at every opportunity.
- h) Member felt that CNPA needed to manage expectations and be careful about what they say they can deliver.

28. The Board

- a) Noted the progress that has been made to date;**
- b) Agreed in principle to support the development of the Cairngorms Community Broadband Project; and**
- c) Provided advice on the identification or establishment of a suitable community-based delivery organisation.**

AOCB

29. There were no items of competent business.

Date of Next Meeting

30. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 11 March 2016, the Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore.