

MINUTES OF THE PARK GATEWAYS AND INFORMATION WORKING GROUP MEETING

9am, Friday 12th March 2004
Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown-on-Spey

Present

Bob Wilson	Chair, Working Group, CNPA Board
Andrew Rafferty	CNPA Board
Gregor Rimell	CNPA Board
Debbie Strang	CNPA Sustainable Tourism Officer
Andrew Harper	CNPA Head of Social & Economic Development
Daniel Alexander	CNPA Head of Communications
Bruce Luffman	CNPA Board
Willie McKenna	CNPA Board
Graham Smith	Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board
Margaret Wearmouth	Aberdeen & Grampian Tourist Board
Alistair Clunas	Mar Lodge

Apologies

Murray Ferguson	CNPA Head of Visitor Services & Recreation
Jim Gillies	Forestry Commission
David Selfridge	CNPA Board

Welcome and Apologies

Action

1. The Chair opened the meeting and noted that there were a number of apologies.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

2. Under paragraph five of the previous minutes, sub-heading National Park Boundary, the Group agreed that Aaron Lawton should advise on the most suitable locations for the marker as close to the boundary as possible. If at all possible the markers should either be on the boundary or inside and markers outside the boundary should be avoided unless there is sufficient justification. With this clarification, the minutes were accepted.

Matters Arising

3. It was noted that although there has been a significant amount of work done on visitor information provision by National Park staff this is not likely to be brought to the Group until the arrival of the permanent Visitor Services Officer in mid April.
4. The previous meeting had discussed the issue of gaelic and whether a gaelic interpretation would be a possibility on the marker signs. It had been agreed

that this issue needs to be kept under review and Debbie Strang noted that Rita Callander the National Park Communities and Cultural Heritage Officer was undertaking some background work on this matter. The Working Group agreed that some direction from the Board would be useful, and the Chair agreed to raise the issue at a forthcoming Board meeting. Debbie Strang said that Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park had commissioned an initial piece of research on the gaelic issue and this might provide a useful beginning point.

5. There had also been a discussion on consultation as the project developed, and Debbie Strang noted that she had contacted the Association of Community Councils to update them on the project.

Update and Further Discussion on Entry Point Markers Project

6. Debbie Strang explained that she had met Aaron Lawton, the consultant for the project, in Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park together with their signage representative, John Jones. She said that the signs were described as high quality stopgap signs and out of 19 possible locations they had chosen to implement 14. John Jones advised that the safety issue was paramount and their point of entry signs had been constructed of a material that would destroy on impact. This had already happened on one occasion, and he therefore advised that ongoing maintenance and possible replacement signs should be considered from the outset.
7. Aaron Lawton is slightly behind schedule due to the heavy snowfall which had prevented photographing all the sign locations during the first week. However much progress has been made and Aaron has identified 22 road locations, 2 cycle sites, 2 walk ways, 5 stations and 2 railway sites. Each site has between 1-3 location options and photographs have been taken at each site showing the panoramic picture, the shots getting closer to the site and the final shot. As a result between 1000 to 1500 images have already been compiled.
8. As a result of visiting the majority of the sites it is clear that there are a number of issues arising that need discussion. For example, the site at Drumochter requires a significant amount of 'tidying up' so that the impact of the National Park marker is not lost. It is clear that the Group want to create an impression of quality and the marker will mark the threshold to that. There is little point therefore, in putting a high quality, well thought out and designed marker into a site that detracts from it. The Group agreed that these locations would need to be considered very carefully and cooperation and joint working would be required between the different stakeholders to ensure the most appropriate site in the best condition possible. Other issues arising are that in some instances the ideal location may actually be approximately one mile from the boundary site, and the Group would need to consider whether this is acceptable.
9. An initial letter has been sent to all organisations connected to this project; including the managers responsible for roads in each Local Authority; the Local Authority Heads of Planning and the Trunk Road Network and Area

Managers in the Scottish Executive. All these contacts have been asked to comment on the list of organisations to ensure that Aaron Lawton speaks with the most appropriate person within each organisation.

10. Aaron Lawton will now finish the photo site inventory, make contact with these organisations produce a report with the photographs.
11. The Group felt that due to the importance of the arising issues it would be useful to meet with Aaron as soon as possible and see some of the photographs highlighting his concerns. It was also agreed to revisit the issue of raising awareness about the project and Danny Alexander agreed to work with Debbie Strang on this issue to come up with some suggestions for the next meeting. He noted that the next version of Park Life the National Park newsletter was due for distribution in early summer.

Date of Next Meeting

12. It was agreed that the next meeting should be on 23rd March at 2pm at Grantown-on-Spey.

The meeting finished at 10.15am