
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the Lonach Hall, Strathdon on Friday 12th March 2004 at 1.30pm

Present:

Peter Argyle
Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden
Douglas Glass
Angus Gordon
Mrs Lucy Grant
Bruce Luffman
Eleanor Mackintosh
Anne MacLean

Alastair MacLennan
William McKenna
Andrew Rafferty
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Robert Severn
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Susan Walker
Bob Wilson

In Attendance:

Daniel Alexander
Norman Brockie
Murray Ferguson
Elspeth Grant
Nick Halfhide

Andrew Harper
Jane Hope
Gavin Miles
Kristin Scott

Apologies:

Andrew Thin
David Green
Basil Dunlop

Welcome and Introduction

1. Eric Baird (in the Chair in the absence of Andrew Thin) welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (13th February) were approved with no changes.

Matters Arising

3. An update was requested upon whether the Convenor had met yet with the Convenor of Scottish Water to discuss the issue of sewerage infrastructure constraints. It was reported that the matter was in hand and that the Board would be updated in due course. It was noted that the CNPA would be a consultee on ‘Quality and Standards III’, which would report at the end of June and which would set Scottish Water’s budgets for 2006-14.

Access Working Group: Progress Report (Paper 1)

4. Kristin Scott introduced the paper, which gave an update on progress made by the Access Working Group, and sought the Board’s approval to slightly vary the timescale for the delivery of its two short-term outputs from that which was previously proposed. The group had now met three times and was chaired by Joyce Simpson, with the support of five other CNPA Board members.
5. Of the group’s two key areas of work, the task of identifying a mechanism for establishing one or more Local Access Fora for the National Park had been given priority over the other key task of developing proposals for establishing a Core Paths Plan. The Group had discussed an ‘options’ paper for the establishment of a Local Access Forum and had agreed a number of recommendations for taking this forward, including broadening the membership of the group slightly, strengthening links with neighbouring Local Authorities, and setting up workshops to raise awareness and gauge levels of interest prior to agreeing a mechanism for establishing a Local Access Forum for the National Park.
6. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) It was still to be decided what the model for a Local Access Forum would look like. Possibilities included having a single forum, several fora, or a hybrid of the two with an umbrella structure for more localised fora. The final model would be informed via the process of engagement with interested parties.
 - b) In deciding upon an appropriate model, the CNPA would need to take account of what the resourcing implications would be.
7. **The paper was agreed and the proposed changed timescale approved.**

Park for All Working Group: Purpose and Short-Term Outputs (Paper 2)

8. Elspeth Grant introduced the paper, which informed the Board of the work of this group and sought their approval for the group's purpose and short-term outputs. The group, which was chaired by Lucy Grant, had met three times and had received a presentation on the Affordable Health and Fitness Project.
9. The group had agreed a minor amendment to its provisional purpose, removing the word 'fully'. It had also agreed that its short-term outputs would be to produce a report by the end of April, detailing the key constraints on social inclusion activity, and a further report by the end of July, setting out proposals addressing the constraints. To gather evidence for the first report, the group was currently undertaking an audit of social inclusion activity.
10. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The social inclusion audit would be circulated to Board members so that they could provide an input.
 - b) The future funding position for the Affordable Health and Fitness Project had yet to be clarified. The future of the project would be discussed at its next Steering Group meeting on 25 March.
 - c) The only external constraint on the deadlines to which the Group were working was that of the Disability Discrimination Act which would come into force on 1st October 2004.
- 11. The paper was agreed and the group's purpose and short-term outputs approved.**
- 12. Action:**
 - a) The Park for All Working group to report back to the Board in May**
 - b) The Board to be updated on the future of the Affordable Health and Fitness Project**

National Park Plan Working Group(Oral Update)

13. Nick Halfhide gave an oral update on progress made by the Park Plan Working Group. It was chaired by Duncan Bryden and had met three times. It had considered the scope of the National Park Plan and how to develop the vision, strategy and related policies. Now that the Heads of Group were in place, it would be important for subsequent discussions to take their views on board.
14. The contract for the State of the Park Report and Health Indicators for the Park was about to be let and further work would be taken forward once the National Park Plan officer was in post after April. The Advisory Group on Joined-Up Government, which comprised chairmen and senior officers from partner public-sector organisations, was due to meet in May and would have a key role to play in the development of the Park Plan.
15. Membership of the Working Group had been considered and the conclusion drawn that it should be kept small and linked to other relevant groups, as appropriate. It was

essentially different from other CNPA Working Groups in that it had more of a project management focus.

16. The group had reviewed the original two short-term outputs that it had been tasked to progress and had decided that they were no longer appropriate. They proposed to replace them with the following two tasks -
 - a) To scope the shape of the Park Plan and develop a framework for its contents for presentation to the Board by the end of June 2004;
 - b) To initiate the collation of background information to inform the development of the Park Plan by the end of June 2004.

17. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The name of the consultants selected to undertake the 'State of the Park' could not be disclosed yet as they were still to be informed of the decision, which was awaiting approval from the Scottish Executive.
 - b) While the Park Plan should ideally be in place first to inform the development of the Local Plan, it was recognised that the respective timescales for each Plan did not allow this. They would therefore have to be progressed in parallel with one another, with linkages being maintained, as appropriate. It was agreed that the Park Plan and Local Plan Working Groups should hold a joint meeting to consider how this could best be achieved.
 - c) To an extent, the Local Plan will have to inform the Park Plan, although the Local Plan will not be able to be formally adopted until the Park Plan is in place.
 - d) It was noted that there would need to be consideration of the special relationship with Perth and Kinross and other contiguous areas but that work on the Park Plan was not yet at that level of detail.

18. The Board noted progress and the amended tasks were approved.

Action:

- a) **The National Park Plan Working group to report back to the Board in July.**
- b) **A joint meeting of the national Park Plan and Local Plan Working Groups to be arranged by Norman Brockie.**

Consultation Response: Strategic Environmental Assessment (Paper 3)

19. Gavin Miles introduced the paper which sought to raise the Board's awareness and promote discussion of the implications for the CNPA of proposed Scottish legislation that would be introducing Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) to all new strategies, plans and programmes developed by the public sector in Scotland. The paper also sought the Board's approval of a short response to the Scottish Executive intimating qualified support for the proposed legislation.

20. In discussion the following points were made:

- a. As a National Park Authority, we should be seeking to conduct a broader sustainability appraisal (which would also consider the economic and social dimension) of all of our plans.
- b. Assessments would consider relevant issues at all levels - local, regional, national and international.
- c. The CNPA would want other strategies/policies that applied to the Park area to also be subject to a broader sustainability appraisal.
- d. There will be resource implications both in relation to the additional work required to undertake SEAs and in relation to time taken in commenting on SEAs conducted by other organisations.
- e. There may be difficulties in applying SEAs to a hierarchy of plans.
- f. It was noted that individual construction projects would not be subject to a SEA, although a programme of construction projects would be (Note - specific construction projects would continue to be subject to Environmental Impact Assessments).
- g. It was noted that the Directive would only apply to certain plans and programmes. The subsequent Bill would be much more all-encompassing.
- h. Given the tight consultation deadline, the Scottish Executive had been given sight of the Board paper on the understanding that it was not yet the agreed Board position.

21. The paper was agreed by the Board, subject to the consultation response incorporating point (c), above.

Action:

- a. **The consultation response to be amended accordingly and submitted to the Scottish Executive.**

Presentations from New Heads of Group - Key Priorities in the Next Year

Head of Communications - Daniel Alexander

22. A brief synopsis of the presentation is attached at Appendix 1. In subsequent discussion the following points were made:
 - a. In developing the CNPA website, advice should be sought from the RNIB to ensure that it is accessible to people with visual impairments.
 - b. With respect to a communication strategy, a paper on the accessibility of CNPA communications would be brought to the Board in June, with other parts to follow in due course.
 - c. It should be ensured that community newsletters are properly integrated into the CNPA's approach to external communications.
 - d. The CNPA needs to ensure that messages are put across in ways that are relevant to its target audiences.

Head of Economic and Social Development - Andrew Harper

23. A brief synopsis of the presentation is attached at Appendix 2. In subsequent discussion the following points were made:

- a. It was acknowledged that the trigger levels that needed to be achieved before BT would commit to upgrading local telephone exchanges to handle broadband could, in some cases, be seen as inequitable. The CNPA would need to consider what it could do to secure greater broadband provision within the Park.
- b. Reference had not been made to agriculture, as the Natural Resources Group were leading on agricultural issues. The Economic and Social Development Group would, though, provide support where appropriate.
- c. It was confirmed that the Local Authorities would be involved in the work on a community development strategy for the Park.

Head of Visitor Services and Recreation - Murray Ferguson

24. A brief synopsis of the presentation is attached at Appendix 3. In subsequent discussion the following points were made:
 - a. It was noted that the Scottish Executive had allocated funding to the local authorities for the next three years for Core Path Planning. However, the two NPAs were not included in this allocation and would be required to make a case for funding through their corporate planning processes. This was already in hand for the three year period ahead. The Authority was appointing an External Funding Officer who would, in due course, help to maximise funding from other sources.
 - b. Concerns were expressed that funding for the Angus Glens Ranger Service was due to cease next year. The CNPA and the relevant partner organisations were discussing the situation with a view to identifying how the service could best be secured as part of wider ranger service provision in the Cairngorms.
 - c. It was noted that there were gaps in the existing provision for the delivery of access, for example in Strathdon, which would need to be addressed. The CNPA would be responsible for convening a Local Access Forum which would bring together all those with an interest in access management.

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25. The question was asked what part the CNPA might play in helping to resolve the difficulties implicit in the recent report that the Glenshee ski centre was up for sale. The Interim Chief Executive reported that the Convener had been approached about further discussions, and the CNPA remained ready and willing to engage with others in discussion on the future of the site.
26. The point was made that because working groups and Committees only meet relatively infrequently, the practice of only making the draft minutes of a meeting available in the public domain a week in advance of the next meeting (as part of the papers for that meeting) was leading to some frustration. The result was that interested people not on the group/committee were only able to discover what was happening and what had been agreed a long time after the relevant discussion, and in some cases after the action itself had been completed. The proposal was made that working groups and committees should follow the practice of making draft minutes available on the website as soon as possible after the meeting, and once Members of that group/committee had had the chance to see

them (not to approve them, but to check for errors of fact). It was noted that the problem did not arise with Board meetings and Planning meetings because of their frequency.

Action:

- a) **Staff servicing working groups and Committees to adopt the following practice for preparing minutes:**
- b) **prepare first draft within a week of the meeting;**
- c) **give other staff and members of the group/committee a chance to correct errors of fact (allowing, say, 5 days for this);**
- d) **then send copy of draft minutes to members of the group/committee, and put on website with “draft” watermark.**
- e) **minutes to be approved at next meeting, and subject to any amendments, then put on to website replacing the draft version.**

27. It was requested that the June Board meeting should take a report back from the Gateways Working group.

28. A session was taken in private, and the Deputy Convener (chairing the meeting) asked, with the approval of the Board, for the following to be noted as the outcome of the Board discussion.

The Board had considered Appendix A of an earlier note (7 March 2004) from Andrew Thin, Convener of the Staffing and Recruitment Committee, to Members of the Board, setting out the process agreed by the Committee for recruitment of the Chief Executive. It concluded in favour of the second of two amendments proposed in that note, namely that “in the case of the Chief Executive’s post, the Staffing and Recruitment Committee was asked to report and justify its intended decision to the full board for ratification before Ministerial approval was sought.”

29. The Board also requested that the minutes note that the role of the recruitment consultant, as set out in Appendix A of the 7 March note, was to act only as an advisor in the process.

30. These points had been considered, and revisited, under paragraph 27 of the standing orders (which provide that a decision of the board will not generally be reconsidered by the Board within 6 months of that decision being carried, except in exceptional circumstances and with the agreement of the Board).

Date of Next Meeting

31. 7th May at Glen Clova. (note: a planning committee would be held on Thursday 8 April at 10.30am in Aviemore, but there would be no Board meeting in view of the Easter holiday.)