

Integrated Land Management Advisory Forum

Tuesday 12th June 2007, Highlander Hotel, Newtonmore.

DRAFT MINUTES

Present

Will Boyd-Wallis (Secretary and Minutes), Nonie Coulthard, Ian Francis, Lucy Grant, Roger Knight, Frank Law, Thomas MacDonnell, Eleanor MacKintosh, Alastair MacLennan (Chair), Colin McClean, Archie McNab, Sandra Middleton, Helen McDade, Justin Prigmore, Anne Rae, Jeremy Roberts, Campbell Slimon, Eoin Smith, Simon Thorpe, Richard Wallace, Jamie Williamson, David Wright.

1. WELCOME

Alastair MacLennan thanked everyone for coming. James Davidson, former Trustee and founding Chairman of the *Newtonmore Community Woodland & Development Trust* was also thanked for leading the highly informative and enjoyable excursion on *The Wildcat Trail*.

2. APOLOGIES

Eric Baird, David Bale, Dick Balharry, Simon Blackett, Duncan Bryden, Iain Hope, Fiona Chalmers, Richard Cooke, Bob Kinnaird, Alister Laing, Edward Mountain, Peter Ord, Nicky Penford, Colin Sheddon, Adam Streeter-Smith, Kenny Taylor, Vicky Thomson, Jeremy Usher-Smith,

3. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING (6th March 2007)

The minutes were agreed as a true record.

Monitor farm:

A number of farm units run by Alan and Jack Adams have been selected in Ballater, Dinnet and Braemar. Concern was expressed that the 'Monitor farm' was "cattle only" and didn't include sheep. However it was acknowledged that it is up to the group of farmers taking part to decide what farm was selected and no 'sheep farms' were forthcoming.

Action points:

AP1: Note of CNPA staff sent out to forum members

This was sent out to the forum on 2 April 2007.

AP2: Summary of "Future Landscapes" project.

This work is currently on hold.

4. DRAFT CORE PATHS PLAN

Sandra Middleton (Outdoor Access Officer) opened discussions on issues relating to the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan and of concern to land managers. CNPA as the Access Authority have a statutory duty to produce a core paths plan by February 2008. The consultation on the CPP runs until 30th June. The key questions in the consultation relate to whether or not the proposed network is sufficient to give reasonable access throughout the

area, whether or not the right criteria have been used to select the core paths and whether or not the right paths have been selected.

Discussion centred almost entirely on the proposal that the River Spey be included as a core path. The Spey has been included on the basis that guidance on producing a core paths plan states that the network can include waterways and should provide for all forms of recreational access e.g. walking, cycling, horse-riding, canoeing etc. The River Spey is also one of the most popular touring rivers in Scotland for canoeists and there was a lot of support for inclusion of the Spey in the network during the first round of public engagement on the core paths plan.

A number of points were made about the Spey being designated as an SAC. Concern was expressed that the core path designation might lead to a detrimental impact on the features of interest – in particular salmon and sea trout. It was strongly felt by some members present that the precautionary principle should apply.

The economic value of fishing was raised as a serious issue to be considered alongside the economic value of other river based recreational activities.

Sandra Middleton highlighted the high level of use of the river already by both anglers and canoeists. She suggested that the designation of the river could lever funding and help focus efforts on alleviating any management issues that arise, e.g. bank maintenance and access/egress points for canoeists.

There was concern that the designation could lead to misunderstanding by future users of the level of safety in the river and increased use by insufficiently skilled canoeists. This in turn could lead to additional pressure to improve safety e.g. by removing build up of deadwood or cutting back riparian vegetation, both of which have important environmental benefits.

The Spey was highlighted as an example where there is a need for the CNP Core Paths Plan to integrate with neighbouring local authority area core path plans.

In relation to all core paths the issue of liability was raised. Sandra pointed out that the CNPA have received legal advice that core paths do not actually change owners' liability and that there is a useful SNH guide available called, 'A Brief Guide to Occupiers' Legal Liabilities in Scotland in relation to Public Outdoor Access'¹. She further indicated the important and tested principle of "accepted risk" where those engaging in outdoor activities have to accept a certain degree of personal risk.

5. BIODIVERSITY GRANTS

Justin Prigmore (LBAP officer) opened discussions on how best to help communities and land managers to work together on projects aimed at boosting local wildlife and habitats.

The Biodiversity Grant Scheme is part of the CNPA Community Investment Programme and is funded by CNPA, SNH, Leader, Aberdeenshire, Highland and Angus Councils. The scheme offers up to 100% funding for projects costing up to £5000.

Grant support is particularly directed towards a number of recently established LBAP priority species and habitats.

The grant scheme is currently not open to landowners, but that there may be scope to access funding by working with community groups. Comments were received from the

¹ Contact Sandra Middleton on 01479 870513 or sandramiddleton@cairngorms.co.uk if you would like to receive a copy of this guidance.

group regarding the need for CNPA and LBAP to fund landowners directly if we want to deliver specific action targeted at our priorities - this was seen as the most effective way to deliver our aims.

Other points made in the discussions:

- Members reflected on the pressure of time on individuals in communities being one of the constraints to getting projects up and running.
- Targeting schools is a good way of getting projects going in communities and involving people of all ages.
- Raising awareness of what wildlife interest there is in specific areas will help to spark enthusiasm and action.
- The perspective of several land managers present was that livestock, tourism and subsidies are the main sources of income for most. Grant schemes such as this are welcome, but are very much on the periphery. Therefore it's important to engage with the communities first and if worthwhile biodiversity projects can be easily accommodated on the land then most would be willing to allow them to go ahead.
- It was suggested that land managers involvement with communities could be encouraged through added incentives connected to other forms of public funding.

6. REVIEW OF THE ILMAF and FUTURE CNPA FORUMS

Will Boyd-Wallis highlighted in particular the very important role that the ILMAF has had in influencing the development of National Park Plan and CNPA's thinking and role in relation to the new Scottish Rural Development Plan. The forum has also been very useful in gathering a cross section of people together aiding communication between agencies, land managers, communities, NGOs etc. CNPA has wished to ensure that all those gathered around the table gain something from being there: whether it is a greater collective understanding of a variety of issues or taking the opportunity to have some additional influence on the future of the National Park.

Will then went on to explain the future plans for the three CNPA forums. Currently there are three CNPA advisory forums: the Visit forum, the Economic and Social Development Forum and the ILMAF. The three forums will be adapted to cover the following three themes which link with the three themes in the National Park Plan and reflect the Statutory Aims of the National Park:

- a) Conserving and enhancing the Park
- b) Living and working in the Park
- c) Enjoying and understanding the Park.

There will be a meeting on 28th September (to which all of the current members of the three forums will be invited) to initiate the new set up.

Will invited comments on how CNPA and forum members can get the best value out of attending forum meetings. The following points were made:

- There must be a clear understanding of links to other National Fora and any fora being managed by Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority.

- It is essential to have good, meaningful, useful and pertinent agenda items.
- Site visits are a good idea; they allow for informal discussion and are often informative.
- It is useful to have a core set of forum members (otherwise you can lose commitment) but be open to inviting others to assist with specific issues.
- Set meeting dates well in advance.
- Good to have a mix of agency, private and public representatives. Good opportunity for land managers to challenge agencies.
- There is a danger of too many forums, taking up too much voluntary time. Whilst they are voluntary, there is a concern that important things may get decided and to ensure good decisions are made there is an onus to be there.
- Meetings twice a year ok, but should only have meetings if justified.
- Content should be focused on delivery of Park Plan.
- Updates could be sent electronically before meeting and then be discussed at meeting.
- There are too many forums for landowners to have an opportunity to have their say.
- CNPA provides some very good training for land managers but is just a talking shop – no funding, too much bureaucracy. This needs to change.
- Need to consult with landowners – what are the issues that are holding them back e.g. funding. Future forums should aim to tackle these issues.
- CNPA should look at funding difficulties that are stopping things from happening on the ground.

7. STUDY TOUR TO NORWAY

Eoin Smith gave a very interesting illustrated report on the recent study tour to Norway organised by CNPA. There are many similarities in habitat and land management between Scotland and Norway, but big differences as well. Hunting is very much a part of the culture. There is an almost frenzied hatred of the wolf, which is not mirrored in other Scandinavian countries. Other species (now extinct in the UK but present in Norway) are not so controversial. Eoin highlighted some problems relating to the European beaver, but Norwegians take a practical approach to dealing with any problems that may occasionally arise. Beaver may be culled or relocated in Norway. He indicated that subsidies are as important in Norway as they are here but apparently even harder to get.

8. CAIRNGORMS DEER ADVISORY GROUP

Colin described 3 deer related projects currently being pursued by CNPA with the support of the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group.

1. The use of deer as an eco- tourism resource. CNPA, Michael Hone, Lynaberack Estate and Highland Council Ranger Service were working in partnership to host a public deer viewing event based round new born deer calves. Lessons learned from

this pilot event and future pilots would be used to provide guidance for deer managers.

2. New entrants to stalking. CNPA are working in partnership with the Country Sports Tourism Group to produce the outline structure of introductory sessions to deer stalking for new audiences. The idea is to have some stalking within the Park marketed to young, active audiences currently involved in activities like mountain biking and mountaineering. Estates could use the outline structure of an introductory session to produce commercial products.
3. Investigating the socio economic impacts of deer reductions. There are numerous deer reductions currently ongoing within the Park driven by both private and public sector. These deer reductions generate anecdotes regarding their socio economic impacts. These anecdotes in turn generate emotional arguments. A proper assessment of the socio economic impacts of deer reductions would enable a healthier, more accurate debate. CNPA are discussing ways of investigating these impacts with a number of estates within the Park.

9. ANY OTHER COMPETENT BUSINESS

Scottish Rural Development Programme

Voluntary modulation has been announced and the SRDP has been submitted. A very challenging timetable is now in place for deciding on regional priorities. It is anticipated that the SRDP will be approved by early November. An update will be appended to these minutes.

END