
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING **held by telephone/ video conference** **on Friday 27th March 2020 at 11.00am**

PRESENT

(By video conferencing unless stated otherwise)

Xander McDade (Convener)	Eleanor Mackintosh
Geva Blackett (Deputy Convener)	Willie McKenna by telephone
Peter Argyle	Ian McLaren by telephone
Carolyn Caddick	Dr Fiona McLean
Deirdre Falconer by telephone	William Munro
Pippa Hadley	Anne Rae Macdonald
Janet Hunter	Dr Gaener Rodger
John Kirk by telephone	Derek Ross by telephone
John Latham	Judith Webb
Douglas McAdam	

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development
Dr Peter Mayhew, Director of Conservation & Visitor Experience
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board

Apologies: None.

Welcome and Introduction

1. Xander McDade the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting.
2. There were no apologies.

Declarations of Interest

3. Declarations of interest were invited. There were no interests declared.

Minutes of Last Meetings held– for approval

4. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 December 2019 were agreed subject to the following amendments:
 - At Para 10ii) Reference to be made explicitly to capercaillie project.

Deirdre Falconer joined the meeting.

5. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 6th March 2020 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters Arising

6. The Convener provided an update on the Action points from the previous minutes September to December 2019
 - a) 20th September 2019 Minutes – Action Point at Para 19 (iii) – **Closed** – Update on this was given to the Board in February 2020
 - b) 20th September 2019 Minutes – Action Point at Para 24 (i) – **Closed** – John Kirk to pass on contact for Young Farmers Group onto the CNPA Outdoor Learning Officer.
 - c) 6th December 2019 Minutes – Action Point at Para 10 (i) – **Closed** – Make it Yours training session for Board Members had taken place in February 2020.
 - d) 6th December 2019 Minutes – Action Point at Para 10 (ii) – **In hand** – Communication of the overall Capercaillie project to be better coordinated to ensure that other elements of the project are also known and are being discussed.
 - e) 6th December 2019 Minutes – Action Point at Para 22 (i) – **In hand** - Future Chair of Economic Steering Group to sit on Tourism Action Group and vice versa to ensure linkages.
 - f) 6th December 2019 Minutes – Action Point at Para 22 (ii) – **Closed** - Board Members interested in becoming the Chair of the Economic Steering Group to make it known to the Board Convener following the meeting.
 - g) 6th December 2019 Minutes – Action Point at Para 32 (i) – **Closed** - Staff Turnover KPI, description to be corrected.
7. A Board member asked when the Board discussion around Moorland Management and the Werrity Report would be likely to take place. CEO advised that it was scheduled to take place today however it had been overtaken by current events. He advised that the discussion would be rearranged for another time when the COVID-19 crisis was over.

8. Action Points Arising: None

CEO Report & Convener Update (Paper 1)

9. This paper was not discussed. Board members were invited to email any questions on the contents of the paper directly to the CEO following the meeting.

2020/21 Budget and Operational Plan (Paper 2)

10. Grant Moir, CEO highlighted the unusual circumstances of considering budget proposals for the year ahead at a time when everyone involved understood that operational impacts and wider implications of the COVID19 crises would require adjustments to be made in to our plans. The CEO explained that the budget presented allows the CNPA to have a framework in place for the start of the financial year. This will allow the Authority to progress agreed actions where that was possible and remained appropriate, while recognising the financial allocations would be subject to ongoing review in light of the current crisis and adjusted accordingly.
11. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 2 which sets out the Authority's financial position for 20/21 financial year. He explained the paper presents the proposed financial allocations for 2020/21 for core income and expenditure, together with intended operational plan investment. He added the paper seeks Board endorsement of the budget and Operational Plan for 2020/21 as an appropriate deployment of resources to work towards delivery of the Authority's adopted Corporate Plan.
12. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Praise for the covering paper and the clarity of the information within it.
 - b) Suggestion made that on approving the budget a caveat be added referring to the current COVID-19 pandemic. Director of Corporate Services highlighted that this was in the recommendations of the paper and that the budget would be revisited during the course of the financial year.
 - c) Question raised on whether there can be flexibility in the budget so that funds that cannot be used because of the COVID19 restrictions might be redeployed into "support" activities? Director of Corporate Services advised that management would work with the Finance & Delivery Committee to recognise the changes arising in budget estimates and priorities around their possible reinvestment. With regard to governance processes associated with the Corporate Plan, any resulting budget amendments would be brought to the

Finance & Delivery Committee for review before coming to the Board for agreement.

- d) Comment made that the current budget states that there are no added pension costs increases in 2020/21 CSPA pension contribution rates. However doesn't the increases in pay of between 3-6% across the organisation mean that there will naturally be increased CSPA costs for the Authority? Director of Corporate Services advised that there would be slight increase in costs but these would be inflationary pension increase rather than as a result of policy changes and increases in underlying contribution rates, which was the intended reference of the "no added pension cost increases" reference in the paper.
- e) Clarification requested around estimated vacancy savings allowed for in the budget at this stage has been reduced to £0.078 million (prior year £0.099 million). Aware that at least 2 posts were not filled last year and delayed recruitment on others to make the savings. Director of Corporate Services advised that there were a couple of vacant posts in the organisation and that there would be a 3-4 month delay in recruiting to fill those given the current pandemic. The reduction in vacancy saving estimates is linked to the awareness of a number of significant, externally funded programmes coming to a conclusion and the potential for some vacant posts being needed to accommodate returning staff – hence limiting potential for savings.
- f) Request made to have a breakdown of the types of post included in the Corporate Services team for clarity. Director of Corporate Services explained that Corporate Services refers to IT, Admin, HR and Finance teams as well as the shared services contracts with LLTNP, the interaction with National Park Partnerships and UKNP's. He added that LEADER delivers directly against Rural Development priorities and while he line managed those staff, they were accounted for within Rural Development budget lines. He advised that this was a good illustration of many areas of activity that, while line managed from one area of the organisation, made multiple impacts across a wide range of corporate plan priorities.
- g) Could a Project Coordinator, as referenced in the paper as a resource requirement, be found from within the organisation, rather than recruiting externally? That way the skill set going forward could be retained. CEO agreed and advised that management were currently looking internally to reallocate staff, which is always the first point in any agreed recruitment process.
- h) Suggestion made to go through the Corporate Plan and Budget to identify which items were likely to be delivered and which might be delayed. CEO advised that Management Team and the Operational Management Group were currently working on this and that that information should be available in the next couple of weeks.
- i) Concern raised that the ratio of staff costs in relation to the GiA allocation was high and while recognising that the Corporate Plan could not be delivered

without staff it would be good to see some planned reduction in staff costs. CEO explained that the funding being levered in, in order to carry out some projects, also had to be taken into account. Director of Corporate Services added that he and Head of Organisational Development are working with the Staffing & Recruitment Committee and were looking at the full number of staff on fixed term contracts and working out a plan to manage these fixed term contracts over the coming 18 months to enable greater flexibility as we near the next National Park Partnership Plan period. The Director of Corporate Services noted that the Authority's staffing levels remained well below many other Non-Departmental Public Bodies and this indicator remained a key metric in the management team's planning.

- j) The Audit & Risk Committee Chair advised that it was important to approve the budget as presented with the proviso to review things as and when they change, which would be the most sensible and pragmatic approach in the current environment.

13. **The Board:**

- a) **Reviewed the proposed budget and resource allocations for 2020/21;**
- b) **Considered whether the proposed deployment of resources poses any perceived risks to the achievement of the Corporate Plan objectives by 2022 and agree any risks posed for subsequent action by the Chief Executive and Management Team;**
- c) **Endorsed the budget and operational plan proposals for 2020/21; and**
- d) **Agreed that the Management Team shall keep the budget and resource allocations under review in light of Covid-19 impacts on both the organisation and the Cairngorms National Park, and report to Finance & Delivery Committee and Board to seek approvals for any significant changes required to budget allocations and delivery profile.**

14. **Action Points Arising: None.**

Business Continuity: Review of Standing Orders (Paper 3)

- 15. The Planning Committee Convener advised that the set up for the planning committee for VC would have to work better for that meeting to be effective. It was noted this was the first live trial of a meeting of over 20 people by a mix of video conference and phone call, only one week or so after implementation of full Business Continuity Plans. Full review of functionality and meeting protocols would continue.
- 16. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 3 which presents a review of the Board's and Planning Committee's Standing Orders for consideration by the Board in the context of Business Continuity Planning considerations

necessitated by risk management of the Coronavirus outbreak. The paper follows notification of review of Standing Orders agreed by the Board at its meeting of 6 March 2020.

17. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) If the Convener and the Deputy Convener were both off at the same time due to illness who would lead the Board? Director of Corporate Services advised that the most senior member of staff would look for a substitute from the Board starting first by the Chairs and Vice-Chairs from the Governance Group grouping from which Board members would be asked to make nominations. He added that he and the Convener would draft a page clearly stating the process of how this would work and circulate it to the Board as soon as possible.
 - b) Acknowledgement that the correspondence has highlighted that the arrangements first implemented are to support decision making in period to Board meeting on 27 March with further review at that point. However, clarity may be required on specified timeline of operation of BCP arrangements and / or arrangements to call BCP arrangements to a halt and revert to normal procedures. Director of Corporate Services advised that the current arrangements would stay in place until the Board resolved that they were no longer required. There was a discussion on whether a regular review should be put in place and Director of Corporate Services warned that he thought that would be an unnecessary bit of process. He advised that in order to get the ball rolling a member could propose it and another member seconds it, then it would go to decision by vote. As with other aspects of the Authority's operations, the Director of Corporate Services advised that the Board would of course have to give full regard to any national guidance and regulations in force.

18. **The Board:**
 - a) **Agreed to the temporary variation to Standing Orders of the Board and its Planning Committee should that be required by the Authority's responses to manage impacts of the Coronavirus outbreak;**
 - b) **Agreed the proposed implementation arrangements for Business Continuity Plan purposes set out in this paper and Annex 2, to incorporate any amendments approved by the Board;**
 - c) **Agreed that the Business Continuity Arrangements adopted through this process should be added as a standing response plan within the Authority's Business Continuity Plan for management of the Authority's governance arrangements in the event of any similar risk of disruption as a consequence of pandemic events or significant disruption to travel;**
 - d) **Agreed the amendment to Standing Orders set out in paragraph 6 of this paper to implement the approved Business Continuity arrangements.**

19. Action Point Arising:

- i. **The Convener and Director of Corporate Services to draft progression plan should the Convener and Deputy Convener be off at the same time clearly stating the process. This is to be circulated to the Board once drafted.**

AOCB

20. The Planning Committee Convener provided the following update:
 - a) Rothes 3 and Clashnagour windfarm objections were discussed at the Planning Committee meeting and the Committee decided to maintain the objection and not to provide oral evidence at any appeal. This was being questioned by Ian Kelly (Planning Agent). The Planning Committee Convener wishes to reassure members that the Authority would be able to provide oral evidence at any future appeal.
21. The CEO invited the Board to send any points of clarification on the CEO report direct to him for answering.

22. Action Points Arising: None.

Date of Next Meeting

23. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 12 June 2020.
24. The meeting concluded at 12.25