

**CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

FOR DECISION

Title: GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT TO BOARD

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Purpose

This paper presents the draft Annual Report of the Governance Committee to the Board.

Recommendations

The Governance Committee is asked to review the draft Annual Report to the Board and agree any amendments prior to submission to the Board in September.

Draft Governance Committee Annual Report to Board for Period August 2021 to August 2022

Activity in Period

1. The Governance Committee was established following a review of the Cairngorms NPA's Board committee structures over the first quarter of 2021/22. The Committee formalised the "Governance Group" of Convener, Deputy Convener and Committee Chairs which previously met to support management of governance, strategic development, and Board management activities.
2. The Committee met for the first time in August 2021 and has met a total of five times up to and including the meeting of 12 August 2022.
3. The Committee has sought assurance over the following key aspects of the Cairngorms NPA's operations over the course of the reporting period:
 - a) Operation of Board committees within their terms of reference.
 - b) Communication strategy and its implementation.
 - c) Development of private finance and green finance initiatives.
 - d) Board complaints procedure.
 - e) Board development, evaluation, and training.
 - f) Board appointment processes including development of skills matrix.
 - g) Appointment of Executive Director role.
 - h) Liaison with Scottish Ministers.
 - i) Oversight of Board business scheduling and Board agendas.
 - j) Oversight of Scottish Government strategic spending and budget review exercises.
 - k) Oversight of Board's digital and virtual operations: hybrid meetings, development, support requirements and implementation of Board portal.
 - l) Oversight of evolution of COVID19 business continuity responses.
 - m) Checkpoint reviews of key programmes and projects: including Heritage Horizons Cairngorms 2030 Programme, Cairngorms Capercaillie project, and peatland restoration green finance activities.
 - n) New Model Code of Conduct development and implementation.
 - o) Board members' commitments to external organisations.

Review of Activities and Commentary

4. The Committee, as a new aspect of the Cairngorms NPA assurance processes, has worked over the year to understand its remit and its role in the context of other committees and governance structures and evolve appropriate reporting structures and points of focus. Overall, the committee feels it has been successful in this work. Appropriate areas of overlap with other committees on performance, resources and risk management have been recognised and duplicate work has attempted to be minimised.
5. The Committee had a consistent membership over the course of the year with excellent attendance and engagement by members in matters covered. The

Committee is open to for attendance by any Board member where members have an interest on any specific matter under discussion.

6. The Committee has not identified any changes required to its terms of reference over the course of this reporting period.
7. Part of the Committee's role is to consider the schedule of business for the full Board. There have been no instances of need for escalation of concerns to the full Board in terms of events identified requiring matters to be raised with the Board as exceptional items. Some minor matters have been made known to other committees to enhance coordinated assurance over organisational performance.
8. The initial scheduling of four committees on the same day has been challenging for timing of meetings; keeping meetings to time while allowing full and valuable discussions to take place; and on officer support time. The change to holding Governance committee meetings as part of a schedule of three committees is welcomed and will be monitored for effectiveness.
9. The Committee are of the view that the adaptation and enhancements made to the Cairngorms NPA committee structure in 2021 have made a positive contribution to the overview and scrutiny of the work of the organisation and significantly enhanced levels of assurance. The Performance Committee in particular has led to a material improvement in levels of assurance, enabling regular deep dives into major project and programme work and, through doing so, improving board governance and scrutiny. The combination of oversight of both staff and financial resource deployment into a single Resources Committee has also provided for enhanced overview and assurance through more integrated analysis and review of deployment of the Authority's total resources.

Conclusions

10. The Committee believes that the establishment of the Committee has made a positive enhancement to the assurance processes of the Cairngorms NPA, formalising and scheduling key governance overview activities and discussions which had previously been on a more ad hoc basis. The operation of the Resources Committee has provided an important and effective element of assurance to the Cairngorms NPA's governance and assurance systems.
11. The Committee believes there are no significant changes needed in the Committee's operations over the coming year.
12. The Committee is grateful to the support of officers provided over the year, for full and clear papers and effective, helpful engagement at our meetings.

David Cameron

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