

**MINUTES of MEETING of the
FINANCE COMMITTEE of**

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
held in The Atholl Arms Hotel, Blair Atholl
on 13th May 2011, at 9.00am**

Present:

Eleanor Mackintosh (Chair)
David Green

Marcus Humphrey
Gregor Rimell

In Attendance:

Jane Hope, Chief Executive
David Cameron, Corporate Services Director
Alistair Hight, Finance Manager
Claire Ross, Communities and Inclusion Manager

Apologies

Mary McCafferty

Election of Convener of Committee

1. Eleanor Mackintosh was elected as Chair of the Finance Committee.

Minutes of Meeting 18th February 2011

2. The minutes of the meeting were agreed with one change:
 - a) Namely that paragraph 7 needed to record the savings associated with installation of the biomass woodfuel boiler. This had been spelt out in the paper and had been an important part of the justification, and it was felt important to replicate this in the minutes.

Matters Arising

3. Paragraph 3: Work was continuing to build in appropriate milestones/conditions as part of the grant offer to the Laggan Forest Initiative Project. Claire Ross and David Green had met the manager, and the Development Officer was in place; work on the Business Plan would follow shortly and would incorporate the required milestones. It was noted that the group was being encouraged to have regular meeting with the LEADER Project.
Paragraph 4: The new phone system has been put in place.
Paragraph 7: The Scottish Government had asked for further analysis of the justification for installation of the biomass woodfuel boiler. This was in hand. It was noted that the replacement woodfuel boiler could not be funded from the 2010/11 budget,

nevertheless funding had been found within the 2011/12 budget. The tender process had been completed but the contract had not yet been let.

Paragraph 9: Marcus Humphrey and David Cameron both declared an interest on this update, as Directors of COAT (Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust). It was noted that following the approval by the Committee in February, CNPA had paid £35,000 to COAT for VAT, and had also paid a grant of £100,000 to support the cash flow of COAT, noting that this did not affect the total amount of funding going to COAT taken over two years.

Sale of Panoramic Posters (Paper 1)

4. David Cameron introduced the paper in the absence of Pete Crane, updating the Committee on the trial sale of posters of the panoramic paintings. The CNPA had worked with the Cairngorms Business Partnership (then the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce) to trial the sale of panoramic posters of two of the five views of the National Park. The CNPA had paid for the printing of 4,000 posters and contracted CBP to trial the sale of posters across the National Park. There had been enough interest in the exercise to justify continuing to market posters through partners. There was clearly a demand from businesses wanting to sell posters and from visitors wanting to purchase them. However, the quantities sold during the trial indicated this was not a strong enough commercial proposition to go to open market tender. The driver from the CNPA's point of view was not sales but raising the profile of the National Park. In the interests of transparency, it was proposed to offer the opportunity to publish and market posters for a three to five year period to COAT and CBP.
5. It was confirmed that the CNPA should not be trading and not competing with the private sector; this arrangement was completely in line with that philosophy. It was also noted that the driver for the project was not sales but raising the profile of the National Park. Given this, it was suggested that the CNPA should take an interest in how the project was taken forward, simply because if doing this at arm's length, it will be perceived as being done by the CNPA and reflect on the organisation. It was noted that there was an opportunity to have more framed panoramas on display, in retail and other outlets and this would be useful given the object of raising the profile. It was also noted that small framed versions of the panoramic posters could be useful as corporate gifts from the CNPA – this was a matter for the CNPA to organise.
6. **The Finance Committee agreed the recommendations of the paper, that the opportunity to publish and market posters for three to five years should be offered to COAT and CBP noting that the main driver for the activity was to raise awareness of the Cairngorms National Park.**

Update on the Distribution of the Beaully-Denny SSE (Scottish and Southern Energy) Funding for the Communities of Laggan and Dalwhinnie (Paper 2)

7. Claire Ross introduced the paper, providing an update of the current position on the £50,000 funding allocated to the CNPA to promote the businesses of Laggan and Dalwhinnie who would be disrupted by the effects of the five year Beaully-Denny Pylon Project. The CNPA had been actively engaging with the two communities over the last year to ensure that the funds were distributed in a fair and impartial way. It had been agreed that the funding would not be used for individual businesses but would be used

for the business community as a whole to make the most of match funding opportunities. Dalwhinnie had decided to wait until most of the works had been completed before relaunching the community as a visitor destination. However, Laggan was keen to use the funds in the short term and wished to split the funds (£25,000) to cover two projects: upgrading Broadband provision in the area, and developing a focused marketing strategy to enhance the profile of local businesses. The current proposal was that £15,000 would be used for the Broadband together with some additional funding provided as a loan. £10,000 would be held back for work on the marketing strategy. While there was no business association in Laggan, there was now a group set up specifically to take forward this marketing strategy. It was noticed that Kinloch Laggan was the most effected by work on pylons and also the community with the least effective Broadband coverage. It was therefore suggested that it was important to make sure the Broadband hubs were spread so that Kinloch Laggan clearly benefited. It was noted that the LEADER grant for the Broadband work would need to make sure that a condition of grant was built in to reflect this.

8. The work on local marketing to have maximum effect, needed to be closely linked to the strategic marketing effort offered by the CBP. It would be important that the local marketing group and the CBP worked together on this so that it was clear what the CBP could add locally, and what the benefit was to the CBP of local marketing.
9. **The Committee agreed to the release of £15,000 of the funds being held on behalf of the communities, to the Laggan Community Association for the purposes of upgrading Broadband service in the area.**

The View of the Financial Year 2010/11 (Paper 3)

10. Alistair Hight introduced the paper which presented a summary review of income and expenditure for the twelve months to the 31st March 2011. The outturn showed a net income of £9,000 against a planned net income of £14,000 – the £5,000 variance represented less than 0.01% of total income. The careful financial management was commended. Efficiency savings of more than 2% had been achieved meaning that an additional £80,000 had been able to be put into the Operational Plan expenditure. A number of capital projects had been undertaken worth £270,000, with additional funds from the Scottish Government. This had also helped to enable the CNPA to maximise the amount of money put into the Operational Plan; increasing this from £1.9million to £2.1million. The costs of Planning Inquiries such as the Dornell Windfarm Inquiry were very difficult to budget for but could not be avoided. In this case the costs had been around £80,000 but had been balanced against some underspends on other projects. It was noted that £165,000 of the money from the Scottish Government had been spent on capital items to assist with the shared services project with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs.
11. It was noted that the results were subject to Audit by Audit Scotland but with that proviso, it was noted that good financial management had enabled the CNPA to make effective use of its funds and all concerned were commended.

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12. With a new parliament starting, and the government's manifesto commitment to look at the possibility of more National Parks in Scotland, it was important that the financial performance of the CNPA was clearly documented. In short, the picture was as follows: overall excellent value for money at less than £1 per person in Scotland; excellent leverage (further work to detail this but COAT a good example with leverage of 1-5); good pioneering work on sharing services; a small but extremely effective organisation which had demonstrated its ability to maximise effective use of a small grant-in-aid budget.

Date of Next Meeting

13. Friday 5th August, venue TBC (the 5th August would be a Board visit in the CRAGG area around Aviemore. The Finance Committee was likely to be in the Cairngorms Hotel but this would be confirmed).