
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the Logie Coldstone Village Hall, Logie Coldstone on 13th August 2004 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Peter Argyle
Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Mrs Lucy Grant

Bob Severn
William McKenna
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Andrew Thin
Susan Walker

In Attendance:

Elsbeth Grant
Andrew Harper
Jane Hope
Andy Rinning

Apologies:

Angus Gordon
Bruce Luffman
Eleanor MacKintosh
Alastair MacLennan
Andrew Rafferty
Richard Stroud

Minutes of Last Meeting – Approval

1. The minutes of the previous meeting (2nd July) were approved with no changes.

Matters Arising

2. Actions points from the previous minutes were largely in hand or had been dealt with. Particular attention was drawn to:
 - a) Paragraph 23: Andrew Thin reported that he had not yet written to all the relevant Health Boards in the Park. He noted that the issues in Moray and Grampian were

different from those in Highland, and this needed to be reflected in the terms in which he wrote to the Health Boards.

- b) Jane Hope reported that an environmental audit was to be conducted on both of the CNPA offices by Business Environment Partnership North East. This would cover issues such as waste minimisation, paper recycling, water and power use. Progress on establishing a system for recycling board papers, and indeed all paper, was expected to emerge from this exercise.

Operational Plan (Paper 1)

- 3. Jane Hope introduced the paper.
- 4. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The timing of the Operational Plan had been some what delayed in the current year, largely as a result of the delay in ministerial approval of the Corporate Plan and confirmation of CNPA funding. In future years the Operation Plan would be put to the Board for approval around January/February, prior to it taking effect in the April.
 - b) Monitoring of expenditure (input) would be carried out by the Finance Committee, while monitoring of activities (outputs) would be for the Board. Given the role of the Finance Committee, there was no necessity for the Board to become directly involved in financial monitoring throughout the year, but it was noted that all finance committee papers were copied to all Board members, enabling any Board member to raise any financial queries.
 - c) The Operational Plan included activities relating to the construction of entry point signage. However, there was no mention of lay-bys which were an important element of the signage project, and indeed an important element of providing for visitors throughout the Park. Litter was another issue which deserved attention throughout the whole Park. It was pointed out that work on lay-by's associated with entry point signage was indeed in hand and an integral part of the work which the Board had already approved, on entry point signage. It was also noted that there was a limit to the number of issues which the Park Authority could deal with particular in its first year. It was simply impossible to address everything straight away.
 - d) On the CNPA core values (annex 2), it was suggested that the second value, being open and inclusive, should include the phrase: "fun to work for and with".
 - e) The list of outputs in the Operational Plan might usefully include one headline outcome of producing a financial outturn within a particular percentage of the budget.
 - f) The progress column in the Operational Plan was by far the most important element of the Operational Plan. It would be important during the quarterly monitoring of the Operational Plan that this included an assessment of likelihood of non-delivery of specified outputs.
- 5. **The paper's three recommendations were agreed as follows:**
 - a) **The Operational Plan to be the basis on which staff took forward work during the financial year;**
 - b) **Progress updates to be brought forward on a regular basis to the Board (June, September, December, March) and progress reporting to highlight significant risks or possible variances from the Plan;**

- c) **The proposed values were approved subject to the amendment that the second core value should include and the end of the line “fun to work for and with”.**

Park for All Strategy (paper 2)

6. The paper was introduced by Andrew Harper and Elspeth Grant
7. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) The target groups with respect to tackling social exclusion and creating a Park for All, as set out in paragraph 13, were very wide, and indeed there appeared to be very few people excluded. In reply the point was made that the list reflected the degree and likelihood of social exclusion, based on reported evidence.
 - b) People can be socially isolated if they can't drive, or through lack of public transport. The issue was much broader than Social Inclusion/Exclusion, and was all about being able to access public services.
 - c) As noted at paragraph 13, the paper was based on research by Shucksmith and Slee. Shucksmith's work had looked at rural areas in Scotland, while Slee's work had been looking at countryside areas in the UK, including areas such as National Parks. In neither case was the work referring specifically to the Cairngorms. However there had been research locally, for example by CRAGG (Cairngorms Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Group), and the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, which might lead to slightly different conclusions. For example, the local research identified some different groups affected by the lack of affordable housing, and slightly different reasons at paragraph 19 for opportunities in education and training being less available in rural areas. Further work on social inclusion issues must not lose sight of the specific needs within the Cairngorms National Park, as opposed to the rest of Scotland.
 - d) The Highlands and Islands Equality Forum had done research covering issues raised at paragraph 7 in the paper, notably the consequences of the new draft disability bill. This covered part of the Park area, and would therefore provide some more local evidence.
 - e) Paragraph 32 referred to the need for an audit of meeting venues. The point was made that some Village Halls will find it difficult to comply with the standards of accessibility that would be required from October 2004. The Park Authority was making an effort to hold its meetings in Village Halls. It might therefore wish to consider helping Village Halls which are not currently fully accessible, to become so.
 - f) On accessibility it would be important to make sure that the Park Authority monitored progress.
 - g) The paper was a description of the issues surrounding Social Inclusion which would need to be addressed in developing the concept of a Park for All, and in drafting the National Park Plan. However, it was important to see the work developing in due course, into providing an Action Plan, and not simply a description of the issues.
 - h) Many of the benefits in the National Park came free, such as attractive landscape etc. Vital to being able to take advantage of these benefits, was the provision of good transport. Public transport in the Park Authority was covered in the table at paragraph 27, and under current activity it should be added that all buses within Badenoch and Strathspey were subsidised by Highland Council. The table could be

more comprehensive and indeed more positive about current levels of activity to deal with the constraints in the first column.

- i) The third bullet point of the recommendations might usefully be changed from “properly addressed” to “realistically addressed”.
8. In summing up the discussion, the Convenor suggested that the concerns expressed about target groups being drawn to widely inevitable led to the question as to the need for further research to improve targeting. The paper represented a good start, should lead in due course a realistic action plan.
 9. **The papers for recommendations were agreed as follows:**
 - a) **The proposed key groups were agreed as a basis for future targeted support in addressing barriers to social inclusion;**
 - b) **The analysis of key social inclusion constraints would be used to inform the development of the Park Plan, bearing in mind that the list included in the current paper were illustrative examples and not comprehensive;**
 - c) **Mechanisms would be put in place to ensure that Social Inclusion issues were properly addressed in the development of projects, with the main mechanism being the National Park Plan and the CNPA’s internal approval process.**
 - d) **The CNPA must strive to be an exemplar organisation with regards to Social Inclusion issues.**

CNPA Advisory Groups (paper 3)

10. Jane Hope introduced the paper.
11. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) Consistent with the arrangements proposed, it would be essential to develop a strong level of interaction between members of staff and member of the board. A positive and constructive relationship in which staff could bounce ideas off Board members and talk issues through with them prior to bringing forward all the Board papers, would be essential if the diversity of expertise and experience among Board members was to be fully utilised.
 - b) The detail of the proposed Advisory Forums including detailed terms of reference, membership etc would need to be agreed by the Board.
 - c) Once Advisory Forums were up and running, it would be essential to have good feedback mechanisms so that members who were interested in what was going on could keep up to date.
 - d) The Local Plan Group was functioning well and had membership from external organisations. Now was not the time to wind it up, just as the local plan process was starting. Whether or not Board members remained involved was a separate question.
 - e) It was essential that the new advisory forums had a very clear focus and clear remit. The suggestion on the membership of 25 might prove rather large. While the aspiration of added value was highly desirable, this could be quite a difficult criteria to measure. It would be important to establish baselines so that the effectiveness of the park authority adding in value could be assessed.
 - f) It would be essential that people attending the proposed advisory forums realised why they were there and felt that they could add value, and influence outcomes. Without that feeling, there would be no great desire to participate in such groups.

g) 25 was not an unrealistic number of attendees at such meetings if these were seen as being advisory in their nature. In practice out of an invitation list of 25 one would rarely get all 25 to a meeting. The important point was to keep a large number of participants in the information loop.

12. **The paper's recommendations were agreed as follows:**

- a) **Five Advisory Forums plus a sub-group, as set out in the paper, should be established;**
- b) **Staff would bring forward proposals to the next meeting on details on membership, remit, and modus operandi of these group;**
- c) **The Working Groups should be wound down in their current form in due course and as appropriate, with the Local Plan Group continuing a while longer as appropriate to the progress with the Local Plan.**
- d) **Staff would continue to draw positively and strongly informally on the expertise and experience of individual Board members; the Senior Management Team would keep an overview of staff working arrangements to ensure these were sufficiently broadly based and engaging with the outside world to deliver well informed and balanced advice;**
- e) **Guidance on preparing board papers was endorsed as a means of ensuring advice to the Board and addressed all the relevant issues;**
- f) **Seminars and workshops would be used as a way of bringing large groups of people together to engage on particular topics.**

13. **Action:**

- a) **Jane Hope to bring proposals on remit, membership and modus operandi of advisory forum to a Board meeting in the near future.**

AOCB

Briefing Paper

14. Andrew Thin drew member's attention to the circulation of two briefing papers one on fire, and one on deer. He encouraged all Board members to read these.

15. A question was raised in respect of the fire paper, and whether fire control measures tended to concentrate currently too much on muirburn and less on the protection of woodlands in the area. It was suggested that action might be needed in the National Park to ensure that more attention was given to fire prevention in these sorts of areas.

16. **Action;**

- a) **Eric Baird and Willie McKenna to discuss further in liaison with Basil Dunlop, Peter Cosgrove and Jane Hope. A point was made that briefing papers were exactly that – how we might develop policy and how we might respond was a separate matter.**

National Access Forum

17. Andrew Thin reported that the CNPA currently represented National Parks on the National Access Forum. A process had recently been agreed for the appointment of a

Convenor to that forum under which nominations had to be made by individual member organisations before the 20th August. The matter of whether or not the CNPA should make a nomination for the post of Convenor was a matter which was being considered by the Access Working Group. That aside, Andrew Thin explained to the Board that he was interested in pursuing the possibility of post of Convenor for the National Access Forum on a personal basis. This was something he remained personally interested in, and he felt he had time to devote to the job. He did not wish to stand in the way of the CNPA nominating its own candidate; and indeed he was not asking the CNPA to nominate him. He wanted to ensure that all members were aware of his intentions, and he was not looking for a decision at that point. He wished to be open and transparent about his own aspirations. He suggested that if any Board members were not happy with what he was proposing, or indeed wanted to advise the Working Group, they should take this up with members of the Access Working Group.

Departure of Bob Severn

18. This was Bob Severn's last meeting as a member of the CNPA. Bob paid tribute to the work of the Board, and wished it well in the future in its key areas of work. He expressed his thanks to all members and staff. Andrew Thin thanked Bob on behalf of the whole Board for his tremendous contribution to the work of the Board over its first 18 months. His sense of humour, commitment, and enthusiasm, coupled with his great sense of realism and an understanding of what worried local people had been invaluable. He had helped to create the culture of a new organisation and everyone wished him success in his new life in sunnier climes.

Primary School in Aviemore

19. A new primary school for Aviemore had now been agreed. This would be a community school, and represented a major step forward within the National Park.

Date of Next Meeting

20. 10th September at Cromdale