
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore on Friday 14th January 2005 at 1.30pm

PRESENT

Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Duncan Bryden
Sally Dowden
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Angus Gordon
Lucy Grant
David Green
Marcus Humphrey
Eleanor Mackintosh
Anne MacLean

William McKenna
Sandy Park
Andrew Rafferty
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Joyce Simpson
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Andrew Thin
Susan Walker
Bob Wilson

In Attendance:

Andrew Harper
Danny Alexander
Don McKee
David Cameron
Fiona Newcombe
Jane Hope
Murray Ferguson
Nick Halfhide

Apologies:

Alastair MacLennan
Bruce Luffman

Welcome and Introduction

1. The Convenor welcomed all present to the first Board meeting of 2005.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (3rd December 2004) were approved subject to two changes:
 - a) Paragraph 11b: the point had been missed that traffic volume on the A95 was equivalent to that on the A939, and this was relevant in making decisions on the placement of signs.
 - b) Paragraph 11f: the final sentence should read "costs being quoted for the temporary signs as being too high" [as opposed to too low].

Matters Arising

3. Matters arising from the minutes were as follows:
 - a) Paragraph 5. Eric Baird had attended a recent meeting of the ACCC, along with Joyce Simpson and Eleanor MacKintosh and a number of staff. The next meeting would be the 24th February. A date of the 21st May was confirmed as a date for the ACCC Conference. Terms of reference for the ACCC were being clarified, and Andrew Harper had this in hand. It was noted that quite a number of staff were attending the ACCC meetings as well as Board Members, but it was felt this was worthwhile.
 - b) Paragraph 19. Bob Wilson confirmed that site visits were ongoing.
 - c) Paragraph 22g. Fiona Newcombe had met members of the former Integrated Land Management Working Group and set out a timetable for progressing initiatives set out in her Integrated Land Management Strategy paper to the previous board.
 - d) Paragraph 25d. This was in hand. Board members would have the opportunity to feed into the preparation of the paper.
 - e) Paragraph 31a,b. This had been completed.

Operational Plan 2004/05 - Progress Report (Paper 1)

4. Jane Hope introduced the paper with a few general comments:
 - a) The Operational Plan gave quite a detailed picture of the work of the CNPA. While this was useful, it did not always give Members a chance to stand back and review the bigger picture, and question whether the delivery of individual actions was successfully contributing to achieving the over-arching aims of the Park Authority. This was a question which would need to be addressed during consideration of the Corporate Plan, and reporting arrangements, for the coming year. There would be the opportunity to do this at the February Board meeting.
 - b) In reporting on progress there was always a tension between the need to be self critical about things which could be delivered better, and those streams of work which had been successfully completed. It was important to be completely honest

about success on the one hand and the need for improvement on the other. She raised the question of whether even more effort should be put into communicating the outputs from the work of the CNPA.

- c) In being realistic about the delivery of the current Operational Plan, it was important to bear in mind that the organisation was still very new. Over the period covered by the Operational Plan, many systems were still being put in place and new staff taking up post. The reality was that the organisation was not yet, nor could be expected to be, a fully efficient and smoothly operating machine. Clearly this was a situation the organisation was working hard to put right. However, it was important to be realistic about what could and could not be achieved in the very early years. Keeping a clear sense of priorities was therefore essential, and this was an important function of the quarterly reporting sessions to the Board.
 - d) While not being complacent about the need to get smarter about the way the CNPA operated, she nevertheless wanted to acknowledge the enormous amount of effort and unstinting contribution made by staff over the period covered by Operational Plan.
5. Each Head of Group was invited to briefly comment on the relevant part of the Operational Plan that fell to their group.

Visitor Services and Recreation:

6. Murray Ferguson reported that good progress had been made in picking up the access responsibilities of the Park Authority. Establishment of the Local Outdoor Access Forum was well in hand; and good progress was being made with consultation on the extension of the Speyside Way (which had previously been stalled). Consideration of ranger services within the Park was progressing well, and a lot of work had been put in behind the scenes, although there was still some way to go before being able to advise the Board on decisions. On gateway signage progress had not been as speedy as expected, largely because the project was extremely complex with multiple partners and many different sites. Following a December Board Paper, work was now in progress on both permanent and temporary signs, and an internal project team had been set up involving members from several different groups to ensure good progress by the start of the summer tourist season. Work on developing an interpretive strategy was progressing following a visit by Sam Ham the previous autumn and a paper would be brought to the Board. Three additional permanent posts would be advertised soon to strengthen the Visitor Services and Recreation Group. This would be essential in ensuring delivery of a very heavy workload for this group.

Natural Resources:

7. This group continued to devote resources advising the Planning team on natural heritage issues relevant to planning applications. The LBAP (Local Biodiversity Action Plan) was not progressing as well as expected, as it was proving difficult to develop new projects. The Steering Group was currently considering where best to direct resources in the future. An important priority for the group was the work on the delivery of public benefits by land managers, and a series of consultation meetings was planned for early in the year. Following the Estates Seminar in November 2004, a paper would be brought to the Board in February reporting on next steps.

Communications:

8. The arrival of an additional member of staff meant that more effort was now being devoted to CNPA publications and development of the website. Overall communications at a local level had been quite good, but more work was needed to communicate effectively with the wider audience in Scotland and beyond. This would be addressed through the next Corporate Plan. The work on opinion polling was about to start and consultants had just been appointed. The aim of this work would be to evaluate over the years how successfully the organisation was meeting its aim of becoming a trusted and respected organisation. Media training for the whole organisation had been arranged and would be taking place in the next few months. The work in developing a Park Brand had progressed well, and a paper would be brought to the Board in February on how this should be rolled out and monitored.

Economic and Social Development

9. Work on an integrated public transport system within the Park was embedded in work being taken forward for the National Park Plan. An integrated timetable for public transport, linking to attractions such as the start of walks, was being put together. Housing policy was a key issue for the Park Authority and for this group, and underpinning the work by the group was the recognition that it was critical to collect good evidence as a precursor to putting in place robust plans and policies in the Local Plan. A paper would be brought to the Board in March setting out the particular role which could be played by the CNPA in helping to deliver a housing policy for the Park area. Although work had been delayed on commissioning a feasibility study for a Park Apprenticeship Scheme, progress was nevertheless being made and it was important to recognise that the outcome of this work was not necessarily going to be a free standing scheme. The intention was first to look at demand, and then look at possible barriers to existing schemes. Only then could the question be addressed of whether or not there was scope for developing a specific Park-related apprenticeship scheme. The sustainable tourism strategy and action plan were close to being finalised, but the timescale for making the application for the Charter was tight. The intention was to discuss the application at the next VISIT Forum, before bringing a paper to the Board in March for endorsement. Despite a tight timescale, work was still on track for an application for the European Charter of Sustainable Tourism to be made by the end of March.

Strategic Policy and Programme Management:

10. The full team was now in place and good progress overall was being made with the National Park Plan, despite some slight delay in individual pieces of work. The development of the National Park Plan was not reliant on one single individual in this group, as much of the work on developing policy chapters was at least partially being completed by members of the relevant policy groups. Buy-in of other stakeholders was being progressed through a variety of contacts including the Panel on Joined Up Government which had met for the first time in May 2004. The next meeting was planned for May/June in 2005, at which point there should be material for the group to start considering. On the programme management side of the Group's work, LEADER+ had continued to be very popular with communities, so much so that an application had been made for an additional £400,000 from the Scottish Executive. The Small Grants

Scheme run by the CNPA had been completed successfully with just over £100,000 being committed to 49 different projects throughout the Park. The photographic and poetry competition had also been completed successfully, resulting in a popular calendar. The Cairngorms Moorland Project continued to do well, with much of the infrastructure on the two sites now in place. Throughout the course of the year systems had been refined for managing all the projects run by the CNPA.

11. Two streams of work were acknowledged as being particularly complex and challenging. A revised timetable for the delivery of the National Park Plan had been agreed by the Board in July 2004. This remained valid, although there had been some problems with the State of the Park Report, in particular over the contributions coming from some other organisations, and one or two of the pieces of work from the consultants. However action had been taken to deal with this and further details would be given in the 3rd Board paper on the agenda. The second complex area concerned the original intention of doing research into a structured process for decision-making under the provisions of Section 9 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act. This work was now scheduled for May 2005 and would take account of the CNPA's obligations under the Strategic Environment Assessment legislation.

Corporate Services:

12. Work in this group had concentrated on establishing key policies and procedures for the organisation. A staff handbook had been completed; guidelines had been issued on FOI (Freedom of Information); the work on job evaluation was coming to an end. Work that was currently in hand included the development of a Risk Management Strategy, which would be brought to the next meeting of the Audit Committee; the establishment of a Staff Consultative Forum would be brought to the next meeting of the Staffing and Recruitment Committee. Putting financial regulations into written form would be completed by the 1st April. Finally, the group was working on establishing an Operational Planning Process and this would be in place for the new financial year.

Planning and Development Control:

13. Work on the Local Plan continued to absorb a lot of resources. Following a successful and resource-intensive initial consultation, a report on this would be available in due course, and would be circulated to communities. Internally the Planning Group was working with members of other groups to put together the draft of the Local Plan. A consultation draft was planned for April/May. Throughout this process, the intention was to give communities and the Board frequent update on progress, to avoid any hiatus developing. On Development Control, there was a backlog of cases resulting from the Board calling in applications faster than these could be determined. It was hoped to recruit a third Development Control Officer very soon, and difficulties over the past few months reflected difficulties across the whole country in recruiting good Development Control staff. Work on enforcement policies was being taken forward through a meeting with the four partner local authorities to review practices and consistency in application. A review of the performance of the CNPA in delivering its planning function was being undertaken, and arrangements were in hand for an independent analysis of the effect of the CNPA's comments on applications which it did not call in. There would be a report to the Board in due course. An informal discussion on the planning function generally was

planned for the 28th January. Finally, Board Members were invited to speak individually to any member of the Planning Team at any time if they had any particular query.

14. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) In response to a question it was confirmed that the use of consultants was approved by the Board on an individual basis as required by the scheme of financial delegation in place for the CNPA. The number of permanent staff employed by the CNPA was deliberately kept relatively low, to ensure maximum flexibility of the organisation to respond down the years to changing policy priorities, as well as to ensure good control over fixed costs. Against that background the use of consultants was seen as being a way of effectively and efficiently delivering particular items of work where the Park Authority did not have the capacity.
- b) Recruitment to individual posts within the Park Authority was not a matter brought to the Board. At the start of 2004/5 the Operational Plan had indicated to the Board in general terms the number of permanent posts expected to be recruited, and what these were. Thereafter, the recruitment itself was delegated to the Chief Executive. The exception to this was recruitment to Management Team posts, including the Chief Executive, which was a matter for the Staffing and Recruitment Committee.
- c) The issue of raising the profile of the CNPA nationally was raised. Discussion had been held through a group of communications officers working in the public sector across the Highlands, which had made it clear that a similar challenge faced all public sector bodies working in the area. Danny Alexander explained that for the CNPA, the intention was to try and raise the profile of the Cairngorms generally in specialist journals, which could have wide readership, stressing the attractions of the area. We had to move away from just being news focused.
- d) On housing the point was made that the role of the CNPA was essentially an enabling role, helping to coordinate partners, and ensure a good evidence base for the development of policy across the Cairngorms. The organisation also had a particular role in encouraging innovative thinking with partners on the challenging issue of affordable housing in the Cairngorms. The actual provision of housing was most certainly not a role for the CNPA, but for other partners who were funded accordingly.
- e) The question was asked as to whether arrangements were on track for ensuring that relevant systems such as computer systems were in place so that staff efficiency could be maximised. In response David Cameron replied that these issues were well and truly on the agenda. Computer systems were in place even though not all other systems were yet established. Remote access to emails and shared documents was now being examined to maximise efficiency when staff were working away from their home base. Work was also in hand to develop an Intranet. The guidance on FOI was welcomed.
- f) Any work on integrated transport needed to look at ways of ensuring better public transport over the hill, not just round it. There had in the past been a Heather Hopper which fulfilled this need, but this no longer operated. The point was acknowledged as being vital to ensuring better communication with communities around and across the Park. It was intended that this would be dealt with through the National Park Plan.

- g) The question was asked as to whether there was any intention to repeat the Small Grants Scheme. In response, Nick Halfhide explained that although the scheme had indeed been a one-off, it was recognised that in the future grant schemes may be an extremely good way of delivering our aims and objectives. The intention was to avoid having too many different grant schemes, and the current thinking was that the CNPA might establish one single grant scheme, but with different priorities set from year to year. This would be something for the Board to consider in the context of the forthcoming new Corporate Plan.
- h) The CNPA website was efficient and workman-like, but still could be considered relatively unexciting and not particularly comprehensive in its information coverage. In response Danny Alexander explained that judgements had to be made on the range and depth of information on the website, which could not be infinite. There was a particular issue about how much information for visitors should be on the CNPA website, and given the existence of other sites dealing with this particularly large volume of information, the appropriate way of dealing might be to have links to those sites. Work on developing the CNPA site had concentrated on accessibility and ease of use, with particular thought being given to accessibility for the less abled. This inevitably produced some constraints on what could be done with the site.
- i) As a follow up the question was asked as to whether there should be a distinction between a National Park website and a National Park Authority website. The point was made that many members of the public would not understand the distinction, and we needed to be aware of their expectations of what a National Park or National Park Authority website would include. We should be looking to provide as far as possible a one-stop website, and at the very least provide effective links with other organisations' websites. These points were acknowledged and would be incorporated into the ongoing work of developing the CNPA website.
- j) It was recognised that the Operational Plan represented a huge amount of work, and a lot of work which went on behind the scenes which was not necessarily always obvious.

15. The Convenor then focused the discussion on paragraph 4 of the Board paper which drew attention to 5 actions which were labelled as "amber" and meriting discussion either because the project was high profile and/or was on a very demanding timescale.

Gateway Signage (Action 3)

16. This was a high profile and sensitive project, under a lot of time pressure if signs were to be in place in readiness for the summer tourist season 2005. The Board had approved a paper at its December 2004 meeting. As a result, resources were being concentrated on establishing temporary entry point signs at six sites, while work continued on the longer-term project already approved by the Board of establishing permanent entry point signs. There was also an intention to have a sign at each of the five railway stations within the Park set up for the 2005 summer season. Work on the permanent entry point markers was also continuing, and a paper would be brought back to the Board in March seeking approval for expenditure on these. The view was expressed that it was important to have a joined up approach to the temporary and the permanent signs, and that the use of the Brand on both sets of signs was consistent. Putting up temporary signs that were

completely different from permanent signs put up one or two years later could lead to confusion.

17. There was some discussion about the development of the Park Brand. It was pointed out that the Branding Project had been approved in June 2004. The aim was to create a visual identity for the Park not just the Park Authority that could be used in a wide range of circumstances. The aim was to capture the value of the area having been designated as a National Park, and to give a common visual identity to a range of things going on within the Park. A paper would be brought to the Board in February explaining the extensive process that had been used to develop this Brand, and seeking approval for how the Brand should be rolled out and rules for using it. The point was made that the informal briefing run for Board Members prior to Christmas might usefully be repeated.
18. It was clear that on a project as sensitive as entry point signs, it was vital that the Board was kept fully informed and briefed.

19. Action:

- a) **Paper to be brought to the Board in March 2005 seeking approval to expenditure on permanent entry point markers;**
- b) **A further briefing session on the Park Brand, and its use on temporary signs to be set up for interested Board Members;**
- c) **Head of Visitor Services and Recreation to ensure the Board are kept fully informed as required in the meantime.**

Local Biodiversity Action Plan (Action 43):

20. The LBAP was a partnership project which had been going for several years. The CNPA were the managing agents, but the project was overseen by a steering group comprising a number of organisations and individuals. Work earlier in the year to develop new projects by talking to other partners had produced less progress than expected, although there were now some encouraging signs. A Board paper was planned in March or April 2005 to report on progress.
21. The sorts of new projects being envisaged included the following: an Aspen nursery was being developed (following a successful conference several years ago), reflecting the fact that the biology of the species made it particularly difficult to grow new seedlings. A further project involved the reintroduction of the fresh water pearl mussel. This rare species only appeared in certain areas of the Park, and the project was looking at how to reintroduce the species into other areas. Another project concerned the promotion of understanding of butterflies and moths in the area, working with volunteer groups.
22. It was recognised that the new Nature Conservation Act which placed a duty on all public bodies to promote biodiversity might help with encouraging other agencies to support LBAP projects. It was also acknowledged that some public bodies did not have money available to support projects this year, but may well do so in the next financial year. However the biggest blockage appeared to be the capacity of communities to develop new projects. We had to recognise that it was not realistic to rely on other people coming forward with projects, and that an important job entailed providing assistance and guidance to people on potential projects that they may wish to develop. The point was

made that the project had originally been designed specifically to engage with communities and individuals. Encouraging community groups was a very good way forward and had a parallel with the farming industry where, for example, schemes such as ESA were available to farmers to help them promote biodiversity, and the parallel for non farmers might be the role of LBAP in promoting practices amongst gardeners that were good for biodiversity. This was precisely the sort of thing where the CNPA could take a lead.

23. The role of volunteers in such projects was questioned, given that these could have an adverse impact on the opportunities for individuals to earn a living through the natural heritage. Some consideration should be given to paying senior school children during the school holidays for delivering some of these projects. Today's school children were the rangers of tomorrow, and many of them could be very successfully trained to collect biological information, act as guides etc. At the same time, the point was made that there were people in the area, particularly those who were retired, who wished to become involved in this sort of work voluntarily and we needed to be aware of this.
24. One of the important roles of the CNPA in helping to deliver the LBAP project in its entirety might well be to see the wider range of national projects that were being taken forward, and to "patch" local initiatives into this wider national picture. The mapping of Juniper was one such example.

25. Action:

- a) **Head of NRG to work with LBAP Steering Group to ensure that the project moved on from discussing to delivering projects, and to report back to the Board with progress around April 2005;**
- b) **CNPA to play its role by encouraging projects to focus on engaging communities and individuals rather than just agencies;**
- c) **CNPA to play its role by helping the Steering Group to look at national projects into with local projects could effectively fit.**

Development Control (Action 62):

26. After a period of allowing the CNPA to find its feet, the Scottish Executive were now requiring the organisation to produce the quarterly statistical returns required of all Planning Authorities, which reported on performance in dealing with planning applications. However, the Scottish Executive were sympathetic to the unique development control powers operated by the CNPA, and the fact of the call-in process possibly adding a further month to the process of dealing with applications. The point was made that the challenge was to look for ways of speeding up the process of dealing with applications, without losing the quality of decision-making.

27. Action:

- a) **An informal discussion to be held by the Board on operation of the Planning Committee;**
- b) **A formal update to be given to the Board by March 2005 on progress.**

State of the Park Report (Action 71):

28. This report would be a crucial part of the evidence underpinning the National Park Plan. Its preparation had been put out to consultants, and the quality of some of their work had been disappointing. They had been asked to bring in additional expertise in those areas which were lacking, and completion of the draft report had therefore slipped to the end of March. After that it was intended that the draft State of the Park report would go through a process of peer review, as it was essential that the report that would underpin so much of the National Park Plan was broadly agreed by other stakeholders. All relevant previous work, including the significant body of work commissioned by the Cairngorms Partnership was being fully taken into account in the preparation of the State of the Park report.
29. In response to a question it was agreed that it would be important to define cultural heritage, above and beyond the definition that was provided in the National Parks (Scotland) Act. It was also recognised that in taking forward the preparation of the National Park Plan, the lessons derived from the early consultations on the Local Plan should not be lost. Indeed, it was acknowledged that thought was being given within the CNPA to establishing some more permanent arrangements, so that there would be an established infrastructure in place for the many occasions when the Park Authority would need to do consultations.

30. Action:

- a) **Head of SPP to ensure that efforts to get the State of the Park report completed did not result in a delay in the overall timetable for final approval of the National Park Plan.**

Local Plan (Action 76):

31. The preparation of the Local Plan was an important piece of work, bound by a very demanding timetable. The drafting of the Plan was engaging not just two or three individuals in the Planning Team, but also other partners and staff in the rest of the CNPA. It would also involve, in some cases, returning to communities to seek clarification where necessary. In taking forward this work, it was recognised that the good participation in the first consultation should not be lost from subsequent consultation. The project was marked as amber, simply to draw attention to its importance and the tight timescale, rather than because there was any concern that the current project deadlines would be missed.

A Natural Heritage Strategy Framework (Paper 2)

32. The paper was introduced by Fiona Newcombe, seeking the Board's approval to a draft Vision and Strategy Framework through which the CNPA would work with a wide range of communities, businesses, visitors, public sector departments, land managers and other interests in order to protect and enhance the natural heritage of the Cairngorms National Park. The draft Vision and Strategy Framework would be developed through the National Park Plan process. The paper acknowledged the large amount of work being done by

many other partners, and also summarised in Appendix 1 the activities being undertaken by the CNPA.

33. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) While the recommendations in the paper were sound, progress had been disappointingly slow, and some urgency should be attached to putting flesh on the bones of the proposed strategy. Protection of the natural heritage was of crucial importance to the National Park since it underpinned everything else. Some urgency should therefore attach to developing the Natural Heritage Strategy Framework in less than the suggested two years.
- b) The Vision Statement was absolutely right. It was vital to popularise the natural heritage and to get people to take ownership of it. There was a tendency to think that the natural heritage was just the business of one or two agencies such as SNH. It would be an enormous step forward if all sorts of private individuals recognised that it was their business as well; in fact it was the business of everybody who lived in Scotland. There were some good examples where land in private ownership had been managed very successfully to protect and enhance the natural heritage. It should be possible to build on this, and to get communities discussing and taking ownership of local initiatives to protect the local natural heritage. That the paper highlighted this was welcome.
- c) The Cairngorms area had been characterised by much argument and disharmony in the past. The CNPA was very new and it would be unreasonable to expect it to make changes very quickly. But against this background, the involvement of people remained essential if the natural heritage was to be effectively looked after.
- d) As part of the process of involving individuals, it was important to also find ways of tackling irresponsible behaviour.
- e) The work proposed in the paper for protecting and enhancing the natural heritage had very close links with the work on developing and Interpretive Strategy for the Cairngorms.
- f) It was essential that this sort of work related directly to people's lives, and any strategies should avoid becoming too theoretical.
- g) It was vital that people had a stake in something if they were going to take an active interest. One obvious way of creating such a stake was for individuals to have a job related to the environment. The challenge was to get all individuals to buy-into the idea of looking after the environment, and to take pride in ownership of it, that was a job for the CNPA.

34. The Convenor summed up with the following observations:

There was some frustration about slow progress with this work, and it was important to make swift and obvious progress with not just thinking but also action. Nevertheless the difficulties of the external historical context, and of building a new team were acknowledged. The Board was offering a powerful endorsement of the vision, with the emphasis on engaging people, and creating a sense of ownership and pride in the natural heritage.

35. The paper's recommendations were agreed as follows:

- a) The Board noted the current work being undertaken to protect and enhance the natural heritage by the CNPA;**

- b) **The Board agreed the draft vision that residents, businesses, organisations, and visitors contribute to the protection and enhancement of the natural heritage of the National Park;**
- c) **The Board agreed that in order to achieve this the CNPA should work with partners and other interests in order to achieve integrated and comprehensive advice, training and support for all;**
- d) **The Board noted that further more detailed strategy papers arising from this framework should be developed by staff and brought to the Board in due course.**

National Park Plan - Update (Paper 3)

36. The paper was introduced by Nick Halfhide who updated Members on progress with the Park Plan and sought their agreement to informal workshops on the 17th February and the 3rd and 4th March 2005. He made the point that the proposed workshops were not a substitute for formal Board consideration but were an opportunity for Members to consider and question relatively large amounts of information before considering formal Board papers for decision.

37. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The opportunity for further input was welcomed but the question was asked as to whether there should be more Member input to the process prior to and after these workshops. The National Park Plan was of such fundamental importance it was vital that it should be got right.
- b) On a point of detail, it was requested that papers be sent out well in advance of workshops..

38. The paper's recommendations were approved as follows:

- a) **The Board noted progress to date on developing the National Park Plan;**
- b) **The Board agreed with proposals to hold a workshop in February to discuss the special qualities of the area and a vision for the future; and**
- c) **The Board agreed to a series of workshops on the 3rd and 4th March to consider the issues papers and draft strategic objectives. These three workshops would each comprise half a day on each of three themes. The workshop on the 3rd would run in the afternoon or evening.**

39. Action:

- a) **Head of SPP to ensure that the Board was fully briefed on progress with the National Park Plan;**
- b) **Head of SPP to consider further how best to involve Board Members in the process of developing the National Park Plan without appropriate full Board decisions being delegated to only one or two Members.**

AOCB

40. The Convenor gave the Board an update on the challenging off-road cycle route (CORC) at Glenmore, which had first been proposed over a year ago by the Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). The application by the FCS had been temporarily withdrawn when it became clear that the route was probably passing through an area occupied by breeding Capercaillie. The FCS set up a Steering Group comprising a wide range of members, including the CNPA, to look further at all the issues involved. The FCS who chaired that group had now asked the members of the group a series of questions on what should happen next. As a member of the group the CNPA needed to respond, and indeed it was important that they should do so. However, because there may ultimately be a planning application, it was important that the majority of the Board were not involved in framing that response. The Convenor therefore proposed that three Members only should work with the Head of Visitor Services and Recreation to prepare a response to the Forestry Commission's questions. Those Members would subsequently not take part in any discussion of a planning application. It was proposed and agreed that the Members who should work on the response to the FCS would be Eric Baird (Chair), Duncan Bryden, Joyce Simpson.

Date of Next Meeting

41. 11th February at Tomintoul Village Hall.