Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group
Meeting 15th March 2019
CNPA office - Grantown-on-Spey

Attendees:	Judith Webb (CNPA Board) - Chair	David Hetherington (CNPA)
	Will Boyd-Wallis (CNPA)	John Grierson (Ass. of Cairngorms Communities)
	Pete Mayhew (CNPA)	Deirdre Falconer (AoCC)
	Mike Cottam (CNPA)	David Windle (NEMT)
	Anne Rae MacDonald (Nonikiln Farm)	Thomas MacDonnell (Cairngorms Connect)
	Colin Shedden (BASC)	Claire Smith (RSPB)
	John Risby (FCS)	David Frew (NTS)
	Alex Jenkins (Edinglassie Estate)	Alison Hester (research rep., JHI)
	Katy Dickson (SLE)	Sandy Davidson (student rep., UHI)
	Chris Donald (SNH)	Jacki Munro (CNPA – Minutes)
	Adam Smith (GWCT – from 1130)	

Apologies: Richard Cooke (ADMG), Richard Gledson (Balmoral Estate), Andrew Heald (Confor)

1. **Welcome & Introductions**

JW introduced herself as appointed Chairperson. Introductions were made. JW stated this was a new group and, although relatively small given the breadth of what will be covered by the group, it should provide a broad and diverse range of views across the various sectors and organisations.

2. **Role of CUAG**

JW explained the aim of the group is to talk about land management within the Park, the majority of which is upland: bringing views from various sectors; discuss how we may constructively take things forward; act as a communication route to make contributions and take actions away. JW emphasised the importance of developing a sense of cohesion within the group and that listening is as important as speaking.

PM gave an overview of the current 5-year National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP), explaining how CDAG had been the framework for deer management across the Park, but an upland advisory forum was needed to bring various land-use sectors together. He referred to the CUAG Terms of Reference and hoped CUAG would advise the CNPA, share good practice examples and stay in touch with current research. The work of the group should be a two way process – advice from the group to CNPA but also discussions should be shared outwith the group with interested parties.

AH felt CUAG could provide better understanding of the biggest research needs.

WBW said, as a new group it is open to develop and discuss what it thinks are the most pressing and important upland issues in the National Park.

In answer to a question about how this group linked to Cairngorms Nature, JW stated she also sits on the Cairngorm Nature Strategy Group and from a Board perspective, knowing these groups are feeding in gives reassurance the NPPP is being considered and delivered, and helps with the linkage and read across between the two groups.

CD felt it was important the Chair was a CNPA Board member for CUAG to maintain focus. The group agreed that a CNPA Board member should be chair. JW to seek Board approval to change the ToR to reflect this **(Action-1)**.

3. Making Best Use of the Group

WBW and PM felt it was very important to get the agenda right and it should be guided by the group what they want to achieve and set house rules.

MC highlighted the key role CNPA can play in providing a link between communities and government and that CUAG can help this.

TM stated CUAG should be focussed, not leave big issues till it was too late or skirt around important discussions, it is likely there would not always be agreement and suggested difference of opinions could be voted on. He added he wanted to ensure everything be minuted to enable anyone to read the minutes and know what was discussed.

KD agreed it is very important the minutes reflect the meeting but it should be recognised sometimes a discussion is required before being minuted, adding she was keen to ensure this group works towards solutions not just talk about the problems.

AJ said the Park is a vast area having many different land uses all with individual merits, and rural employment should be considered as well as the importance of highlighting best practice.

DFa stated residents in the Park see information but don't know how decisions are arrived at and suggested creating a simple breakdown explaining how decisions were made for feeding back to the general public.

TM said it is politically correct to listen to what the public want but are they always correct? He felt different sectors do understand each other, just don't always agree, and asked how to integrate that.

SD stated local community groups are important but the group should talk about wider national views.

CSm enquired if CUAG, considering its members, was to be an evidence based group, suggesting site visits can be very informative if done well.

PM agreed debates should be based on good and up-to-date information, but that's not always available and people don't always make decisions based on evidence, but on emotion or cultural background. So evidence will not necessarily be the end decision maker and broader thinking may be required.

PM stated CNPA will look to this group for thoughts to help develop and deliver relevant policies and that CUAG will be crucial for the next NPPP.

CD added it is key to remember CUAG is an advisory group and not to mirror the CNPA Board's role.

DFr felt the group could be used for more and it would be good to have an output to take to other organisations and provide an evidence base that goes beyond the National Park.

In summary:

- Aim for solutions and outcomes, observing Chatham House Rules when required
- Short, sharp and reflective minutes on what's discussed that can be shared with others
- Reflect land owner interest and wider public views, increasing awareness and understanding
- Site visits to be considered when it is felt necessary and resources allow
- Help inform future policies and deliver existing ones
- Members help to direct what should be discussed - both new and existing questions.

4. Key upland issues in the CNP

PM asked what the big land use questions are that CUAG should be addressing. How can we celebrate raptors, how can we improve moorland practice within the Park, consider questions about farming that aren't captured in the NPPP? E.g. should policies be considered on tracks and ATV use?

ARM highlighted the potential threat to farming from the anticipated subsidy changes and suggested bringing in expert speakers on specific topics such as this to future meetings.

TM suggested inviting tenant farmers to a discussion as farming plays an important role within the Park and subsidy regime changes will have implications for this. He'd like to see subsidies change to help farmers support different activities, not just farming, in order to combat rural depopulation.

AJ suggested mountain hares as a future topic for discussion and emphasised the importance of farming work with moorland management.

CSm felt trying to engage farming communities can prove difficult if talking about waders, deer etc.

JW suggested this might be something CUAG could look at.

PM suggested an agenda item might be 'where small scale farming is going within the Park' as opposed to simply 'farming', reiterating the importance of defining the agenda well.

SD felt climate change is a huge topic and reminded the group it was Youth Climate Strike day.

JW emphasised that group size had been limited so as to be able to manage discussions, but agreed speakers should be invited along to help inform the group when necessary. She added any issues picked up by the group need to be manageable and it was important to ensure focus on conservation, while still sitting well within other groups relating to Visitor Experience and Rural Development and that CUAG discussions on issues should focus on causes, consequences and solutions.

JW invited members to think SMARTly about agenda items and agreed any background papers would be circulated prior to meetings and that, where appropriate, members from CUAG would be tasked with drafting papers to present on particular topics.

The National Park Partnership Plan can be viewed online.

5. Pilot Research into Impacts of Different Land Use Objectives

MC explained that CNPA have good environmental data from within the Park which is being mapped but we do not have data on social or economic impacts of differing land uses across the National park. As a result CNPA are funding a scoping study with the New Economics Foundation (NEF) that will pilot research at an estate level and, if it provides useful data, will then look at scaling the project up. It is hoped to have tested these data by mid-April to see if this model will allow CNPA to upscale.

DFa suggested it would be interesting to see a map of who owns what and get a comparison between all the different land owners' objectives.

WBW added CNPA were wary of categorising land owners as they all have many different focuses, therefore the approach being taken with this project is to focus on different land uses rather than different landowners.

KD stressed that care be taken not to talk about the Sheep Enterprise or Sporting Enterprise but would like to see any report bring all areas together.

TM expressed concern as to who the land owner being studied in the pilot was and that it was unlikely to be representative. He was reminded that the study is about land uses not landowners.

AJ stated that all land uses 'haemorrhage' money.

MC explained this project is not an exercise to justify if any one type of land use makes a profit but to objectively look at its contribution to the local economy and environment.

JR felt the subject of local economy merits some discussion and thought the topic should be revisited when there are some results to look at.

JW suggested this be an agenda item for future meetings to hear project updates. **(Action-2)**

6. CNPA Update

Forest Strategy and Cairngorms Nature Action Plan
WBW stated both documents closely relate to CUAG and copies were made available to all (also available on the CNPA website).

East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership (ECMP)
This is a key partnership project in the Park. CNPA are lead with six Estates; Invercauld, Mar Lodge, Balmoral (incl. Delnadamph), Glen Avon, Glenlivet and Mar, aiming to bring estates together to work collectively to understand what sustainable grouse shooting looks like in practice.

Tomintoul & Glenlivet Landscape Partnership (TGLP)
Through an HLF grant of £3.6million 20 different projects are being funded.

Peatland Restoration
Funded by Scottish Government, Stephen Corcoran and Emma Stewart are working on a large number of Estates across the Park to restore 1,000 ha/year which will have great benefits.

Cairngorms Connect - http://cairngormsconnect.org.uk/
"The biggest ecological restoration project in the UK".

Miscellaneous
JW stated members should feel able to inform the group on projects around the Park that are outwith the NPPP and not CNPA-led. It was suggested a paper with background information and links be circulated prior to meetings for members to view at their leisure and if discussion was required it could be added to the Agenda.

7. Wider Engagement

WBW asked whether others should be invited to join, bearing in mind the group was potentially already at capacity. He added that larger events such as public debates could be organised separately if appropriate.

SD suggested a CNPA staff member attend UHI's annual Integrated Land Use Conference to talk about the Park, adding students can be good at coming up with fresh ideas.

JW suggested further thoughts could be put forward at a later date as members had a chance to consider more.

8. Date and Agenda for next meeting

A Doodle poll to be circulated to find a date in late September.

A request was made for meetings to be held towards beginning of a week.

JW thanked everyone and stated should anyone be unable to attend, she would be happy to speak on their behalf based on background papers.

9. AOB

JG clarified that AoCC was more far-reaching than Community Councils.