

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

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
held at Community Hall, Boat of Garten  
on 15<sup>th</sup> May 2009**

**Present:**

Eleanor Mackintosh (Chair)  
David Green

Mary McCafferty  
David Fallows

**In Attendance:**

Jane Hope, Chief Executive  
Alistair Hight, Finance Manager  
David Cameron, Head of Corporate Services  
Pete Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer  
Matthew Hawkins, Senior Natural Heritage Officer

**Apologies**

Richard Stroud

**Welcome and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies as above.

**Minutes of Meeting 20 March 2009**

2. The minutes of the meeting were agreed without amendment.

**Matters Arising**

3. Referring to the discussion at the previous meeting on the budget for 2009/10, David Cameron reported that the grant and total resource allocation for the year had yet to be confirmed by Scottish Government.
4. David Green referred to the discussion on the grant to the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT).
5. Prior to further discussion on this point, both David Fallows and David Cameron declared an interest as Directors of COAT. The Chair noted these declarations and David Green highlighted that his point would not require the Directors to leave the room.

6. David Green reported on his attendance at a successful media launch by COAT of a new bridge near Kingussie, and asked how the intended use of the National Park brand by the Trust was being progressed. David Cameron reported that the Trust's use of the brand has been highlighted in the 2009/10 grant offer letter as a condition of grant. This matter would be progressed in detail by the Authority's Access Team in conjunction with the Trust Manager.

### **Review of Financial Year 2008/09 (Paper 1)**

7. Alistair Hight reported on the final monitoring position for the 2008/09 financial year, highlighting what he believed to be a very successful result of a small surplus at year end of £16,000. This year-end position compared with a mid-year forecast loss of £59k. The £16k surplus represents 0.4% of Grant in Aid received in the year.
8. Alistair reported that the £75k variance against mid-year forecast is mainly the result of managing Operational Plan income & expenditure across the organisation towards a targeted break even outcome.
9. The position was warmly welcomed by Committee, who thanked Alistair and his team for all their work in delivering a result so close to the break even target.
10. David Cameron reported that the external audit of the financial accounts was progressing and no significant items had been raised to date.
11. In discussion, members noted that expenditure patterns were still loaded very much toward the end of the financial year. Alistair is seeking to put additional systems in place to seek to address this issue and deliver a more even pattern of expenditure over the year, and hence reduce year-end risk of significant over- or under- spends. However, it was recognised that there would likely be some lead time remaining in the system, particularly relating to new project activities, where budget holders would take some time to design and receive approval for projects before moving on to committing funds.
12. **Members noted and warmly welcomed the financial results for 2008/09 and noted the additional analysis of expenditure over Operational Plan areas in the year.**

### **Sale of Panoramic Posters**

13. Peter Crane reported on discussions he and colleagues had been having with the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce on the trial sale of posters using the National Park panoramas. The Authority and the Chamber were seeking to arrive at a partnership agreement that would allow existing business networks to be used to trial the sale of these posters, rather than officers undertaking the trial.
14. Peter outlined the intention to provide the Chamber with a grant in the order of £5,000 to undertake the trial, to support the time taken in the project. A further cost in the order of £5,500 was anticipated for the print of 10,000 posters, following

internal officer discussion and agreement that it would seem the best course of action for the Authority to pay for and own the printed posters. The funding to the Chamber would support the networking and distribution of the product.

15. Pete had been in discussion with the Finance Manager over the trial project. The view remained that any net income received from the project would be allocated to COAT. The objective of the trial remained one of determining the likely commercial viability of the product, and allowing the Authority to better manage and gain best value for any future licensing or outsourcing of the panoramas for use of posters. The production of posters was also intended as a contribution toward raising public awareness of the National Park.
16. In discussion, it was noted that the advantage of ownership of the posters themselves would be that the Authority retains the right of use of any surplus products remaining at the end of the trial project.
17. **The Committee noted the update and noted that they would receive further information as the project progressed.**

## **Any Other Business**

### ***Landscape Character Assessment Project and Expenditure Proposal***

18. The Chair highlighted that a Project and Expenditure Proposal had been circulated by email to Committee members with a request that it be considered under Other Business. The Chair asked that officers seek wherever possible to ensure that Expenditure Justification proposals are included with agenda papers to ensure time to consider them fully and also allow other Board members to see them. Officers noted this point and assured members that they would continue to seek to issue expenditure proposals with agenda papers. David Cameron highlighted that, in this case, the original expectation was that the project would cost under £25,000 and would not have required full Committee approval. However, on the basis of tenders received there was a possibility that the value may exceed £25,000, therefore the opportunity to bring the proposal to the scheduled meeting of the Committee had been taken.
19. Matthew Hawkins highlighted that the aim of the project was to provide an up to date description of the landscapes of the National Park, including distribution and special features that make them special. Matthew reported he is seeking approval to expenditure of £46,000 for the project.
20. In discussion, the Committee noted that there had been some variation in the content of tenders received and some difficulty in establishing an appropriate assessment of tenders against the specification. Some potential contractors had included additional work that would be valuable. It was agreed that Matthew would return to potential contractors seeking clarity of proposed cost against the core project brief.
21. **The Committee agreed funding at a ceiling of £46,000 to progress work on the Landscape Character Assessment.**

22. David Cameron updated Committee on progress in reviewing the Land Based Business Training Project (LBBTP) and potential future funding and sustainability of services provided through the project. Consultants working on the review had requested an extension for providing the draft report, and this was now expected at the end of May. The consultants had reported difficulty in getting views on the future of project services from some partners.
23. The Chief Executive reported to Committee that the “Rural Family” within Scottish Government had been undertaking scenario planning for future budget situations, in light of anticipated total reductions in Scottish Government funding in future years. There was nothing concrete to report at this stage. Jane highlighted that she wished to make the Committee aware at this early point that she and David Cameron were aware of the situation and were managing the financial situation, in order that the Authority could be as well placed as possible to deal with any future budget adjustments.

**Date of Next Meeting**

24. 7 August, Glenmore Lodge, Glenmore.