
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING **held in the Community Hall, Boat of Garten** **on Friday 15 December 2017 at 10.15am**

PRESENT

Peter Argyle (Convener)	John Latham
Rebecca Badger	Eleanor Mackintosh
Geva Blackett	Xander McDade
Carolyn Caddick	Ian McLaren
Angela Douglas	Willie McKenna
Paul Easto	Gordon Riddler
Janet Hunter	Judith Webb
Gregor Hutcheon	Brian Wood (Deputy Convener)

In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development,
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services,
Pete Mayhew, Director of Conservation & Visitor Experience,
Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Services,
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board.

Apologies: Pippa Hadley Dave Fallows
Walter Wilson

Welcome and Introduction

1. Peter Argyle, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting in Boat of Garten.
2. The Convener provided an update on fellow Board Member Dave Fallows who was now back home and was confident he would be back in the New Year.

3. The Convener said that the cancelled discussions and dinner with the Highland and Island's Enterprise Chairman, Lorne Crerar and Chief Executive, Charlotte Wright would need to be rescheduled.
4. Apologies were received from the above Members.
5. **Action:**
 - i. **Discussion & Dinner with Lorne Crerar and Charlotte Wright, HIE to be rescheduled.**

Minutes of Last Meeting held on 6 October, 2017 – for approval

6. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 6 October 2017 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters Arising

7. The Convener provided an update on the Action points from the minutes of the meeting on 6 October 2017:
 - Action Point at Para 6 (i.) – In hand – Meeting with Convener, Deputy-Convener, CEO and CBP Convener & CEO scheduled for January to discuss annual joint informal discussions.
 - Action Point at Para 11 (i.) – In hand – New Mountain Hare Guidance scheduled for release in January 2018 therefore there is the potential to schedule a Board discussion in Spring/ Summer 2018.
 - Action Point at Para 17 (i.) – In hand – Board Informal session and visit to East Cairngorm Moorland Partnership is being scheduled for all Board members in the Spring of 2018.
 - Action Point at Para 17 (ii.) – Outstanding – Grant was to ask SNH for update on deer movement concerns and circulate to the Board.
 - Action Point at Para 22 (i.) – Closed – David Berry circulated dates of the proposed LDP MIR Consultation events to members.
 - Action Point at Para 22 (ii.) – In Progress – Board members are being supported by staff when attending community meetings during consultation period.
 - Action Point at Para 22 (iii.) – Closed – Struan Hotel site (Carr-bridge) added to Main Issues Report.
 - Action Point at Para 26 (i.) – Closed – Board Member's left and joined various groups.
 - Action Point at Para 26 (ii.) – In hand – Upland Forum paper to be brought to March 2018 Formal Board meeting.
 - Action Point at Para 31 (i.) – Closed – VisitAberdeenshire to be listed under

paragraph 13c of the Communications and Engagement Programme 2017/18 paper.

- Action Point at Para 31 (ii.) – Closed – Feedback from Europarc Verifiers circulated to the Board.
- Action Point at Para 31 (iii.) – In hand – Wider Councillor population to be added to circulation list for Convener’s e-bulletin.
- Action Point at Para 31 (iv.) – In hand – Responsible access being added to the Make it Yours campaign.
- Action Point at Para 31 (v.) – In hand – A list of all the community newsletters in the Cairngorms National Park will be circulated with the Communications & Engagement paper in March 2018.
- Action Point at Para 36 (i.) – In hand – Update on Scottish Land and Estates Wildlife Estates accreditation scheme to be brought to the Board when available.
- Action Point at Para 41 (i.) – Closed – The Convener had written a letter to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Economy and Connectivity and had received a reply. GM positive reply in connection to R100.
- Action Point at Para 46 (i.) – In hand – Draft Budget paper to be scheduled to be brought to the Board at an Informal Business session early in 2018.

8. **Action:** **None.**

Declarations of Interest

9. No interests declared.

Election of Board Deputy-Convener and Planning Committee Convener (Paper I)

10. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, as the Authority’s nominated Proper Officer, conducted the election for the positions of Board Deputy Convener and Planning Committee Convener.
11. David Cameron reminded the Board that they had agreed at the Board meeting in October 2017, that the election for these two posts should be held in December 2017. He added that those elected for these posts would begin their term from 1st January 2018.
12. David Cameron advised the Board that he had not received any nominations for the positions from absent Board Members.

13. David Cameron invited the Board for nominations for the Board Deputy Convener position. Brian Wood was nominated by Geva Blackett and seconded by Gordon Riddler. There were no other nominations.
14. David Cameron invited the Board for nominations for the Planning Committee Convener position. Eleanor Mackintosh was nominated by Gordon Riddler and seconded by Geva Blackett. There were no other nominations.
15. **Brian Wood was elected as Board Deputy Convener for a second term to 30th September 2018.**
16. **Eleanor Mackintosh was elected as Planning Committee Convener for a third term to last 3 years.**
17. The Convener congratulated both Brian and Eleanor on behalf of the Board and said that he was looking forward to their continued hard work.
18. **Action: None.**
19. The meeting adjourned to allow for the Planning Committee meeting to take place.

CEO Report (Paper 2)

20. Grant Moir Chief Executive introduced Paper 2 which highlights the main strategic work streams that are being directed by Management Team. Grant explained that these are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver National Park Partnership Plan priorities. He highlighted the following areas:
 - a) Pleased with the Draft Budget allocation and the National Park was one of the few Public Bodies whose allocation is being increased which is a great endorsement of the work of the Cairngorms National Park Authority.
 - b) Pay Policy – the pay cap will be removed. 3% increase on those earning less than £30k and a 2% increase for those earning more than £30k. Organisations have to find the funding for progression within bands. This still had to be approved by the Scottish Government. An official letter from the Scottish Government is expected in Feb/ March with final budget allocations.
 - c) Progress made over lots of areas, thanks to staff there has been a lot of delivery which has lead to a good year.
22. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) A Board Member reported that at the recent Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group (CDAG) meeting the wording in the National Park Partnership Plan received the group's endorsement.
- b) Praise for Katie Crerar's great achievement as being identified as Scottish Young Thinker of the Year (Runner up) through the Young Scotland Programme and congratulations to be passed onto her from the Board.
- c) Regarding peatland action conservation when are we likely to hear when funding would be available? Grant Moir advised that initial funding had been allocated in the Scottish Government budget but that further funding sources were still being looked at. He added that they were confident that the funding would be available again this year.
- d) Concern raised around the maintenance of the Speyside Way extension. Pete Crane advised that a budget for maintenance was now in place and agreed to get the detail from Board Members after the meeting on the locations of the sections of path that were reported to be falling into disrepair.

23. **The Board noted the Paper.**

24. **Actions:**

- i. **Katie Crerar to be congratulated on behalf of the Board on her great achievement.**
- ii. **Board Member(s) to pass on details and locations of sections of the Speyside Way that have fallen into disrepair to Pete Crane.**

Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report (Paper 3)

- 25. The Convener reminded the Board that Dave Fallows, Audit & Risk Committee Convener was not able to attend the meeting and asked that it be noted in the minute that the Board continue to send speedy recovery wishes to him.
- 26. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 3 which presents the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report.
- 27. Grant Moir read out a statement from Dave Fallows Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee which said:
 - a) The Audit & Risk Committee have been constantly challenging and enquiring, making a real contribution to the value of Committee's work overall.
 - b) Those no longer on the Audit & Risk Committee will be greatly missed.
- 28. **The Board agreed and noted the report.**

29. **Actions:** **None.**

Strategic Risk Management & Monitoring Corporate Performance (Paper 4)

30. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 4 which presents an update of the Authority's performance over the 2017/18 financial and operation year, the final year of the current Corporate Plan.
31. The Board considered the detail of the paper and discussed the following points:
- a) With reference to page 12 of Annex 1, as regards results of the equal pay audit, were Board members content to leave the rating as amber? David Cameron confirmed that he understood the concern and advised that the rating had been given by the Staffing & Recruitment Committee. He reported that there was an imbalance in average pay which was as a result of circumstances. He added that the action that was being taken was to look at the recruitment of posts and helping current staff to progress within the organisation. He highlighted that in a small organisation such as we are one change of gender at the top impacted greatly on the average pay between male and female employees.
 - b) Brian Wood, Staffing & Recruitment Convener added that the Times Best Place to Work Staff Survey had just been completed and the results of it would be available early in the New Year.
 - c) There was a discussion around whether it was the right indicator to assess the Authority's performance on equalities and to consider this as part of the KPI's for the new corporate plan.
 - d) With reference to Next Year Income (Annex 1, page 10) and Next Year Commitments (Annex 1, page 11), could these be rated as green following yesterday's draft Budget announcements? David Cameron agreed that they would.
 - e) With reference to Annex 1 page 3, Number of People using key paths in the National Park/ Walking for health participation, could something be done to improve data collection? Pete Crane advised that part of the issue was that they had been using data collected by others that was not always very accurate. He added that the CNPA had taken over the management of the Walking to Health which should allow better data collection.
 - f) Is benchmarking against other similar sized organisations done periodically? David Cameron confirmed that it was through an active Human Resources network. Items such as turnover rates and recruitment rates. He added that the organisation was fairing relatively well and once information was

forthcoming from other organisations these can be brought together with internal information to give a wider picture.

- g) Recognition of the notable reduction in the number of complaints.
- h) Praise to staff for the fantastic achievement relating to the budget outturn for 16/17.
- i) Discussion around the Staff Absence Indicator on page 7 of the Annex and question raised around whether 9 days per person was too high as a target performance measure. David Cameron advised that this target was taken from below public sector measures at the time of approval of the Corporate Plan in 2015 and agreed that they could be reduced further.
- j) Is the Bradford Index used to monitor staff absences? David Cameron confirmed that it is used internally to monitor staff absences. Brian Wood, Staffing & Recruitment Committee Convener added that the Committee regularly challenge information brought to the meetings and are always satisfied with the answers provided.
- k) With reference to the length of path upgraded or extended indicator (Annex 1 page 2), could it be explained why it had been rated as green when it appeared that only half had been achieved? Pete Crane advised that it was because of ongoing works that were happening now, and where staff were therefore confident that performance remained on track to achieve target.

32. The Board:

- a) **Reviewed the update on corporate performance and strategic risk management set out in the paper.**
- b) **Highlighted any achievement or exceptions which, from a strategic leadership perspectives, Board Members believe are of particular significance to the delivery of the Authority's strategic objectives.**

33. Actions:

- i. **Next Year Income and Commitments rating to be changed to green.**
- ii. **Equalities mainstreaming actions performance indicator to be reviewed and revised.**
- iii. **Staff Absence benchmark to be reviewed and revised.**

Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan: Update (Paper 5)

- 34. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development introduced Paper 5 which presents a review of the annual progress with delivery of the Cairngorm Tourism Action Plan and looks forwards to the priorities in the year ahead. He added

that the Tourism Infrastructure Fund is £6million over 2 years, and that staff were working on how to tap into it.

35. The Convener advised the Board that if any Members were interested in the joining the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership then they should email that interest to him.
36. The Convener reported that two tickets had been booked for the Scottish Tourism Month: Signature Conference on 1st March 2018 in Glasgow and if any Board members were interested in attending then they should let him know.
37. The Deputy Convener reported that he and Heather Trench had attended the Awards Ceremony for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas in Brussels. He reported that the Cairngorms National Park were the only UK National Park who had been re-awarded the Charter and had also been invited to give a presentation. He advised that what they said was received with enthusiasm and they had also had a chance to promote the forthcoming Europarc Conference in Aviemore in September 2018.
38. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A Board Member reported that the mechanism for applying to the Rural Tourism Fund is not yet clear and there is likely to be significant demand on the fund. Councils are strapped for funding and looking at other options.
 - b) Had the Board not agreed to have a Board Discussion on visitor giving? It was confirmed that they had and that it would be scheduled to take place in 2018.
 - c) Resounding agreement with the comments made in the Europarc Verifier's report and hope that implementing the recommendations will be pursued. Murray confirmed that they would all be discussed at the next meeting of the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership in March.
 - d) A Board member commented that at a local petrol station she had been asked to give a donation to the Air Ambulance when she was paying for her petrol and asked if a visitor payback scheme such as that had been looked into? Murray Ferguson advised that a lot of work had gone into looking what others do, that, business support was required, and we should certainly pursue such mechanisms to make it easy for visitors to contribute.
 - e) Gordon Riddler as member of VisitAberdeenshire reported that at a recent meeting they had been given a presentation from a consultant about their future strategy. Suggestion was made for staff to provide advice on the destination strategy. Paul Easto, Cairngorms Tourism Partnership Convener endorsed the suggestion and agreed that the future relies on the engagement of all three neighbouring Destination Management Organisations.

- f) Request made for regular updates on the Tourism Action Plan to be brought to the Board so not to lose sight of the implementation of it. Murray confirmed that there would be annual updates.
39. **The Convener on behalf of the Board congratulated everyone involved in helping the National Park to achieve European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected areas Award status and thanked Paul Easto for contributing to the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership as well as chairing the meetings.**
40. **The Board:**
- a) **noted that the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas has been re-awarded to the Cairngorms National Park for third time.**
 - b) **noted the progress with delivery of the Cairngorms Tourism Action Plan and that the next report will be brought in March 2019.**
 - c) **noted the plans being made for Visitor Survey in 2019/20.**
41. **Actions:**
- i. **Board Members interested in joining the Cairngorms Tourism Partnership to make this interest known via email to the Convener.**
 - ii. **Board Members interested in attending the Scottish Tourism Month: Signature Conference in Glasgow on 1st March 2018 to let the Convener know via email.**

Supporting LEADER Programme Delivery (Paper 6)

42. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 6 which provides an update on the delivery of the Cairngorms LEADER Programme, supported by the Authority as the Accountable Body. He highlighted that the Cairngorms LEADER Programme was 80% committed.
43. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Brian Wood, LAG Member endorsed the hard work of David Cameron and the Cairngorms LEADER Team and advised that the bureaucracy around programme management and project funding applications was out with their control. He added that it had been a difficult journey but thanks to the team they were getting there.

- b) Comment made that the LEADER process is losing credibility amongst communities, as not only is the process so rigorous but also forever changing. David Cameron agreed with this sentiment and agreed that small community bodies could not cope with the levels of admin involved. He added that the Cairngorms LEADER team work very closely with Community Bodies to help them with the IT system needed for LEADER claims and also in getting their projects developed to be as fit for purpose for LEADER funding as possible.
- c) Worst case scenario if it was found that the Cairngorms LAG had funded a project that was ineligible and the National Park Authority as Lead Body had to foot the bill, how much would that bill likely to be? David Cameron advised that the system is of project samples where every 1 euro of 250,000 euros is audited. If that one euro audited was found to be ineligible then it would fall on the Park Authority as Lead Body to pay the 250,000 Euro. However he added that negotiation as to who would be liable (Lead Body, LEADER or the Scottish Government) was still ongoing. The Authority could also be held liable for any specific element of a project that was deemed to be ineligible prior to repayment of project awards to the Authority by Scottish Government
- d) Comment made that the amount of leverage from the private sector in match funding LEADER applications are very low.
- e) Comment made that match funding levels were becoming low for applicants applying to the programme.
- f) David Cameron agreed that the funding environment was becoming ever more difficult for applicants to source match funding and the LEADER intervention rates in projects was higher in this programme than in previous programme periods. That said, the programme was still leveraging over £2 million in community led local development project funding from LEADER which David projected would be added to by a further £1.2 million in various sources of match funding.

44. **The Board considered the updates of the Authority’s position as Accountable Body in support of the Cairngorms LEADER Programme.**

45. **Actions: None.**

National Parks UK Proposal to establish a National Charity (Paper 7)

46. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 7 which seeks the Board’s approval to the Authority’s participation in the development of a charity operating on a national basis for all 15 National Parks in the United Kingdom.

47. The Convener reported that he felt it was a good proposal and provided the Board with some background on how the concept had come about.
48. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Were there any constraints, could the interests of the National Park Authority be protected? David Cameron advised that they would look to ensure that there are understood mechanisms to ensure that it would be targeting UK wide businesses and not local development or local charitable investment. The Convener added that the scale of the businesses that they would be looking to target would be much bigger than those we as an Authority would be looking to target.
 - b) Concern was raised around governance and the potential for conflicts of interest. David Cameron reported that a working group had found that establishing a charity as a mechanism was the best possible solution to securing funding from large corporate entities. With regards to conflicts of interest David Cameron advised that they were looking to create an arm's length entity and that they would have to think carefully about how to set up Trusteeships. He added that the current thought was that all National Parks would benefit over the course of medium to long term.
 - c) Had the Charities Aid Foundation be looked at to manage those? David Cameron confirmed that it had been fully explored but it had not been considered the best option to create an even flow of benefit over the course of time. He added that using the Charities Aid Foundation was more likely to add a further layer of complexity in the view of the working group. Feedback received was that corporate donors were looking for a clearly recognisable charity entity with whom they could work.
 - d) Clarification was requested as to what was meant by the term large commercial organisations. The Convener advised that they meant large UK wide organisations such as Tesco UK and not Tesco Aviemore.
 - e) Concern around the governance and the costs involved and concern raised that if all 15 National Parks did not have a representative with a direct say the problems that might arise. David Cameron provided some reassurance that the activities would be clearly detailed in the memorandum and articles. He explained that all 15 National Parks will have the opportunity to become the Members of the Charity and members will reserve the right not to agree the changes proposed to the memorandum and articles of association. David Cameron added that the split of Trustees was still being worked up but that they were looking at the possibility of having one Trustee from Scotland, one from Wales and three from England split geographically. It was not thought to be a costly process.

- f) Suggestion made to make any change in the memorandum and articles of association a unanimous agreement as opposed to the normal 75% agreement. David Cameron agreed to take this point back and feed the suggestion in.
- g) Suggestion was made to make an amendment to the Paper recommendations to request that the draft memorandum and articles are brought before the Board for agreement prior to signing up to the charity. Grant Moir explained that there was an issue on timing and that at the meeting of National Park Conveners they were looking at having it agreed by their next meeting in early February 2018.
- h) Caution aired that not making a decision now could lead to missed opportunities.
- i) Agreement that the memorandum and articles would be circulated to the Board when available and only if Board Members had a specific concern would the Convener be informed and a meeting be scheduled to discuss the concern.

49. The Board agreed to the recommendations as set out in the paper.

50. Actions:

- i. **David Cameron to feed back to the UK National Park's UK National Charity working group the suggestion to ensure that any changes to the Memorandum and Articles are a unanimous agreement.**
- ii. **As further information is forthcoming, this to be circulated to the Board. If Board Members are concerned with it then they are to let the Convener know so that a discussion session could be scheduled.**

AOCB

51. The Convener thanked everyone for coming to the meeting and wished everyone a Merry Christmas, and a happy, prosperous and successful New Year.

52. **Actions: None.**

Date of Next Meeting

53. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 26 January 2018, The Pagoda, Grantown-on-Spey.

54. The Public part of this meeting concluded at 15.30.