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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Braemar Village Hall on Friday 16<sup>th</sup> January 2004 at 1.30pm

### PRESENT

Peter Argyle  
Eric Baird  
Stuart Black  
Duncan Bryden  
Sally Dowden  
Basil Dunlop  
Douglas Glass  
Angus Gordon  
Mrs Lucy Grant  
David Green  
Bruce Luffman  
Eleanor Mackintosh

Anne MacLean  
Alastair MacLennan  
William McKenna  
Andrew Rafferty  
Gregor Rimell  
Joyce Simpson  
Sheena Slimon  
Richard Stroud  
Andrew Thin  
Susan Walker  
Bob Wilson

### In Attendance:

Jane Hope  
Nick Halfhide  
Fiona Newcombe  
Ruathy Donald  
Debbie Strang

### Apologies:

David Selfridge  
Robert Severn

## **Welcome and Introduction**

1. Andrew Thin welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the Hungry Highlander for providing lunch, and also for providing supper for Board Members after the previous evening's public meeting. He welcomed the fact that a small local business was able to deliver that high quality service.

## **Minutes of Last Meeting – approval**

2. The minutes of the previous meeting (5<sup>th</sup> December) were approved with no changes.

## **Matters Arising**

3. The Convenor reported on the following matters arising:
  - a. Paragraph 9: Jane Hope had submitted the draft Corporate Plan to the Scottish Executive immediately prior to Christmas.
  - b. Paragraph 14: This action was pending, and the Working Group set up to examine 1<sup>st</sup> Anniversary events would report back to the Board at its next meeting.
  - c. Paragraph 17: Minutes from working groups were being put on the CNPA website once they were approved. Preparation of minutes from the working groups was being standardised.

## **Key Issues for Tourism in the Cairngorms (Paper 1)**

4. Debbie Strang and Ruathy Donald introduced the paper, which comprised the first report to the Board of the Tourism Development Working Group (TDWG) and identified the key issues for tourism in the Cairngorms. The importance of tourism to the Cairngorms was emphasised in the introduction. An estimated 1.2 million visitors per year came to the area, generating approximately £240 million a year for the local economy. Approximately 85% of businesses in the area were involved in tourism. A key and overriding issue for the Cairngorms National Park would be to encourage a sustainable approach to tourism. Sustainable tourism meant, in practice, a number of things;
  - Responsible tourism
  - Striking a balance between meeting the needs of the visitor, the environment and the host community for current as well as future generations.
  - Contributing to the delivery of all of the Park aims.
  - The CNPA using the powers it possessed in Schedule 3 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act to encourage people to visit the National Park. (This power was specific to Scottish National Parks and significantly different from the powers possessed by National Parks south of the border in respect of tourism.) This enabled the Cairngorms National Park Authority to engage in marketing the area.
5. The Tourism Development Working Group had been operating for several months, and had worked on the principle of including a wide range of people from the area and from the industry, but at the same time keeping to a manageable size. The Group had identified a number of key issues:

- Coordination and integration of the large number of organisations involved in tourism, and the industry itself; trying to keep a handle on everything that was going on in such a diverse industry, with such a large number of interested organisations and individuals, was a key challenge.
  - The development of a Sustainable Tourism Strategy. The intention was to achieve European Charter Status, but in reality the process of developing the Strategy was the more important point, and the achievement of charter status an incidental bonus.
  - Developing a Cairngorms Marketing Strategy. A consultant had been engaged to draft a marketing strategy for the Cairngorms National Park Area and this would be finalised in February. This would include the development of a brand.
  - Quality Standards.
  - Product development. This covered food marketing and non-food marketing elements. It was recognised that the food marketing element would be led by the Food Marketing Working Group, but clearly close coordination between the two working groups would be essential.
  - Information and interpretation provision. This would be led by the Park Gateways Group. Here again, the TDWG would have a close interest.
  - Customer experience and research.
6. The key in charting the way forward was that the Tourism Development Working Group was essentially industry-led. In addition, it would be essential that each issue was taken forward simultaneously, and where appropriate in close coordination with other working groups.
7. Bruce Luffman (Chair of the TDWG) commented that it was vital to have such a working group and that it was industry-based. With three area Tourist Boards, three Local Enterprise Companies, and four Local Authorities, each with a legitimate interest in tourism, coordination of activities on tourism to benefit the whole of the Park area was extremely difficult. There had not been such a grouping to look at tourism issues prior to the creation of the CNPA in April 2003; the Group had been brought together quite quickly and had identified the need for a marketing strategy and a marketing plan. Innovation would be key to the success. The delay in the current review of area Tourist boards, the outcome of which had been awaited for some two years, was not helpful. That aside, and regardless of the outcome of the review, the Group was bringing the existing Area Tourist Boards together to cooperate on pan-Park issues. The Working Group was large, and inevitably there were differences in thinking across such a diverse group. The role of the CNPA was to distil what was coming out of that group.
8. Sally Dowden (deputy Chair of the Group) acknowledged that the paper in front of the Board represented a lot of work by staff and the Working Group itself. The decision to make the Working Group a large one had been deliberate in order to reflect the diversity within the tourism industry. The whole approach of the group was to integrate the range of views across the industry. That diversity view provided challenges, but it also provided strength to the eventual decision made by the Park Authority. She emphasised that there would be specific sub-groups of the TDWG to deal with, for example, marketing strategy and branding.

9. In discussion the following points were made:
- a. It was suggested that the Paper should make more explicit reference to the contribution made by tourism to social inclusion; also the importance of the Park Authority's theme of creating a Park for All which by implication meant making specific efforts and adjustments to welcome the less able and the disadvantaged. Both these points were understood and accepted, and would be included in the marketing strategy. The fact they were not explicit in the paper did not reflect their lack of importance, merely the level of detail at which the paper was written. The wide and diverse membership of the TDWG also helped to ensure that such issues would not get overlooked. It was also pointed out that the European Charter for Sustainable Development included a principle of looking at a Park for All.
  - b. The difficult balance to achieve would be to ensure integration at a strategic level, but at the same time celebrate diversity within the National Park. Healthy competition between tourism businesses within the National Park should not be seen as undesirable.
  - c. As Paragraph 26 of the paper suggested, the provision of information and interpretation needed to be addressed as a priority. The point was made that information provision and signage were both needed quickly and the question was raised as to whether these two elements could be moved forward at the same time. It was pointed out that Debbie Strang sat in on both the Tourism Development Working Group and on the Park Gateways Group to ensure the activities of both groups were properly joined up.
  - d. A visitor guide was being produced this year for the very first time covering the whole of the National Park area, and this was being done through the joint activities of the three area Tourist Boards. The CNPA was not in any way stopping activities from carrying on as in previous years, such as individual ATB activities, but it was able to influence the degree of coordination of these activities, and the extent to which these were done on a pan-Park basis where appropriate.
  - e. A brief report was given on signage. Consultants had been invited to scope the siting and form of signs at the entry points into the National Park. They were due to report back at Easter and then to the CNPA Board very soon thereafter. However, there would need to be community input on the form and siting of the signs. Getting signs in place would therefore not be a quick process if the Park was to have good quality signs that would last, and whose siting was agreed.
  - f. Any pressure to get signs in place very quickly was not coming from the tourism industry, who well understood the importance of getting the process right. In this context it was pointed out that the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce was now embracing membership across the whole of the National Park. This would ensure enhanced cooperation between all the businesses within the National Park
  - g. Whatever one working group decided this was likely to have an impact on the work of other groups. There would inevitably be some overlap between the work of different groups. It was particularly important that the staff going to one group were also able to go to other relevant groups and report back. No group could work in isolation or without input from people outwith the CNPA who had the relevant expertise and experience.
  - h. Paragraph 17 listed a series of key action points for the marketing strategy. It was suggested that an additional bullet point should include raising the profile of the

tourism industry in schools in an effort to raise the status of the industry as an employer, and in providing a career structure for youngsters.

- i. Tourism was essentially a people business. The CNPA needed to find a way of capturing and building on the passion, enthusiasm, and pride for the area, and extending this to community involvement

## **10. The Paper was agreed.**

### **CAP Reform Consultation Response (Paper 2)**

11. Fiona Newcombe introduced the paper, which contained the Agriculture Working Group's response to the Scottish Executive's consultation on the implementation of recent Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) Reforms. The paper was intended to bring the Board up to speed with the response agreed by the working group. The response had been submitted to the Scottish Executive in early January and had been informed by two open CNPA meetings held in the Park area and one meeting held by the Scottish Executive. Farming and crofting were important in delivering all four of the Park aims. Agriculture in the National Park, just as across the whole of Scotland, was under threat as a result of falling incomes, and fewer young people wanting to enter the industry. The CNPA response to the consultation focused on calling for a reformed CAP to have a regionalised approach; to deliver through land management contracts; for the National Park to be a region for the purposes of land management contracts; for the Park area to be designated as special because of its particular landscape and wildlife qualities; and to suggest that the Park area be used as a pilot for land management contracts. The principles behind the CNPA response were that support to farmers and crofters should be based on the provision of public benefits in support of the four aims of the National Park; and that it was too soon to be making specific choices on the options. The principle should be for a regional approach. The Board were invited to note this response and to take opportunities to promote its ideas.
12. Alastair MacLennan (Chair of the Agriculture Working Group) commended the paper, and emphasised that agriculture had been changing within the National Park for the previous twenty years. There were now fewer farm units, fewer livestock, fewer farm workers, less arable cultivation. There were threats to the natural heritage, the landscape and the cultural heritage as a consequence. This mid-term review of the CAP was a major reform with a potentially huge impact on land management in the area. It presented great opportunities as well as threats. The Agriculture Working Group had looked at it as a positive opportunity to influence land management in the area to deliver the Park's aims.
13. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a. For a long time national agriculture schemes had not encompassed sufficient flexibility. The CAP reform offered the opportunity to encourage farmers to produce what the customers wanted. There were customers for a wide range of food and environmental goods produced within the National Park. The area was capable of giving good value for public money.
  - b. Some farmers were opposed to the proposed national envelopes for the beef sector. [Note: A national envelope refers, for a particular sector, to a total sum of money

determined by payments made to that sector historically, and now reallocated to that sector for different purposes.]. The point was made that the principle of national envelopes could be useful to the National Park and should therefore not be opposed, but that there may in any event be other and better ways of targeting payments at particular sector-related issues through the Scottish Rural Development Programme.

- c. Paragraph 26 referred to using set-aside to encourage access, and to placing set-aside along water courses. It was pointed out that making access provision along river banks could be rather expensive. However, it was pointed out that as set-aside was only available on land required to grow crops, it would not therefore be covering river banks.
- d. The Crofters Commission were currently in consultation with a number of other organisations (Highlands & Islands Enterprise, Western Isles and Shetland Councils) working up a joint position on CAP reform which was broadly similar to that taken by the CNPA. This would be shared with the Agriculture Working Group. The conditions in the Highlands and Islands were different from the conditions elsewhere and therefore needed a different solution. The principle of flexibility was therefore common to both positions.
- e. The reform of the CAP was a long-term issue for the National Park. The consultation response did not represent the end of the story. The National Park was capable of delivering a wide range of public goods at value for money. There was a clear need for regionalisation, and pilots of land management contracts were an obvious way of testing these ideas. The challenge now was to ensure that the whole of the farming community within the National Park was in agreement with this approach, and to then build awareness of it nationally.

#### **14. The Board noted the paper.**

### **Integrated Land Management Schemes (Paper 3)**

15. Fiona Newcombe introduced the paper which outlined a process for developing integrated land management schemes. The development of integrated land management schemes had been identified as an early priority for the Park in the Corporate Plan. There currently existed a plethora of national and local schemes run by many different organisations, a situation often regarded as bureaucratic and expensive to administer. It was also inflexible, and not easily tailored to meet the particular needs of local areas. There was also on occasions conflict between schemes. The consequence was that land managers were forced to ask "what can I do under the existing schemes" rather than asking "what do we want for this area/business". The aim of integrated land management schemes within the National Park was, in the long term, to have a one-stop-shop with all public measures delivered through the one vehicle. This was ambitious, and initially the best approach might be to aim for better coordination of existing schemes while still aiming in the long term for a one-stop-shop.
16. The Agriculture Working Group had completed its objective of compiling and submitting a consultation response to the Scottish Executive on the reform of the CAP (see previous paper). In the process it had identified two further streams of work:
  - The identification of public benefits;

- Better coordination and integration of agriculture with other schemes (e.g. forestry, river management).

17. A new working group was therefore proposed to take this work forward. It would be important to bring in external members to the group who brought appropriate expertise and experience.

18. In discussion the following points were raised:

- a. The broad approach proposed in the paper was right, but emphasis should be given to looking at the gaps in existing schemes and where there were opportunities, but no mechanisms, for identifying public benefits. Some organisations had done work in this area already and the CNPA should be looking at this
- b. State Aids was a tricky issue. It would be advisable to seek early discussions with the Scottish Executive to avoid some of the pitfalls associated with the constraints of the State Aids rules.
- c. This was an important issue for Scotland's biggest National Park. It would take some time, indeed years, to work through and it would be important to work incrementally.
- d. Many of the issues discussed in the paper would be common to both the National Parks in Scotland. It could be valuable to work closely with the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority(LL&TTNPA). Fiona Newcombe reported that in putting together the CNPA's response to the CAP consultation there had been close consultation with the LL&TT National Park Authority.

19. The Convenor proposed that the Agriculture Working Group would become the Integrated Land Management Working Group and Alastair MacLennan would chair the first meeting. The Convenor asked members to let him know if members wished to join the group. (Bruce Luffman reported he would wish to come off the group, Sue Walker and Willie McKenna both expressed interest in joining the group).

**20. The paper was agreed and it was agreed that the Agriculture Working Group should evolve into the Integrated Land Management Working Group (ILMWG).**

**21. Action:**

- a. **Members to advise the Convenor if they wished to join/leave the ILMWG**

## **AOCB**

22. The Convenor reported on the recent process of recruiting members of the senior management team and for the record, gave a run down of the seven members of the team as follows:

**Head of Communications - Daniel Alexander.** Currently head of the Britain in Europe Campaign. Originally from Fort William, he was keen to return to the Highlands. He had also held posts with the Liberal Democrats and with Westminster Research. He would take up his post on the 1<sup>st</sup> March.

**Head of Economic and Social Development - Andrew Harper.** Currently working for One North East, the Regional Development Agency for the North East of England where

he is Planning and Performance Manager. His earlier career involved posts as Community Development Manager with English Partnerships, and Economic Development Officer with various councils. He would be joining the CNPA on the 16<sup>th</sup> February.

**Head of Visitor Services and Recreation - Murray Ferguson.** Currently working with SNH, and well known in the area for leading the consultation by SNH as official reporter into the arrangements for the Cairngorms National Park. He would take up his post on the 9<sup>th</sup> February.

**Head of Planning and Development Control - Still to be confirmed.** The candidate originally chosen had withdrawn after accepting, for personal reasons. It was now reasonably sure that an alternative candidate would take the post. This would be confirmed as soon as possible. In the meantime Denis Munro would continue to be the acting head.

23. The three other members of the senior management team were already in place and well know. They were:

**Head of Natural Resources - Fiona Newcombe**

**Head of Strategic Planning - Nick Halfhide**

**Head of Corporate Services - Andy Rinning,** as Interim Head of Corporate Services on secondment from the Scottish Executive. Recruitment of a permanent post holder would take place in due course, but it was not sensible to disrupt the current process of establishing the organisation and Andy would remain on secondment to complete that task.

24. The Convenor went on to outline the process for recruitment of the Chief Executive. He explained that the Staffing and Recruitment Committee (S&R) had deferred the process of recruitment of the Chief Executive so that the senior management team could be put in place. The Committee had now met and decided on a process for taking forward the recruitment of the Chief Executive. The purpose of this announcement to the Board was to put an explanation of that process in the public domain. The process would consist of the following stages:

- No member of CNPA Staff would be involved. The Convenor was therefore managing the process in conjunction with the Scottish Executive and the Recruitment Consultant.
- An advert would be placed in the national and local press by the week beginning on the 2<sup>nd</sup> February. The closing date would be the end of February.
- The initial short-listing meeting of the S&R Committee (including the Scottish Executive and recruitment consultant) was set for Friday 5<sup>th</sup> March. This meeting would produce an initial short list of around 10 candidates.
- Interviews of this initial short list would be held by the consultants by the 24<sup>th</sup> March. This process would allow the Consultants to probe the written applications of those candidates and advise the S&R Committee..
- A final short-listing meeting of the S&R Committee would be held on the 25<sup>th</sup> March to agree a final short list of about 4.
- Final interviews would be held on the 22<sup>nd</sup> and 23<sup>rd</sup> April. The interview panel would consist of Andrew Thin, Eric Baird, Anne MacLean, a Scottish Executive representative, and the recruitment Consultant.



- The panel would not make the final decision; this would be made by the S&R Committee which would meet on the 28<sup>th</sup> April.
- The decision on appointment required approval by Scottish Ministers. The announcement to the Board of the successful candidate would be made as soon as possible following Ministerial approval.

25. A date of the 20<sup>th</sup> February had been set for the formal opening event of the Ballater office. The event would take place at 12 noon with Mike Rumbles MSP conducting the formal opening. Jane Hope agreed to circulate details to Members.

### Date of Next Meeting

26. 13<sup>th</sup> February 2004 in the Duke of Gordon, Kingussie