

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK VISIT FORUM

Meeting held on Wednesday 16th February at Supper Rooms, Albert Hall,  
Ballater at 10:15am

## **Present**

Bruce Luffman (Chair)  
Danny Alexander  
Scott Armstrong  
Neil Black  
Elaine Booth  
Sandy Dear  
Sally Dowden  
Ian Dunlop  
Peter Crane  
Andrew Coleman  
Patricia Eccles  
Roger Edwards  
Murray Ferguson  
Heather Galbraith  
Jim Gillies  
John Grant  
Debbie Green  
Andrew Harper  
Paul Higson  
Harry Leith  
James Macfarlane  
Elma McMenemy  
Meg Mearns  
Mick Pawley  
Debbie Strang  
Hamish Trench

Auld Cummerton, Strathdon  
Cairngorms National Park Authority  
Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board  
VisitScotland  
Scottish Enterprise Grampian  
Tourism and the Environment Forum  
Speyside Wildlife  
Aberdeen & Grampian Tourist Board  
Cairngorms National Park Authority  
UDAT  
Nethy House, Nethy Bridge  
Moray Badenoch and Strathspey Enterprise  
Cairngorms National Park Authority  
Cairngorms National Park Authority  
Forestry Commission  
SRPBA  
Scottish Natural Heritage  
Cairngorms National Park Authority  
ECAP Project Co-ordinator  
La Mangiatoia Restaurant  
Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain Bridge  
Royal Deeside and Mearns Tourism Forum  
The Stables Cafe Bar  
Angus Council  
Cairngorms National Park Authority  
Cairngorms National Park Authority

## **Apologies**

Simon Blackett  
Alex Burns-Smith  
Alister Clunas  
Willie Colville  
Alistair Gronbach  
Fred Gordon  
Bob Kinnaird  
Andrew Kirk  
Jim Knowles  
Garry Marsden  
Pierre Masson  
Caroline Mitchell  
Ann Napier  
Ian Reynolds  
Douglas Ritchie  
Kevin Shaw  
Syd Smardon  
Elizabeth Thompson  
Tim Walker  
Drennan Watson  
Andrew Wells

Braemar Tourist Association  
Pine Bank Chalets  
Mar Lodge Estate  
Phase One- Fun  
VisitScotland  
Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service  
CairnGorm Mountain Ltd  
The Cairn Hotel  
Aberdeenshire Council  
Balmoral Estate  
Moray Council  
Aberlour Distillery  
Association of Cairngorms Community Councils  
Scottish Enterprise Tayside  
Perthshire Tourist Board  
Mountview Hotel  
Speyside Highland Leisure Park  
Dalwhinnie Distillery  
Sportscotland Glenmore Lodge  
Scottish LINK  
Glenlivet Estate, Tomintoul

## **In Attendance**

Richard Denman  
Menekse Suphi

The Tourism Company  
Scott Porter Research

## **Welcome and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, introduced Richard Denman of The Tourism Company, and noted the apologies.
2. As Richard Denman had to depart the meeting early, the Chair announced that agenda item 3, Sustainable Tourism Strategy would be taken before item 2.

## **Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan**

3. The Chair noted that the strategy had been very well received, and thanked everyone for their comments. Richard Denman expressed his thanks for giving him the opportunity to carry out the work, and outlined the draft strategy and the process for application for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.
4. Debbie Strang tabled Paper 1 which outlined the comments that had been received on the draft report. She apologised for not being able to circulate these in advance, but said that in an attempt to keep the process as open as possible, she had accepted comments up until 5pm on 15<sup>th</sup> so that the VISIT Forum could discuss these at the meeting the following day. The Forum ran through each of the comments outlined in Annex 1 (see amended annex 1 to these minutes for the decisions taken), and were encouraged to e-mail any further amendments to the comments outlined in annex 2 by 23rd February.
5. It was also noted that a further set of comments had been received that morning. It was agreed that consideration of these together with confirmation of the revisions as suggested by the VISIT Forum would be undertaken by a sub-group of Forum members before presentation to the Park Board.
6. Paper 1 also provided a brief outline for the publication of the report once finalised, which needs to remain an evolving and flexible document able to take account of the emerging strategies of both the Park and key partners. It will however, be widely circulated, placed on the website and made available to anyone who requests it.
7. The Forum endorsed the view that a short summary document should be produced so that it can be made sent to all tourism enterprises on the current database, to all those who had contributed to the development of the strategy and to raise awareness about the commitment by the VISIT Forum to sustainable tourism. It was also agreed that the report should encompass a summary of the 2003 Visitor Survey, list the Forum members and those NP staff with a responsibility for tourism. It was stressed that this report will be an additional document and the full main report will be widely available.

**ViSIT  
Subgroup**

**DS / PC**

## **Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising**

8. The minutes of the last meeting were approved.

9. Pete Crane advised that iPoint, which had gone into liquidation, had been bought over and was operating again under the same name.
10. Scott Armstrong confirmed that the Aviemore TIC had relocated and the new premises in the centre of the village were now open.
11. Pete Crane advised that the final draft of the Visitor Survey was still being tweaked. A full version of the final report will be available electronically, and a summary will be published with the shortened report of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
12. Options for the new Cairngorms brand for brown directional tourist sign by local authorities are currently being produced. Initially this will be for signage well outside the Park that will focus on directing people to the park. Ian Dunlop stressed that any such signage must work within the national convention for tourist signage. A paper on pre-arrival directional signage will be produced prior to the next meeting

MF

### **Park Plan**

13. Hamish Trench gave a brief presentation on the Park Plan, which is the strategic management plan for the park. The plan will act as the vehicle for collective achievement of the 4 aims of the National Park by all public bodies operating within the park.
14. The plan will include background statistics, a vision for the park and objectives and actions under 3 themes related to the aims of the park.
15. A draft plan should be complete by the end of the year which will go out to consultation in early 2006. The final plan should be complete by Autumn 2006 and will be presented to the Scottish Executive for approval.
16. There was a discussion on the consultation with local authorities over the park plan, and Mick Pawley suggested that it would be useful for local authorities to set up National Park working groups.

### **VisitScotland Organisational Structure**

17. Ian Dunlop updated the forum on the changes to VisitScotland organisational structure. The Area Tourist Boards will be dissolved on 31st March and the new integrated network will be operational from 1st April. The new system has been designed to increase Scotland's competitiveness in the world tourism market, and the Scottish Executive have increased funding, mainly for marketing but also for quality assurance, skills and training.
18. A process of job-matching for the new structure is underway, and many central support jobs will be located in area offices. In the meantime, support arrangements such as TICs, visitor information and marketing opportunities will continue as normal.

19. Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs) are to be set up, including representation from business and local authorities and supported by the local tourism network office. It is proposed that these ATPs co-ordinate tourism development and support activity and lead upon the development of local tourism strategies. The Chair prompted a discussion on the 'fit' between the Park and the three ATPs that would dissect it. He suggested that the ViSIT Forum was already effectively fulfilling the role of an ATP, that it had existing buy-in from key partners and that it had additional support available via the CNPA. A wide variety of views were expressed on the future position of the Park in the context of the ATPs but it was recognised by everybody that the ViSIT Forum and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan would need to be properly taken account of in whatever new partnership and strategic planning arrangements were developed.
20. VisitScotland will not market destinations but will instead focus on product marketing and it is likely that National Parks will be seen as a product, perhaps with a specialised account manager at VisitScotland. Representatives from the ViSIT Forum would meet with David Noble, the new Director of Network Operations, as soon as possible to discuss the most appropriate mechanisms for VisitScotland to engage with both the ViSIT Forum and the CNPA.

AH

### **Marketing Strategy Action Plan**

21. Andrew Harper updated on the Marketing Strategy Action Plan. It is proposed that park-wide marketing should be tailored to VisitScotland's existing themes. CNPA were considering the provision of financial support to encourage collaborative marketing and events

### **Cairngorms Branding**

22. Danny Alexander introduced Menekse Suphi of Scott Porter Research, who carried out the market testing of the new Cairngorms brand.
23. Menekse gave a presentation summarising the Market Research process, and consumer and stakeholder response to the visual identity routes tested. The research had given a clear steer to one preferred visual identity which will become the new Cairngorms National Park brand.
24. A paper detailing the planned implementation of the brand was approved by the CNPA board on 11th February. The brand will be rolled out after a launch event on 8th March, and will initially appear on interim metal entry point road signs, railway signs and visitor print for 2005. Thereafter it will be available for use by stakeholders, subject to certain criteria. Licenses will also be available for use of the brand in merchandising, with revenue raised going to support conservation projects within the park. A brand management committee, including community and business representation, will be set up to guide the rollout of the brand.

### **Visitor Guide 2006**

25. The 2005 Visitor Guide was tabled. The changes to the 2005 guide including changes to the map and the inclusion of community information, were welcomed.

26. There was a discussion on the format for the 2006 guide and it was decided that generally the format should not be changed considerably, and particularly that accommodation listings should not be included, because existing area accommodation guides will be produced in 2006 by VisitScotland.

### **Project Updates**

27. Point of Entry Signage. The interim metal road signs, featuring the brand with gaelic interpretation, and similar permanent metal signs at railway stations are scheduled to be in place by Easter, but this is now dependant on the contractors undertaking the work. On the permanent granite marker project, the landscape architects and product designer have been appointed, funding applications have been submitted, communities and landowners contacted have been contact and advertisement consents for all sites apart from Dinnet have been submitted to the appropriate local authority.
28. Visitor Information. The Cairngorms Countryside events leaflet has been produced and will be distributed in time for Easter. A leaflet promoting the 6 walking festivals within the park is also planned. Branded park information will be placed in the TICs in Grantown and Aviemore. A paper on ranger services within the park will go to the CNPA board in March.
29. Public Transport Timetable. A brochure containing information on public transport within the park, linked to specific walks, is planned.
30. VisitScotland Expo. The CNPA has booked 8 stands at VisitScotland Expo to exhibit with partners under the Cairngorms National Park brand. Space is still available and an approach would be made to various businesses and groups in the Grampian and Angus areas to encourage take-up of the remaining space.
31. Cairngorms Connections Training Course. Moray College are developing a new product knowledge-based training course for businesses within the park, in association with Tourist Board Training and the CNPA. They are aware of sensitivities surrounding the previous National Park Welcome course, and a pilot course is scheduled for 3rd March 2005.

**HG**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting will be Wednesday 20th April.

*The meeting ended at 14:00*

**Heather Galbraith**

February 2004