
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey on Friday 16th March 2012 at 10.30am

PRESENT

Peter Argyle	Eleanor Mackintosh
Duncan Bryden	Ian MacKintosh
Jaci Douglas	Willie McKenna
Katrina Farquhar	Martin Price
David Green (Convener)	Gordon Riddler
Kate Howie	Brian Wood
Gregor Hutcheon	Allan Wright

In Attendance:

David Cameron	Gavin Miles
Murray Ferguson	Andy Rinning
Jane Hope	Hamish Trench
Karen Major	Francoise van Buuren

Apologies:

Angela Douglas	Mary McCafferty
Dave Fallows	Gregor Rimell
Marcus Humphrey	

Welcome and Introduction

1. David Green welcomed everyone to the Board meeting.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting of the 20th January were approved with minor editorial changes.

Matters Arising

3. Following up the discussion on coordination of Ranger Services 2012 – 17 (paragraphs 11-16) Murray Ferguson reported that there had been further discussion and significant progress with Rothiemurchus Estate. Their rangers were displaying the Cairngorms Brand identity, and had attended the annual Cairngorms Ranger Gathering and contributed very positively. The estate would be applying for ranger grants for the coming years.

Declarations of Interest

4. None

National Park Plan Review Consultation Report (Paper 1)

5. Gavin Miles introduced the paper which presented the report of the Consultation Analysis on the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan, and sought a steer from the Board on how to address the main issues raised by the consultation. The annexes to the paper included the Consultation Report itself and a working draft of the National Park Plan that the consultation responses were helping to develop. Members had also been given a copy of the individual responses for reference.
6. The National Parks (Scotland) Act set out the origins of the National Park Plan as: “set the CNPA’s policy for managing the National Park, and coordinating its functions and those of other public bodies in relation to the Park in order to achieve the collective and coordinated delivery of the Aims of the Park”. The challenge for the Plan was therefore to deal with all the complex issues related to the Park as well as the complicated relationships between organisations across boundaries and of resources and complicated legal systems, all as simply as possible so that it could be easily understood by the people who needed to use it. The National Park Plan was there to provide direction and leadership to organisations and to other more detailed plans and strategies. The Local Development Plan was a good example: the National Park Plan set out the vision for the Park; the LDP took that and provided more specific detail on where, when and how development should happen to deliver that vision.
7. Work had been progressing on the review of the National Park Plan for the previous two and a half years. There had been five formal Board meetings, and a number of informal discussions considering the process and the development of the Plan; in 2010 and 2011 there had been a number of partner discussions, community information and visioning sessions (attended by nearly 400 people) as well as workshops with various organisations and with schools and youth workers. There had been 88 formal responses as reflected in the Analysis Report. More recently there had been ongoing

discussions with partners on the draft Plan and their responses to it during and since the consultation.

8. There had been considerable broad agreement arising from all this work; also many suggestions which had been incorporated into the drafting of the Plan. The Cairngorms Business Partnership had put in a rather different response from most consultees. They had concentrated on the opportunities provided by the National Park and emphasised the need for collective delivery. It was a very thoughtful response supported by the Federation of Small Businesses, and proposing that greater direction and coordination for growth and diversification of the economy of the Park was required for the future. The responses concluded with the proposal that a Cairngorms Enterprise Forum should be set up for the Park, led by the private sector but bringing together all the relevant public and private bodies to develop and deliver an economic development and diversification strategy for the Park. The many responses received were helpful; many were practical. But in their entirety the responses illustrated how it would be impossible to please everyone.
9. Apart from the many smaller issues which were covered by the paper, there were three major issues on which the Board's views were sought. Underlying all of these was in some cases a misunderstanding of the aims of the Park, in the sense that there was a perception that only the first aim (conservation) mattered. This made it difficult to have a meaningful discussion about the draft Plan which was very clearly required to ensure the collective and coordinated delivery of all the four aims of the National Park.
10. The first of these three issues was economic growth and disagreement on whether or not economic growth was an appropriate aspiration for the National Park. The consultation document set out to promote economic growth in the Park as a way of supporting business, communities, young people and making it more resilient to changes in the future. That approach was one that the business community wanted, most communities recognised as important, and was consistent with what the Scottish Government wanted for Scotland. The opposing view was that this would be bad for the Park; damage the special qualities; or that it was not appropriate for the National Park Plan to tackle it. The proposed response to this was to continue to promote economic growth and diversification of the economy to support communities and business in order to get to the long term outcome of a sustainable economy. The question for the Board was whether this proposed drafting got the balance right. In asking that question, it was noted that economic growth was currently a real challenge for Scotland which it was essential to address. This priority could change in the future.
11. The second issue was related to the economic question and concerned population and housing. The Board had already identified a housing supply for what could be needed in the future through the Local Plan and the LDP would continue to have to identify a land supply for future housing. The National Park Plan Consultation Document

reinforced the point that the established land supply should accommodate future needs. There was a view from a number of respondents that there should not be new open market housing in the Park, or that only affordable housing should be built. The proposed response in the National Park Plan was to provide sufficient land to allow housing for a range of needs, including the desire to continue to attract young workers to the Park, and keep young people here; the natural change in housing need as the population got older; and the specific needs of communities. The proposal also drew a distinction in approach between Badenoch and Strathspey where there was a strong case for growth, and other parts of the National Park. The proposal was also clear that the growth should be accommodated in the existing identified capacity of land supply unless more flexibility was needed, in which case the LDP should find additional small sites around more communities in the Park. The proposal was also to continue support for communities to develop innovative housing solutions at community level.

12. The third big issue was the approach to wildness. On the one hand there was a view that much more needed to be done to enhance wildness than was outlined in the consultation document. On the other hand was the view that wildness was one of the special landscape qualities of the Park but that other qualities also needed support, and there were more realistic ways of enhancing them together. The proposed response in the final National Park Plan was to change the five year outcome to encompass the special landscape qualities of the Park together, including wildness. This recognised the diversity of those qualities as well as what is practically achievable.
13. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The consultation process had been resource intensive but had been fruitful in obtaining people's opinions and input to the National Park Plan. A lot of people had taken the trouble to take part in the consultation and this was welcome. The challenge was dealing with opposing views.
 - b) Targets and indicators seemed to be a considerable source of debate and diversity of opinion. It was agreed that more work was needed on this. Unfortunately, it was very easy to express a view of not agreeing with a particular target or indicator; very few consultation responses offered constructive alternatives.
 - c) Generally responses were supportive of the proposed approach.
 - d) Some support for the idea of housing in "smaller parcels around settlements" but "smaller" surely needed greater definition and clarity. It was felt that this wording was appropriate for giving the strategic steer intended in the National Park Plan; it was for the Local Development Plan to be more precise and define the scale.
 - e) It would not be possible to get sustainable economic development unless affordable housing was available. Current statute made it impossible to ensure that houses made 'affordable' with Government funding could be allocated as a priority to the local workforce. It was important to distinguish between

homelessness and housing need: the Homeless Persons Act required homelessness to be addressed, but in doing so housing need took second place. The Local Development Plan provided for a certain percentage of affordable housing provision and local need, but the complex law on allocation made it impossible to provide solely for local need without being discriminatory. It was recognised that things had to be done differently to solve the local affordable housing issues, but the solution was not clear. In practice, one option appeared to be the use of charities such as housing trusts which were not bound by the same legislation; the CNPA was currently working with communities to develop these sorts of solutions but inevitably this would be quite slow and on a relatively small scale. It was noted this was a complex issue, work was in hand looking at what constituted “key workers”. A paper would be brought back to the CNPA Board to update Members on this complex issue.

- f) Three big issues as outlined were clearly interlinked and could not be taken in isolation e.g. the Economic Forum had to (amongst other things) address concerns about the special qualities of the Park. It was noted that all the discussions in the last two and a half years had been trying to address precisely this point on the need for joined up thinking. But no amount of discussion was going to change some of the views which remained entrenched in a misinterpretation of the National Parks (Scotland) Act.
- g) Continuing that point it was noted that the Economic Forum needed to ensure it had a range of interests reflected in its membership. Nevertheless, it was recognised that the Forum was not simply another discussion forum – its focus would be finding solutions on diversification and sustainability of the economy. It clearly needed to recognise that sustainability had three legs but it could not afford to become yet another discussion forum on points of principle.
- h) There was clearly going to be disagreement on the three big issues flagged up. The job of the CNPA was to find a way through that, finding a balance of economic growth that could fit with the other aims of the National Park. If there was no fourth aim, then the notion of no economic growth etc. would be a legitimate course to pursue. However the fourth aim was there, and reflected in the purpose of the CNPA and indeed the statutory purpose behind the Cairngorms National Park Plan. The expectation of the Scottish Parliament, as reflected in the legislation was clear, namely that the Park Authority and the National Park Plan had to address the collective and coordinated delivery of the four Aims. Another perspective on the same issue was this: with no economic growth, communities die. Things cannot remain static, they have to grow or decrease. It was not possible to have people working in the National Park unless there was housing for them. There had to be economic growth appropriate to the National Park to deliver this, within all the four aims.
- i) There was some discussion about the need to encourage in-migration of young workers to the Park and to slow the loss of young people from the Park. It was noted that not all “young people” are the same in respect of their needs e.g. a

single student did not need the same as a young married person with children. In practice, slowing departure and increasing in-migration were both important. Interestingly, the Economic Baseline Study conducted recently in the Cairngorms National Park indicated that while the out-migration of young people was similar to all other rural areas of Scotland, the Cairngorms was in the enviable position of attracting a higher proportion of in-migration than other rural areas. It was noted that it was perfectly reasonable for young people to want to leave the area they grew up in, in order to attend university, find new experiences etc. What was important was not that this was stopped, but that young people felt they could come back. It was essential therefore to be clear what was meant by lack of housing for young people and therefore what solution should be pursued.

- j) Public policy was formed through public opinion and evidence. The consultation had clearly dealt with the matter of opinion; in respect of the evidence base, it was important this was sufficient to make a judgement, for example, on whether there was a direct correlation between economic development and the impact on habitats and species. There would be many sources of impact which could not be controlled through the National Park Plan, and the difficulty was therefore making a judgement on what policies to pursue in order to achieve a particular outcome. Clearly development, and economic growth more generally, might have some direct impacts but also some indirect impacts. The equation also had to recognise that there were many other actions (e.g. building core paths) which also had effects which helped to mitigate others. It was a complex set of interactions. A particular example was given to illustrate this point: 20% of the workforce commuted into the National Park. The interesting but probably unanswerable question was whether the carbon footprint of this commuting was greater than that of the housing created to house the commuters as an alternative.
- k) The aim was to build communities not just housing. This implied that all the support services that go with houses (hospitals, schools etc.) were also considered alongside the provision of housing. The Local Development Plan would give effect to that consideration through the settlement strategies. The general policy of focusing development on existing settlements in effect dealt with this particular issue. The point was made however that it would be useful to have statements in the National Park Plan that recognised this link and therefore the need for partners to participate proactively in the process.
- l) While the current draft of the National Park Plan had reference to partnership, it was suggested that this could and should be strengthened to make the point that stakeholders are interdependent with each other in the National Park, and to stress the collective responsibility for the care of the National Park and the delivery of the National Park Plan. In this respect it was noted that the principles articulated at the beginning of the Park Plan were being developed jointly with the other National Park in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs and would be common to both National Park Plans. One of these principles was a reference

to partnership and it was essential that this message came across strongly in both National Park Plans.

- m) The references to economic growth implied erroneously that the issue was growth *per se*, whereas in fact it was more about developing an economy that was resilient and adaptable. The explanation on page 15 was very useful, emphasising that the issue was not unfettered growth. There was a communications challenge implicit in this.
- n) On page 17 of the draft Plan there was reference to “high in-migration”. This had to be relative to some other measure and it was noted that it was young people and entrepreneurs etc. that were particularly needed, but still within the limits of the capacity of the National Park.
- o) The National Park should be a place that encouraged entrepreneurial activity as this would be the basis for a stronger and more diversified economy. It was the activity of people that helped to build vibrant places. While it was recognised that this was expected to emerge from the economic strategy it was important that the Park Plan encapsulated this idea to illustrate what was meant by a sustainable economy in practice.
- p) The aspiration of maintaining the quality of wildness was not ambitious enough. The term “increasing” might be more appropriate. The point was made that wildness was a multi-dimensional characteristic comprising many different factors. Depending on which elements one focused on, there was potential for enhancing wildness but only in relation to those particular factors. So the aim of “enhancing” was reasonable given the way that wildness had been defined. There were mixed views in the consultation on this matter some of which reflected the idea that it was not sensible to think that one could increase wildness given the increasing pressures. The landscape was essentially the product of management down the centuries. Some places might feel wilder than others. One could remove artefacts but in essence in the end it was a man-made landscape and this had to be realised. It was important not to exclude people through the use of the term “wildness”. Rolling wildness in with the other special qualities of the Park seemed a sensible approach. It was also recognised that it was better to have tried and failed than not to have tried at all in respect of increasing or enhancing the quality of wildness in the National Park.
- q) Wildness had many different meanings and interpretations; ecological wildness meant leaving things alone; the human interpretation of wildness meant something often very different. Clearly wildness was about perception. Nevertheless, it was quite possible to define the various elements and to measure those and this was what the Landscape Toolkit devised by the CNPA was designed to do.
- r) Summing up on the wildness discussion, the Convener suggested that wildness was multi dimensional; there was support for the aspiration to make the most of opportunities to enhance the wildness, on the basis this would mean

enhancement in relation to particular factors. But taking all those factors together the aspiration was at the very least to maintain overall wildness.

- s) People born and brought up in the National Park can enrich the Park with their own experience if they leave and come back. Their own experience of the Park itself can also be enriched as a result. The National Park Plan could benefit from more prominence given to working with young people to develop an appreciation of the National Park, thereby creating young ambassadors. If young people appreciate their National Park they would want to come back again. There also needed to be a better wage structure and better paid jobs to attract them back.
- t) It was noted that in the consultation responses there were various offers of help. These were being followed up in respect of writing the Plan but also implementing the Plan.

14. The Convener summed up the discussion as follows:

- a) A complex consultation which had been well distilled into the Main Issues. The CNPA Board recorded its thanks to all those who had contributed to the consultation.
- b) Housing: there was clearly a tension between homelessness and housing need. More focus needed to be given to the continuing the work with communities on meeting local housing needs. A paper would be brought back to the Board shortly.
- c) Young people and in-migration: focus needed on making the economic base better so that young people wanted to come back and could come back. Expectation that the Economic Forum would consider this issue.
- d) Partnership principle: needed to be strengthened in drafting the Plan
- e) Wildness: an important topic. Essential not to over-complicate but recognise that the term “wildness” is multi dimensional. Clear aspiration to make the most of the opportunities to enhance wildness through enhancing particular factors. But overall aim to at least across the board maintain what we have.
- f) Need to be explicit about the link between the National Park Plan and Local Development Plan.
- g) Environment Minister to chair a meeting of partners on the 19th March to seek broad agreement to the Plan and the main issues being flagged up. The Plan would continue to be refined with further discussion by the CNPA Board in April, and final approval in May prior to sending to Scottish Ministers for formal approval. It was being styled “Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan” in recognition of the fundamental part played by partnership in formulating and delivering the Plan.

15. **The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **Accepted and considered the report of the Consultation Analysis on the Draft Cairngorms National Park Plan.**

- b) **Offered a steer on the main issues raised by the consultation, as set out in the Conveners summing up.**

16. Actions:

- a) **Further paper to the Board on progress with affordable housing issues.**

Local Development Plan Main Issues Report – Responses to Consultation (Paper 2)

17. Karen Major introduced the paper which updated the Board on the responses received to the Consultation on the Main Issues Report, and set out the next stages in the process. Public consultation on the Main Issues Report for the Local Development Plan had been held from the 19th September to the 9th December 2011 (alongside the consultation on the National Park Plan). The paper provided a summary of the responses received together with a copy in full of all responses and a short summary of each comment listed by the issue in question. There had been 114 formal responses raising 530 points, combined with the responses received at the 10 community meetings held around the Park. These all gave a clear steer to help influence the drafting of the proposed Local Development Plan. Over a third of the comments had been about individual settlements.
18. A summary of responses on the Main Issues was outlined in the paper between paragraphs 5 and 15.
19. The timetable for taking the Local Development Plan forward had been recently approved by the Planning Committee. Drafting of the document and its associated Supplementary Guidance would continue with the final decision by the Board planned for November 2012, prior to consultation on the documents in March 2013.
20. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) It would be helpful for the Affording Housing Officer to be part of all the meetings proposed with Community Councils in refining the Local Development Plan further.
 - b) It was observed that the process for developing the Local Development Plan was a considerable improvement on the old process; the new process was very open and it was much clearer to ascertain what people thought.
 - c) It was important that Community Reps involved in meetings fed back to their respective community councils. It was noted that every community council now had a Planning Rep specifically identified.
 - d) There was some confusion amongst the public over statutory responsibilities in respect of housing. There was still a perception amongst some people that you could “pull up the drawbridge”. The fact remained that there was a statutory requirement for a Local Development Plan to provide land for open market

housing. In developing the LDP it was essential to be more explicit about how the planning system worked in conjunction with other duties and obligations (e.g. in respect of housing). The point was that in many respects there was limited discretion on the provision of land for housing.

- e) There had been very few if any opinions expressed about the density of housing during the consultation, although there had been some concerns expressed about design.

21. The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) **Accepted and noted the responses received to the Consultation on the Main Issues Report and the Summary Report of these;**
- b) **Noted and agreed the next steps in the preparation of the proposed Local Development Plan.**

AOCB

22. Members gave a roundup of their activities as follows:

- a) Jaci Douglas had attended a meeting at Inverness Airport with the Airport Authorities discussing the Airport as a gateway for getting people into and out of the National Park. Not much was being done at present to recognise the fact of the Cairngorms National Park being on the Airport's doorstep, but the Airport Authorities were receptive to the idea. There was clearly an opportunity to have a display at the Airport; this was an opportunity that should be discussed further with the Cairngorms Business Partnership.
- b) Ian MacKintosh had been involved in discussions on the Walking Festival at Kirriemuir, which was very much a gateway to the Cairngorms National Park in the Angus Glens.
- c) Kate Howie reported on the event at Blair Atholl to cut the first turf in preparation for the development of the Blair Atholl Visitor Centre/Ranger Hub. The event had been very well attended, including by the Cabinet Secretary for Finance. Thinking and talking on this project had started in 2003; it had taken nine years for the development to happen and it was recognised that this was very much due to the coming of the National Park. There was huge community support.
- d) Peter Argyle reported that the Aberdeenshire Local Development Plan had been approved by the Reporters. Under the new process, the Reporters findings are binding; in fact the LDP was reasonably intact and its main thrust retained. The public examination process had taken a full year from start to finish.
- e) Brian Wood reported on the Outdoor Learning Initiative which was continuing, and which had now spawned three smaller groups looking at the Resources Programme, Communications, and Evaluations and Monitoring. He had been involved in a series of staffing related meetings (Staff Consultative Forum, Staffing and Recruitment Committee) considering the review of pay and grading

structures. He had attended a meeting bringing together a small number of Board Members from the two National Park Authorities, essentially to share experience of the two quite different National Parks, but also to consider the issues and the communications round these issues which both National Parks shared and would need to communicate and the joint launch of the two National Park Plans in June. There was considerable enthusiasm and commitment, and a recognition that the messages about the value of National Parks to Scotland was much stronger if done jointly.

- f) David Green had attended meeting during Tourism Week in Edinburgh. He had attended an event in the Scottish Parliament during Scottish Environment Week, run by Scottish Environment LINK and sponsored by the two National Park Authorities and SNH. He had attended the Blair Atholl turf cutting event. He attended a Climate Change 20:20 Group meeting chaired by Ian Marchant of SSE.
- g) Duncan Bryden reported on his attendance at the Environment LINK event, the meeting held with the Planning Minister (Derek McKay) who was very keen to see across the whole of Scotland a reduction in the bureaucracy of the Planning system and see the Planning system helping to support sustainable economic growth. He had by invitation spoken to a Conference in Sweden (run by the Swedish Environment Protection Agency) where he observed that there was huge support for what was being done in the Cairngorms National Park. Sweden had had National Parks for the last hundred years based on the conventional model of the privacy of nature. However, this was proving difficult to maintain in the 21st Century and conference delegates were very keen to hear about how in Scotland National Parks we were marrying up the three legs of sustainable development. They were very keen to hear about the Access Legislation in Scotland, and were developing quality assurance schemes for tourism, looking with interest at the scheme operated by Visitscotland. The message overall was a recognition that the future of these areas depended on people and that the old model of National Parks was creaking. A similar rethink was taking place in the United States. It was easy sometimes to forget in the midst of day to day decision making that the Cairngorms is seen by many in the outside world as leading the way in demonstrating a 21st Century approach to National Parks.
- h) Martin Price reported on his attendance at the LINK event in the Scottish Parliament; the Moorland Forum meeting; and an IUCN meeting at which the Peat land Enquiry launched its report. He noted that Scottish National Park Authorities should keep an interest and involvement in the follow-up to this report.
- i) Katrina Farquhar reported on her attendance at the Moorland Forum 10th Anniversary event; the Cairngorms Deer Advisory Group meeting; the Ballater and Crathie Community Council at which the CNPA had given talks on Outdoor Access and Affordable Housing; a presentation to the WRI on the Cairngorms National Park; the Cairngorms Food Group; and the Farmers Forum.

- j) Willie McKenna had attended a public consultation in Aviemore on the possibility of a new ice rink. He had also visited the Scalan at the Braes of Glenlivet and noted its importance as part of the cultural heritage of the National Park and suggested a Board site visit.
- k) Eleanor Mackintosh reported on her attendance at a Monitor Farm meeting in Strathdon which she noted could prove a useful continuing project for the CNPA to keep its connection with Land Managers; she noted that the SAC were keen to raise the profile of modern apprenticeships, possibly through this project. She had also attended the joint meeting with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority; Farmers Forum; Tomintoul and Glenlivet Regeneration Project meeting where she noted that there was good progress with agreement by the community to establish a steering group to form a Community Development Trust. Funding for this latter project was in place for a Development Officer with support from CNPA, HIE, Moray Council, and the Crown Estate (in kind)
- l) Gordon Riddler had attended the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs joint meeting; and had attended the Inclusive Cairngorms meeting where there was a good presentation on affordable housing by Di Alexander. He noted that there remained confusion over the planning process and the group would welcome a presentation from the CNPA Planning Team.
- m) Gregor Hutcheon reported on the activities of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust and welcomed the allocation of £120,000 to the bridge at Strathdon and £42,000 to additional path works. He also noted that discussions were continuing within COAT for the setting up of a trading subsidiary to deal with any income that was generated (as required by a charity).

Date of Next Meeting:

23. Next formal meeting Friday 11th May, 2012, Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey.