

## CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK VISIT FORUM

Draft Minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 16<sup>th</sup> November 2005 10.30am,  
Boat Hotel, Boat of Garten

### Present:

Bruce Luffman (Chair)	Auld Cummerton, Strathdon
Anne Angus	Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise
Scott Armstrong	Visitscotland
Sandy Dear	Tourism and the Environment Forum
Sally Dowden	Speyside Wildlife
Ruathy Donald	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Ian Dunlop	VisitScotland
Patricia Eccles	Nethy House, Nethy Bridge
Murray Ferguson	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Jim Gillies	Forestry Commission
Fred Gordon	Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service
John Grant	Rothiemurchus Estate
Jill Harris	Moorfield House, Boat of Garten
Bob Kinnaird	CairnGorm Mountain Ltd
Andrew Kirk	Cairn Hotel
George Inglis	Auld Kirk Hotel
Pierre Masson	Moray Council
Rita Marks	Moray Tourism Forum
Alistair MacLennan	Balliefurth Farm, Nethybridge
Elma McMenemy	Royal Deeside & Mearns Tourism Forum
Ann Napier	Association of Cairngorms Community Councils
Mick Pawley	Angus Council
Andy Rockall	Scottish Natural Heritage
Debbie Strang	Cairngorms National Park Authority

### Apologies:

Elaine Booth	Scottish Enterprise Grampian
Alex Burns-Smith	Pine Bank Chalets
Andrew Coleman	UDAT
Roger Edwards	Moray Enterprise
Heather Galbraith	Cairngorms National Park Authority
David Geddes	Braemar Tourist Association
Steve Hunt	Scottish Natural Heritage
Paul Higson	ECAP Project Co-ordinator
Louise Mackie	Aberdeenshire Council
James Macfarlane	Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain Bridge
Garry Marsden	Balmoral Estate
Caroline Mitchell	Chivas Brothers
James Rattray	Blair Atholl Tourism Group
Ian Reynolds	Scottish Enterprise Tayside
Elizabeth Thompson	Dalwhinnie Distillery
Tim Walker	SportScotland Glenmore Lodge
Drennan Watson/Jim Conroy	Scottish LINK

### Minutes of last meeting and matters arising

Matters arising in the previous minutes not otherwise appearing on the agenda were as follows:-

**Action**

- Para 3 –Guidance for businesses wishing to deal with the travel trade and follow up expo contacts, had been e-mailed to the Chamber of Commerce.
- Para 13 – Wording for businesses who wish to refer to European Charter status, whether or not they are eligible to use the brand, was agreed by the Brand Management Group. Summary information on the Charter will be put on the CNPA website.
- Para 17 - The CNPA's tourism database was in the process of being updated and members were asked to assist with this update following the meeting.
- Para 27 – Pete Crane explained that following advice from Visitscotland, it had been agreed to retain the current size of the Visitor Guide rather than change it to A5. Ian Dunlop noted that the revenue generated from advertising in the 2006 Guide had been less than in previous years. It was agreed that a paper should be developed on this for discussion at the next meeting of the Forum.
- Para 31 – A review of the membership of the Forum was to be discussed under agenda item 3, paper 1. It was agreed that Forum meeting days will alternate between Thursday and Wednesday. The dates for 2006 will be placed on the CNPA website. Forum Papers and minutes will also be placed on the website in advance of the meetings.

### **Emerging Relationships between Area Partnerships and the ViSIT Forum**

1. Debbie Strang explained that Area Tourism Partnerships (ATPs) were being set up, covering similar areas to the VS Network offices. The Park area will be covered by 3 ATPs, each with differing structures. It is clear that the ViSIT Forum would need to take account of the new ATPs and that CNPA staff need to ensure that the new Frameworks for Action take full account of the Park area and the Sustainable Tourism Strategy.
2. In Aberdeenshire the Park area is well represented by ViSIT Forum members on NESTOUR and development of their Framework is well underway. Angus and Dundee are developing an Action Plan Framework and Debbie Strang is meeting with the Area Director in December.
3. In Highland, local area forums will be established to feed into the Highland ATP, and as the ViSIT Forum already exists, the views of the Forum were sought as to whether it could fulfil the role of a local forum for Badenoch and Strathspey. Scott Armstrong outlined the current membership of the Highland ATP and explained that six industry representatives, 1 from each local forum area (5 areas, with 2 representatives from Caithness & Sutherland due to the size of the area) were being sought. It was suggested that locally within the private sector there was no emerging desire to have a separate forum.
4. The Forum discussed this proposal and agreed that they were in favour of avoiding duplication and the ViSIT Forum could fulfil the local forum role, however in doing so, care should be taken so that the advisory strategic Park wide role of the Forum should not be lost. It was recognised that this will require flexibility in future meetings, particularly in relation to tailoring the agenda, currently CNPA focussed, to enable local discussion on specific issues. The practical approach to the organisation and content of meetings should be flexible as some issues may be for discussion by the Forum as a whole, some may only be relevant to Badenoch and Strathspey, the latter discussion if necessary taking place immediately after the conclusion of Forum meetings. It was agreed that this should be an interim approach subject to review at a later date to assess if it is effective. It was suggested that a paper outlining in practical terms how the Forum will operate both as an Advisory Forum to the National Park, and as a local forum, and with suggestions on nomination of a representative to the Badenoch and Strathspey ATP Local Forum should be presented at the next meeting of the Forum.

5. Debbie Strang gave a brief overview of paper 2, highlighting that there has been progress on all “high priority year 1” objectives and that an Action Plan update will be presented to the Park Board in January. A specific objective drawn to the Forums attention was the development of an Art & Crafts group, with around 30 or so people responding to a press release. An initial meeting of the Group takes place on 24 November, led by Economic Development officer, John Thorne.
6. The Action Plan update at this stage only includes projects that the CNPA are either involved in, or aware of. The annual update at the end of March 2006 will seek to include all projects relevant to the implementation of the Strategy. Members were encouraged to forward information on relevant projects directly to Heather Galbraith.
7. Pete Crane outlined progress that has been made in the coverage of the Cairngorms in Landmark bedroom folders. Discussion followed on how to optimise the Cairngorms in the bedroom folders such as paying for additional pages rather than incurring additional costs of separate printing and distribution. The extent of distribution by Landmark and whether it was based on the capacity of the accommodation was raised. (N.B. This was clarified following the meeting, attached)

### **Strategic Positioning of Visitor Information**

8. Pete Crane presented his paper on the criteria for placing CNPA visitor information beyond TICs. The proposed criteria, in summary, are that the venue should meet the tourism business brand criteria; that they should already be providing information through both print & staff, and that the footfall of visitors is at least 15,000 per annum. Exceptions to these criteria should also be considered for example in areas of the Park where there is no information provision and in potential “obvious” outlets such as Glenmore Lodge. In some instances where businesses deliberately avoid quantity to focus on quality they should not be eliminated from providing information if they would do so to a high standard. The racking system will be provided on a loan basis from CNPA so it could be recalled in a worst case scenario. It was also suggested that businesses who qualify and want to provide CNPA information should ensure employees attend the Cairngorms Connections courses so that everyone has the same baseline level of information.
9. Discussion followed on a wide range of issues pertinent to visitor information. The principles were broadly accepted as a reasonable way to guide priorities for future work. CNPA was urged to interpret the principles in a flexible way, appropriate to local circumstances. It was also suggested that there are a variety of individuals with experience of provision of visitor information in the Park (e.g. ranger services, visitor centres staff, tourism business operators). It would be useful for CNPA to convene a half day seminar (perhaps before end of March) to review progress and plans on the provision of information for visitors at Park-wide level.

### **Brand Management Group Minutes**

10. Ruathy Donald explained that to date 14 businesses, 5 tourist/ community associations and 1 event are using the brand. The Brand Management Group last met on the 1<sup>st</sup> Nov and discussed the Communications Plan which outlines the linkages between the brand and Charter mark. The pilot of Visitscotland’s Code of Conduct involving approx 20-30 business in the Cairngorms will take place in November and the scheme will be rolled out nationally by the end of December. The development of criteria for use in certain aspects of food marketing was also discussed. It was agreed that based on previous discussions by the Food Marketing Group criteria could be agreed for beef, lamb and venison produce and this would be progressed for the next meeting. All other decisions on criteria for other sectors and merchandising were deferred until the next meeting of the Group on 28<sup>th</sup> November.
11. Alistair MacLennan said that he had attended a Highland Food Forum meeting where the European Charter for Mountain produce had been raised and tabled a copy of the document for CNPA staff to follow up.

**Action**

## Cairngorms Tourism Conference Feedback

12. Debbie Strang explained that the Conference report will be sent out to all those who attended the Conference at the end of the month, once answers from VisitScotland had been received to some of the questions raised at the Conference. The Forum agreed that the Conference had been well organised and all those who attended felt it was a highly worthwhile event. The provisional date for next years event is Wednesday 1<sup>st</sup> November.
13. Ruathy Donald explained that following the Conference, 2 Green Tourism Business Scheme seminars have been arranged for Monday 5<sup>th</sup> December and Thursday 8<sup>th</sup> December in Aviemore and Ballater respectively. All those who attended the Conference and all "QA" businesses in the Park had been informed and invited to attend. A follow up visit to grade individual businesses would be made in the weeks following the seminar. Those businesses who attend the seminar and who meet at least bronze standard will qualify for free joining membership and will have the first years annual membership paid. If demand to attend the seminar exceeds the nominated places it is likely that additional seminars will take place in the New Year.

## Forum Members' Information Sharing

14. The Chair said that it was important that the private sector feed into the setting of the agenda for ViSIT Forum meetings and he asked for views on the best way to achieve. It was felt that as well as having standard issues on the agenda, each meeting should have a specific focus, with one main topic for discussion and brainstorming so as to ensure a more open agenda and ongoing active participation in the Forum. It was also suggested that as there are often a number of papers accompanying the meeting that the agenda should form part of the e-mail invite so members can instantly see the subject of the Paper. The Chair urged those who had specific topics they wanted the ViSIT Forum to discuss to contact the tourism team, within the CNPA, directly.

## AOB

15. Bob Kinnaird gave a brief update on the work of ABSC. The marketing group now has approx 50 contributing members, and the Group are in the early stages of planning a Destination Management Organisation (DMO) for the area.
16. Anne Angus said that she had recently returned from the last in a series of learning journeys, to Switzerland, during which participants had a useful insight into an established hospitality academy.

## Dates & Proposed Locations of Meetings for 2006

Thurs 26th Jan	Ballater
Wed 15th March	Kingussie
Thurs 18 May	Strathdon
Wed 13th Sept	Aviemore
Thurs 30 Nov	Grantown

**Tourism Conference: Wed 1 Nov 2006**

*Ruathy Donald*  
*November 2005*