
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the Albert Hall, Ballater on Friday 18th March 2011 at 10.30 am

PRESENT:

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| Peter Argyle | Mary McCafferty |
| Duncan Bryden | Eleanor Mackintosh |
| Angela Douglas | Willie McKenna |
| Jaci Douglas | Ian MacKintosh |
| Dave Fallows | Gordon Riddler |
| Katrina Farquhar | Gregor Rimell |
| David Green(Convener) | Brian Wood |
| Marcus Humphrey | Allan Wright |

In Attendance:

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| David Cameron | Karen Major |
| Murray Ferguson | Gavin Miles |
| Bob Grant | Hamish Trench |
| Jane Hope | Francoise van Buuren |

Apologies:

Kate Howie
Bob Kinnaird
Gregor Hutcheon

Introduction and Welcome

1. The Convener noted the results of the Direct Elections to the CNPA Board which had concluded the previous night. Eleanor MacKintosh, Mary McCafferty and Willie McKenna were all returned; Dave Fallows had been elected to Ward 1 and was welcomed back to the Board; Katrina Farquhar had been newly elected to Ward 5. The Convener extended congratulations to all who had taken part and thanked Highland Council who had run the elections. He also expressed thanks to Geva Blackett and to Andrew Rafferty who were no longer on the Board and were commended for their hard work and contributions over the last four years (eight years in the case of Andrew Rafferty who had been a founder Member).

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting of the 21st January were approved subject to two minor changes:

- a) Correction to Paragraph 2 which should have referred to the previous meeting date as the 29th October 2010;
- b) Correction to Paragraph 36 (c) second sentence where the phrase “organisation’s purpose” should read “organisation’s performance and capability”.

Matters Arising

3. Paragraph 12: The Board had endorsed the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan and application to Europarc for the Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. The Assessor had made his visit, and met several Board Members and staff as well as a range of other players. The meeting had been positive, and it was hoped that there would be an indication of our success or otherwise in regaining the Charter within the next month or so. The Charter network meeting which in effect would make the decision would be in June, while the award of the Charter would be at the Europarc Conference in Germany in September.
4. Paragraph 24 (c): Members were reminded that if they had an interest in sitting on a short-term working group on Indicators for the National Park Plan, they should express their interest to Gavin Miles or Hamish Trench.
5. Paragraph 32: The Convener had held a round of meetings with the various MSPs. It was noted that David Green and Duncan Bryden had been due to meet Fergus Ewing, but this had not taken place because of a diary mix up.
6. Paragraph 34: The meeting of the Convention of Highlands and Islands (CoHI) had been due on the 14th March at the Coylumbridge Hotel, but this had been cancelled because of heavy snow. The expectation was that the next meeting of CoHI in October would still be in the Cairngorms.

Declarations of Interest

7. Marcus Humphrey declared an interest in Paper I, as a Director of COAT, and noted that he would leave the room for this discussion. David Cameron also noted that he was a Director of COAT but would remain for the discussion in order to provide professional advice. David Green noted that Gregor Hutcheon had agreed to take on the role of Director of COAT (following the departure of Dave Fallows the previous October, no other Board Members had expressed an interest).

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust – Business Plan 2011-2015 (Paper I)

Marcus Humphrey left the room.

8. Bob Grant introduced the paper which highlighted the work already delivered in the current Business Plan of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) and sought support for the range of work to be undertaken in the next four years, as well as a commitment to fund the detailed work in the first year of COAT’s Draft Business Plan. Paragraphs 4 – 8 of the Board paper summarised the progress of COAT to date, and emphasised that this was the principle mechanism for delivering an outstanding path network within the National Park. This network delivered a range of outcomes on health, sustainable transport, and people enjoying the outdoors. There was still much

work to be done (this would always be the case) and the proposal was that the CNPA should support COAT to deliver their Business Plan which in turn would help to deliver the vision of an outstanding National Park. The Business Plan outlined was for four years; the paper was seeking approval for funding for just one year, given that the CNPA would not know its Grant-in-Aid allocation for April 2012 onwards until later in 2011. Annex I set out the proposed four year Business Plan indicating the wide range of funding partners, and also indicating the leverage of 1 to 5 achieved through the CNPA's funds.

9. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) The Highland Perthshire area of the Park had not previously been covered by the work of COAT and there was no financial contribution noted for the Perth and Kinross Council. A Countryside Trust was already in existence covering this area and a meeting between themselves and CNPA and COAT was due shortly to develop an effective and efficient working arrangement for the future.
 - b) While there had been some initial nervousness about the amount of money required to develop an outstanding path network, nevertheless, the COAT mechanism had worked extremely well and had achieved excellent leverage from the CNPA's point of view. This had become a very effective way of delivering a good path network. It was a good example of the CNPA enabling others to achieve outcomes for the National Park and it would be helpful to see more acknowledgement of the role of the CNPA. It would be good if COAT used the Cairngorms Brand. The ongoing challenge in respect of communication was noted.
 - c) The support given by the CNPA through providing a range of financial services including payroll, management accounts and annual report (see paragraph 14) was worth £16,000 per year but did not show up in the plan.
 - d) Running costs comprised core infrastructure such as office running costs, and some elements of staff costs, although these were largely allocated to projects.
 - e) It was noted that many people did not understand what COAT was; it would be helpful to take every opportunity to clarify this with community councils.
 - f) The four year Plan showed costs for maintaining the Speyside Way. The suggestion was made that it would be helpful to put some effort into making it clearer to the public where the start and the end of the Speyside Way was, giving a certificate to people for completing it, etc. It was noted there was experience within Highland Council on marketing the Great Glen Way and some of this might be applicable to the Speyside Way.
 - g) There was generally considerable support among Members for the work of COAT and the CNPA continuing to fund it.
 - h) The paper focused essentially on the supply of paths, with little consideration of the evidence for a demand. It would be helpful if this was articulated more clearly, not least because the Visitor Survey for example showed how many people came to the Cairngorms to walk. It would be useful to make more of the economic benefits of the high quality path network in relation to the value of demand, which in turn was helpful in setting the justification for this expenditure.
 - i) It was essential to ensure that the work of COAT and CBP were aligned and not duplicating each other. They should be mutually beneficial.
 - j) The CNPA contribution amounted to 3.8% of the CNPA's budget. It was therefore very good use of CNPA funds but it was important for the CNPA to be able to plan ahead and this would not be possible until future years' funding was known. For the moment it was right to restrict funding to one year.

- k) It was important to make every effort to allocate costs to projects so that the core running costs could be kept to a minimum.
- l) There was some debate about how one would know when enough had been done on path creation and maintenance. The CNPA had developed a simple methodology of assessing paths as “fit for purpose”, and the target was to achieve 70% of paths reaching this criterion (currently at 40%). However, it was unlikely that the job would ever be complete as there was always maintenance work. The ideal was to build new paths in such a way that a need for future maintenance was minimised; however this was an ideal and while clearly desirable, this had to be balanced against the funding available. It was pointed out that all the work described in the paper represented capital expenditure. The aim of COAT was to secure long-term sustainable income streams in order to cover maintenance into the future.
- m) Some equalisation across the National Park had taken place since COAT was established. In some areas such as Strathdon for example, there had been little path work previously.
- n) The work of COAT delivered the same outcomes as the NHS (i.e. Outcome No 6 that the population “lives longer healthier lives”). There was a challenge of getting GP surgeries brought into this idea and there was work to be done to encourage more surgeries to actively promote health walks.

10. The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) **Noted the progress towards achieving the agreed outputs in the 2009/11 Business Plan;**
- b) **Noted the close fit between the outputs in the future Business Plan for 2011/15 with the Priority for Actions contained in the National Park Plan; and**
- c) **Approved a total CNPA contribution of £185,000 for the 2011/12 financial year.**

Marcus Humphrey returned to the meeting.

2011/12 Budget and Operational Plan (Paper 2)

- 11. David Cameron introduced the paper which set out a budget for approval by the Board for the 2011/12 Budget and Operational Plan. This was the final year of the current Corporate Plan. As a result of the recently announced spending cuts, the CNPA’s Budget had been reduced by 4.4% compared with the previous year. We were also charged to find a 3% efficiency saving. During 2010/11 various management actions had been taken so that running costs had been reduced by £175,000 (5.9%). As a result, the Operational Plan for 2011/12 managed to maintain investment level in Operational Plan activity (i.e. projects on the ground), and could continue to use these funds to maximise its leverage e.g. with COAT, LEADER.
- 12. Annex 1 to the paper set out the CNPA’s Strategic Outcomes as derived from the current Corporate Plan but revised in the previous year for the period April 2010 to March 2012 to take account of changing circumstances. The Strategic Outcomes were largely unchanged, but there had been some minor adjustments as shown in the Annex where Management Team considered changes were needed in light of diminishing resources. Annex 2 set out in some detail the budget lines for the individual lines of

action for delivering the strategic outcomes. This showed estimates of staff time required as well as cash expenditure.

13. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) At Paragraph 12 it was noted that clarity was still sought from the Scottish Government as to whether the “extra” efficiencies achieved would be allowed to contribute to the required efficiency targets for 2011/12. The current budget sought to make a full 3% of efficiency savings as a prudent measure; if the Scottish Government response was favourable this “extra” could be recycled into delivering the Operational Plan.
- b) Provision for legal charges arising from the Challenge to the Local Plan were difficult to predict. This was recognised as an area of risk. The Convener noted that the CBP was an essential delivery arm for the CNPA and it was important to make sure sufficient resources were available to allow it to grow to sufficient critical mass to fulfil this role. The organisation was starting to attract national attention and was reaching a critical tipping point. The budget had been put together on the basis of an agreed plan of work with the CBP, but there were potentially other streams of work and this would be considered in year. It was also noted that it was important to encourage other funders to contribute and not just rely on the CNPA.
- c) The Finance Committee had previously considered and approved the Budget. This had included a more detailed version of the running costs and this illustrated there were some unavoidable inflationary pressures on items such as IT and other running costs.
- d) The Finance Committee had identified the real challenge of partners pulling out their funding leaving the CNPA with a decision on whether or not to fund the gap. This was noted in the risk register and it was current practice that every project manager was asked to address the long-term sustainability and viability of a project before seeking approval through an expenditure justification. Major sources of funding from Europe were also at significant risk of running out and increasingly these would not be available in the future. The National Park Plan being developed would provide an essential tool for establishing commitment with our partners for longer term projects. At Paragraphs 26 and 27 confirmation was given that assessing the staff resource required for work was not a precise science, but it was good practice to make an estimate. There was always the risk of staff becoming overloaded as resources became tight, and this was dealt with in the usual day-to-day way through constant discussion with the line manager, and the more formal process of appraisal.
- e) There was some discussion about the resources being made available on housing. It was noted that the CNPA did not have the budgets of housing allocations. The CNPA’s focus was on supporting discussion at local level and following the departure of the CNPA’s Housing Officer, there was an internal trawl for a part-time Housing Officer, and some resources would be transferred to others to deliver e.g. housing enablers and trusts. Much of the work and influence of the CNPA on affordable housing was done through the planning system. While housing remained an extremely important issue, it was essential that the CNPA, and partners, were realistic about the limited role that the CNPA could play on this matter.
- f) The CNPA’s budget was very small in relation to the gross value added for the National Park of approximately £400 million. The budget was tiny but expectations were large. We should be making much more of the context,

notably the enormous benefits to society for a small amount of money. It was noted that the CNPA had done a lot of work with stakeholders and politicians to get precisely this message across and we were constantly trying to provide the evidence to bolster the argument about the scale of the benefit of having the Cairngorms National Park.

- g) Competent financial management was commended.
- h) Demand-led pressures were difficult to predict. Other than legal costs, in particular the challenge to the Local Plan there were none factored in to the budget.
- i) The Finance Team would continue to monitor forward commitments so that the organisation continued to retain some flexibility into the future in times of uncertain budgets.
- j) In deploying the CNPA's Operational Budget, the principle of leverage was crucial. COAT had already been discussed in this respect. The CBP was also flagged up as a similar opportunity. It was noted that a paper would come back to the Board in May seeking approval to funding for the CBP.

14. The Board approved the proposed Budget and Operational Plan for 2011/12.

National Park Plan and Local Development Plan (Paper 3)

15. Gavin Miles and Hamish Trench introduced the paper which sought the Board's agreement on the Vision and Strategic Objectives for the next National Park Plan (2012 – 2017) and the timetable for consultation. Approval was sought to consult on the Draft National Park Plan and the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report at the same time, and for twelve weeks starting in August 2011. The issues were complex and it was important to get these right. Further, the proposed timetable would ensure that the two National Park Authorities were consulting in parallel, and it would also mean that the consultation would avoid the busy summer period. So while the proposed consultation date represented a slight delay compared with previous Plans, it was on balance beneficial. The Board were also asked to give an initial steer on the way in which the Vision and the Strategic Objectives were expressed. The proposal was that the Vision should essentially be the same in substance as that used for the first National Park Plan, but should be a shorter statement that was more likely to strike a chord with people. If the 25 year outcomes from the first Plan were retained, these would provide the more detailed explanation of the Vision, making it easier for us to adopt a very short and snappy Vision Statement.

16. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) In running both consultations together, there would be a serious challenge to ensure people were aware of what we were consulting on and aware what important issues were. We would be consulting not just on community proposals, but also on more strategic policies. It was noted that officers had already started work on engaging communities and had established a framework for the consultation. It was helpful being able to do an informal consultation first as a proactive lead in to the formal consultation on the paper.
- b) There was considerable discussion about the Vision and it was generally agreed that a short simple sentence would be desirable and that this could not attempt to cover any detail but would essentially be aiming to strike a chord with people. It was noted more generally that there would need to be at least two styles of getting the message across, depending on the audience.

- c) On the Strategic Objectives it was noted there were 108 in the current Plan and this was too many. The structure shown at Annex 1 had arisen from discussion with partners as a way of grouping ideas. The three Strategic Objectives represented three broad themes which would focus people at the start of the Plan. It was agreed these were about right, with further work to be done on the nature of the wording before the draft Plan was brought back to the Board for final approval for consultation.
- d) It was noted that the Plan had to have substance and had to flag up the essential issues. The work of inspiring people was important but should be addressed after the substance of the Plan was settled.

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

- a) **Agreed to consult on the draft National Park Plan and Local Development Plan Main Issues Report for twelve weeks starting in August 2011;**
- b) **Agreed that a single sentence short Vision was desirable, supported by the 25 Year Outcomes as in the current National Park Plan;**
- c) **The Board agreed in broad terms the three Strategic Objectives, subject to some further refinement of the wording.**
- d) **That the Board would have a further opportunity to consider the draft National Park Plan before consultation.**

TAYplan – Proposed Strategic Development Plan – Endorsement of Proposed Plan to Consult (Paper 4)

18. Karen Major introduced the paper which sought the Board's formal endorsement for consultation purposes, of the proposed Strategic Development TAYplan which affects that part of the Park which falls within Perth and Kinross. With the extension of the National Park boundary into Perth and Kinross, that part of the Park was now subject to the direction and strategic vision of TAYplan, a Strategic Development Plan being prepared for the Dundee City region. This would replace the current Structure Plans for the area and would be material in the planning process. Work on TAYplan had reached the stage of publishing a proposed Plan. As the CNPA was now one of the constituent authorities for the TAYplan area we were asked to endorse the proposed Plan and its associated documents in preparation for a period of public consultation.

19. The Board formally endorsed the proposed Strategic Development Plan, TAYplan, which would enable the formal consultation process to commence.

**Cairngorms Business Partnership – Future Support (Paper 5)
Local Development Plan Main Issues – Results of Pre Consultation (Paper 6)**

20. Papers 5 and 6 were for information, and were noted without further discussion.

AOCB

21. David Green reported to the Board on a number of activities in recent months. He had attended the UK ANPA (UK Association of National Park Authorities) meeting in London where there had been considerable concern about budget cuts for English and Welsh National Parks. There had been some discussion about branding for all UK

National Parks. In February he had attended the Ministerial unveiling of the entry point marker at Killiecrankie, marking the extension of the Park into Perth and Kinross. In March the Convener and Deputy Convener had met with a range of MSPs, to update them on progress in the Cairngorms National Park. He had also attended, along with other Board members and staff, the Environment LINK Event sponsored by both National Park Authorities as part of Environment Week at Holyrood for MSPs. Local produce had been available from both National Parks.

22. Brian Wood reported on his attendance at Braemar Community Council meetings; a meeting with the Convener and various members of staff to explore the idea of a Schools Award Scheme in the Park; a Deeside Tourism DMO event chaired by Gordon Riddler; appeals training for Members of the Staffing and Recruitment Committee; a meeting at Glenmore Lodge planning for the concluding conference of the Outdoor Learning Project. He had also attended the Scottish Environment LINK Event, and sat in on some of the debate on the Wildlife and Natural Environment Bill on the same day. He also noted that he had attended an appeal meeting in respect of an application which had been rejected and then appealed. He had met the Reporter on site. The applicants had not turned up. Seeing the process all the way through had been very informative and he looked forward to being able to share this with others on the Planning Committee.
23. Ian MacKintosh drew everyone's attention to a consultation on the Future of Police Forces in Scotland and urged everyone to respond on a personal level. This was an important issue in rural areas.
24. Eleanor MacKintosh noted that she had received considerable amount of feedback during the election process and was keen to find some way of feeding this into a discussion with the rest of the Board.
25. Mary McCafferty had reported she had attended the opening of the Dulnain Bridge riverside path. She also noted the renovation of the Village Hall with some money from LEADER.
26. Duncan Bryden had attended the Cairngorms Business Partnership Conference at the end of January which had been very positive. He also attended a Low Carbon National Park Conference organised by the CNPA and held in Aviemore. There had been an interesting dichotomy between the scientist's approach which advocated concentrating on those actions where one got the greatest effect in carbon term, in contrast to the much more pragmatic approach being taken by the Lake District National Park which focused on the quick wins, notably through hotels. He had also been involved in briefing MPs and MSPs on progress in the National Park.
27. Gordon Riddler had attended a LANTRA meeting in Perth; the Ward 15 Marr Area Community meeting; DMO meeting at Inver which discussed DMOs and had been very positive with an attendance of about 60 people; had given evidence to the Christie Commission; and would be going to the Inclusive Cairngorms meeting where he was now the CNPA representative.
28. Willie McKenna reported on his attendance at the Aviemore Community Council meeting. He urged Members to get out and about more to communities.

29. Peter Argyle had also attended the DMO meeting at Inver. He noted it was a good meeting and should be repeated.
30. Jaci Douglas had attended the Sustainable Tourism Forum; she had also been involved in the Revitalisation of Grantown High Street meetings.
31. Marcus Humphrey had chaired the Ward Forum and had attended the COAT Board meeting.
32. Dave Fallows, since September when he had left the CNPA Board, had had the opportunity to see the CNPA as others see us and was interested in having further discussions on this with the rest of the Board.
33. Angela Douglas had found the LINK meeting useful in building relationships but she felt that many people still had a very poor understanding of the Cairngorms National Park and National Park Authority.

Date of Next Meeting

34. It was noted that during the summer the Board would be getting out and about on visits to see project on the ground and meet partners and communities. Formal business for the Board would therefore be kept to a minimum. The next formal meeting would be at Blair Atholl on the 13th May.