

**MINUTES of MEETING of the  
FINANCE COMMITTEE of**

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
held in the CNPA Board Room, Grantown-on-Spey  
on 19<sup>th</sup> August 2011, at 9.00am**

**Present:**

Eleanor Mackintosh (Chair)                      Mary McCafferty  
David Green                                              Gregor Rimell  
Marcus Humphrey

**In Attendance:**

Bob Grant, Senior Outdoor Access Officer  
Pete Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer  
Jane Hope, Chief Executive  
Matthew Hawkins, Senior Heritage Officer  
Alistair Hight, Finance Manager  
Claire Ross, Communities and Inclusion Manager  
Hamish Trench, Strategic Land Use Director

**Apologies**

None

**Minutes of Meeting 13<sup>th</sup> May 2011**

1. The minutes of the meeting were agreed with no changes.

**Matters Arising**

2. Paragraph 6: Nothing further to recommend at this stage on arrangements for publishing and marketing posters.

**Review of 4 Months to 31<sup>st</sup> July 2011 (Paper 1)**

3. Alistair Hight introduced the paper which was for information. There was nothing of concern to report in the current financial year. It was noted that good efficiencies had been made over the last three years to March 2011.
4. **The Committee noted the paper.**

**Community Enterprise Project (Badenoch and Strathspey) (Paper 2)**

5. Claire Ross introduced the paper which sought approval for a commitment of £15,000 per year for the Community Enterprise Project in Badenoch and Strathspey for three

years 2012 – 2015. The paper was being brought to the Committee early and before all the details had been finalised because there was the opportunity to lever in considerable match funding from the European Social Fund (ESF) provided match funding could be confirmed by the end of September. The project followed on (in the Badenoch and Strathspey area) from the Our Community a Way Forward Project. The aim was to help communities to help themselves as reliance on public sector funding would inevitably have to decrease in future years. There had been a 10% increase in voluntary activity from the Our Community a Way Forward Project and the intention was to see a further 10% increase.

6. The project details were still to be worked up but aimed to provide a comprehensive learning and training programme over 36 months aimed at developing the skills of the community and voluntary sector thereby enabling the areas Community Organisations to become more sustainable, skilled and coordinated with other partners. The training would focus on three main themes: Developing qualities of good community leadership in the area; Identifying the projects that need/can be developed by communities (business planning to improve local economies); and teaching practical skills in generating income locally. The lead partner in the project would be Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS).
7. It was noted that the leverage of CNPA funding on this project was excellent (1:6). It was an example of a project where the CNPA would not be controlling the project and would have to “let go”. The intention was to work with the Cairngorms Business Partnership in working up the details as well as looking at involving Glenlivet and Tomintoul communities.
8. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) The project was welcomed as a successor to the Our Community a Way Forward Project.
  - b) In the regional context it was important to identify the “big thing” that would underpin the sustainability of communities, as opposed to a lot of very small projects which, while helpful, did not have a large impact. The suggestion was that the Big Idea could well be a focus on sustainable tourism related projects, all of which added value to the mainstay of the local economy, namely tourism.
  - c) It was noted that the Enterprise Growth Fund recently launched by the Scottish Government may offer some opportunities for this work, given that funding was increasingly tending to go to community led work.
  - d) It was noted this project could only cover Badenoch and Strathspey because only the Highlands and Islands area could tap into European Social Fund monies. The paper highlighted at Paragraphs 9 – 12 what was happening in other areas of the Park. The intention was to try and find linkages between activity in the different parts of the Park.
  - e) It was important that communities could learn from each other, and the intention was to hold an event once a year for sharing good practice across communities in the National Park.
  - f) All the communities in Badenoch and Strathspey had taken part in the Our Community a Way Forward Project and all the information had been collated. Nevertheless, it was noted that communities were at very different stages in terms of being able to take on management of their own future.

- g) This was a good project, focused on changing mindsets. Money could no longer just flow from the public agencies and councils and increasingly communities had to take matters into their own hand. A very good example of this had been the Braemar Castle project. This project was about dealing with the long term.
- h) Claire Ross and others were commended for their work in this area to date.

**9. The Committee approved the recommendations of the paper, that a commitment be made of £15,000 a year for three years (2012/13 – 2014/15).**

**Point of Entry Marker Project (Paper 3)**

- 10. Pete Crane introduced the paper which provided the Committee with final expenditure and output of the Point of Entry Marker Project as previously approved by the Board. The whole project had taken six years, having been extended slightly by the change to the Park boundary. It was noted that overall the contribution from partners had been 40%. Paragraph 12 set out the results from the recent visitor survey which indicated that the markers were making a contribution to the original outcome of the project namely that “everyone will know when they have arrived in the National Park and have a positive feeling about arrival in a special place”.
- 11. The project had been complex, involved significant expenditure, but results suggested this was vindicated. The project was now closed.
- 12. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) Pete Crane and all other staff involved were congratulated on the completion of a complex and successful project.
  - b) It was noted that the grass cutting around the point of entry markers was not always as good as it should be which detracted from the whole purpose of the entry markers. This seemed to be a particular problem in Aberdeenshire and work was in hand to deal with this.
  - c) Paragraph 25 highlighted 5 next steps. These needed to be prioritised so officers did not get bogged down in continuing to put effort into relatively unimportant matters. It was felt that point a) was the most important, namely the landscaping of unsightly informal pull off near the marker on the A95. It was also felt that point e) should be followed up through encouraging Perth and Kinross Council to take forward the upgrade of two poor quality laybys in Glenshee on the A93.
- 13. **The Committee noted the paper and the close of the project, and commended all those involved.**

*[Marcus Humphrey left the room]*

**Expenditure Proposal: Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust Training Project (Paper under AOB)**

- 14. The Chair echoed her displeasure that this paper was being brought under AOB. This coupled with the following paper which was also being taken under AOB, and was circulated very late, was not good governance. She emphasised this must not happen again in the future. The Committee would have to consider whether or not it was

reasonable to even make a decision on these two papers, particularly on the second given its late arrival.

15. The paper under this item, introduced by Bob Grant presented an outline of an expenditure proposal for consideration following a recent discussion with the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) Manager. It sought approval to the commitment of £15,000 to the project each year, commencing 2011/12 for three years. There were some similarities to the paper on the Community Enterprise Project (paper 2) in that both were seeking to maximise leverage from the European Social Programme which offered intervention rates of up to 75% at least for the moment but these rates were not likely to be available for much longer. In each case, one of the Authority's delivery partners was seeking to take this opportunity to deliver training and development projects of various types. The potential leverage from both projects was considerable at around 1:6 to 1:7 with a total potential contribution of £30,000 from the NPA bringing annual funding of £190,000 into project delivery within the National Park.
16. It was noted that both projects were three year projects and therefore seeking funding commitments from the CNPA into future years. ESF applications had to be submitted by the end of October, including letters of commitment from funding partners and if the CNPA was to support these project activities, it was not possible to delay consideration of the projects until the Board and Finance Committee had considered the future Corporate Plan in full. The Committee had previously set 30% of total Operational Plan Budgets as a ceiling for forward project commitments. It was pointed out that current forward commitment levels were around 18%, and the project contribution of £15,000 from each of the papers in front of the Committee, represented a further 0.75% commitment.
17. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust Training Project was developing the idea already piloted through the Mountain Heritage Project which had clearly shown a demand for training and apprenticeships in path building. The demand for places on that training project had far exceeded what was available, which had led COAT to think what else they could do to satisfy this demand. The current proposal for a three year project was the result and would offer a range of skills to trainees who would get a wide skill set which could then be used immediately and locally for businesses with a long term future in the national Park.
18. It was noted there were potential links with the Land Based Business Training Project and some possible overlaps – it would be important to look at these to make sure both were joined up. It was however pointed out that LBBT tends to look at training of existing employees in existing businesses, in contrast to the current project.
19. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) One might have expected Skills Development Scotland to be contributing to this sort of project. It was suggested they should be approached.
  - b) Claire Ross agreed that as part of the Land Based Business Training Project, efforts were being made to bring a steering group together involving a range of national agencies involved in training in order to find synergies. This would be done before finalising this application for ESF funding.

- c) COAT was Park-wide, while the ESF funding for this particular project could only cover the Highlands Area. This was a complication, but not an insurmountable problem. On the plus side, it was a good opportunity to bring Highland Council into the work of COAT.
- d) The approaches to other funders were still to be made (including Skills Development Scotland) and these should not be limited by the £21,000 indicated in the paper. It was agreed that a single sheet briefing note for Members would be helpful, for use at political level to help with the approaches for funding.
- e) This was potentially a very good project for the area and every opportunity should be taken to publicise it once confirmed.

20. **The Committee approved the funding proposal for £15,000 to the project each year commencing 2011-12 for three years until 2013-14.**

*[Marcus Humphrey returned to the meeting]*

### **Cultural Heritage Project (Paper under AOCB)**

21. Matthew Hawkins introduced the paper which was a late request to the Committee to approve funding for the Cultural Heritage Project recently considered by the Board. A completed expenditure justification had been circulated to the Committee albeit late. It was noted that the expenditure justification was a substantial document and it was inappropriate to make a decision without further time to consider the details. Nevertheless, it was noted that there were two decisions required one was immediate and one could be delayed. The immediate decision required was approval for funding for the continuation of the Cultural Heritage Officer post. The post was needed in order to take forward the work, as agreed in outline at the Board meeting in July, of working up a large scale application for European Funding for the Landscape Partnership Project. The approval from the Finance Committee to the outline of the Aviemore Project was less urgent and could be agreed at a future meeting.
22. **The Committee approved the proposed funding for the extension of the Cultural Heritage Officer Post to end of March 2013.**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

23. Friday 28<sup>th</sup> October, Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie.