
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey on Friday 20th January 2012 at 10.30am

PRESENT

Peter Argyle	Marcus Humphrey
Duncan Bryden	Gregor Hutcheon
Angela Douglas	Eleanor Mackintosh
Jaci Douglas	Ian MacKintosh
Dave Fallows	Martin Price
Katrina Farquhar	Gordon Riddler
David Green (Convener)	Gregor Rimell
Kate Howie	

In Attendance:

Stephanie Bungay	Murray Ferguson
David Cameron	Andy Rinning
Pete Crane	Hamish Trench
Jane Hope	Francoise van Buuren
Matthew Hawkins	

Apologies:

Mary McCafferty
Willie McKenna
Brian Wood
Allan Wright

Welcome and Introduction

1. David Green welcomed everyone to the first Board meeting of 2012.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. The minutes of the meeting of the 28th October were approved with one change, notably recording that Jaci Douglas had not been present at the meeting and had offered her apologies.

Matters Arising

3. None.

Declarations of Interest

4. None

Review of Local Biodiversity Action Plan and Partnership (Paper I)

5. Matthew Hawkins introduced the paper which sought the Board's approval to review the Local Biodiversity Action Plan (LBAP) and to develop a new delivery partnership for biodiversity. The current LBAP had served the National Park well and the review was intended to ensure it was a good fit with the emerging second National Park Plan, was comprehensive, as well as having more targeted action plans and outcomes. The revised LBAP needed to be clearer and easier to use; for example developers had asked for greater clarity on the species which were of most importance in the Cairngorms, which was not always the same thing as the UK Biodiversity list. The timescale for the review was as follows: discussions were currently underway with partners and this would lead to a paper on which there would be a consultation around September. The outcome and consequent proposals would be brought back to the LBAP Steering Group and the CNPA Board in December.
6. The partnership underpinning the LBAP was equally important. This had reduced in size over the ten years and it was now time to review the membership and find ways of increasing the levels of participation. It was a good case for involving community groups, tourism and business interests. Other obvious interests would be RSPB (Royal Society for Protection of Birds), Scottish Wildlife Trust, Scottish Land and Estates.
7. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The current partnership (Management Group) comprised CNPA, SNH, Aberdeenshire Council, Angus Council, and the Highland Council. These are all funding partners; with the exception of Highland Council who were no contributing financially. In the last year SNH had withdrawn its funding to all LBAPs; and funding from Angus Council had halved. Against this background of

decreasing funding from the public sector it was clearly time for a fundamental rethink of the LBAP partnership so that it was able to support projects as well as a Project Officer post. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust was a good example of how a broad partnership could bring together a significant package of funding to deliver a wide range of projects.

- b) LBAP work was continuing to look at the potential for a list of habitats as well as species. The National Park Plan appeared to be providing a focus on woodland and wetland restoration (albeit other habitats also required attention) and this would logically provide a lead for action. Surveys helped to identify gaps in knowledge, and widening the groups of people involved in LBAP would also achieve useful pooling of information and knowledge. The role of NESBREC (North East Scotland Biological Records Centre) was currently under review along with the various other ways of recording information. It was time to stand back and consider the best way of delivering this, especially in light of the fact that public sector funding had fallen away.
- c) There was some discussion about the importance of ensuring that the vast amount of information on biodiversity was available to all who needed to access it e.g. developers. It was not envisaged that a refreshed LBAP partnership would advise directly on planning cases; that statutory role still fell to the Planning authority and SNH. Nevertheless it remained important that survey information was available to all, and the burden of surveys on developers was proportionate and not duplicated. Because of their very nature surveys were time limited and eventually lost currency. It was noted that the CNPA was undertaking a number of baseline surveys as part of the new Local Development Plan. In respect of particular applications, the CNPA's Ecologists were always willing to advise on what would be needed in terms of support for an application. This part of the discussion concluded by recognising the need to find a "front end" for all the existing information within the National Park on biodiversity and related subjects. NESBREC had undertaken collation of information and had limited front end access.
- d) The presence of local authorities on the LBAP was acknowledged as important; they provided advice and had the ability to back up action via ranger services and other outreach work in the councils. This contribution was difficult to quantify but was nevertheless recognised as important. It was agreed that the Perth and Kinross Council is engaged with the Cairngorms.
- e) It was stressed that the LBAP should not just be about rare species. Indeed, it was important to get greater involvement of the public and it therefore made sense to look at typical species not just rare species. The project should be very much about species for people. An interesting example was the red squirrel – this was a species people engaged with and although rare in other parts of the UK, was not under particular threat in the Cairngorms. This was an interesting

illustration of the complexity of developing criteria for deciding what to concentrate on in the LBAP.

- f) There was some discussion about possible governance structures for a revised LBAP partnership. It was clear from discussions with partners that it was too early to jump straight to the conclusion that a new Trust should be formed. The COAT provided a useful model but it was recognised that the best option was to start a revised LBAP under the wing of the CNPA in order to develop sufficient momentum at which point the move might be made to set up a free standing Trust. The intention was in the longer term that the LBAP partnership should grow into a delivery arm in its own right.
 - g) The purpose of the LBAP would be to deliver objectives in the National Park Plan.
 - h) There was some discussion about the term “biodiversity” which was not well understood. There was some consideration about whether the title “Cairngorms Wildlife Partnership” would be a better title for the new partnership. It was recognised it was not for the CNPA Board to determine the best title, agreeing that this would emerge through further discussions with partners. But the point was stressed that the title had to be one that the general public could relate to if the intention was to get a wider involvement in the partnership.
 - i) The refreshed partnership should not just be the “usual suspects” and technicians. It needed to have a wider involvement particularly on community and businesses and land managers. But in conjunction with this it was important there was a sense of responsibility on the group and the community representatives on the group should be able to then make much better connections with local communities on consultation on LBAP plans etc.
8. The Convener summed up by stressing the importance of the new partnership being inclusive in two ways: it should not just be about rarer species but about the species that were important for people; and it should engage a wide range of people. The name of the refreshed partnership should be carefully considered to reflect this.
9. **The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**
- a) **To review the Cairngorms Local Biodiversity Action Plan, to be guided by the principles considered at Annex I;**
 - b) **To match the Local Biodiversity Action Plan boundary to the National Park boundary;**
 - c) **In principle to establishing a ‘Cairngorms Wildlife Partnership’ to be a focus for partner collaboration and delivery of National Park Plan biodiversity actions.**

10. **Actions:**

- a) **Draft consultation paper to be brought back to the CNPA Board in the autumn, prior to the consultation itself.**
- b) **Conclusions from the consultation to be brought back to the CNPA Board.**
- c) **Any Board Member interested in being involved in the LBAP partnership to approach Matthew Hawkins or Hamish Trench.**

Coordination of Ranger Services 2012-17 (Paper 2)

11. Pete Crane and Justin Prigmore introduced the paper which updated the Board on progress to date in coordinating ranger services and sought agreement in principle on the future role of the CNPA and funding support for the period 2012-17. The partnership approach in the Cairngorms to providing rangers was recognised as good value for money for all concerned. Work had continued since October 2010 on refining the nature of the partnership framework in order to clarify the position for the employer and the funder. The financial support to underpin the partnership framework was recommended to continue at current levels. It was noted that the funding for supporting ranger services in the Cairngorms had originally come from SNH. The recommendation to continue funding at the current levels was in line with the practice SNH were pursuing in the rest of Scotland. Ranger services were provided and funded in the Cairngorms National Park where there was an identified gap in provision. Recently such a gap in provision had been identified in a particular area of Aberdeenshire, along with some local problems arising on a number of sites along the River Dee. Aberdeenshire Council had reorganised their ranger provision very helpfully, and in order to support this it was recommended there would be some uplift in the grant support to the Aberdeenshire Council Ranger Service, reflecting their increase in ranger support in the National Park to one full-time equivalent.
12. During the summer visits round partners, the CNPA Board had noticed some shortfalls in the extent of “buy in” to the partnership arrangements on ranger service provision. In particular it had been noted in some cases that ranger services that were receiving grant aid from the CNPA were not displaying the Cairngorms badge. Work was continuing with partners to change this. In addition there were other actions proposed namely the Scottish Ranger Award, and a course in February on presentation skills.
13. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) National Trust for Scotland (NTS) did not historically receive grant support. Nevertheless, they were keen to be part of the Cairngorms “family” and be branded accordingly. It was also noted there was an opportunity to work more

closely with RSPB staff who carry out similar actions to rangers and this is in hand.

- b) Discussions on the partnership agreement and the funding support had been continuing and of the nine ranger services eight had either been positive or had no comment. Rothiemurchus Estate was the only one where there were still issues, namely their feeling that consultation with ranger employers was lacking, outcomes expected were not clear, and the expectation they had to move too quickly. The consultation had actually started in spring 2010 and in November 2011 there had been a very good meeting chaired by Duncan Bryden, so it was puzzling to have these comments still at this stage.
 - c) It was noted in the case of Rothiemurchus that one of the stumbling blocks appeared to be that the Estate felt that all their staff undertook ranger related activities and it was difficult to focus these on just one or two posts. While this was acknowledged, it was also agreed that what was important was the delivery of outcomes, not how this was done. Nevertheless, if the suggestion as part of the rangers partnership framework was that rangers should be identifiable if dealing with the public then the point was simply that some or all of the Rothiemurchus staff should be appropriately badged.
 - d) Training for rangers needed to reflect the specifics of the area they worked in; in other words the training needed to have a Cairngorms element to it. This was recognised and it was noted that a rangers forum was being developed as an online facility which could be easily accessed by rangers providing them with the backup information they needed.
 - e) Rangers had an important part to play in outdoor learning as they were able to up-skill teachers. They also had access to sites which were known to be safe and could direct teachers towards them.
 - f) Given the proposed increase in ranger provision in the Aberdeenshire part of the National Park, it would be helpful in a year's time to have a report back on how this was working in practice.
 - g) The Junior Rangers Initiative was excellent at helping town children get out into the countryside. The biggest bar was the cost of transport.
 - h) The partnership framework as set out in the paper needed to incorporate something on branding but also as part of this something about the expectation on conveying messages about the National Park to the public.
14. The Convener summed up by noting that the private/public partnership approach to rangers in the Cairngorms had worked well. There was an ongoing discussion with Rothiemurchus that needed to be concluded. There were also further discussions to be had with Forestry Commission and RSPB. The Board summer visits had revealed that the partnership approach and the co-branding of ranger services worked extremely well in Angus so could presumably work elsewhere. The increase in ranger provision in the Aberdeenshire area of the Park was very welcome.

15. **The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**
- a) **Noted the effectiveness of the unique partnership approach adopted for managing Ranger Services in the National Park, and approved in principle the expenditure of £181,600 per annum for ranger grant in the next corporate plan, subject to ratification of the plan and noting this allows for a small increase to cover changes in Aberdeenshire.**
 - b) **Approve in principle the ‘Partnership Framework’, to be ratified by CNPA management team (We want to pick up points for discussion and also further feedback from Ranger Employers. Due to go to Management Team in 2 weeks).**
16. **Action:**
- a) **As set out at Paragraph 29 of the paper, with a report back to the Board in one year’s time on progress in Aberdeenshire.**

Communications and Engagement Programme (Paper 3)

17. Françoise van Buuren and Murray Ferguson introduced the paper which set out a proposed CNPA approach to communications and engagement in the National Park. The paper set out what had been achieved to date, what the objectives would be looking forward, and a proposed change in emphasis which looked to the achievement of objectives across the whole of the public sector, therefore making better use of the diminishing resources. The CNPA approach was to work with and through others; this was not just about better use of resources but was fundamental to achieving a better outcome because it secured the support of others. This approach meant that the CNPA had to focus on creating a sense of ownership, responsibility and enthusiasm so that people wanted to get involved.
18. There had been a good level of awareness and support achieved in the last nine years. Nevertheless there were still misunderstandings and importantly there were still missed opportunities to get people involved. The proposed programme therefore put greater emphasis on the following:
- a) Greater clarity on who to reach and the outcomes to be achieved;
 - b) How to implement this through creating champions, increased effort in the new digital area; focusing on joint campaigns with partners; empowering communities; creating opportunities for people to get involved; and greater direct engagement for Members. All this should become embedded in the way that the CNPA operated.

19. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) The paper was welcomed and it was acknowledged that it was less about changing what the CNPA did but more how it went about it. It was fundamental to embed the thinking of the paper into the way the organisation worked.
 - b) This was a complex area and it was complex because people are complex; engaging with people was the right way to go but was not easy or quick. The paper began to bring some clarity and simplification and it was recognised there was a limit to how far you could simplify what was an inherently complex subject.
 - c) The idea of creating champions was welcomed. The success in Angus was noted where ambassadors had been created, nominated by the people of Angus. There was a suggestion there should be a young people champion, and that further ways of engaging with young people should be considered.
 - d) There was general agreement that the target audiences should explicitly include young people, while recognising they were implicitly included via the reference to communities.
 - e) The Park Brand and its values was implicit in everything in the paper; it was recognised this could be more explicit.
 - f) Engaging people meant thinking through the answer to the question “what’s in it for me”.
 - g) There was a real opportunity using the new digital media which had not been available until quite recently. This also chimed with the notion of it being easier to engage with young people.
 - h) The use of new digital media was undoubtedly the right way forward, but the amount of resource needed to properly manage this should not be underestimated.
 - i) There was some discussion on measuring the success of communications and engagement. Clearly surveys were one way of measuring the impact, albeit they were costly and should only be used with some care. Digital media allowed one to quantify levels of interest. There were other measures that could be used that were specific to the type of operation e.g. rangers, and the numbers and levels of engagement they achieved.
20. The Convener summed up by commending the paper and the considerable amount of work put into its preparation; he noted the references to the existing social media policy and the brand values both of which should be circulated around Members. While implicit, the paper should be more explicit about the Brand and its values and the importance of engagement as opposed to communications. The target audiences should be expanded to suit young people, as well as recognising under politicians and decision makers, the importance of the international aspect.

21. Subject to the comments above by the Convener, the Board agreed the main elements of the approach to communications and engagement in the Park as follows:

- a) Three outcomes (the difference we are trying to make):
 - i. increased awareness of the Park
 - ii. a sense of “closeness”
 - iii. a sense of ownership and responsibility
- b) Three themes about the Park:
 - i. The Cairngorms National Park is a special place that needs special care
 - ii. The Cairngorms National Park supports a thriving economy and vibrant local communities
 - iii. The Cairngorms National Park is a place to enjoy and get involved
- c) Development of a network of Champions to act as communication partners
- d) Programme of Work:
 - i. Digital communications (online tool kit, website and social media)
 - ii. Stakeholder engagement and events plan (Forward Look 2012)
 - iii. Campaigns Programme
 - iv. Strengthening our Communities
 - v. Volunteering Initiative
- e) The role of Board members

[Dave Fallows left the meeting]

CNPA Gaelic Language Plan (Paper 4)

22. Stephanie Bungay introduced the paper which sought the Board’s formal approval for the CNPA Gaelic Language Plan. Preparation of the Gaelic Language Plan was a statutory duty on all public bodies. It set out how the organisation would use and develop Gaelic in the delivery of its Corporate functions. The Plan had been the subject of discussion with officials in Bòrd na Gàidhlig who were content with the Plan. There was one recommendation made by officials which the CNPA had not been able to address namely that “a target should be included specifying that reception staff will be given Gaelic language skills training within three months of commencement of the Gaelic Language Skills Audit.” It was felt that there was a relatively high turnover of reception staff which would mean considerable financial and time commitment for the CNPA, and any language training would at best provide staff with a basic grasp of the language and we would still rely on a translation service. The commitment was therefore that the CNPA would continue to provide and fund for Gaelic training where requested/identified.

23. A range of other commitments had been made and these were detailed in the covering paper and in the Plan itself. The CNPA was happy to make these commitments as its contribution to the spirit behind the Gaelic Language Act.
24. **The Board approved the Gaelic Language Plan for submission to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.**
25. The following papers were for information and were noted without further discussion:

Update on the Preparation of the National Park Plan and Local Development Plan (Paper 5)

Corporate Plan Monitoring (Paper 6)

Research: Developing the Research Web Portal for the Cairngorms National Park (Paper 7)

National Park Plan 4 Monthly Progress Report 10 (Paper 8)

AOCB

26. Hamish Trench reported on his attendance at the High Court hearing the previous week which considered the case brought by three conservation bodies challenging the Cairngorms Local Plan, and five sites in particular. Some of these sites already had planning permission which made this a complex case. The court hearing had been completed and the judge was now considering his conclusions. It was impossible to speculate on the time or indeed the nature of the conclusion.
27. There was a brief roundup from Board Members of their various activities:
 - a) David Green had attended an event to celebrate the completion of training of the first eight apprentices as part of the COAT path construction/training project. All eight apprentices now had jobs which was an excellent outcome. He had also attended the SNH open evening in Grantown, which had been very supportive of the Cairngorms National Park.
 - b) Peter Argyle, Katrina Farquhar, Gordon Riddler and Marcus Humphrey had attended a meeting of the Ballater Business Association, attended by John Swinney to talk about business rates. Mr Swinney had been complimentary about the positive impact on Highland Perthshire of inclusion in the National Park.
 - c) Duncan Bryden had attended the UHI inaugural lecture. He noted there was potential to develop the working relationship with UHI. He also attended the Gaelic Language Awareness course along with Gordon Riddler which he found extremely useful.

- d) Angela Douglas had attended Glasgow Botanic Gardens, and reported that the Friends of the Botanic Gardens were looking for a speaker for their annual lecture and flagged up the possibility of someone from the CNPA doing this.

Date of Next Meeting:

- 28. Next formal meeting Friday 16th March, 2012, Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey.