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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at the Grant Arms Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey on Friday 21<sup>st</sup> January 2011 at 10.30 am

### PRESENT:

Peter Argyle  
Geva Blackett  
Duncan Bryden  
Angela Douglas  
Jaci Douglas  
David Green(Convener)  
Kate Howie  
Marcus Humphrey  
Gregor Hutcheon

Bob Kinnaird  
Mary McCafferty  
Eleanor Mackintosh  
Willie McKenna  
Ian MacKintosh  
Andrew Rafferty  
Gordon Riddler  
Gregor Rimell  
Allan Wright

### In Attendance:

Chris Bremner  
Stephanie Bungay  
David Cameron  
Murray Ferguson

Jane Hope  
Gavin Miles  
Hamish Trench  
Francoise van Buuren

### Apologies:

Brian Wood

### Election of Deputy Convener (Paper 1)

- I. David Cameron as the CNPA Proper Officer managed this item of business.  
Nominations for the vacant post of Deputy Convener were received as follows:
  - a) Angela Douglas (nominated Duncan Bryden, seconded Bob Kinnaird);
  - b) Brian Wood (nominated Geva Blackett, seconded Gordon Riddler).Votes were cast as follows: Angela Douglas 7, Brian Wood 11; Brian Wood was therefore duly elected as the Deputy Convener for three years.

## **Minutes of Last Meeting – approval**

2. The minutes of the meeting of the 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010 were approved with no changes.

## **Matters Arising**

3. Paragraph 23(a): Allan Wright clarified that Moray Council was not withdrawing financial support this year from the Visitor Information Centre and Museum in Tomintoul.
4. Paragraph 29: Murray Ferguson provided an update on the issues surrounding informal camping at the Clunie Flats on Invercauld Estate. Staff had been working with the Estate and Scottish Enterprise to find a suitable alternative campsite in the Braemar area, and would continue to assist the Estate with part-time ranger support.

## **Declarations of Interest**

5. None.

## **Briefing on Priorities for Action: 5 (Tourism and Business) (Paper 2)**

6. Chris Bremner introduced this briefing paper to inform the Board on progress made in delivering the National Park Plan Priority for Action 5, “Making Tourism and Business More Sustainable”. The paper was one of a series of background briefing papers to inform the Board, and in particular new Members, of the work of the CNPA. The paper explained why and how the CNPA were working with the business community and what they were seeking to achieve. The role of the CNPA was outlined and specific examples of partnership working were described. Of particular importance was the delivery being achieved through the private sector, and a brief presentation was given by the Cairngorms Business Partnership to illustrate how this collaboration was working. The introduction to the paper concluded with two questions being posed: what was needed to raise appreciation of the economic value of National Parks in Scotland; and how best the CNPA should define its role in economic development alongside the Enterprise Network, VisitScotland, and the private sector.
7. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) There was some discussion about the spread of membership and how the CBP ensured it engaged with small businesses. The CBP was undertaking a review of its membership structure, and while tourism was clearly of major importance, the aim was to ensure that the CBP embraced all businesses. As of April the CBP would be fully and formally established, with articles of association that ensured sectoral and geographical representation.
  - b) The percentage of businesses in the CBP was only part of the story. Arguably it was important to ensure that the large businesses were members and an important indicator was the percentage of turnover represented by the CBP. In practice, the CBP were trying to ensure that their membership was spread across the spectrum which would mean they could give a better offering to all types of business and better represent them. The CBP certainly could not rely on just one or two big businesses; in practice the number of the major

employers in the area were members, but the aim was to incorporate small businesses as well.

- c) It was noted that with the rise of self catering in the current economic climate, there was the risk of hotels being lost and with it an important accommodation base. There were similar implications for restaurants and cafes. This had been recognised as an issue in discussion with the Enterprise Networks. The work currently in hand in taking forward the Food For Life project was helpful in this respect, with its emphasis on local food. A Producers Directory and the Food Guide were being made available very shortly and this would help to raise awareness among visitors.
- d) It was noted that the CBP were engaging with local communities.
- e) The collaborative work with the CBP was an excellent example of the sort of private/public collaboration that was needed to deliver the National Park Plan, and was becoming the envy of the rest of Scotland. The key to such collaboration was recognising that the public sector were good at some things and the private sector good at other things, and getting this balance right. There were certain actions that required private sector entrepreneurship. There was still a long way to go but the CBP venture was undoubtedly going in the right direction and growing. It was important that the CNPA continued to support the initiative.
- f) Examples of destination management in the rest of the world showed how the people driving the initiative were critical to success, and in that respect those involved in developing the CBP were to be congratulated.
- g) Under-capitalisation of businesses in rural areas was a real issue and it was important to look at ways in which people could start a business without crippling overheads. There was work in progress with HIE and Scottish Enterprise looking at start-ups and business space within the National Park, and this would provide a basis for considering how to tackle this issue.
- h) It was noted that while visitor numbers were on the increase, it seemed likely that the roads infrastructure was limiting. The economy depended on moving people, products, and services around. The railway was not fit for purpose, the A9 was limiting and broadband was unsatisfactory. An example was quoted of how one business was facing a 15% increase in delivery charges as a result of the fuel price increase.
- i) There was general agreement that it was good to see progress in the developing partnership between private and public sector. The recent ATWS Conference (Adventure Trade World Summit) had been a huge success and brought a large amount of useful publicity for the area.
- j) Certain elements of delivering policy was best done through others, in this case the private sector. The CNPA was therefore “letting go” but would always be supportive. The inevitable consequence was that the CNPA itself may become invisible, but the important outcome was that the profile of the National Park was raised.
- k) There were something like 250 DMOs across Scotland with many of these small and unsustainable. Many were highly dependent on public sector support. Ultimately, market forces should dictate where DMOs flourished. There were discussions in train about developing a more strategic approach to the public sector support of these business-led organisations. In some cases, the DMOs could be self sustaining but this would mean they had to remain membership focused and not able to deliver the wider work sought by the public sector.

- l) It was noted that the Cairngorms Brand was core to the marketing work being developed by the CBP who were aiming to connect logo use to the brand values and communicating this to customers. The Brand Management Group continued to have a role in enabling the brand to be developed building on the work done to date. It was noted that a number of other National Park Authorities were very interested in how the Cairngorms National Park Brand had been developed.

## **8. The paper was noted with approval.**

### **Sustainable Tourism Strategy Application (Paper 3)**

9. Chris Bremner introduced the paper which sought formal Board endorsement of the new Cairngorms National Park Strategy and Action Plan for Sustainable Tourism 2011-15 as required for reapplication for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in protected areas. The Cairngorms National Park had been awarded the European Charter for Tourism in protected areas in March 2005. The Strategy and Action Plan which was required as part of the Charter ran for five years to 2010, although a delay in reapplication by a year had been approved so that the Plan could be aligned more closely with the National Park Plan process. The new Strategy had been developed during 2010 by Richard Denman of the Tourism Company. The Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Forum which had broad industry, environmental and community representation, had provided direction and guidance to the process and had been involved throughout. The current version of the Strategy had been agreed by the Forum and other key partners. The intention was to formally submit to EUROPARC in late January with a verifiers visit due in summer 2011. It was anticipated that the Strategy would enable much of the delivery of the emerging “sustainable destination” theme in the next National Park Plan.
10. It was emphasised that the CNPA were handling the process on behalf of the wider community, as represented by the Sustainable Tourism Forum. The paper was therefore seeking Board endorsement to add further weight to this process.
11. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) It was important that the Sustainable Tourism Strategy was owned by the sector. It would therefore be helpful if someone from the sector could take over the Chair of the Sustainable Tourism Forum.
  - b) There was some comment about the need for the document to be more explicit about the importance of shooting/sporting estates and their activities. While there was no mention on Page 4 under the Economic Profile, the actions on Page 44 Paragraph 6(g) were explicit. The section on natural and cultural heritage (Page 5) made no mention of salmon and fresh water pearl mussels – there was scope for amending the text in this respect.
  - c) It was noted that the principles of the European Charter are a “given”, and provide a start point for the Strategy which in effect answers how these principles will be met.
  - d) The cost of producing the Strategy and Action Plan was in the region of £15,000 to £20,000 all inclusive (ie the fee for the Tourism Company plus cost of meetings etc.). The benefit of having the Charter for Sustainable Tourism had been discussed at great length procuring the development of the Strategy and Action Plan. The Forum had agreed it was useful to continue as it was useful to have the framework to follow. Nevertheless, no one should overplay the marketing benefits of having the Charter. Inevitably there were and always

would be competing views of how the Park should be managed and it was useful to have the Strategy and Action Plan which flowed from the Charter as a way of being open on the collective view about managing the Park. It was noted that the award of the European Charter certainly brought status in the eyes of other National Park Authorities, and the Westminster All Party Parliamentary Group on National Parks, to which the Convener had recently made a presentation.

- e) There was some discussion about the order of events in respect of the Strategy needed to be submitted to EUROPARC in January 2011, but the National Park Plan not being complete for a further year. To some extent there was little choice and the Board had agreed earlier that we did not want the European Charter to lapse. In practice it seemed unlikely that there would be misalignment of the Strategy and Action Plan developed through this process, with what emerged from the National Park Plan given that both processes were wide ranging in their consultation.

**12. The Board agreed the recommendation of the paper: Subject to minor editorial changes, the Board formally endorsed the new Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan, and application to EUROPARC for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas.**

**Briefing on Priority for Action 8 (Strategy and Communications) (Paper 4)**

13. This briefing paper was introduced by Hamish Trench, Françoise van Buuren, and Claire Ross. The paper explained how the work of the CNPA contributed to the Scottish Government's National Framework, and set out the Strategic Policy Context through which the CNPA operated. The CNPA's Statutory Purpose was essentially one of ensuring an integrated approach to the delivery of the four Aims of the National Park. The CNPA could not do everything, and delivery was achieved by working with and through others to an agreed Strategy. That Strategy which provided clarity on shared objectives comprised the Local Plan, the National Park Plan, the Core Paths Plan, and our own Corporate Plan.
14. The other important element of this work was how the CNPA communicated with others. This was crucial in the CNPA's "enabling" approach of delivering with and through others. The paper set out the various groupings that helped this communication. There were a number of formalised groupings as set out at Paragraphs 22 to 24, as well as a number of looser networks and affiliations which brought groups of interest together to share ideas and promote best practice. The engagement and support of communities was an important strand of work, and this was set out at Paragraphs 27-47. The approach was to build on existing community organisations recognising the role of community planning as the nation-wide statutory process facilitated by local authorities. In support of the Community Planning Partnerships at a local level, the CNPA had worked with public sector partners to support community based action planning. This was well developed in Highland and Aberdeenshire, and was making progress in Moray, Angus and Perth and Kinross. The community action plans emerging from this process were feeding into the Local Development and National Park Plan.
15. The Communications Strategy for the CNPA had been developed several years previously, and the overall aim remained valid, namely "developing a reputation for the organisation as an enabler that was trusted and respected". The objectives were to

show how we could add value; to generate enthusiasm; and to assist the key stakeholders to act as ambassadors for the National Park. The CNPA's communications work did not focus on marketing and promotion, which was done in partnership with the tourism industry delivering the relevant Priority for Action in the National Park Plan (raising awareness and understanding of the National Park). Board Members had an important role to play in engaging with communities, linking back to local authorities, and providing support in the various forums which were outlined in the paper.

16. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) Huge progress had been made in community engagement. Establishing the consultation "toolkits" was a big learning exercise which had helped people in the local communities to concentrate on the priorities – those things that are really important. The skill of the facilitators from VABS (Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey) was commended (Karen Derrick, Marie MacDonald). Effective community consultation released local talent to ensure quick wins.
- b) There was still work to be done to get people to understand what the Park was about.
- c) In Moray there was some concern that the community planning exercise did not have local buy-in.
- d) It was important that people were clear on what the local authority should be delivering and what the National Park should be delivering; good joint working between these two organisations was essential. The National Park was often a small part of a local authority area, some way distant from the main focus of the local council's activity. This was all the more reason for looking at opportunities for joint working between the CNPA, other partners, and the local authorities.
- e) The difficulty with community planning lay in the delivery of actions. In more dispersed areas it might be better to have one individual leading this work.
- f) There remained a question of how much work by the local community bounced back to delivery by public bodies. The danger was that community planning would raise expectations which delivery agencies could not meet. It was important to explore the problem of other bodies' interpretation of the statutory duty to "have regard to" the National Park Plan. There was some doubt as to how many people, including public bodies, recognised that the National Park was something different. Clarity and pressure needed to be brought to bear on key public sector partners on their statutory roles to have regard to the National Park Plan. The Strategy Group which met once a year, usually chaired by the Minister and attended by the senior representative of partner organisations, was a good vehicle for doing this.
- g) The whole point of community planning partnerships was that this allowed communities to identify what they would prefer to do for themselves.
- h) The statements from the local communities attached to the paper at Annex 2 had been prepared by the communities themselves.
- i) There remained a challenge as to how to enthuse people about being in a National Park. Once people were enthusiastic, then engagement and involvement would follow.
- j) There was scope for the CNPA to engage better with the voluntary sector.
- k) There was an important role for Board Members in developing relations with partners so that the enabling role of the CNPA was better understood and adopted.

17. **The paper was noted with approval.**

## **National Park Plan Development – Emerging Structure and Themes (Paper 5)**

18. Hamish Trench and Gavin Miles introduced the paper which updated the Board on engagement with partners and communities to develop the next National Park Plan. Agreement of the Board was sought to the emerging structure and themes. The process of developing the next National Park Plan was part way through, and was about to accelerate towards the consultation on a draft in May/June 2011. There had been many ideas brought forward from partners in discussions and these now had to be distilled into a structure for the Plan. There would be a number of opportunities for the Board to consider this further before the consultation in May/June.
19. The emerging National Park Plan was building on lessons learnt from the previous Park Plan, as well as on discussion with partners and work with communities. The intention was to make the consultation draft of the National Park Plan discursive with options for consultees to consider. This contrasted with previous experience of consultation in which the draft tends to be seen as the near final Plan on which drafting comments are merely being sought. The proposed structure of the Draft National Park Plan was set out in paragraphs 16-26. The key difference from the first National Park Plan would be that instead of including long action plans, there would be a limited number of big priority projects. It was noted that there may need to be two versions of the National Park Plan: one essentially technical to meet the statutory obligations; and the second a more easy-read version for those with a more general interest.
20. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) At Paragraph 16 something should be included on the roles and responsibilities of communities in the National Park.
  - b) The process was as important as the Plan itself. It would help to create receptive “hearts and minds”, and create a platform for the National Park to be launched on the national stage. It was an opportunity to be more up front about the issues and the difficulties the CNPA shared in dealing with them. It might be a good opportunity to have a number of public debates as part of the consultation process. In reality, everyone wanted National Parks to do well and were probably receptive to the idea of being part of that.
  - c) The value of the Plain English campaign was flagged up and a possibility of obtaining a Crystal Mark. (the Structure Plan for Aberdeen City and Shire demonstrated that this was possible for a statutory document).
  - d) While Paragraph 17 recommended keeping the current vision, there was an opportunity to shorten this.
  - e) The three key themes (Paragraph 23) needed to be explained in different language to encapsulate the “what’s in it for us” angle.
  - f) There was general recognition around the Board table that the National Park Plan was making good progress.
- 21. The Board approved the emerging structure and themes for the Plan as the basis for the development of the draft (subject to comments outlined above).**

## **The State of the Park Review 2011 (Paper 6)**

22. Gavin Miles introduced the paper which updated the Board on the development and purpose of the State of the Park Review and sought agreement on the purpose and scope of the Review as well as proposed National Park “health” indicators. Compared with the State of the Park Report produced in 2006, the intention this time was to prepare a much more focused report published in an easily accessible form that provided a summary of the State of the Park and how it was changing over time. Annex I set out the suggested format. Input was sought on the proposed indicators (Paragraphs 12-17) and the proposal was made that a small working group of Members might be established to look at this issue further, and allow those Members with a particular interest to discuss this in more detail.

23. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The structure was commended.
- b) The value of having a paper document published was questioned and the suggestion was that this report be exclusively online.
- c) The use of the expression “health indicators” was questioned.
- d) To draw people into the interest of the document, it was suggested it could be tailored more to the end users, eg land managers, winter sports enthusiasts etc.
- e) The question was posed as to who the audience was and the primary purpose of the document.
- f) The example was given of people at a local recycling depot who were excited by what they were doing. There was a lesson and indeed an opportunity in that example for the development of the National Park Plan and the State of the Park Report.
- g) The possibility of a workshop with partners for refining the indicators was suggested. It was important to involve partners who would ultimately be collecting the information.
- h) It was noted that if Members were interested in being part of a short-term working group they should inform Hamish Trench/Gavin Miles.

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

- a) Agreed the format of the proposed State of the Park Review;**
- b) Agreed the scope of the proposed National Park Health Indicators and their role of communicating the state of the Park;**
- c) Agreed that those Members with an interest of sitting on a short-term Working Group should express their interest to Gavin Miles or Hamish Trench.**

## **Cairngorms National Park Authority Gaelic Language Plan (Paper 7)**

25. Stephanie Bungay introduced the paper which sought the Board’s approval for the Cairngorms National Park Authority Gaelic Language Plan. The CNPA had a statutory duty to prepare a Gaelic Language Plan setting out how it would use and develop Gaelic in the delivery of its functions. The proposed Plan was meeting that obligation. It was noted that following consultation in December 2010 fourteen responses had been received and a number of changes had been made to the Plan. Bòrd na Gàidhlig had provided £13,000 to the CNPA to help implement the Plan.



26. One point was made in discussion, namely that the percentage of Gaelic speakers in Badenoch and Strathspey would be considerably lower if the statistics took account of visitors to the area.
27. **The Board approved the Gaelic Language Plan for submission to Bòrd na Gàidhlig.**

**Corporate Plan Monitoring (Paper 8)**  
**National Park Plan 4-Monthly Progress Report 7 (Paper 9)**

28. The above two papers were for information only and were noted with no discussion.

**AOCB**

29. Jane Hope updated the Board on the legal challenge to the Cairngorms Local Plan which was formally served on the CNPA on the 11<sup>th</sup> January. The appellants were the Badenoch and Strathspey Conservation Group, the Cairngorms Campaign, and the Scottish Campaign for National Parks. The grounds were complex but in basic terms were challenging the number of houses provided for in the Local Plan. The next steps were to work with lawyers to clarify the arguments and then provide responses to the objections in the next few weeks. Once there had been a period of about a month in which adjustments could be made by each side to the arguments there would be a wait for the case to be heard by three judges in the Court of Session. Timing was not within the CNPA's control and advice was that the case was unlikely to be heard quickly and could mean a wait until the end of 2011. Costs to the CNPA could be in the region of around £50,000; as things become clearer it may be possible to refine this assessment.
30. There was very little that the CNPA could say beyond this at the moment as care was needed not to prejudice a live case. However, the aim was to keep the public updated on progress and explain as much as we could when we could. For the moment, the message was that for people making planning applications in the National Park it was business as usual; no one should hold back from making applications in the usual way. The Local Plan approved by the CNPA Board in October 2010 still stood, but the fact of the legal challenge would be a material consideration for planning applications decided while this court case was outstanding. The Planning Team would advise on a case by case basis.
31. Jane Hope drew Members' attention to the guidance circulated in respect of the forthcoming Cairngorms National Park Direct Elections. Now that the Notice of Election had been given, with the election itself due on the 17<sup>th</sup> March, all Members and staff would need to take care that they were not seen to favour any particular candidate; similarly, current Board Members who were standing again for election would need to make sure they did not use Board and Planning meetings to further their election campaigns.
32. A local MSP, Fergus Ewing, had expressed an interest in addressing the Board on the subject of Section 75s, something he had consistently expressed strong views about in letters to the Park Authority. A speaking slot was being offered for the 18<sup>th</sup> March at the meeting in Ballater, and a background briefing note would be provided. [Post meeting note: this engagement has subsequently been cancelled.]

33. A Board training and development day had been set for Friday the 15<sup>th</sup> April, with the possibility this would be combined with a community engagement session on the previous evening.
34. The next meeting of the Convention of Highlands and Islands (CoHI) was to be held on the 14<sup>th</sup> March at the Coylumbridge Hotel. John Swinney would be chairing the meeting, with the First Minister in attendance. This was a good opportunity to raise the awareness of the Cairngorms National Park in the minds of Scottish Ministers and other public sector partners.
35. David Cameron (Director of Corporate Services) reported that the CNPA had attracted some additional Capital Funding from the Scottish Government, to be spent by the end of the financial year in March 2011. The installation of a Woodfuel boiler in the Grantown office was being considered. Because of the tight timescales, and given that this would cost more than £50,000, the Board was asked to agree that the approval for this be delegated to the Finance Committee who would be able to consider the details of the scheme within the timeframe allowed. This was agreed by the Board.
36. In the round-robin reports by Members on their individual activities, the following was noted:
- a) The Convener had attended the following: a Sustainability Conference at Dynamic Earth, which resulted in Hamish Trench representing the CNPA on the 2020 Climate Change Group; The Crofting Connections Conference; the launch of the Wildlife Estates Initiative in Perthshire at which the CNPA was applauded for supporting the pilot to be run within the Cairngorms National Park shortly; a visit to Perth and Kinross Council on the 15<sup>th</sup> December to provide an update on benefits of being in a National Park; a meeting with all four Ward Councillors in Highland Council (in recognition of the fact that the membership of the Board had reduced the number of Highland Councillors); an event at Ballater primary school to mark the award of the 10,000 John Muir Award within the National Park.
  - b) Duncan Bryden had attended a Biodiversity Conference, held by Highland Council in Inverness; a Sustainable Tourism Strategy workshop; a meeting to consider the Highland-wide Local Plan, held by Highland Council; chaired a seminar on Knowledge Transfer which brought together a large number of scientists working in and on the National Park; an event with Scottish Water to discuss issues in the National Park; Planning Conveners Workshop considering the modernisation of the planning agenda.
  - c) Angela Douglas reported on her attendance at a Scottish Government hosted Seminar on Board Effectiveness. Three main points had emerged in discussion: the importance of focusing on the organisation's performance and capability; authenticity; the importance of networking.
  - d) Bob Kinnaird reported on the latest meeting of the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum which had been attended by the Chair of the National Access Forum who had spoken in glowing terms of the work of CLOAF as an exemplar. It was noted that the CLOAF was looking for new members.
  - e) Geva Blackett reported that she had also attended the award ceremony for the 10,000<sup>th</sup> John Muir Award in the National Park.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

37. Friday 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2011, the Albert Hall, Ballater.