

**MINUTES OF THE PARK GATEWAYS AND INFORMATION PROVISION  
WORKING GROUP MEETING**

**2 pm, Friday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2004  
Kinord Hotel, Dinnet**

**Present**

Bob Wilson	Chair, Working Group, CNPA Board
Alistair Clunas	Mar Lodge
Pete Crane	CNPA, Visitor Services Officer
Murray Ferguson	CNPA Head of Visitor Services & Recreation
Jim Gillies	Forestry Commission
Bruce Luffman	CNPA Board
Andrew Rafferty	CNPA Board
Gregor Rimell	CNPA Board
David Selfridge	CNPA Board
Graham Smith	Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board
Debbie Strang	CNPA Sustainable Tourism Officer
Margaret Wearmouth	Aberdeen & Grampian Tourist Board

**Apologies**

Daniel Alexander                      CNPA Head of Communications

**In Attendance**

Aaron Lawton	Aaron Lawton Associates
Duncan Bryden	CNPA Board
Sally Dowden	CNPA Board

**Action**

**Welcome and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and said that there would be a slight change to the agenda and item 4 on Visitor Information Provision would be taken after the presentation by Aaron Lawton.

**Minutes of Meeting 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2004**

2. There are no amendments to the minutes from the meeting held on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2004.

**Matters Arising**

3. Debbie Strang said that there had been a preliminary brainstorming session on visitor information provision at the NPA and Graham Smith of Host had provided further detail on the effectiveness of roadside information, and this would be taken in to consideration as the full plan for visitor information provision was developed.
4. She went on to say that she had contacted Highland Council to find out about the commissioning of a study on how the current grant to HOST might be spent by the Council

following the future Tourist Board changes, and the National Park Authority will be a consultee on this project. The Chair noted that the problem of litter on the A9 had been highlighted by the local paper, the Strathy.

## Update on Entry Point Markers Project

### *Update Issues*

5. Aaron Lawton opened his presentation by updating the Group on two issues. He had recently visited the Grand Canyon National Park and found an excellent example of how a roadside marker for a National Park could be used to also provide visitor information and to create a sense of arrival.
6. Secondly, he and Debbie Strang had met with the Scottish Executive Trunk Roads Department in Edinburgh and had discussed in great detail the opportunities that there may be for joint working on the upgrading of the point of entry sites on the A9, A95 and A86. In short it was agreed that the meeting had been extremely productive and the Scottish Executive are keen to work in partnership to upgrade the trunk road for visitors and locals alike. It was agreed that the site at Drumochter should be used as a pilot, to look at upgrading the lay-by, and adapting the lay-by further North to accommodate the HGV's that currently stop in the Drumochter lay-by, to rationalise the signs that need to be at Drumochter and move those that do not need to be at this site. The Scottish Executive also said they would consider contributing towards the cost of the upgrading the site if several other partners were involved; and offered to project manage this on behalf of a partnership group.
7. The on-going maintenance of the sites was discussed, for example the snow clearing at Drumochter and the control of BEAR who had been contracted to provide this service, and Aaron Lawton said that the next stage for the development of the trunk roads sites would be to work with a landscape architect who would consider all these issues in the initial design stage.

### *Entry Point Provision*

8. Aaron Lawton said that he had categorised the point of entry sites as follows:
  - C low profile – low key entry marking or no entry marking as appropriate
  - B medium profile – full entry sign, landscape repairs
  - A high profile – full entry sign lay-by parking visitor information point and designed landscape setting.
9. Vehicle counts provided by the local authorities and trunk roads department were the basis for categorisation, but the importance of the point of entry site to visitors was also relevant. He added that the knowledge of the working group members would prove extremely useful in confirming site classification. The following categories were recommended:

### *Category A*

Map Ref	Road	Location	Authority	Vehicles/Day	Action
01	A9	Drumochter Pass	Scottish Exec	7,060 (est)	
04	A9	Slochd Summit	Scottish Exec	7,000 (est)	
15	A93	Dinnet	Aberdeenshire	4,400 (rec)	
08	A95	Advie	Scottish Exec	1,880 (est)	
22	A93	Glen Shee	Aberdeenshire	1,100 (est)	

02	A86	Kinloch Laggan	Scottish Exec	934 (est)
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*Category B*

06	A939	Grantown-on-Spey	Highland	1,550 (rec)
12	A97	Glenkindie	Aberdeenshire	1,000 (est)
05	B9007	CarrBridge	Highland	540 (rec)
11	B9008	Tomnavoulin	Moray	539 (rec)
17		Glen Esk	Angus	391 (rec)
19	B955	Glen Clova South	Angus	285 (est)
10	B9136	Glenlivet	Moray	235 (rec)

*Category C*

14	B9119	Ordie	Aberdeenshire	500 (est)
16	B976	Bridge o' Ess	Aberdeenshire	500 (est)
13		Rippachie	Aberdeenshire	300 (est)
07	B9102	Advie	Highland	250 (est)
21		Glen Isla	Angus	89 (est)
18		Glen Clova North	Angus	86 (est)
03		Garva Bridge	Highland	75 (est)
20		Glen Prosen	Angus	48 (est)
09		Drumin	Moray	no data

9. It was agreed that there were a couple of sites that fell between categories on the basis of the traffic figures presented. For example, estimated figures at Glenshee did not include ski visitors and the Group felt that this entry point could be allocated category A to reflect this seasonal influx. In addition the A86 is a major route into the Park from the West and there is no logical place for a lay-by and this had been discussed at the Scottish Executive meeting. It was suggested however that a recent initiative for a Cycling Centre at Strathmashie with a visitor arrival facility might be able to provide a useful site for National Park visitor information, and Debbie Strang agreed to investigate.
10. It was agreed strongly by the Group that the 9 category C sites should be given further consideration to what type of low key marking might be suitable.

*Sign Designs*

11. Aaron explained that he had disregarded a number of designs options before arriving at two main options. Option one, drew inspiration from the landscapes and the interlocking nature of the mountains and the shadows caused by the light on the mountains and their constantly changing nature. This option used layered slabs of granite, or some other rocktype found in the Cairngorms National Park.
12. The second option was inspired by the strong link with nature and in a sense, the sign growing out of the ground and this related to stonewall dyking to reflect the type of dyking found in the Cairngorms area.
13. The Chair asked for an initial indication by the group as to their favoured option. The Group agreed that option one with the layered granite should be pursued further, and if the glass, once it was tested was not robust enough or would not stand up to ongoing maintenance, it

was agreed that coated steel or granite should also be explored for the background for the lettering.

14. A discussion on materials then took place and it was agreed that the layers of stone do not necessarily have to be granite but they should be materials that can be found in the Cairngorms area. Ideally the materials should be sourced within the National Park area failing this they should be sourced within Scotland.

#### *Sign Content*

15. Aaron re-emphasised the fact the signs need to be very clear and contain the minimum amount of information for people to read whilst travelling at speed. He also noted the current Scottish Executive policy on signage for the A9 was not to include Gaelic. Highland Council is currently reviewing their policy and it is unclear at this stage whether all signs will be renewed to include Gaelic. It was noted that the Board will consider this issue at their next meeting. Aaron Lawton had prepared some of the initial designs with Gaelic included and these would be kept under consideration until greater guidance by the Board on this issue had been given.
16. The issue of the type face for the lettering was discussed and Aaron explained that the corporate identity for the National Park Authority did not transfer well to signage. He had used Gill Sans, a classic font and stated that the Group needed to be clear which sort of types face would be most appropriate because these signs will be in position for many many years. Aaron noted that discussions had taken place with the Park Authority on whether the type face could be altered for the signs and this was acceptable. He noted that it this was an important issue for the development of the Cairngorms brand and the designer should take in to account the many uses that the brand would be put to other than on leaflets and paper. It was also agreed that should a suitable logo be developed within this branding initiative that could be easily identified and would transfer well to the signs this could be used on the point of entry markers and maybe a possibility for a marker of some type for the category C markers. Debbie Strang offered to keep a close on eye on the development of the branding project to see whether the timing of this may provide a logo that could be used on the entry markers. **DS**

#### *Opportunities*

17. Aaron said a couple of opportunities had arisen that were not strictly part of the current project but he felt nevertheless they were worth presenting to the group. He said that the A9 is a fantastic resource in tourist terms and that some sort of design strategy for the roads and the landscape and the view management might be something the Park Authority would wish to pursue in due course. It was noted that Aberdeenshire Council have allocated funding within this financial year to renew all the existing signage on the A97 from Mossat to Dinnet.
18. Aaron also suggested that Ralia was worth considering as a possible National Park Visitor Centre. It was noted that Highland Council are currently trying to attract a community enterprise into the building but there was a large number of disabled access issues that would need to be resolved before the building was put into operation once again.

#### **Update on Initial Work on Visitor Information Provision**

19. Murray Ferguson reminded the Group that although much of the work was focused on the point of entry signage project the Group was also responsible for looking at visitor **Action**

information provision in the more general sense, and he asked Peter Crane, the new Visitor Services Officer to provide an update on recent activities.

20. Peter Crane said that a number of meetings had taken place that were worth mentioning at this stage:
  - Consultants have completed an All Park Visitor Survey and this data would prove extremely useful as the trends and significant differences perhaps from one part of the Park the other became apparent.
  - The Ranger Services Working Group had met a couple of times
  - Information was currently being gathered from other National Parks to look at how they address relevant issues.
  - Input to the Branding project and the Communication strategy currently being developed by Danny Alexander.
21. He summarised by saying that the next step would be to bring a strategy paper to the Group with a vision for information provision for the next 25 years and the priorities for the way forward.
22. He noted however that it would be important to look for quick wins and not miss opportunities because strategy development work was ongoing. He noted that presentations had been given by a company called Ipoint which is a robust touch screen visitor information system and that Sam Ham had been booked to provide some training in Interpretation in September and further information will be available in due course.

#### **AOCB**

23. Debbie Strang said that the Group had been very aware of consulting on the development of the Point of Entry Project and the need to raise awareness about the initiative. Danny Alexander and herself had agreed that many of the decisions had not been made when the Park newsletter was being finalised. However, she suggested that a substantial article could be produced when the next Park newsletter is produced in September. She also said that she was attending to the Association of Community Councils meeting on 26<sup>th</sup> May and would provide an update.

#### **Date of Next Meeting**

24. Debbie Strang explained that the next steps for Aaron Lawton would be to finalise firm up some of the decisions that the Group had made at the meeting to provide guidance on the project and this would be presented to the Board at the divide board meeting. She suggested that the Group did not need to meet prior to that date unless there was significant work to consider on the visitor information provision issue. It was agreed therefore that a date would be fixed in due course.

*The meeting finished at 5pm*