
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Gordon Hotel, Tomintoul on 10 October 2003 at 10.30am

Present:

Peter Argyle
Eric Baird
Duncan Bryden
Stuart Black
Basil Dunlop
Douglas Glass
Angus Gordon
Lucy Grant
David Green
Bruce Luffman
Eleanor Mackintosh
Willie MacKenna

Alastair MacLennan
Anne Maclean
Andrew Rafferty
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge
Robert Severn
Sheena Slimon
Richard Stroud
Andrew Thin
Susan Walker
Bob Wilson

In Attendance:

Jane Hope, Interim Chief Executive, CNPA
Nick Halfhide, Policy & Projects, CNPA
Andy Rinning, Head of Corporate Services

Apologies:

Sally Dowden
Joyce Simpson

Welcome and Introduction

1. Andrew Thin welcomed those in the public gallery to the meeting. He also thanked all of those who had come to the open meeting the previous evening in the Memorial Hall to talk to Board members about the National Park. Over 60 people had attended, and the result was a very constructive meeting. He would be commenting later in the morning about how it was intended to handle the feedback from the evening.

Minutes of Last Meeting

2. **Agreed**, subject to two changes to paragraph 15(c), changing “might” to “would” and adding “and other public agencies” after “local authorities”. This would convey more clearly that the Park Board had accepted this as an action point (given that the last meeting had agreed in paper 2 a research project looking into this).
3. Clarification was sought as to the meaning of the reference in paragraph 23(b) to “projects at risk”. It was explained that this was a catch-all phrase for reasons that affected the progress of a project, but the most likely “risk” was slippage in starting a project and therefore a delay in expenditure.

Matters Arising

4. The Convener reported on a number of action points arising:
 - a) Paragraph 9(b): The Convener had decided in the course of his discussions with Members that chairmanship of working groups should be left to each group to determine. This was reflected in paper 1, to be taken as the next item.
 - b) Paragraph 13: work on new project specifications was in hand and circulation of regular project update summaries had already started.
 - c) Paragraph 17: Work to take forward the National Park plan was in hand.
 - d) Paragraph 21: Bob Wilson and Lucy Grant had agreed to sit on a sub group, together with officials, to work up proposals for First Anniversary Celebrations.
 - e) Paragraph 24: action was in hand to encourage local authorities to find more appropriate places within the National Park for making their copies of National Park Board Papers available for public inspection.

Working Groups (paper 1)

5. Jane Hope introduced the paper, which reflected discussion arising from the paper agreed by the Board at its previous meeting (paper 1, 12/09/03). (Note: One additional Group, the Agriculture Working Group, had been added subsequently as a result of a briefing on CAP reform which the Board had attended on 26 September.) That previous meeting had agreed the principle of establishing a number of working groups. The current paper proposed names of Park Board members to sit on each of those groups, as well as proposing a remit and a timetable for producing specified outputs.

6. She drew attention to the fact that the membership of each group simply reflected the wishes expressed by Board Members, and there had been no attempt to modify these. As a result, the membership across the working groups was rather imbalanced, with some groups such as Agriculture attracting 8 members, and others such as Access only attracting 3. It would be important to leave sufficient room on the groups to bring in members from outside the Park Board, as well as making sure that Board Members were not over-committed, given that they could only be paid for an input of 3 days per month. Further, there were several ways in which Members could keep abreast of progress in each working group without having to sit on the group. Members had the right to attend any working group meeting if they wished; there would be minutes from each of the meetings; and it was expected that there would be an oral report to a full Board meeting from time to time by each group.
7. The first meeting of each working group would be arranged as soon as possible, but the timetable would reflect the fact that staff resources were still limited. As new staff were recruited, working groups for which there was currently no staff secretariat would be convened. The timescales shown in the paper for short-term outputs from each of the groups was inevitably a best guess at the point of drafting the paper, and would need to be refined by each of the groups having taken a realistic look at the scale of the task and the availability of staff resources.
8. In discussion, the following points were made:
 - a) A number of modifications to membership by Board Members were indicated:
 - Joyce Simpson: to sit on the Access group;
 - Richard Stroud: to come off the Gateways group;
 - Bob Severn: to sit on the Access, Tourism and the Integrated Transport groups;
 - Alastair MacLennan: to attend, but not sit on the Tourism forum;
 - Sheena Slimon: to attend but not sit on the Food Marketing group;
 - Peter Argyle: to come off the Integrated Transport group;
 - Stuart Black: to sit on the Access;
 - Sue Walker: to come off the Gateways group.
 - b) Membership by Board members should be seen at this stage as relatively fluid, and would settle down over time as the work and remit of the groups became clearer. The Convener made clear that the working groups were essentially informal, and were not bound by the standing orders of the CNPA Board and Committees. The Groups would aim to work by consensus.
 - c) It was confirmed that the initial membership of the Working Groups, comprising the Board members, would be responsible for deciding (with advice from officials) who to invite as external members.
 - d) It would be essential that the Working Groups reported back to the Board, and that the progress and the remits of the groups was kept under review.
 - e) The question was raised as to whether the Food Marketing working group would and should be concentrating just on food. It was pointed out that on the wider issue of branding and marketing Park produce under that brand fell within the remit of both the Tourism Group and the Food Marketing Group, and the two groups would need to work closely on that. Nevertheless, the narrow issue of creating opportunities for marketing food from within the Park was certainly the

remit just of the food marketing group as it would involve tackling specific food-related issues which required a particular expertise.

- f) The park Gateways and Information group did not have within its remit sufficient emphasis on information provision. Following discussion it was suggested that it was for the group itself to determine how it dealt with the matter of information provision, but focusing in the first instance on signage.
- g) It was agreed that a master list showing the meeting dates for all the working groups (and other groups) would be essential to allow Members to attend any working group meeting in which they had an interest. The list would be compiled by the CNPA and circulated regularly to Members.
- h) The timing of working group meetings, particularly the first meetings, would need to be staggered to take account of the implications for staff resources. The start-up of Advisory Panel meetings would similarly need to be carefully co-ordinated. The Convener suggested that getting working groups underway should be the priority, after which attention could be turned to starting up the Advisory panels.
- i) Since the Board was meeting at fortnightly intervals, it would be good use of Board members' time to arrange, as far as possible, meetings of working groups and committees etc on these days. If members were prepared to travel to Board meetings the night before, this would enable an early start to the following day's meetings.

9. The paper was agreed.

10. Action:

- a) **Staff to prepare a timetable for the first meetings of the working groups, circulate this to Members, and to put in hand arrangements for the first meetings.**

Members' Code of Conduct (Paper 2)

- 11. Jane Hope introduced the paper which sought agreement to the Model Code of Conduct being adopted by the Board as the CNPA's Code of Conduct for Members. Board Members had been given copies of the Model Code in April, and since then it had been the source of guidance on ethical standards. However, there was a formal process under which the Board was required to agree to adopt a Code of Conduct, based on the Model Code, and to notify this to Ministers by 1 December.
- 12. The paper proposed no changes, mirroring the approach adopted by the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority. However, following circulation of the paper, it had been pointed out by a Board Member that the parallel Code of Conduct for Councillors included a section relating to how Members should conduct themselves in relation to planning applications. Since public bodies other than Park Authorities did not deal with planning applications, the Model Code of Conduct did not include this. Given the unique position of both Park Authorities as Non Departmental Public Bodies with planning powers, it was only logical that their codes of conduct should include a section similar to section 7 in the Councillors' Code.

13. It was therefore proposed that the Board should address two separate questions:
- (a) whether the CNPA Code of Conduct should in principle include a section on Planning similar to section 7 in the Councillors' Code; and if so, whether they were content to take the text of this as an item for ratification at their next meeting;
 - (b) Aside from the section on planning, whether they were content to approve the rest of the Model Code unchanged.
14. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) A large number of members supported the principle of including a section on dealing with planning applications, similar to section 7 in the Councillors' Code.
 - b) The related question arose of whether Board Members should be attending discussions of Community Councils on planning matters. It was agreed that the position of Board Members was no different from that of Councillors in this respect, and that it was perfectly proper and indeed desirable for Board members to attend such meetings in order to be well informed. However, they should be attending simply to listen but not to take part in the discussion as this could later be construed as prejudicing the outcome of the eventual determination of an application. The same logic applied to Board Members who were also Community Councillors.
 - c) Board Members needed to be clear that they should not comment on applications in advance of the relevant planning meeting. Equally, it was important that the public understood this principle, and it was suggested (and agreed) that a standard note to this effect should be attached to the receipt acknowledgements of all planning applications.
 - d) Section 6.7(a) did not make clear that it was lobbying of the CNPA (as opposed to lobbying of any public body) by a CNPA Member on behalf of another person or organisation that was not acceptable. It was implicit, and made clear in the following paragraph, and the Board therefore agreed to record in the minutes that this was its interpretation of section 6.7(a)
15. The Model Code of Conduct was **approved** unchanged as the CNPA's Code of Conduct for Members, subject to the addition of a section on planning, similar to section 7 in the Councillors' Code of Conduct. This would be brought to the next Board meeting for ratification.
16. **Action:**
- a) **A paper to be brought to the next meeting for ratification offering a section on planning, similar to section 7 of the Councillors' Code, to be added to the CNPA Members Code of Conduct.**
 - b) **A standard note to be attached to all planning application replies to the effect that Board Members could not comment on applications in advance of a Board discussion.**

AOCB

17. The Convener reported that on the previous evening (9 October) there has been an open evening for people in the area to come and meet Board members and discuss

National Park issues. The meeting had been very well attended, and had split into a number of small discussion groups with a Board Member in each. He asked that the relevant Board Members compile a note of the points raised in their groups, and feed these back to Jane Hope for collation into a single note of the meeting. This would be a valuable record of all the concerns raised and suggestions raised, and would then be circulated to all Board Members and to the local Community Councils/Associations.

18. A similar format would be adopted at the next Board meeting in Laggan on 7 November, and there would be an open evening on 6 November for any members of the public who wished to come and meet Board Members.

Date of Next Meeting

19. Friday 7 November, Laggan (village hall).