



## Minutes of the Board Meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown on Spey

### In Person

22 March 2024 at 9.30am

### Present

Sandy Bremner (Convener)

Eleanor Mackintosh (Deputy Convener)

Bill Lobban

Kenny Deans

Paul Gibb

Russell Jones

Lauren MacCallum

Duncan Miller

Geva Blackett

Steve Micklewright

Xander McDade

Chris Beattie

Dr Fiona McLean

Hannah Grist

John Kirk

Peter Cosgrove

Ann Ross

Derek Ross

### In Attendance

Grant Moir, CEO

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services & Deputy CEO

Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development

Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change

Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations

Colin McClean, Head of Land Management

James Ade, Clerk to the Board

### Apologies

### Welcome and introduction

1. Sandy Bremner, the Board Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted. The Convener also paid tribute to Stewart Fulton who had chaired the Cairngorms Partnership which preceded the Park Authority and who had sadly passed away recently.



## Approval of minutes of previous meetings

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on the 24 November 2023 were agreed noting a correction required that Derek Ross and Steve Micklewright were present at that meeting.

## Matters arising not covered elsewhere

3. The Board Convener provided an update on the action points from September 2023 minutes:
  - a) Para 14i: The CEO confirmed that we will speak with Cairngorms Business Partnership and discuss their long-term plans and come back to the Board with an update. In hand
  - b) Para 21i: Strategic aspects of the plan come back to the Board for approval and Performance Committees for regular updates, this was seconded by Gaener Rodger and Doug McAdam. In hand24 November 2023 minutes:
  - c) **Para 10i:**The CEO to write to farmers and put on the National Park website on grant assistance for flood banks in the Cairngorms National Park. Complete
  - d) **Para 10ii:**The CEO and Officers to meet with farmers and crofters to answer outstanding questions. Complete

## Declarations of interest

4. None declarations of interest.

## CEO Report

5. Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced the paper which was to highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by the Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver (with partners) the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.
6. Eleanor Mackintosh, informed the Board of a community meeting bringing community groups from across the Cairngorms National Park together, along with Board and staff Members to discuss how the Park Authority and communities should



communicate. This was done through a variety of workshops to gain feedback which Officers are now collating to create a summary and proposed forward plans.

7. The Board noted the Paper. The Convener thanked the Chief Executive and all staff on behalf of the Board.
  - a) Discussion was had on Board Members involvement on work Values and Culture in the Cairngorms National Park Authority. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services & Deputy CEO, informed the Board that Organisational Development Strategy would be going to the Resources Committee at an appropriate stage in development for review and approval. This strategy will cover the outcome of the culture and values exercise in development with the staff group. David agreed that it would be appropriate to seek views of the full board at an appropriate stage in the development process in advance of the submission to the Resources Committee.
  - b) Discussion was had on local policing numbers and extra police patrols particularly at Glenmore. The CEO informed the Board that conversations with Police Scotland had happened, and the Cairngorms National Park Authority will be looking to pay for extra police presence in 2024.
  - c) A discussion was had on improved communication with communities, with more accessible language, on how work being carried out on to improve the natural environment will benefit people and place. Communications was highlighted, such as the *Cairn magazine*, which focuses more on planning and place than nature, along with the proposed climate adaptation fund which will help communities. The members noted the importance of highlighting what the Cairngorms National Park Authority's statutory obligations are, with more specific communications on this.
  - d) A Member asked for a briefing note on farming activity and statistics in the Cairngorms National Park. The CEO responded that this was something that could be created and shared with the Board.
  - e) Discussion was had on work being done on the Wellbeing Economy, which will be coming to the Board formally in September 2024.
  - f) A discussion on access, particularly around access to the River Spey, was had. Officers informed Board Members that this matter was being considered, highlighting small scale infrastructure work to help access to the River Spey and reassuring members that the Cairngorms National Park Authority will be writing to the Scottish Canoe Society on this issue.

8. Action Points Arising:



- i. CEO, to prepare a briefing note on farming activity and statistics within the Cairngorms National Park and distribute to the Board.
- ii. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Place to write to the Scottish Canoe Society about access to the River Spey.

## **Cairngorms National Park Authority budget and operational plan for 2024/25**

9. Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations, introduced the paper which set out the Cairngorms National Park Authority's proposed budget for the 2024/25 financial year. The paper provided the Board with the opportunity to consider the overall budget position together with the impact of any key assumptions made in establishing budget estimates.
10. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) A Member questioned how much of the operational plan was already committed on projects. Officers responded while the Cairngorms 2030 project was a pre committed spend, there were currently relatively few multiyear spend commitments that the Cairngorms National Park Authority had in place with total level of commitment therefore relatively low.
  - b) A Member requested a list of grants that were available to the community to access. Officers responded that a list could be produced, circulated with Members and put on the Cairngorms National Park website.
  - c) Discussion was had on efficiency savings. Officers highlighted work being done to create and improve shared services, around IT, GIS, procurement and recruitment, with other National Parks and NatureScot to find efficiencies savings.
  - d) Discussion was had on running costs and staffing levels. Members raised that they are pleased with staffing levels in terms of this representing a low level of total budget commitment, citing the quality of the jobs being offered by the Cairngorms National Park and the positive benefits this has for the local economy.
  - e) A discussion was had on how an additional National Park in Scotland might affect the Cairngorms National Park Authority budget. Officers responded that while they were unsure how much impact a new Park would have on budgets, or any other single policy initiative undertaken by Scottish Government, staff continuously look at what impact a 5 – 10% reduction in budget might have on



the Cairngorms National Park Authority's financial position as scenario planning supporting our strategic risk management.

## Recommendations

The Board was invited to:

- a) approve the Cairngorms National Park Authority budget and operational plan for 2024/25 as set out in this paper.

11. The Board noted the paper and approved the Cairngorms National Park Authority 2024/25 budget and operational plan.

12. Action Points Arising:

- i. A list of community grants to be published on the Cairngorms National Park Website and circulated with Members.

*The Board broke for a short recess at 10.45am*

*The Board reconvened at 10.57am*

*Colin McClean and Heather Trench joined the meeting at 10.57am*

## Managing deer for climate and nature: consultation

13. Colin McClean, Head of Land Management, introduced the paper which sets out the Park Authority's response to the Scottish Government consultation on 'Managing Deer for Climate and Nature'.

14. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) Discussion was had on the number of roe deer in the Cairngorms National Park, with Members feeling that numbers were too high, with community impacts through road accidents and increasing tick numbers. Officers informed the Board that there was not a data set of roe deer densities in the Cairngorms National Park. Officers agreed that they would add a paragraph to the consultation on the issue of roe deer.



- b) Discussion was had on whether reducing deer numbers would impact sporting estates and job numbers. While this was a concern, multiple schemes and support mechanisms were highlighted that support this sector.
- c) Discussion was had on changes to the closed seasons. Officers highlighted welfare issues for orphaning calves and reductions in deer numbers had been achieved without changing the closed season, a view that was shared by local stakeholders. A Member requested a more nuanced statement from the Cairngorms National Park Authority, with Officers agreeing to put more of an explanation in their response.

## Recommendations

The Board was asked to:

- a) Approve the response to the 'Managing Deer for Climate and Nature' consultation set out at Appendix 1.

The Board agreed to including clarification as discussed.

Action Points Arising:

- i. Colin McClean to add a paragraph to the consultation on the issue of roe deer in the Cairngorms National Park.
- ii. Colin McClean to expand the Cairngorms National Parks response around the close season.

## Sustainable Tourism Action Plan – Annual Update

15. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Place, introduced the paper which updated the Board on delivery of the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan 2022-27 and gave wider context on associated policy developments.

16. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) Discussion was had on proposed visitor levies by Local Authorities in areas covered by the Cairngorms National Park. Officers highlighted that legislation gave choice to Local Authorities to develop the scheme and they have the responsibility to set how the money raised through levies is used. It was highlighted that tourism is a big sector of the economy in the National Park, meaning the visitor levy could generate significant funding for tourism investment



in the Park. Additionally, the levy will help longer term planning meaning bigger projects can happen, helping keep more and better paid jobs in the long term. Officers raised that it was being considered whether campervans should be included in the visitor levy.

- b) Discussion took place around work being done to promote quieter areas of the Cairngorms National Park to help manage visitor numbers in busy areas. Officers highlight work being undertaken to make photos more widely available to brand holders for brochures that are from less visited areas of the National Park.

## **Recommendations**

The Board was asked to:

- a) Note progress in delivery of the Sustainable Tourism Action Plan 2022-27.

The Board noted the papers.

Action Points Arising: none.

*Colin McClean and Heather Trench left the meeting at 11.55am*

## **Board Committee Minutes**

17. The Convener introduced the paper that presents the draft and approved minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee, Resources Committee, Performance Committee and Governance Committee.

18. The Board noted the minutes.

19. Action Points Arising: None

## **AOCB**

None.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

The date of the next meeting is Friday 28 June in person.

*The meeting concluded at 11.57am.*