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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore on Friday 23<sup>rd</sup> February 2007 at 1.45pm

### PRESENT

Eric Baird	Anne MacLean
Stuart Black	William McKenna
Duncan Bryden	Sandy Park
Nonie Coulthard	Andrew Rafferty
Basil Dunlop	Gregor Rimell
Douglas Glass	David Selfridge
Angus Gordon	Sheena Slimon
Lucy Grant	Richard Stroud
David Green	Susan Walker
Bob Kinnaird	Ross Watson
Bruce Luffman	Bob Wilson
Eleanor Mackintosh	

### In Attendance:

David Cameron	Jane Hope
Murray Ferguson	Sandra Middleton
Bob Grant	Chris Taylor
Andrew Harper	Francoise van Buuren

### Apologies:

Marcus Humphrey  
Alastair MacLennan

### Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

1. The minutes of the last meeting held on the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2006 were approved with one minor amendment:  
Susan Walker had been listed as present for only part of the meeting; in fact she had been present for the whole meeting.

### Matters Arising

2. Paragraph 7: The National Park Plan and consultation report had been submitted to Scottish Ministers as requested following the Panel on Joined Up Government on the 4<sup>th</sup> December 2006. Ministerial approval was awaited, and all the signs were hopeful.
3. Paragraph 11: Following discussion on the Point of Entry Marker Project, a paper would be brought to the Board in the Spring of 2007 on options for the upgrade of the Drumochter lay-by. It was noted that the Cairngorms Boundary Bill was currently before Parliament, with the Stage 1 debate planned for the 14<sup>th</sup> March. Clearly if the Bill were to be passed before the end of the current Parliament (the end of March) then this would affect the placement of the entry point marker and lay-by on the A9. Further work specific to the Drumochter location would not be progressed until the outcome of the Parliamentary consideration of the boundary was clear.
4. Paragraph 16: The CNPA's advice on proposed extension to the Speyside Way had been submitted to SNH following the Board discussion.

### **Declarations of Interest**

5. Bob Kinnaird declared an interest in Paper 1, as a director of the Aviemore and the Cairngorms DMO.

### **2007/08 Operational Plan (Paper 1)**

6. David Cameron introduced the paper which presented the recommended 2007/08 Operational Plan and associated financial allocations for the Board's approval. The paper also presented a number of options for additional expenditure and/or investment of staff resources for consideration by the Board. These options included the following:
  - a) Work on Stakeholder Opinion Polling;
  - b) Additional resources for planning enforcement;
  - c) Additional resources to progress work on climate change with partners.

The paper made the point that the next Corporate Plan, covering 2008-2011, would be developed over the coming year and would be the opportunity to discuss and agree longer term plans on the use of the CNPA's resources. Establishing that Corporate Plan would complete the Authority's transition from one of planning and policy development during the first few years of its existence, to one of delivery, coordination of National Park Plan implementation, monitoring and review. The Operational Plan for 2007-2008 represented the third year of the existing Corporate Plan, and took its structure from that Corporate Plan rather than the National Park Plan; nevertheless, the Operational Plan was still very clearly helping to deliver the National Park Plan as set out in Annex 3.

7. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) Politically, climate change had become a huge issue, and although not reflected in the Corporate Plan for 2005-2008, it was welcome that it was proposed to incorporate it in the Operational Plan for 07/08. There was a wide expectation that the CNPA would show some leadership on this issue; work with Partners to date had indicated that they were keen to see the CNPA take a facilitating and coordinating role (which it was already starting to do). The 0.3 FTEs was proposed in the first instance to scope exactly what the extent of the CNPA's role

should be. This in turn would allow a judgement to be made on whether this staff resource needed to grow to more like one or two posts as members appeared to be requesting. It was proposed that the Board should have an informal discussion on climate change on the 23<sup>rd</sup> March, leading to a formal Board paper in April. It was noted that there were many strands of work currently taking place on climate change and the CNPA should not be duplicating these but taking advantage of them. There was no doubt that the consequences of climate change were crucial to the National Park and hence was becoming core to the CNPA's business.

- b) The concept of sustainability was inherent to much of what the CNPA undertook. In view of this, there must be some question over how an appointment of a specific officer to deal with the entirety of climate change would work in practice.
- c) In making climate change core to all the work undertaken by the CNPA, it was suggested that planning applications should include a proforma setting out the impact of the development on climate change; and similarly Board papers should routinely report on the implications for climate change.
- d) In recognition of the importance of the climate change issue, it was suggested that a Board sub-group might be set up to work alongside staff, to give weight and importance to the subject. It was noted that this might most conveniently be done through the existing Audit Committee, which already included greening issues in its remit.
- e) There was some discussion of stakeholder opinion polling (paragraphs 24-26). There was a suggestion that opinions should be ascertained on the basis of little and often, over an extended period rather than in one "big" approach relatively infrequently. It was also noted that there were times when it was appropriate to do opinion polling in a formal way, while in between times what was needed was reassurance that the CNPA was making the most of the informal ways it used of ascertaining public opinion. In practice these mechanisms were many and various including the Board open evenings, Advisory Forums, etc. It was important with the wealth of informal feedback that the organisation was able to demonstrate that it was listening and learning from what people were saying.
- f) The 5 year review conducted by the Scottish Executive was mentioned at Paragraph 25. This type of review generally looked at governance and how the organisation operated. There was some indication that in 2008 both National Park Authorities would be considered together. As there was no history of how these organisations were reviewed, it was noted that there may be some scope to feed into this review. It was not at all clear to what extent these reviews would take account of public opinion but if the data were to be available, there was clearly an argument that it was a relevant reflection of the organisation's effectiveness.
- g) It was still possible to conduct the opinion polling in 2007. However, the Local Plan consultation would be taking place in the second half of the year, and implementation of the National Park Plan would start at about the same time. There was an argument that opinion polling might better come a little while after these events.
- h) Paragraph 15 made reference to the Local Plan. The original aim had been for a fast track process taking two years to get the Plan on deposit. In practice this had slipped for all sorts of good reasons; the target was now to put the Plan on

deposit in mid 2007. The question of deploying additional resources had been considered by Management Team, but the conclusion had been that this was not necessary and that June 2007 would be met as the deposit date.

- i) The Operational Plan included at goal 16 implementing actions within the Sustainable Tourism Development Strategy and Action Plan. The point was made that at a recent Scottish Executive conference, great importance was being attached to gathering intelligence as a way of informing actions. Work was in hand to establish a monitoring framework for the delivery of the whole National Park Plan, including sustainable tourism objectives. As a result of this, there might be a need to generate some more basic information on tourism. The important thing was to try and work with partners on this and not duplicate existing work. The point would be followed up with the Scottish Executive.
- j) On planning enforcement, the proposal for additional resources was welcome. It was not yet clear what the best solution would be for dealing with enforcement matters across an area as big as the Park, but discussions were already underway with local authority partners to investigate the scope for sharing resources. Members were giving a clear steer that they wished to put these additional resources into effective enforcement; staff would investigate the best solution to this and report back to the Board. The best solution might be for an enforcement officer placed in the CNPA Development Control section working on behalf of both the CNPA and local authorities; or it may be for the CNPA to tap into (and co-fund) the enforcement staff currently located in other local authorities. The practicality of one member of staff covering the whole area of the Park was clearly questionable.
- k) The paper made clear (paragraphs 40 – 43) that the post of the Cultural Heritage Officer was currently vacant. As with the enforcement issue, there was a decision to be made on how best to deal with this complex issue, which may not be best dealt with through a single post. The term cultural heritage covered a broad range of issues and paragraph 43 made clear that further thought was being given to how best to provide the CNPA with the capability of dealing with these. Reassurance was given that there was no question of not dealing with cultural heritage, and the real challenge was how best to do this; working with partners in local authorities and possibly other organisations was being looked at very closely.
- l) The general point was made at the end of the discussion that there was always a tension between needing to put resources into new and important pieces of work on the one hand, and on the other responding to the Board's desire to keep staffing costs under control. There would be an opportunity to revisit this question in quite a fundamental way when the new corporate plan was discussed later in the year.

8. The Convener summed up the discussion as follows:

- a) There was clear agreement that additional resources should be directed towards enforcement of planning/development control decisions. It was for staff to work out how best to deliver this.
- b) On opinion polling, the balance of opinion was that the opinion polling should be postponed for the moment but information gathered from the range of informal

feedback mechanisms should continue to be collated and assessed on an ongoing basis.

- c) On climate change there was a clear and strong feeling around the Board table that this was an issue of great importance for the National Park and there was an expectation that the CNPA would have a crucial role in coordinating and facilitating work, much of which was already in progress. The CNPA should certainly not duplicate work of others but should facilitate and coordinate. If this work required a full post, then the Board were content with this.
- d) On the basis of this clear steer from the Board, the Operational Plan was approved as presented.

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

- a) On the options for resource allocation and expenditure set out in the paper agreed;
  - i) Work on stakeholder opinion polling should not be progressed in 2007/08; as a priority, but ways of assessing informal feedback;
  - ii) Additional resources should be allocated to develop the Authority's planning enforcement powers;
  - iii) Additional resources should be allocated to progress work on climate change with partners;
  - iv) Any additional financial implications arising from points i) to iii) should be accommodated by Management Team within their normal budget management strategies in order to deliver overall activity in line with budget by the end of the financial year.
- b) Considers no further amendments were required to the recommended Operational Plan set out in Annex 1 to the paper;
- c) Approves the recommended 2007/08 Operational Plan set out in Annex 1.

**Future Scope of the Park Brand (Paper 2)**

10. Chris Taylor introduced the paper which sought to update the Board on recent success in implementing the Park Brand. Sally Dowden was present during the discussion as Chair of the Brand Management Group. It updated the Board on the work of the Brand Management Group, Brand Action Plan targets and implications for use of the CNPA Corporate Logo in the light of current thinking on the Brand. The point was made that the brand was a powerful tool for encouraging the buy in and participation of a wide range of partners to the concept of the Cairngorms National Park and everything it stood for, as set out in the brand wheel. Take up of the brand reflected a willingness of others to adopt the values of the Park.

11. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) It was encouraging that producers and other partners wanted to be associated with the Cairngorms National Park Brand and its values. There was some discussion as to whether one needed evidence that there was wide understanding of the qualities underpinning the brand before promoting the use of the brand by partners. The early development work on the brand focused on

establishing what the brand stood for; it was recognised it was more than just a logo. The Brand Management Group had concentrated on setting criteria for use which reflected those brand values. In practice, it was too early, and the brand was not used widely enough, to establish people's views and whether or not there was a clear association in people's minds between the brand and the brand values. At some point this work would need to be done, but no sensible information would be gathered by doing it too early.

- b) The Brand Action Plan aimed to increase the number of brand users. 75 businesses were currently using the brand with the majority of these being tourism businesses; the aim was for 250 tourism businesses. It was noted that tourism businesses were particularly important, and the early focus had been on tourism businesses which had a particularly clear appetite for use of the brand. However, it was noted that other businesses should not be overlooked.
- c) There was a clear set of criteria, developed by the Brand Management Group, which applicants had to meet before being allowed to use the brand. Those criteria were based on existing criteria (e.g. the Green Tourism Business Scheme criteria) rather than invent new ones. In practice applicants were required to demonstrate that they adhered to these criteria when they expressed a wish to use the brand.
- d) There were some concerns about a diffusion of the brand through the use of a family of brands. There was the danger of confusing visitors through the use of a family of brands if this was done before the underpinning values were clearly embedded in the public's consciousness. The counter view was that a complete understanding and appreciation of what the logo/brand stood for took a long time. The bird without the words (National Park) was an important marque and already appeared on the small entry point markers. It was good that organisations and businesses wished to use this marque and it presented a huge marketing opportunity for the National Park in that it would raise the awareness that we were striving for. That opportunity would be lost if many of the groups and users in the Park developed completely different logos and marques which bore no resemblance to the National Park brand/logo. These groups and businesses have been approaching the CNPA wanting to use the brand and be part of the Park and everything it stands for. The important thing was that they could demonstrate the criteria which had been set and were closely associated with the use of the brand.
- e) Further to paragraph 42 of the paper, it was noted that the brand had never been intended to explain anything about whether or not the product being branded was particularly accessible. The brand was an important tool in raising awareness of the National Park; however it was not related to the various schemes which set standards for accessibility in respect of tourism attractions and organisations. It was suggested that a review of those schemes and how they could help to raise awareness was taken forward.
- f) There were concerns that it was too early to be using derivatives of the brand, it was suggested that for the next few years the brand itself should remain intact before families were developed.
- g) The Brand Management Group was different in kind from the other forums and advisory groups established by the CNPA. It was important that it remained in place, even though it might be appropriate to review the make up of the group.

- h) The logo was the visible icon of the brand values as set out on the brand wheel. Raising awareness was a long game; in these early years it was aimed at the visitor when they arrived in the area, and not at those outside the area. There was considerable research showing that derivatives of a brand were a very effective way of raising awareness. Importantly VisitScotland were very supportive of the approach being taken in the development of a family of brands for the Cairngorms National Park.
- i) Consumer research costs should be borne by the businesses in the longer term if they were the beneficiaries.
- j) The discussion on one brand or a family of brands should not be seen as an either/or decision; in reality both had a part to play. The Cairngorms National Park brand with the words Cairngorms National Park still appeared on a wide range of publications and signs. In addition to that the opportunity had arisen to get the messages associated with the Park across by working with others through the development of a family of related brands. It was important to work in that inclusive way.
- k) The point was made that the Cairngorms brand might have a role as a marque of environmental quality in respect of new build houses.
- l) The whole idea of a family of brands was well known and indeed had been flagged up by the company Navy Blue which had worked on the development of the National Park brand. For example, the Peak District National Park had a family of brands; equally San Francisco had a family of brands in which country park, the Golden Gate visitor centre etc. all wanted their own individual logos but very clearly associated with the San Francisco Brand.

12. In summing up the Convener noted that there had been a good debate; he was persuaded and indeed reassured by the confirmation of the strict quality criteria underpinning the use of the brand and the family of brands. Nevertheless, he noted that a number of Members still had some concerns, and in this respect the further work referred to at paragraph 48 would be important. The Brand Management Group had been set up with appropriate expertise on it, and had expended a lot of effort in developing the criteria underpinning use of the brand. Extensive use and roll out of the brand could only help to promote an understanding and appreciation of the Cairngorms National Park.

**13. :The Board agreed the paper as follows:**

- a) **Agreed the recommendations at paragraph 35 on use of the CNPA logo and the CNP brand;**
- b) **Noted progress of the Brand Management Group in rolling out and implementing the brand and expressed some concerns on the development of the family of brands, requesting an update paper on progress in implementing this as soon as possible;**
- c) **Noted that a paper would be brought to the Board in spring/summer outlining the future structure for advisory groups, and also for the Brand Management Group.**

**Approval of Draft Core Paths Plan for Consultation (Paper 3)**

14. Bob Grant and Sandra Middleton introduced the paper which summarised the progress made to date on developing a Core Paths Plan for the Cairngorms National Park, building on the discussion at the recent joint workshop for the Board and Local Outdoor Access Forum. The paper provided costed options for a proposed core paths network and sought the Board's approval on the most appropriate network for inclusion in the interim draft Core Paths Plan which would be subject to a public consultation exercise.
15. Bob Grant recorded thanks to Board Members for helping with the process of consultation, and in particular thanked the Board and the Local Outdoor Access Forum for participating in a workshop for developing the criteria for the Core Paths Plan. The current paper sought approval to go to consultation on the Interim Draft Core Path Plan. Following this, a further draft would be brought back to the Board for approval around December 2007, following which it would be submitted to Ministers, with a formal and final consultation on the resulting plan after February 2008.
16. The maps in the paper were indicative only to illustrate the extent of the two options being suggested. Option 1 was a minimum network to deliver the requirement for "a network sufficient to give reasonable access throughout the area". Option 2 went beyond this and provided the best fit with the aspiration set out in the National Park Plan of providing high quality opportunities for outdoor access. This second option was the recommended option. There had been some concerns expressed by the Board about cost of implementation. The paper therefore included estimates of the capital costs of the various options and the likely CNPA share of these costs. Maintenance costs had also been estimated and reflected the fact that many paths were already maintained through a variety of organisations/landowners/availability of grants, etc.
17. Finally the point was made that in respect of the earlier debate on climate change a good path network in and around communities could help mitigate against climate change by encouraging people to holiday close to home, get to and from work/school and by reducing car dependency.
18. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) Paragraphs 27 – 30 addressed the possibility of core paths being designated on water, and specifically the inclusion of the River Spey as a proposed core path within the plan. There was some discussion about possible additional costs of creating access points on the river. It was felt that paralleling with the Speyside Way minimised these costs as there were synergies between the infrastructure (car parks, toilet blocks etc.) for the walking route and the river.
  - b) Tables 1 and 2 set out an indication of anticipated costs associated with options 1 and 2. Table 1 did not include any maintenance costs or signage, but these were expected to be relatively small.
  - c) The point was made that in respect of core paths on water, there might be opportunities for using core paths to manage recreational hotspots for multi use, for example Loch Morlich. While in theory this was possible, all the consultation meetings (22 meetings with the public) had focused on use of paths as linear features and very few people had flagged up the use of lochs.
  - d) In respect of the criteria set out at paragraph 7 in Annex 3, these were welcome but two additions were suggested. In respect of (a) a key element of core paths



should be the encouragement of the use of those which were most robust and not on sensitive sites. Any legislation in respect of sensitive sites and sensitive species needed to be taken into account. The point was made that while one did not wish to damage the natural and cultural heritage there were some positives to be gained in this respect. For example one might wish to promote paths through a national nature reserve. The Core Path Plan would be subject to a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA). This meant the criteria being used would be assessed and the networks themselves would also be assessed for impacts on the environment. The consultation on the SEA would ensure that consultees (including statutory agencies as well as communities) could offer views on whether or not there were potential negative effects. The point was also made that the majority of paths in the interim draft plan already existed. This meant that many of the proposed paths had already been subject to earlier discussion and consultation in respect of potentially damaging effects. The proposed core path network was implicitly directing people to those paths that were already most used.

- e) The figure used of 20 pence per metre as a maintenance cost over the whole path system was clearly an average and was only intended to be indicative.
- f) Possibly there were three rather than just two options given that even option 2 did not include plenty of well used paths. For example the path at Cambus o' May attracted something like 10,000 visitors a year, was an all abilities path and was connected to a public bus route. So option 1 would exclude potentially a lot of community interest. It also would not give the support to land managers in providing them with a tool for managing access to their land. Option 1 therefore did not seem a viable option as consultation on this option would almost certainly lead to having to add to it at a later date.
- g) Paragraph 18 made clear that the Park Authority was unlikely to be able to fund all necessary maintenance on every path. A range of imaginative solutions would need to be found depending on local circumstances. There was a danger of a shift towards an assumption that responsibility for all costs lay with the CNPA and this needed to be dealt with. This assumption had been countered during the previous consultation and would continue to be so in the future consultations; there was a real challenge to manage people's expectations.
- h) The possibility of a third option as described would have meant including higher level routes. The public consultation had revealed a strong feeling against these higher level routes being included and it was felt that option 3 did not constitute a valid option.
- i) Option 2 appeared to focus much more on circular routes rather than connecting routes. There was a suggestion that core paths should be primarily connecting routes, that the consultation process should identify these and put them in place where absent. However, the public consultation had revealed that circular routes were most popularly demanded. In practice the Core Path Plan tried to achieve both the desire for circular recreational routes and linear functional routes.
- j) It was suggested that the aim for the Core Paths Plan in the National Park as set out at paragraph 9 could incorporate the idea of partnership in respect of maintenance.

- k) UDAT had demonstrated the possibility of achieving a lot of leverage of additional funding and it would be important for the CNPA to look at continuing this, possibly through a dedicated funding officer.
- l) The aim of the Core Paths Plan in the National Park as set out in paragraph 9 could be simplified; the more complex it became the more likely it was to be problematic in the future. In response, the point was made that the aim tried to incorporate three elements; the legal terms of the Land Reform Act; the guidance from the Scottish Executive; and the outcomes described in the National Park Plan (high quality provision, well maintained networks). The idea of the river Spey as a core path was welcomed, but clarification was needed on just how much of the river this covered, which of the tributaries, etc. It was not yet clear whether other Core Path Plans would incorporate rivers, but it was known that Aberdeenshire were considering the river Dee and Moray Council the lower stretches of the river Spey. It would be important to keep abreast of how their thinking was developing.
- m) Option 2 was widely supported by Members.
- n) There needed to be a mature and creative discussion with partners about funding of the core path network in the future.

**19. The Board agreed the recommendations in the paper as follows:**

- a) Note the progress made to date in developing an Interim Draft Core Paths Plan;**
- b) Approve the aim for the Core Paths Plan for the Cairngorms National Park;**
- c) Considers the options presented and approves Option 2 as the basis for the development of the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan for public consultation; and**
- d) Approves the inclusion of the River Spey as a proposed core path within the Interim draft Core Paths Plan.**

## **Information Papers**

**20. Information papers were noted with no comment as follows:**

- a) Transport Update (Paper 4), Operational Plan 2006/07 Quarter 3 (Paper 5), Audit Committee (Paper 6)

## **AOCB**

21. The point was made that there needed to be a consistent policy across the Park on taking rubbish home or providing for collection bins. It was noted that the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils had recently been putting a can recycling bin in place at the Linn of Dee; this was contrary to the NTS policy of encouraging visitors to take their rubbish home. This required further investigation.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

22. Extra Board meeting to be held on Friday 2<sup>nd</sup> March, Albert Hall, Ballater. Next full and scheduled Board meeting, 20<sup>th</sup> April 2007 in the Richmond Memorial Hall, Tomintoul.