

**MINUTES of MEETING of the
FINANCE COMMITTEE of**

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
held at Cairngorm Hotel, Aviemore
on 23 February 2007**

Present:

Eleanor Mackintosh
David Green

Bruce Luffman
Gregor Rimell
David Selfridge

In Attendance:

Jane Hope, Chief Executive
David Cameron, Head of Corporate Services
Denby Pettitt, Finance Manager
Patricia Hamilton, Leader+ Manager
Pete Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer

Apologies:

None

Welcome

1. The Chairperson welcomed all present to the meeting, and noted there were no apologies received. David Selfridge was not present at the start of the meeting but expected.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

2. On paragraph 5 of the minutes of the previous meeting, of 1 December 2006, members agreed that the elements noted of the Monitor Farm project were requirements rather than desirable elements.

Matters Arising

3. On Paragraph 24, David Cameron informed members he was aware officers in the Visitor Services and Recreation Group were considering the Authority's potential

involvement with NESTOUR on the Highland Tourist Route. He expected a more formal update to come from officers in due course.

4. With regard to the cost of the PGA contract to the Authority in 2006/07 (paragraph 19 of previous minutes), David Cameron confirmed that there was no scope to renegotiate the charge for the year. However, officers were looking in detail at the charging model for 2007/08 with a view to adapting practice and minimising the charge for future years.

Approval of New Expenditure Proposal: Ceilidh Trail (Paper 1)

5. Patricia Hamilton outlined the details of the Ceilidh Trail project put forward for consideration. The objective of the project was to offer professional development and performance opportunities to local young musicians, supporting the culture of the area and through that, potentially enhancing cultural tourism opportunities. Project delivery would be supported by a project coordinator.
6. Members discussed the suitability of the project across the entirety of the Park as envisaged, in light of the mix of cultural tradition between the East and West areas of the Park. Members noted on this point that Feis Spe, who would take the lead on project delivery, would develop the project more as an introduction to Gaelic rather than promoting Gaelic above all other cultural aspects within the Park. Only a few Feis projects were based solely on Gaelic, with the focus for projects more on music than language. [David Selfridge arrived during this point of the discussion.]
7. Members noted that the location for the project coordinator would depend to an extent on the home location of the successful candidate. The project coordinator would be responsible for selecting both the young people participating in the project and the trainers to be used with them. These projects typically attracted very good quality trainers.
8. Members highlighted that it would be good to see local authorities also contributing to this project and asked for clarification on how communities were being consulted on the project. Officers responded that local authorities had been approached for financial support but, to date, none was forthcoming. Consultation was being undertaken primarily with musical groups, and the project was seeking to be sensitive to those musicians who sought to make an economic return from their music.
9. **Members agreed to approve the establishment of a budget allocation for the project as sought in the paper. Members also agreed that the support for the project, and the project's terms of reference, should explicitly recognise the need for the project to address the cultural diversity of the area. The Coordinator's annual reports should also be explicit in reporting how this sensitive aspect of the project delivery is addressed.**

Ratification of Previously Approved Expenditure Proposals (Paper 2)

10. **Members approved the expenditure proposals which had been agreed between Committee meetings, in line with the Committee's agreed scheme of delegation.**
11. Members noted that the current arrangements for considering confirmation of budget allocations appeared to be working relatively well.

Outturn for 10 Months to January 2007 (Paper 3)

12. Denby Pettitt introduced this paper, which set out an update on the Authority's financial performance against budget over the 10 months to the end of January 2007. At the end of this period, actual expenditure was £327,000 below budget, with £263,000 of this accounted for by expenditure on Operational Plan activities and the balance of £64,000 relating to "core" costs.
13. Denby highlighted that he had recently completed a third review of the status of Operational plan activities and associated budget deployment. This review continued to suggest that expenditure would return close to budgeted levels by the end of the financial year. Denby and the finance team would now focus in particular on the 30 key Operational Plan activities, in terms of the amount of outstanding expenditure these represented, in order to seek to bring year end income and expenditure position as close to the planned budget position as possible.
14. Members discussed the balance to be struck by officers in seeking approval to budget proposals at a stage which retained sufficient flexibility for members to be able to fully consider options without affecting the Authority's standing with potential project partners were the activity to not be funded. At the same time, proposals had to be sufficiently well worked up to allow officers to properly advise on the potential project implications and risks. All present agreed this was a difficult balance and one which, on the whole, was currently being achieved.
15. Members noted the update, and welcomed the close monitoring of the financial position as a whole, and of projects showing significant variations from budget in particular, undertaken by the Finance team.

Expenditure Proposal: Laggan Wolftrax Phase 2 (Paper 4)

16. Pete Crane introduced this proposal for support of a second phase development at Laggan Wolftrax, following on from a very positive outcome to date from phase 1 in terms of visitor numbers and jobs created.
17. In discussion, members noted that the expenditure proposal put forward for consideration highlighted that consultants had been engaged to consider the degree to which phase 1 of the project had achieved its original objectives. This review had included consideration of the potential economic displacement arising from the first phase of the project. The report had highlighted over £0.25m in additional

expenditure within the local economy arising from the project, with some potential economic displacement around the catering aspect of the operation. A separate economic displacement study would be undertaken if any further extension to the on site café were proposed as part of the second phase project.

18. The proposal was for CNPA funding of £30,000 towards a total project cost of £322,000, both the project and the Authority's contribution being split across 2006/07 and 2007/08 financial years.
19. **Members agreed the expenditure proposal.**

AOCB

20. No further items of business were raised.

Date of Next Meeting

21. The next meeting of the Finance Committee was scheduled to take place on 15 June 2007, Panmure Arms Hotel, Edzell.