



# Draft Minutes of the Board Meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown on Spey

In person

24 March 2023 at 09.30am

## Present

Xander McDade (Convener)

Janet Hunter (Deputy Convener)

Dr Fiona McLean

Willie Munro

Russell Jones

John Kirk

Bill Lobban

Eleanor Mackintosh

Doug McAdam

Geva Blackett

Willie McKenna

Kenny Deans

Paul Gibb

Anne Rae Macdonald

Lauren MacCallum

Derek Ross

Ann Ross

## In Attendance

Grant Moir, CEO

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services & Deputy CEO

Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Place

Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change

Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning

Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development

Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations

Mariaan Pita, Executive Support Manager

Oliver Davies, Head of Communications

Karen Archer, Press and Communications Officer

Catrina Strang, Clerk to the Board

James Ade, Clerk to the Board



## Apologies

Dr Gaener Rodger

Chris Beattie

## Welcome and introduction

1. Xander McDade, the Board Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting including new members Kenny Deans, Lauren MacCallum & Paul Gibb. The Convener congratulated the new board members on their success in the elections to the Cairngorms National Park Authority board and recorded his thanks on behalf of the board to the previous elected members for their work on behalf of the Park Authority. Apologies recorded above were noted.

## Declarations of interest

2. There were no declarations of Interest.

## Minutes from Previous Meeting

3. The draft minutes of the meeting held on 25 November 2022 were agreed with no amendments.

## Mattering arising from previous meeting

4. The Board Convener provided an update on the action points from 25 November 2022 minutes:
  - a) Para 18i: Improve cross-referencing to transport generally and the National Strategy for Economic Transformation in Annex 3 - Complete
  - b) Para 18ii: Develop approach for the Active Cairngorms Action Plan development and oversight that complements the Tourism Action Plan - Complete
  - c) Para 22i: The policy regarding windfarms within the NPF4 needs to be considered in appraising a new National Park where there are existing wind farms - Complete
  - d) Para 22ii: Para 8 should be reworded and include culture heritage, nature recovery, climate crisis and just transition - Complete
  - e) Para 22iii: Para 22 remove reference to people in and out with the Cairngorms National Park - Complete
  - f) Para 26i: Highlight reason why deer management needs to be funded - Complete



## CEO Report

5. Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced Paper 1 and highlighted to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by 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. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) A Member questioned whether there are any cost implications for Cairngorms National Park for rerouting part of the Braemar to Keiloch path. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Place, responded that there may be cost implications but will be manageable within the budget provisions proposed for next year.
  - b) Members raised concerns around the Cairngorms National Park Authority's efforts to diversify the Park's economy from the traditional sectors and the need for an inward investment strategy. Director of Planning & Place clarified that the economic steering group have had good discussion about these issues and are working on them through the development of the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan. A lot of the solutions rely on good digital connectivity and the Park Authority still has a digital connectivity steering group who help to oversee the improvement of connections to more remote areas. The Convener added that he will put the idea of an inward investment strategy to Highlands and Islands Enterprise to encourage high paid jobs within the Park.
  - c) Members queried what work was being carried out to help local businesses and engage with landlords to help get empty units occupied. The Convener highlighted work that has been carried out over the past few years in which staff and board members went out into the community and spoke to around 100 businesses. From this, the economic action steering group was formed to facilitate communication with stakeholders. A lot of these issues sit with councils or Highlands and Islands Enterprise rather than the Park Authority.
  - d) A Member asked what the benefits of living in the Cairngorms National Park are and what can be offered to young people after school. The Convener acknowledged that there are differences to living within and outside the Park but emphasised the amount of investment that has been made in the Park through funding due to the engagement of the Park Authority, including providing job opportunities for young people. Additionally, there has been a significant change with people moving back into the park due to hybrid working, which we are working on to promote through selling the vision of living in the Park. The CEO



added that there are significant benefits of living within the National Park and that there has been significant extra investment in infrastructure, community development, active travel, nature restoration since the Park's inception. While there are still issues around housing, the Park Authority is working on this, with the LDP having 45% affordable housing in four key settlements (well above the Highlands average) and the new NPPP aiming for 75%.

- e) A Member raised that funding and investment needs to be more spread throughout the Park as residents in Donside are feeling neglected.
- f) A Member suggested that where matters directly relate to the longer term national policy, the Board should consider whether they are operational or have a strategic element for the Board to have further input. The Convener responded that when trying to get that balance right between operational versus strategic, a call needs to be made on whether it is new information or whether it has already been covered by previously agreed strategic objectives and policy.
- g) A Member sought assurances that the wildcat releases are not happening in capercaillie conservation areas and questioned why the National Park has been put forward as the reintroduction champion on the beaver introductions in some communications. Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change, reassured that a site specific habitat risk assessment has been carried out by NatureScot and there would be little or no risk to the capercaillie populations. Additionally, the National Park has led application process on the beaver reintroductions and have had positive community feedback.

7. The Board noted the Paper. The Convener thanked the Chief Executive and all the staff on behalf of the Board.

8. Action Points Arising:

- i. Director of Planning & Place to speak to Eleanor Mackintosh and Geva Blackett about potential projects in the short and long term in the Donside area of the Cairngorms National Park – Closed.

## **Cairngorms National Park Authority Corporate Plan 2023-2027**

9. Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced Paper 2 setting out the proposed corporate plan for the next four years to 31 March 2027.

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



- a) Members discussed whether there was scope in the corporate plan to hold board meetings elsewhere in the Park. The Convener raised that some members complain about in person board meetings and the Board needs to decide what combination of in person, hybrid and online meetings they desire. The Convener added that holding board meetings in person elsewhere in the Park makes the Board visible to communities and can help to showcase the work being done for the benefit of the National Park. The CEO informed the Board that the Authority has purchased new audio visual and recording kit so meetings can be livestreamed from anywhere with a good internet connection.
- b) A Member sought assurance that cultural heritage network will not get watered down as part of the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan, as cultural heritage is in the Park's first aim. The CEO and Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Place gave assurances that the cultural heritage network will not get watered down.
- c) A Member would like following points added to the paper: review for support mechanisms for farming and clarification that support is for all estates, not just moorland. The CEO was happy to add a point about review for farming support. The CEO highlighted that support for wildlife estates is in the Park Plan.
- d) A Member raised concerns around a Scottish Minister's comments referring to the Park as a useful national tool to reach net zero goals and questioned whether this will affect the Park's economy. The CEO responded that acting as a carbon sink will generate jobs in the local area as part of the overall national efforts to reach net zero. For instance, changes like shuttle bus services, will help local businesses, residents and tourists, helping the economy. Another example would be jobs created to carry out peatland restoration.

11. The Board approved the CNPA Corporate Plan for 2023 - 2027 for submission to Scottish Government.

12. Action Points Arising:

- i. The CEO to add a review for support mechanisms for farming to the paper-Closed.

*Break 11.05am - 11.17am*



## **Cairngorms National Park Authority 2023/2024 Budget and Operational Plan**

13. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, introduced Paper 3 and highlighted increase in grants from Scottish Government. He outlined that despite the year ahead being a year of transition in externally funded programmes, this was the Cairngorms National Park Authority's largest ever budget.
14. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) A Member questioned whether there was provision in the budget for expenses for more in person meetings. The Director of Corporate Services responded that while there is not specific provision for an upturn of in person meetings, he did not expect it to be a significant aspect of the budgetary management process over the course of the year.
  - b) A Member asked for clarification on the significance of the 'National Park Grant in Aid - Visitor Management' having £0 of funding for 2023/2024. The Director of Corporate Services clarified that the specific grant awarded in 2022/23 does not exist anymore as it came from a specific part of government, so there is a change in how the grant in aid is set out. Grant through the main National Parks budget line now recognised the Park Authority's visitor management activities.
  - c) Members highlighted the increase in budget since the Park's inception and credited the staff for their hard work on increasing this.
15. The Board approved the Cairngorms NPA budget and operational plan for 2023/24.
16. Action Points Arising:                      None

## **Notice of Forthcoming Board Election of Convener, Deputy Convener and Committee Chairs and Standing Orders Considerations**

17. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 4 notifying the Board of the upcoming elections and highlighting the proposed changes to Standing Orders.
18. The Board considered the Paper and discussions took place around the following:



- a) The Convener recommended suspending business continuity measures and reducing quorum to 50% plus one of the number of appointed members to board and committees.
- b) Members expressed their keenness in there being flexibility in how the vote is conducted to allow all members to be able to vote. While there was a range of ideas of how this could and should be achieved, it was agreed the Director of Corporate Services would come back with a paper to present to the Board on possible voting arrangements.

19. The Board responded to the Notice of Forthcoming Board Election of Convener, Deputy Convener and Committees in the following way:

- a) Agreed the full suspension of all business continuity adaptations to Standing Orders and an immediate return to adopted Standing Orders, with the exception of the continuing provision to hold elections by electronic or postal means and without the need for a face to face meeting.
- b) Noted the Intention to bring forward proposed amendments to Standing Orders regarding provisions on quorum for meetings at the next board meeting.
- c) Rejected arrangements for the election of the Board Convener and Board Deputy Convener at the next scheduled formal board meeting on 23 June, to be conducted in accordance with agreed Standing Orders and agreed that a further paper setting out revised options be brought forward.
- d) Rejected proposed arrangements for elections of Committee Chairs as set out in this paper and agreed that a further paper setting out revised options be brought forward.

20. Action Points Arising:

- i. Director of Corporate Services to write paper presenting possible voting arrangements for forthcoming elections.

## **AOCB**

21. The Convener noted that it was last Board meeting of Anne Rae Macdonald and Willie Munro, thanking them for their contributions over the past four and a half years.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

22. The date of the next meeting is Friday 23 June in person.



Motion to move to a confidential minute for reasons of protecting legal privilege was agreed.

Public session closed at 12.00 noon.