

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

## Minutes of the Board Meeting

Held at Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown  
On Friday 23 September 2005, 1:30 am

### Present

Eric Baird	Sandy Park
Duncan Bryden	Andrew Rafferty
Angus Gordon	Gregor Rimell
Lucy Grant	David Selfridge
David Green	Joyce Simpson
Marcus Humphrey	Sheena Slimon
Eleanor Mackintosh	Andrew Thin
Anne MacLean	Susan Walker
Alastair MacLennan	Bob Wilson
William McKenna	

### In Attendance

Jane Hope	David Cameron
Murray Ferguson	Cattie Anderson (SNH)
Jim Strachan (Speyside Way Route Manager)	

### Apologies

Stuart Black	Douglas Glass
Sally Dowden	Bruce Luffman
Basil Dunlop	Richard Stroud

### Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies as above.

### Minutes of Previous Meeting

2. The minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2005 were approved without amendment.

### Matters Arising

3. On point 3a, the briefing note to members on the Cairngorms Brand had been received.
4. On point 3b, the note to raise awareness and understanding of the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism was still to be discharged.

5. **Action:**
  - a) **Note on European Charter for Sustainable Tourism to be issued to members.**
6. On point 10a, a short summary note had been provided to members showing the breakdown of costs for the Point of Entry Marker Project and setting those in context to assist in responding to any questions from the public.
7. On point 8b, David Green questioned whether the increase in size of Gaelic wording would necessitate an increase in the size of the markers themselves. He suggested that the letters themselves in the Gaelic wording may be increased without consequent changes in the size of markers. He indicated his concern that smaller lettering may undermine the use of Gaelic rather than support it through use of the language on the markers. He said that he was not arguing for the size of lettering to be equivalent to the letters in English words but he felt there was scope to increase the size of the Gaelic lettering without compromising the existing design and he would like to see that matter considered further.
8. In brief discussion, members acknowledged that the point had been made very early in the discussion about the markers that if they included words in English, they should also include Gaelic.
9. Murray Ferguson reported that the designer and project team had considered the use of Gaelic wording on the markers at some length. The designer had advised that it was critically important that the markers functioned as an effective sign and one of the keys to that was to get the letters at the right size for the speed of passing traffic on each road. To include the words in both English and Gaelic at the correct size would require the markers to be unfeasibly large, particularly given the granite materials to be used.
10. The Convenor indicated that he was reluctant to reopen debate on this matter at the meeting.
11. **Action:**
  - a) **Members agreed that Murray Ferguson could take the comments made forward during the ongoing review of the project as it is implemented.**

### **Funding the Speyside Way (Paper 1)**

12. Bob Wilson declared an interest in this item as Chair of the Speyside Way Management Group, as a member of Moray Council, but had no material interest that would prevent his participation on this and the next item.
13. Murray Ferguson introduced this paper, mentioning that the reason for holding this special meeting of the Board in Grantown was to host discussions of the subject of the Speyside Way close to the area concerned. To that end, he was glad that a number of members of the public had been able to attend.
14. Murray Ferguson reported that the Authority had been working closely with partner organisations through the Speyside Way Management Group. Changes introduced by

the Land Reform Act require the CNPA to lead on the implementation of long distance routes within the Park. There was precedent for this in the practices adopted by Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park for the areas of the West Highland Way. There were also very close linkages between other access works and an argument that it would make for more “Efficient Government” for a single funder to be concerned with the length of the route within the Park.

15. It was highlighted that payment for the route would be no greater in overall public funding terms, but the Authority would be accepting a financial risk. It was likely that the current portion of funding met by SNH could be switched to the Authority by the Scottish Executive, particularly as both organisations shared the same sponsor department. The potential for funds to transfer from Highland Council was more uncertain.
16. At this point it was noted that the four members present who were also Highland Councillors had an interest in the financial aspects of this item, but that this did not prevent them from continuing to participate in the discussion of the item.
17. In discussion, members noted that the proposals made in the paper appeared to represent a significant financial commitment for the Authority and that the financial consequences of the proposals should therefore be reflected in future resource bidding processes. There was some discussion on the extent of the total potential financial commitment. Officers, assisted by the Speyside Way Route Manager, indicated that current financial commitments amounted to £57,000 per annum, which had been derived from the Authority’s pro-rata share, based on mileage of the path within the Park, of the costs of maintenance plans. The plans themselves had been derived from a rigorous, costed process. This sum was currently provided for in the Authority’s operational plan budgets.
18. There was some concern among members on entering into financial commitments of this scale, and the potential additional financial commitment that an extension to the route may bring. The current estimate for the additional costs of maintaining the extension was £58,000, bringing the total annual contribution to management of the Speyside Way to £115,000. While the current length of the route was covered within existing budget provision, a bid would have to be made for additional resources to cover the cost of managing an extension, were that to arise.
19. Alastair MacLennan declared an interest as a land manager with a length of the Speyside Way on his land. He queried whether land management contracts could be used to enable management of the Speyside Way by land managers. Officers indicated that there was great potential to use land management contracts (LMCs) to encourage land managers to maintain the route and this would have number of advantages. However, there were a number of unsatisfactory aspects about the way in which land management contracts were currently being used in relation to access and considerable further work was required to make the system effective.
20. **The Board agreed to note the paper presented, in particular noting the new responsibilities falling to CNPA as a consequence of the passing of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.**

21. **The Board approved expenditure of £57,000 for the current year, and similar appropriate sums for future years, on management of the Speyside Way, subject to the satisfactory conclusion on a minute of agreement between CNPA, the Highland Council and Moray Council.**

#### **Proposed Extension to the Speyside Way (Paper 2)**

22. Prior to commencing this item, the Convener invited members to read a letter of representation on the item received from Alvie and Dalraddy Estates.
23. Murray Ferguson introduced the item, indicating that the paper set out the results of a consultation exercise and sought to chart a way forward on the potential extension of the Speyside Way. The decision about the route would ultimately be taken by Ministers on the advice of Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH). The Authority had agreed to lead on the consultation process now being reported as a means of overcoming a difficulty of lack of resource availability within SNH to progress the matter. Murray expressed his thanks to Cattie Anderson of SNH for her work in summarising the various consultation responses received from the exercise.
24. The consultation had shown unanimous support for the principle of an extension to the Speyside Way, from a very healthy level of feedback received. The consultation had been on a single proposed route for the extension. In response to a question in the consultation paper about the rationale used to come up with this route proposal 38 of the 56 responses had either given support or not commented on this point. The majority of responses had made comment on the route proposed. Following consideration of detailed comments on the route, changes had been proposed to 4 of the 6 sections of the extension and these changes were now set out in the revised extension route presented in the paper to the Board.
25. While the process was felt by officers concerned to be coming ever closer to a final solution for recommendation by SNH to Ministers. However, it was also highlighted by officers that additional work still remained to be done to deal with a number of specific issues including, for example, the situation between Aviemore and Dalraddy where a significant piece of land had been sold since the consultation.
26. In response to a question from the Convener, officers clarified that although further work was still required, it was not proposed that the proposed extension route would come back to the Board for further consideration. Rather, the paper sought the Board's approval for delegation to officers of final resolution of remaining issues and determination of the route. Bob Wilson further clarified that if the proposals in the paper were agreed CNPA officers would continue to work with the Speyside Way Management Group on this matter.
27. Members and officers discussed specific issues which remained around a few lengths of the route.
28. Members commented that if the subject was not to come back before the Board, they should be made clear of the financial consequences to the Authority of the extension. Members also commented that there were a number of issues that remained to be

finalised and, therefore, that they were not comfortable with approving the paper and delegating responsibility to officers at this stage.

29. David Selfridge proposed a motion that a decision on this matter be deferred, pending resolution of these matters and officers reporting back to the Board. This motion was seconded by Anne MacLean.
30. Bob Wilson proposed an amendment, that the recommendations made by officers in the paper be approved. This was seconded by Gregor Rimell.
31. Members considered further some of the detailed issues which remained to be concluded prior to SNH being able to make a recommendation on the route for the extension to Ministers.
32. Members also considered whether the extension of the route was to be supported by car park and toilet provision. The Speyside Way Route Manager responded that funding to develop car parks and toilets would be considered when putting the final proposal together. However, the need for additional annual funding to support and maintain these facilities would also have to be considered.
33. Officers also clarified that the consultation period had ended in March and a further consultation process was not anticipated. Bob Wilson commented that he was entirely satisfied with the process that had been undertaken and pragmatic discussion with landowners was now required.
34. Following further discussion on the start and end point of the extension, the Convener summarised that the motion was to defer a decision by the Board and for officers to report back in due course to allow the Board to consider the proposed extension route again prior to finalising the consultation led by the Authority. The amendment was to approve in principle the development of the extension of the Speyside Way route between Aviemore and Newtonmore, noting that a number of issues remained to be resolved and delegating authority for the Authority's officers to deal with those issues along with the Speyside Way Management Group.
35. Members voted on the issue, the result being 6 for the motion and 13 for the amendment.
36. **The Board approved in principle the development of the extension of the Speyside Way route between Aviemore and Newtonmore, noting that a number of issues remained to be resolved and delegating authority for the Authority's officers to deal with those issues along with the Speyside Way Management Group.**
37. **Action:**
  - a) **The Convener asked for a progress report to be brought back to the Board in due course.**
  - b) **Members requested that they receive a copy of the letter of response to Alvie Estate.**
38. Andrew Rafferty left the meeting at this point.

### **Membership and Remit of Committees (Paper 3)**

39. In introducing the paper, Jane Hope indicated that proposed membership of Committees represented members' preferences as expressed to her. The paper made clear that Committees had delegated responsibility to take decisions on matters within their remit.
40. The paper also set out proposals for improvements in communications between the Committees and the Board. The Audit Committee would make an annual report to the Board once a year, around December. The Finance Committee would change the timing of its meetings to allow a quarterly financial report to dovetail with the quarterly reports to the Board on progress made on the Operational Plan. Specific and significant developments considered by the Staffing and Recruitment Committee would be reported to the Board as required.
41. In discussion, it was highlighted that Annex 1 to the paper did not reflect that Andrew Thin would be stepping down from the Finance Committee, and that the Head of Corporate Services and HR Manager would be officers in attendance at the Staffing and Recruitment Committee.
42. In discussion, it was also acknowledged that the Board was ultimately responsible for all business of the Authority. As Standing orders allowed for the Board to revisit any Committee decision if such action was felt necessary, it was agreed that it was not necessary for the Board to ratify each Committee decision.
43. **The Board agreed that the membership of Committees should be modified as proposed.**
44. **The Board agreed that Committee remits should remain unchanged, as proposed.**
45. **The Board agreed that the activities of Committees should be reported back to the Board in the following ways:**
  - a) **An annual report from the Audit Committee around December each year;**
  - b) **Quarterly reported from the Finance Committee incorporated into quarterly reports to the Board on delivery of the operational plan;**
  - c) **All Board members continue to receive Finance Committee papers; and**
  - d) **No reports from the Staffing and Recruitment Committee (as items are usually confidential) but specific/significant develops will be reported on an ad hoc basis to the whole Board.**

### **Any Other Business**

46. There were no other items of business.

### **Date of Next Meeting**

47. 7 October 2005, 1:30 at Strathdon.