



Minutes of the Board Meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown on Spey

In Person

24 November 2023 at 9.30am

Present

Sandy Bremner (Convener)

Eleanor Mackintosh (Deputy Convener)

Bill Lobban

Kenny Deans

Paul Gibb

Russell Jones

Lauren MacCallum

Duncan Miller

Derek Ross

Xander McDade

Chris Beattie

Dr Fiona McLean

Hannah Grist

John Kirk

Peter Cosgrove

Ann Ross

Steve Micklewright

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

Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning

Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services

Oliver Davies, Head of Communication

Adam Streeter Smith, Recreation and Access Manager

Mariaan Pita, Executive Support Manager

James Ade, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Geva Blackett



Welcome and introduction

1. Sandy Bremner, the Board Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

Approval of minutes of previous meetings

2. The draft minutes of the last meetings held on the 8 September and 27 October 2023 were agreed with no amendments.

Matters arising not covered elsewhere

3. The Board Convener provided an update on the action points from 8 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.
 - b) Para 17i: Meeting to be set up with CEO, Head of Strategic Planning, Convener and Deputy Convener to discuss the shortage of planning staff. Completed
 - c) Para 17ii: Proposed paper to go to Resources Committee regarding recruitment options for Planners. Completed
 - d) 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 hand
 - e) Para 25i: The Board agreed that Convener and Officers arrange a meeting with Forestry and Land Scotland to discuss resourcing at Glenmore. Completed
 - f) Para 25ii: The Director of Planning and Rural Development to check whether Aberdeenshire Council rangers can give fixed penalty notices. Completed
 - g) Para 25iii: The Director of Planning and Rural Development to communicate with the Community Council and Community Trust the outcome of this meeting. Completed
 - h) Para 25iv: Paper on potential bylaw implementation across the park to be presented to a future meeting of the board. Completed
 - i) Para 29i: The Clerks to the Board to distribute information to Members of how substitutes for committee meetings are to be secured. Completed



Declarations of interest

4. John Kirk declared a note for transparency in item 1: his farm is potentially affected by the proposed beaver release into the Cairngorms National Park. He will participate as the item and any discussion arising is for information.
5. Ducan Miller declared a note for transparency in item 1: his farm is potentially affected by the proposed beaver release into the Cairngorms National Park. He will participate as the item and any discussion arising is for information.
6. Russell Jones declared a note for transparency in item 1: he is a member of a shinty club that is potentially affected by the proposed beaver release into the Cairngorms National Park. He will participate as the item and any discussion arising is for information.

CEO Report

7. 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.
8. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) Some members raised community concerns that grant assistance from the Park Authority for flood banks potentially damaged by beavers was not yet in writing and that Strathspey Framers require further consultation. The CEO responded that the Park Authority's offer of grant assistance was already in writing, and that he would put out further information on grant assistance post 2026 to the concerned farmers and on the National Park's website. Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change, added that the commitment to grant assurance forms part of the licence application. The Convener highlighted that delivering the management and mitigation plan was part of the application and would be part of the licence conditions from NatureScot which should provide land managers with the reassurance that they were looking for. The CEO reassured the Board that he and other Officers would continue to meet with farmers and crofters to answer outstanding questions.



- b) A discussion was had on the risk that grant assistance for flood banks damaged by beavers posed to the Cairngorms National Park Authority. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services & Deputy CEO, informed the Board that the financial consequences have been looked at and a specific budget will not currently be put against the risk associated with beaver impacts on flood banks. Therefore there is no immediate impact on budget provisions made. However, the wider risk management will be looked at with the Resources Committee and financial provisions that may be required for any grant aid responses regarding beaver impact on flood banks.
 - c) A Member questioned what part the Board plays on policies on equalities and gender. The Director of Corporate Services & Deputy CEO responded that the policies arose through the National Parks Management Group and has been implemented in support of the Staff Group and its management. Board Members input to the process is through the Resources Committee and through the Committee's scrutiny of the Staff Consultative Forum Minutes, and through individual Board Members that were nominated on to the Forum. This is all standard procedure for developing and internally consulting on all policy and procedures. Grant Moir, CEO, reinforced that this is all in keeping with the governance requirements established by the Framework Agreement.
 - d) A Member raised whether more could be done with National Park Branding on agricultural products due to agricultural budgets being cut. The CEO informed the board that currently branding for venison is being looked at, however it is more difficult within bigger supply systems to say where products come from.
9. The Board noted the Paper. The Convener thanked the Chief Executive and all staff on behalf of the Board.
10. Action Points Arising:
- i. The CEO to write to farmers and put on the National Park website on grant assistance for flood banks in the CNP.
 - ii. The CEO and Officers to meet with farmers and crofters to answer outstanding questions.

Adam Streeter Smith entered the meeting at 10.29am



Active Cairngorms Action Plan

11. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Rural Development, introduced the paper which presented the Active Cairngorms Action Plan for approval along with a summary of related work that has been completed to date. The Action Plan will help to deliver many of the objectives of the National Park Partnership Plan relating to outdoor activity, health, wellbeing and general enjoyment of the Park in a sustainable way.
12. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A Member questioned what it meant where projects were indicated as Cairngorms 2030 and raised concerns about projects on litter, health and education which are not the Park Authority's core business. The Director of Planning and Rural Development responded that most directly relevant projects that are Cairngorms 2030 are very spatially specific. He added that the green health agenda is key part of the Cairngorms 2030 programme and litter is about bringing partners together who are already working on a voluntary basis and not taking on anyone's statutory responsibility.
 - b) A Member queried what evidence there was of recreation impacting on disturbance. The Director of Planning and Rural Development highlighted evidence of different recreation activities impacting different species including capercaillie, goldeneye and raptors, with the Park Authority being keen to take an evidence based approach.

A Member raised concerns about the potential risk that publishing the priority areas for management areas of recreational disturbance of species could pose especially if it ended up in the wrong hands. The Director of Planning and Rural Development responded that the map had been included to remain open and transparent, to reinforce that a spatially targeted approach was needed, and to recognise it was important to take stakeholders with the Authority on this work. There is a strong sense that understanding of the spatial approach through provision of broad mapping information was important to this process, while the maps were considered sufficiently general to not pose any significant risks to the environmental objectives of the work through wider public awareness. He added that sensitive areas will not be highlighted on signage in the Park.



Recommendations

The Board was asked to:

- a) Approve the Action Plan (Appendix 1).
- b) Note the summary of engagement that has gone on in preparation of the Plan (Appendix 2).
- c) Note that a paper will be brought back to the Board annually to report on the progress with delivery.
- d) Note the work that has been undertaken by Cairngorms National Park Authority and partner organisations on the management for visitors in 2023 (Appendix 3).
- e) Note the summary of the grants awarded by Cairngorms National Park Authority to partners as part of the Visitor Infrastructure Improvement Programme (Appendix 4).

13. The Board noted the paper and approved the Action Plan.

14. Action Points Arising: none.

Oliver Davis entered the meeting at 11.15am

Fire Management Byelaws – Proposed Consultation

15. Grant Moir, CEO, introduced the paper which invites Members to agree on an approach to a public consultation on whether to take forward a fire management byelaw for the Cairngorms National Park and what that fire management byelaw should include or cover.
16. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A Member raised that if the Authority goes out to consultation could language be chosen carefully, with the use of controlled burning not just muirburn as this is only one example of controlled burning. The CEO agreed with this approach.
 - b) Members highlighted the importance of taking people along with the Park Authority.
 - c) A discussion was had on how, if a bylaw was implemented, rangers would be protected. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Rural Development, informed the Board that this is a discussion that will happen with the ranger team and have to be clear with partner ranger services that they will not be involved in enforcement.



- d) Members questioned why one option in the consultation was not time bound for no fires in the summer. The CEO responded that while Officers did look at a time period, the highest fire risk is earlier in the year when there is maximum load. The CEO highlighted that it would of course be open for respondents to suggest a time period for operation of a byelaw if that was their view.
- e) A member also asked that the consultation be for 10 weeks rather than 8 weeks. This was agreed.

17. Paul Gibb put forward an amendment to include a specific question in the consultation as to whether controlled burning should be covered in the byelaw options, and to reflect the impact of this question in the draft byelaw. Seconded by Ann Ross. This was agreed.

Recommendations

The Board was asked to:

- a) Agree to proceed to a public consultation based on three options as outlined in this paper, starting in January 2024 for 8 weeks.

18. The Board agreed to proceed to a public consultation for 10 weeks. the Board accepted the amendment to include a specific question on controlled burning in the public consultation together with associated illustration of the impact of that question in a draft byelaw.

19. Action Points Arising: none.

Peter Cosgrove and Adam Streeter Smith left the meeting at 12.49pm

Consultation on Gaelic Language Plan 2024-28

20. Oliver Davies, Head of Communications, introduced the paper which outlined the Park Authority's proposed approach to a six-week consultation on our proposed Gaelic Language Plan 2024-28.

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



- a) A Member raised that the National Park Authority should be going beyond promoting Gaelic in the organisation and encouraging others in the promotion in the use of Gaelic. The Head of Communications responded that he will feed this back to Bòrd na Gàidhlig and ask whether the main objective can be adjusted.
- b) A Member raised that it would be good to get younger Gaelic influencers involved as some have a big reach on TikTok.
- c) A Member raised that there are a number of young Shinty Players that are fluent in Gaelic that he could put Oliver Davis in contact with. The Head of Communications responded that more connections in that community would be helpful.

Recommendations

The Board was asked to:

- a) Review our proposed stakeholder engagement approach and agree that the consultation can start w/c 15 January 2024 for a period of six weeks.

22. The Board agreed to the Papers recommendation.

23. Action Points Arising: none.

Scottish Biodiversity Strategic Framework consultation

24. Andy Ford, Director of Nature and Climate Change, presented the paper which sets out the proposed Park Authority response to the remaining parts of the Scottish Government consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity .

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

- a) A Member asked for clarity whether the other effective area-based conservation measures would be legislative frameworks from the Scottish Government, or would a community approach be taken and whether this could be reflected in the National Parks response. The Director of Nature and Climate Change clarified that this could be included in the National Parks response as a key consideration is the statutory obligations to some of the designations and stake holders will be looking for assurance and accountability around those designations.

Recommendations

The Board was asked to:



a) Agree to the consultation response set out in Annex 1

26. The Board noted the Paper and agreed to the consultation response set out in Annex 1.

27. Action Points Arising: none.

Committee Annual Reports

28. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy Chief Executive, presented the Annual Reports of the Audit and Risk, Performance, Governance and Resources Committees to the Board.

29. The Board noted the Annual Reports.

30. Action Points Arising: None

Minutes from Committee Meetings

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

32. The Board noted the Paper.

33. Action Points Arising: None

AOCB

34. None.

Date of Next Meeting

35. The date of the next meeting is Friday 22 March in person.

The public part of this meeting concluded at 1.13pm.