



For information

Title: **Board Committee Minutes**

Prepared by: **Catriona Strang, Clerk to Board**

Purpose

This paper presents the draft minutes for the following meetings:

Performance committee 8 September 2023

Audit and Risk Committee 22 September 2023

Recommendations

- a) The Board is asked to note the draft minutes of the Performance and Audit and Risk Committee.



Draft Minutes of the Performance Committee

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown on Spey

In person

8 September 2023 at 2.30pm

Present

Kenny Deans (Convener)

Doug McAdam

Chris Beattie

Ann Ross

Steve Micklewright

Sandy Bremner

Eleanor Mackintosh

In Attendance

Grant Moir, CEO

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO

Colin McClean, Head of Land Management

Andy Ford, Director for Nature and Climate Change

James Ade, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

None

Welcome and introduction

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of the Performance Committee

Declarations of interest

2. Doug McAdam noted for transparency connections to items of business on the agenda: he Chairs a Deer Management Group and is a member of the Capercaillie Project Board.



Minutes of Previous Meetings & Matters Arising

3. The minutes of the previous meeting, 9 June 2023 held in person, were approved.
4. Action points arising from previous meetings:
 - b) 11 February 2022
 - i. **Para 19ii)** - Report relating to Visit Scotland funding to be brought to the Committee.
 - c) 9 June 2023
 - i. **Para 8i)** CEO to circulate outcome of the meeting with peatland delivery partners. Closed – CEO gave an update with nothing to circulate as a note.
 - ii. **Para 16i)** The Director for Nature and Climate Change to feedback to the festival steering group members comments on timing.
5. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO informed the Committee that an additional £149,000 had been secured for community led capital projects from Scottish Government.

Cairngorms Peatland Action Programme (Paper 1)

6. Colin McClean, Head of Land Management, introduced the paper which presents an update on the delivery of the Cairngorms National Park Authority's Peatland ACTION programme in 2023-24.
7. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:
 - a) Members raised questions around security for contractors and the number of contractors taking on work. Officers informed Members that the Park Authority have multi-year funding in some cases giving contractors security and are hoping to extend the use of such contracts. Contractor numbers are expanding.
 - b) Members and Officers discussed the possibility of estates applying for funding and carrying out peatland restoration projects themselves using their own staff and equipment. Officers agreed that this is a good model and will help with upscaling the number of projects as estates have vested interest. However, there are complications around subsidy control and proving value for money, though both these considerations can be managed. The caveat for estates is the initial outlay of buying expensive machinery.
 - c) A Member commented that the amber risk in the performance dashboard around staffing feels like a significant risk. The Head of Land Management responded



that growing the team would help with scaling up, but currently the Park Authority are working at full capacity. The Head of Service would like to be able to procure project support for the following summer.

8. The Committee noted the paper.
9. Action Point Arising: none.

Heritage Horizons Update (Oral)

10. David Clyne, Head of Heritage Horizons, gave an update on the heritage horizons application.
11. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:
 - d) Members questioned what the 13 new roles that were being recruited were and does the scale of the building need reconsidering. Officers responded that the Clerks can distribute the staffing matrix and that due to flexible working patterns the building can accommodate the increase in staff.
 - e) A member questioned how internal recruitment would be managed if funding has not yet been secured. The Head of Heritage Horizons responded that any appointments will be in principle and subject to funding being secured. If there is not a positive outcome around funding then the Park Authority will have to manage the staff who have applied and their expectations, and the link of roles in question to the funding bid will be made clear at the outset. However, it is seen as a positive if staff want to stay in the organisation and progress with their careers, with the C2030 providing a potential opportunity for some staff in maintaining and extending their careers with the Park Authority.
12. The Committee noted the paper.
13. Action Point Arising: none.

Performance Committee Terms of Reference and Scope (Paper 2)

14. David Cameon, Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services introduced an overview of the scope of work to date of the Performance Committee together with a reminder of the agreed terms of reference of the Committee within the context of the Park Authority's wider committee structure.



15. The Performance Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:

- f) Members raised that they would like to see papers coming to the Committee on the Beaver and Wildcat Releases; the Raptor Project; and on woodland restoration. Andy Ford, the Director for Nature and Climate Change, responded that these could come to the committee under the broader title of Cairngorms Nature Action Plan.
- g) A Member raised they would like to see a Paper on the Ranger Service coming to the Committee. The Deputy Chief Executive and Director of Corporate Services responded that one off papers can come to the Committee and this would fit with that.

16. The Committee noted the paper.

17. Action Point Arising: none.

AOCB

18. The Chair informed the Committee that this was Doug McAdams last meeting, thanking him for his work as Vice Chair.

The meeting closed at 2.30pm



Draft Minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown on Spey

Hybrid

22 September 2022 at 1.00pm

Present

Fiona McLean (Chair)

Gaener Rodger

Bill Lobban

Kenny Deans

Peter Cosgrove

Paul Gibb

In Attendance

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO

Louise Allen, Head of Finance, and Corporate Operations

Gregory Odour, Mazars

Elizabeth Young, Azets

Catriona Strang, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Geva Blackett

Elizebeth Young, Azets

Grant Moir, CEO

Welcome and introduction

19. Fiona McLean, the Chair, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

Approval of minutes of previous meeting

20. The draft minutes of the meeting on the 21 June 2023 were approved with no amendments. Decisions were noted.



Action Points

Ref	Action Detail	Who	When	Status
29/10/2021 (Para 8i)	Bring lessons learned on LEADER back as Agenda item to a future AR Committee.	David Cameron	Review will come to meeting In November 2023	Open
29/10/2021 (Para 4i)	Complete a detailed VAT review.	Louise and Stephanie	Complete in next 6 months. delayed due to HH project	In progress
11/02/22 (Para 18i)	Standardisation of project management procedures and terminology. This to be brought back to the ARC to ensure the appropriate language was used.	Project Manager when recruited	On completion of internal review of process	In Hand
21/06/23 (Para 11)	To review timescales for further update on actions against outstanding audit recommendations with Azets and bring to next committee to confirm	Louise Allen	24 November Committee Meeting	Open
21/06/23 (Para 20)	To produce timeline for scheduled board time to develop the strategic risk register alongside the new Corporate Plan	David Cameron		Closed: 24 Nov board session

Matters arising not covered in agenda

21. David Cameron, the Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, to bring lessons learned on LEADER back as Agenda item to the next Committee meeting.

Declarations of interest

22. There were no interests declared.



Vice Chair nomination

23. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, introduced the item, inviting nominations for Vice Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee to come forward from committee members.
24. The Chair nominated Peter Cosgrove as Vice Chair. Gaener Rodger seconded the nomination.
25. The Committee voted Peter Cosgrove as Vice Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Internal Audit Report 2022/23: Risk Management

26. Elizabeth Young, Chief Internal Auditor, Azets, introduced the paper that gives an overview of the Cairngorms National Park Authority approaches to and controls in place for Risk Management. Elizabeth highlighted that the risk management strategy was out of date for the organisation and that a formal risk scoring methodology for the assessment of both current and target risk scores should be implemented..
27. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the report and made the following comments and observations:
- a) The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO welcomed the report and the range of helpful direction which this gives to thinking on the Park Authority's review of our approaches to strategic risk management.
 - b) Members agreed that the example strategic risk register would be an appropriate format to consider replicating. This potential for discussion becoming too focused on the scoring of risk rather than wider discussion of risk exposure was recognised. Members agreed that having recognised that potential, it would be incumbent on them to ensure they gave appropriate focus to risk management considerations.

Recommendations

28. The Audit and Risk Committee is asked to
- a) Consider the internal auditors report and findings;
 - b) Endorse the management responses to recommendations for future action and system improvements.
29. The Audit and Risk Committee agreed the recommendations.



30. **Action** - none.

Internal Audit Report 2023/24: Expenditure and Creditors

31. Elizabeth Young, Chief Internal Auditor, Azets, provided the overview of the Cairngorms National Park Authority approaches to and controls in place for management of expenditure and creditors. Elizabeth highlighted to the Committee three recommendations for action and the need for standardisation in the organisation's documentation.

- a) Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations, noted that some systems at date were in transition from paper to electronic with workshops to be held with the wider organisation on this. This process is looking at making the Park's systems smoother.

32. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:

- b) Members welcomed such a positive internal audit report following a review of such critical financial systems.

Recommendations

The Audit and Risk Committee is asked to:

- c) Consider the internal auditors report and findings;
- d) Endorse the management responses to recommendations for future action and system improvements.

33. The Audit and Risk Committee agreed the recommendations.

34. **Action** - none.

Internal Audit Report 2023/24: Progress Report

35. Elizabeth Young, Chief Internal Auditor, Azets, provided the overview of the internal audit review of progress report, informing the Committee that Azets are on track to deliver the annual report in March.

36. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:



- a) In response to a question from members on the reason for the "advisory nature" of the finance system review, David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, informed the Committee that the functionality of the Park Authority's finance system was being considered. The new system specification would be considered by Azets and there would be a gateway review before moving to a full procurement exercise. The Azets review and advice would support this 'gateway review' exercise. Louise Allen, the Head of Finance and Corporate Operations, added she would like to have 'self-serve' functionality for the wider organisation for expenses and procurement. There are options of adding to the current system or moving to a new one, which Azets are looking into.

37. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the paper.

38. **Action:** - none.

External Audit (Oral)

39. Gregory Odour, Mazars, provided an oral progress update on the external audit plan for 2022/23, informing the committee that the audit plan was on course and field work is currently being carried out.

- a) David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, reiterated the timeline for Audit and Risk Committee does not leave a lot of contingency time for approval of accounts and laying those in Parliament prior to recess. David is encouraged about the positive progress being made and good working relationships quickly established between Mazars and the Park Authority's finance team. Should any issues which may impact on the closure timetable, David will notify the Chair and Deputy.

40. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:

- a) No comments were made.

41. The Audit and Risk Committee noted the oral update.

42. **Action** - none.

Information Request Update

43. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, presented the update on the number of information requests, and key performance measures in



meeting them, under the Freedom of Information (Scotland) Act / Environmental Information (Scotland) Regulations arrangements since April 2021. David highlighted the significant drop off in the Freedom of Information requests recently.

44. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:
- a) The Committee questioned if levels of Freedom of Information requests have dropped to pre-Covid levels. The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO responded that requests come in swathes depending what is in the public eye at any one time.
 - b) The Chair sought clarity on where the Scottish Information Commissioner sits in the escalation process for Freedom of Information requests. The Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO responded that the escalation comes from the requester. The Park Authority's Information Manager handles all initial responses and any appeals are dealt with by the Director of Corporate Services. If the requester is not satisfied following this internal review and second response, they can then go to the Scottish Information Commissioner to seek a further review.

Recommendations

The Audit and Risk Committee is asked to:

- a) Note activity in this area and Authority performance
- b) Comment on breadth and depth of reporting for future updates

45. The Audit & Risk Committee noted the paper.

46. Action - none.

Draft Annual Report To Board

47. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services and Deputy CEO, presented the draft Audit & Risk Committee Report.
48. The Audit and Risk Committee discussed the update and made the following comments and observations:
- a) The Committee discussed the process by which Board Members are assigned to Committees.



b) A Member questioned if there were still any high or moderate recommendations and management actions outstanding from the internal audit summary. Louise Allen, the Head of Finance and Corporate Operations, responded that there are some historic high recommendations that are still being addressed, others have been superseded by subsequent audit work. The Committee will have sight of the full updated list of outstanding recommendations at the next meeting in November.

49. The Audit and Risk Committee is asked to

- a) Consider the report and;
- b) Agree any amendments to it, prior to circulation to the Board.

50. The Audit & Risk Committee agreed the paper.

51. Action: Head of Finance and Corporate Operations to bring the updated list of outstanding recommendations back to the Committee.

AOCB

52. The Chair informed the Committee that she had attended an Audit and Risk Committee Chair network meeting in August which had presentations on duties, requirements, and good practice.

Date of next meeting

53. Scheduled date is 24 November 2023.

54. The meeting concluded at 1.55pm.