

---

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

---

## DRAFT MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING

held by telephone/ video conference  
on Friday 10<sup>th</sup> December 2021 at 2pm

### PRESENT

*(By video conferencing unless stated otherwise)*

Xander McDade (Convener)	Eleanor Mackintosh
Geva Blackett	Willie McKenna
Peter Argyle	Ian McLaren
Carolyn Caddick (Deputy Convener)	Dr Fiona McLean
Deirdre Falconer	William Munro
Pippa Hadley	Anne Rae Macdonald
Janet Hunter	Dr Gaener Rodger
John Kirk	Derek Ross
John Latham	Judith Webb
Douglas McAdam	

### In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,  
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services & Deputy Chief Executive  
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Place  
Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Services  
Andy Ford, Director of Nature & Climate Change Gavin Miles, Head of Strategic Planning  
Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development  
Oliver Davies, Head of Communications  
Helen Mason – Minute Taker

**Apologies:           None**

### Welcome and Introduction

I. Xander McDade the Board Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting.

## Declarations of Interest

2. The Board Convener invited Declarations of interest.
3. Fiona Mclean declared a New Interest for the record while noting this does not have specific relevance for this meeting:  
Reason: She has become a member of the Committee for Scotland National Lottery, Heritage Fund. This might be relevant for the Heritage Horizons project.

## Minutes of Last Meetings held – for approval

4. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 10<sup>th</sup> September 2021 were agreed with no amendments.

## Matters Arising

5. The Board Convener provided an update on the action points from previous minutes:
  - a) 10 Sept Minutes - At Para. 13(i) **-In Hand-** Director of Nature & Climate Change agreed to collate the monitoring results for some of the species that could be obtained over the last 5-10 years but not to level of individual estates to retain confidentiality of data and send it to the Board.
  - b) 10 Sept Minutes – Action Point at Para. 13(ii) **-In Hand-** David Hetherington, Woodland Officer to give Board Member John Latham a call to discuss woodland riparian schemes on Donside.
  - c) 10 Sept Minutes – Action Point at Para. 13(iii) **-In Hand-** Peatland Board visit to be organised for the Spring of 2022 –
  - d) 28 May Minutes – Action Point at Para 26(i) - **Closed** – Communications team advised to put out tick and sheep scaring warnings through the Authority’s social media channels, which will go out in due course.
  - e) 11 June Minutes – Action Point at Para 16(ii) - **In Hand** -Board Business session around reducing wildfires will be scheduled to coincide with the review of the ranger service in the autumn.
  - f) 11 June Minutes – Action Point at Para 21(iii) – **Closed**– CNPA records regarding the ownership of Braemar Housing Project were being updated.
  - g) 11 June Minutes – Action Point at Para 21(iv) – **In Hand** – The Director of Corporate Services will talk to the Board Convener about bringing the ongoing review of strategic risk back to the Board via the Governance Committee.

- h) 11 June Minutes – Action Point at Para 21(vi) – **Closed** – CEO and Director Conservation and Visitor Services were to investigate possible funding avenues from Aberdeenshire Council for Deeside Way Extension. This was discussed with Aberdeenshire Council and Scottish Enterprise and will be addressed as part of the North East Adventure Project and the Heritage Horizons Project.

**8. Action Points Arising: None**

**CEO Report & Board Convener Update (Paper 1)**

- 9 Grant Moir, Chief Executive, introduced Paper 1 which was to highlight 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. He specifically brought the following to the Board's attention:
  - a) The Programme for Government has come out showing what will be coming forward over the next parliamentary term.
  - b) Nature Recovery Fund with NatureScot, operating over the next five years. Discussions on Monday about what we are going to do in the Cairngorms National Park.
  - c) National Park Partnership Plan consultation. Over 800 responses had been received to date, with most organisational responses expected over the next week. There have been a lot of meetings covering this. It will be put on the Board Meeting for 13<sup>th</sup> January and Formal Consultation Report compiled during January.
  - d) CNPA had received a good budget settlement for the National Park which will be taken forward in updates to the Resources Committee and in the Operational Plan to the March Board Meeting in the coming year.
- 10 The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) A query was made about the NPPP consultation responses and how we are weighting responses from organisations representing large numbers of people in relation to individual responses. The CEO explained we don't weight responses but look at the quality of arguments for the final plan to work out the right way forward for the next five years. In a further comment a member suggested we should look at the size of the relevant constituency when we assess the argument being put forward. The CEO responded that ultimately, we look for consensus. If lots of people say something should be amended, we

look at what we can do. This information will be taken to the Board, then we will amend before finally deciding on it in April. The process is not formulaic: it is for the board to gauge the strength of argument made in responses and to judge and determine appropriate levels of response. Members commented on the importance of how the plan was presented and could the Board be told how they are to be presented before we are given the results. The Board Convener confirmed to members we would be considering the responses in the New Year and encourage everyone they know to respond by the deadline next Friday. There will be follow up publicity going out to encourage any further responses.

- b) A question was asked about the proposed path near Braemar that would form part of a Deeside Way extension; has funding been secured for the extension? The CEO said CNPA had agreed to fund the project and that Aberdeenshire Council are taking a paper regarding funding to their Committee soon. The planning permission has been extended until next autumn.
- c) Parag 16 about the housing summit and the press reports about bringing forward housing for key workers and local people in Badenoch and Strathspey. Further details would be publicised in near future by the Cairngorms Business Partnership who had organized the event.
- d) Parag 30 – 31, good to see the young on the Kickstart Scheme we had developed for Rangers getting permanent jobs.
- e) Referring to the Annex about the Housing Conference on the Board Convener report, is there anything we should be aware of? The Board Convener made the following points: There was good representation at the Housing Conference, and he described the actions coming out of the meeting. Reassured the Board there was now work undertaken by statutory and non-statutory partners and there will be actions and developments in the coming months. 1. Immediate issues were around Key Workers and the economy, 2. The medium term ensuring middle market rental properties and 3. Long term need to develop a more sustainable housing situation.
- f) The Board Convener said the point he had made at the meeting was around the lessons we've learned over Covid about getting money to be available more quickly.
- g) The Board Convener gave an update on the visit with Lorna Slater, Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity. It was a productive day, and she will come back sometime in the New Year and hopefully speak to the full Board.
- h) Comment was made about the impressive amount that has been achieved by staff, especially under the present circumstances, and congratulations were passed on to everybody involved.
- i) Comment relating to COP26. Will there be an opportunity to get some feedback and discussion the outcomes of COP26 especially in the light of the

NPPP. The Chief Executive referenced the planned Board session in January looking at NP Partnership Plan including COP26 and other things such as the Scottish Biodiversity Strategy which was in development at present.

- j) NPPP - Does the Board get to see the consultation responses in full? If individual responses are confidential, why do they have to give an email address? If people must phone for a copy of the form was there a message which asks them for their contact details. The Chief Executive replied that all responses are publicly available. People get asked if they wish their comments to be published or not. Responses can be seen but not who made them. The report will breakdown into type of response such as residents, land managers etc. Officers will try to get as much as this as possible for 13<sup>th</sup> January meeting. It was noted that the admin team can take contact details by phone when paper copies of response forms are requested, which there can also be downloaded from the website.
- k) Congratulations to the Chief Executive and team for the excellent report.
- l) Concern about long distant routes paragraph 11. There was a very boggy area around Grantown in particular. The Chief Executive explained it was 4-5 km section of the Speyside Way, just outside the National Park which was Highland Council responsibility. Head of Visitor Services explained they are aware and would have a further discussion outside the meeting. Also noted Moray Council has additional funding for upgrading along the old railway line in Moray. Explained there are no quick solutions but will be looking it going forward.

**11. The Board noted the Paper. The Board Convener thanked the Chief Executive and his team on behalf of the Board.**

**12. Action Point Arising:**

- i. Meeting to be arranged by Head of Visitor Services about the Speyside Way section maintenance with the Highland Council.**

**Managing Visitors in 2021 (Paper 2) for discussion**

- 13. The Board discussed arrangements for managing for visitors that were in place over 2021 and the proposals in 2022, all of which are subject to the confirmation of the CNPA budget.**
- 14. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Place, Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Services and Olly Davies, Head of Communications introduced the report.

*Anne Rae Macdonald left the meeting*

The approach to managing for visitors in the National Park this year had been generally very successful, and the feedback has been positive across the National Park. There were lots still to do but plans were in place with partners. The CNPA Ranger Service has been a great asset out on the ground and had complemented the work of other site-based rangers very effectively.

15. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) Some concern was expressed about the Payback Scheme – condition of paths around Glenmore was poor. Head of Visitor Services was not aware of requests from key organisations there for path improvements. A site visit was proposed with the member concerned to visit to the paths in question.
  - b) Director of Corporate Services spoke about the Voluntary Giving Scheme which was being led by the Cairngorms Trust. Work has been going on to develop a scheme but has been interrupted by Covid. Donations to the value of circa £5,000 - 10,000 per year were coming from visitors and businesses for infrastructure and nature restoration work. The Cairngorms Trust has funded some path infrastructure improvements from donations already received. Director of Corporate Services noted he expected to update the Board over the course of the coming year about how this initiative can evolve.
  - c) Director of Planning and Place noted we get very good feedback about the quality paths and tracks in the Visitor Survey – 94% of visitors had said paths were in good, or very good, condition and the feedback was more positive than the last time we conducted the survey. Also, there was now an Infrastructure Officer (Liz Henderson) in place who will be preparing a strategic plan for these issues.
  - d) Concern was also expressed about the path on the Speyside Way between Inveruglas and Drumguish which was very muddy. This would be looked at in addition to the previous paths discussed. Convener noted that this year there was more money available for use on paths and an Infrastructure Officer in place.
  - e) Campervans and price of sites – the Cairngorm Mountain campsite prices are considered high. Wastewater and fresh water sites are near each other and difficult to access, with use of buckets necessary for waste water. The point was noted.
  - f) Note made that all the Rangers are doing a good job and it is excellent that there are now more of them.
  - g) Request for clarification of how people can contact rangers out of hours. Director of Corporate Services explained the system involving messages and

answer machines. If the call goes to answer machine a message can be left, and a person will respond. In working hours, messages are checked and picked up regularly.

- h) How are the variable electronic signs we rent powered? Head of Visitor Services explained they are a mix. Some are solar powered, some are battery and solar, some are battery, some are mains. Officers confirmed this was one issue that was to be picked up in review and we need to connect the management of the signage.
- i) It was noted that overall, visitor management was better this year but what was proportion of positive /negative encounters with Rangers? Head of Visitor Services explained that about 12,000 people have personally talked with Rangers – he estimated that 99% of all contacts are positive. CNPA funded Police Scotland on Fridays and Saturdays of the peak season in Glenmore. Two people were charged over the six-week holiday period for illegal behaviour which is low in comparison to other offences.
- j) The Annex 2 table showed fewer fires with could lead to something serious, but it was still approaching 1,000 instances. Are rangers adequately equipped with tools and powers? It would be good to see the year-on-year figures coming down. Is there an issue that messaging has been designed to appeal to people who think differently about the National Park to the people who design the messaging? Head of Visitor Services explained that this year Glenmore has seen more gas fires bought from local outlets. It was not a quick win but we are seeing some positive change. A tiny minority were behaving irresponsibly/ illegally.
- k) What about infrastructure and priorities of next year with particular reference to Angus Glens? Officers responded that the team have done positive work early in year with Angus Council and partners getting toilets open again. Through Heritage Horizons, discussion about public transport and other options are taking place. A seasonal ranger has also been located in Angus area this year.
- l) Organisations such as WildScotland had discussed the use of fires as a key part of outdoor experience and bushcraft. In other areas (e.g., North America and Scandinavia) infrastructure was provided in managed areas so people can still enjoy fires. Officers were having discussions with Scottish Fire and Rescue Service, looking at training for rangers on ways to manage fires.
- m) Comment was made about litter and the 581 bags picked up by rangers. We need to get message about litter out to people better. Director of Planning and Place explained that this litter was just that collected by the Park Authority rangers. There were many community-led litter-picks organised across the National Park – the Green Recovery Fund had helped by funding six communities with litter picking equipment and had provided some ranger support. The Keep Scotland Beautiful 2022 Spring Clean dates were 21<sup>st</sup> March

– 21<sup>st</sup> April. Further work would be undertaken to develop a Cairngorms Litter Network. It was noted that litter was a Scotland-wide issue with a significant increase in littering in the lockdown period.

- n) The Convener asked for detail about Kickstart Rangers and Junior Ranger schemes. Officers noted the good thing was it was taking young people who were on unemployment benefit. It was planned to do a similar thing to Kickstart next year, giving a pathway for young people but with CNPA funding. It was noted that we also have a team of Volunteer Rangers and were restarting the Junior Ranger programme.
- o) Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development reported that CNPA had just been accredited as a Guaranteed Young Employee organisation. We have made a commitment to employ young people with Ranger Training commitments over the next twelve months. Members noted it was good to see we have led the way in youth employment and that the Kickstart Scheme was a Cairngorms initiative; well done to all involved.
- p) In conclusion the Convener noted we are doing more than was detailed in paper – the number of issues raised with CNPA had dropped noticeably. The increase in number rangers and management of facilities had made a significant difference. He thanked Janet Hunter for her work in the Tourism Recovery Group and the Board members for their support in these initiatives.

*Willie McKenna left the meeting*

**16. The Board noted:**

- a) **The wide-ranging, partnership work which has been undertaken across the National Park to encourage visitors to respect, protect and enjoy the Cairngorms.**
- b) **The feedback received from local partners.**  
**Convener proposed – Deputy Convener seconded the paper. The paper was agreed.**

**17. Action Points Arising:**

- i. **Murray Ferguson to organise site visit to look at path condition in key areas of Glenmore and Speyside Way with Willie McKenna and Deirdre Falconer.**

*Anne Rae Macdonald re-joined the meeting*

## **Corporate Plan 2023 to 2027 Development Timetable – (Paper 3)**

18. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 3. He explained that the paper sought to establish a straightforward approach to ensure that the next Corporate Plan for the CNPA was developed after the new NPPP is approved in 2022. He added that the paper sought to ensure a one-year, transitional strategic plan is developed as a bridging document between the end of the current Corporate Plan in March 2022 and the commencement of the next long term Corporate Plan from March 2023.
19. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) A query was put whether it needs to be cleared by Scottish Government. Director of Corporate Services clarified that we could approve the plan ourselves, while he will keep our Sponsor Team apprised of the evolution of the plan.
  - b) Clarification of the one-year plan - a light touch revision of what we have at the moment? Director of Corporate Services explained it was 3-way structured approach:
    - i. looking at the evolving NPPP
    - ii. Key multiyear program commitments running forward.
    - iii. Residual elements of Corporate plan which had not quite reached a conclusion by March 2022.A draft will be brought to the Board Meeting in March and pick up any residual actions necessary.
  - c) Was this timing ambitious for being ready in March? The Director of Corporate Services responded this would be a strategic, high-level document with key outcomes over the next year. It will be achievable over the next couple of months before board meeting in March, and a requirement to structure the Authority's operations over the coming year. The CEO added that most detail will be in operational plan - come to the Board in March. Then the year to develop the 4-year plan going forward. Director of Corporate Services confirmed that the sponsor team content with how we are approaching it.
  - d) Comment about this in relation to the NPPP which has not been agreed yet. Director of Corporate Services - we will look at the plan as it was evolving so when we do need to finance elements in the first year these are identified, while seeking to ensure we have the budget in place straight away when we start the NPPP.

20. **The Board:**
  - a) **Agreed the timetable for the development of the 2023 to 2027 Corporate Plan set out in Annex I.**
  - b) **Agreed the transitional arrangements for corporate planning over 2022/23.**
21. **The Board Convener moved, Deputy Convener seconded and the paper agreed.**
22. **Action Point Arising: none**

### **Cairngorms Green Recovery Fund (Paper 4)**

22. Murray Ferguson introduced Paper 4. Overall, the Fund had proved extremely popular and has prompted the delivery of very good variety of projects all across the National Park. The lessons learned, both at the CNPA and at the Cairngorms Trust, will be useful as the community-managed grant scheme and other projects are developed. He also noted:
  - a) Thanks to the external partners who had helped with the evaluation.
  - b) It was good to see members were able to visit the Aviemore Ice Rink and Ritchie's waste management facility near Aviemore which have benefitted from the Fund.
  - c) Looking to the future a further round of the Green Recovery Fund is not envisaged but the Community Managed Grant Scheme under the Heritage Horizons/Cairngorms 2030 Project will provide similar support.
23. The Board Convener thanked Willie Munro regarding his role in this project. Willie Munro said it was good to see range of projects coming through and was impressed by quality of applications and quick turn-around of paperwork by key staff. Good if there were something similar going forward and look at scope for participatory budgeting for communities.
24. The CEO thanked Director of Planning and Place and team. It had been a very positive project including allowing access match funding such as the ice rink.
25. **The Board**
  - a) **Noted the success of Phase 1 of the Green Recovery Fund, which was delivered in partnership with the Cairngorms Trust in 2020-21 to support communities and businesses in their recovery from COVID-19 pandemic.**
  - b) **Noted the progress to date with delivery of Phase 2 of the Fund which is ongoing, and all projects are scheduled for completion by the end of March 2022.**
26. **Proposed Board Convener, Seconded Willie Munro and Agreed.**

27. **Action Point Arising: None**

### **Draft Minutes of Board Committees (Paper 5)**

28. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services introduced Paper 5 which had been prepared by Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board.
29. The following draft minutes dated 29<sup>th</sup> October 2021 of public meetings were presented to the Board but not yet in the public domain:

Draft Resources Committee Minutes  
Draft Performance Committee Minutes  
Draft Governance Committee Minutes  
Draft Audit & Risk Committee Minutes

The CEO requested that if the members of the Board had any questions about the minutes to please take up with committee chairs, vice-chairs, himself, or senior officers responsible for Committee papers.

30. **The Board noted the draft minutes of the Board Committees.**

31. **Action Point Arising:**

- i. **Members of the Board with any questions about the committee minutes to please take up with committee chairs, vice-chairs or board convener.**

### **AOCB**

32. The Board Convener spoke about the planned residential Board Strategy Session at the Aviemore Highland Resort on 13/14th January, noting there are back-up plans if there are Covid restrictions. If members have concerns or points around the content of the meeting, please contact him.
33. New Code of Conduct had been agreed by the Scottish Parliament for Scottish Councillors and Members of Devolved Public Bodies. David Cameron Director of Corporate Services as proper officer was also made by the Standards Commission for Scotland. The Governance Committee will review the model Code of Conduct prior to a paper for the CNPA Board to approve in early 2022.
34. The Director of Corporate Services explained the new Model Code must go to the Governance Committee then on to the Board and was conscious the revised Code had come at the same time as the budget and there was a lot to be considered. Several changes of ethos of the Code and changes to guidance that go along with the Code. The Director of Corporate Services will arrange for the documents to be on

the board portal in the next few days – anyone can reference and lodge questions with him.

35. The Convener, on behalf of the Board expressed thanks to the staff team over the past year – difficult to appreciate how much the staff put in. Round of applause for their hard work. It was agreed by the Board for the CEO to write to all staff before the Christmas Break to express thanks.
36. **Action Points Arising:**
  - i. **Director of Corporate Services will arrange for the documents relating to the new code of conduct to be on the board portal in the next few days.**
  - ii. **Board Convener to write letter of thanks to the staff.**
  - iii. **Aviemore Highland Resort Meeting – contact Board Convener with any concerns or points.**

### **Date of Next Meeting**

37. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2022.
38. The public part of this meeting closed 15.54.