

**MINUTES of MEETING of the  
FINANCE COMMITTEE of**

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY  
held in The Lonach Hall, Strathdon  
on 29<sup>th</sup> October 2010 at 9.00am**

**Present:**

Eleanor Mackintosh (Chair)                      Mary McCafferty  
David Green    Gregor Rimell  
Marcus Humphrey

**In Attendance:**

Jane Hope, Chief Executive  
David Cameron, Head of Corporate Services  
Pete Crane, Senior Visitor Services Officer  
Alistair Hight, Finance Manager  
Claire Ross, Education and Inclusion Manager

**Apologies**

None

**Welcome and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting in particular Gregor Rimell and Marcus Humphrey who had joined the Committee in place of Dave Fallows and Richard Stroud who had recently stepped down from the Board.
2. It was also noted that the annual election of the Chair of the Committee was due and notice was served that this would be the first item of business at the next meeting of the Finance Committee.

**Minutes of Meeting 6<sup>th</sup> August 2010**

3. The minutes of the meeting were agreed with one minor amendment (Alistair Hight had not been included in the list of attendees).

**Matters Arising**

4. Further to the discussion on Paper 1 (paragraph 4 to 7) David Cameron noted that the UK Government Spending Review had announced the allocation to the Scottish Government, but budget allocations to Scottish Public Bodies remained dependent on the Scottish Spending Review, an announcement on which was expected in late November. The CNPA Management Team was working on options, and was also

taking action internally in terms of managing staff reductions. The organisation could not stand still, and so was controlling forwards commitments to 30% of total budget.

### **Laggan Forest Initiative – Business Development (Paper 1)**

5. Claire Ross introduced the paper which sought approval for continuation funding for the Laggan Forest Initiative for years 2011/12 and 2012/13 (years 2 and 3 of the project). Some funding had already been given to year 1 of the project to enable the project to stimulate partner match funding: approval was now sought for a commitment of £10,200 per year for the next two years to help with phase 1 of the project which entailed among other things the funding of the Development Manager and Project Officer. It was noted that the project brought together businesses and community groups and built on the success of the Wolfrax venture which was currently attracting 30,000 visitors a year. The aspiration was for the project to be self sustaining after three years.
6. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) This was an ambitious project showing good leverage and good partnership, all of which was to be encouraged. It was important to ensure that funding brought about a sustainable outcome, and in particular this must mean good collaboration and joining up between the various groupings involved. It was noted for example, that a charity can apply for planning permission for nothing. A better joined up working between the various organisations would therefore allow saving in planning fees.
  - b) It was therefore suggested that funding should be on the basis of some conditions and some milestones written into the project plan. David Green and Gregor Rimell were happy to meet the community in this respect.
  - c) The point was made that considerable Leader funding was involved in the project and an audit requirement was for a discrete set of deliverables so some care needed to be exercised in imposing conditions which all sought to join up a number of individual projects.
  - d) The initiative was an important one and it was right that the CNPA should support. An opportunity should be sought to jointly raise the profile of this initiative in the interests of the Park as a whole.
7. **The Committee approved the commitment of £10,200 per year for the next two years for Phase 1 of the Laggan Forest Initiative Project, subject to officers agreeing with the Chair of the Committee building in appropriate milestones/conditions to the grant offer (one of these being the production of a Business Plan)**

### **Community Action Planning in Badenoch and Strathspey (Confirmation of Funding for Year 3) (Paper 2)**

8. Claire Ross introduced the paper which sought approval for the commitment of £21,500 for the final year of the Community Action Planning (Badenoch and Strathspey) Project for 2011/12. The Community Action Planning Project was now half way through its second year. To date it had completed community action plans with four communities: Laggan, Dalwhinnie, Newtonmore and Kingussie, and was currently

delivering similar exercises in Aviemore, Rothiemurchus, Glenmore and Kincaig. A Board paper in March 2009 had confirmed funding for the project for years 1 and 2 and agreed in principle funding for year 3. The current paper sought the Finance Committee's agreement to year 3 funding.

9. The project had helped to bring loose, overlapping formations together. It reported back to the Badenoch and Strathspey Community Planning Partnership; a number of quick win projects had emerged (Annex 2) and funding packages identified for each of these. The whole ethos of the project was to empower communities and galvanise local expertise better. In the long run the aim had to be to support communities to do things for themselves. Nevertheless, it was noted that every community was different. As a result of the Community Action Planning in Badenoch and Strathspey an overall view was emerging across the National Park giving the CNPA a sense of its role in the future and where resources were best directed.
10. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) It was noted that every community across the whole Park was involved in the Community Planning Process as part of the National Park Plan.
  - b) There needed to be some succession planning for this initiative. Clearly local authorities had a major responsibility in this area. It was important to avoid over engaging and continual confrontation and lead after the National Park Plan to a more streamline approach which would focus on support for projects.
  - c) A legacy list of projects was needed for agencies to then help with delivery. There remained the question of who was left to deliver particularly against a background of economic constraint. There might be a future for social enterprises but this was just one possibility.
  - d) Communities often needed training to make the leap to taking responsibility for themselves; it also required initiative to come together. The Learning Forum already held had been very successful in this respect. A single development officer is not always the best solution.
  - e) The problems facing Tomintoul were noted.
  - f) A paper would be brought to the Board in January and this would pick up the matter of succession planning.
11. **The Committee approved funding of £21,500 for 2011/12 for the final year of the Community Action Planning (Badenoch and Strathspey Project).**

### **2010/11 Second Quarter Review (Paper 3)**

12. Alistair Hight presented a summary review of income and expenditure for the six months to 30<sup>th</sup> September 2010 and a projection of the financial outcome for the year to 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011. It was noted that at the half year point the financial results of the CNPA were with £15,000 of budget. It was noted that the £120,000 which had in effect been transferred from SNH to the CNPA to cover the Grant Aid of Rangers did not yet appear in the CNPA's baseline and was being dealt with as an adjustment until the Spending Review gave the opportunity to change the baseline.
13. **The Finance Committee noted the position with approval.**

## **Review of Operational Plan of Operational Plan Expenditure Commitments 2010 to 2013 (Paper 4)**

14. Alistair Hight introduced the paper which provided a regular update on Operational Plan spending commitments over the next three years. It was noted that forward commitments were limited to 30%, and were currently running at 15% even taking account of commitments that may rise from Board papers later in the day. It was also noted that in practice this was not the total picture of likely commitment put forward as there were other streams of work for which support was very likely to be needed in coming years, but which had not so far been considered formally; it was important to avoid making forward commitments simply on a first come first served basis. This was noted and the point was made that certain approvals had to be made earlier than others because of timing constraints from other sources of funding in certain cases. The point of the Forward Review of commitments was simply to ensure that there was not an over commitment of resources and ensure there was enough headroom to make decisions on other work streams as well.
15. **The Committee noted with approval the current picture of spending commitments for the next three years.**

## **Grant Funding of Ranger Services 2011/12 (Board Paper 6)**

16. Pete Crane introduced the paper which was being considered by the Board later in the day. The commitment to funding rangers was tied to the Corporate Plan which ran until March 2011. However, the Board recently decided to extend the Corporate Plan for one further year to March 2012. The paper therefore suggested that funding for rangers should be approved for a further year in line with this extension, with a full discussion on the whole range of CNPA priorities for funding beyond 2012 to be held over the coming months.
17. There was an associated decision concerning the £27,000 for the funding of the Atholl Ranger Service following the extension of the Park. The suggestion was a transfer of funding from SNH, following the same rationale as applied to the transfer of £120,000 from SNH to the CNPA for the funding of other ranger services eighteen months ago. It was pointed out that the expression "transfer" was not entirely appropriate as technically it would be dealt with not as a transfer of money from SNH to CNPA, but as a result of SNH not bidding for those funds, and CNPA bidding for those same funds from the Scottish Government.
18. The Committee recorded its support for the recommendation in Paper 6 which would be considered by the Board later in the day.

## **AOCB**

19. None.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

20. 18 February 2010, Ballater.