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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at Duke of Gordon Hotel, Kingussie on Friday 28 October 2011 at 10.30am

### PRESENT

Peter Argyle  
Duncan Bryden  
Angela Douglas  
Dave Fallows  
Katrina Farquhar  
Kate Howie  
Marcus Humphrey

Gregor Hutcheon  
Eleanor Mackintosh  
Willie McKenna  
Ian MacKintosh  
Gordon Riddler  
Gregor Rimell  
Allan Wright

### In Attendance:

David Cameron  
Jane Hope  
Matthew Hawkins

Andy Rinning  
Hamish Trench

### Apologies:

Jaci Douglas  
David Green (Convener)  
Mary McCafferty  
Brian Wood  
Martin Price

### Welcome and Introduction

1. Duncan Bryden took the Chair for the meeting in the absence of the Convener and Deputy Convener.

## **Minutes of Last Meeting – approval**

2. The minutes of the meeting of the 2<sup>nd</sup> September were approved with no changes.

## **Matters Arising**

3. Para 10 (a) – following the Board’s approval in principle to contribute up to £100,000 towards the development of an improved information hub at Blair Atholl, subject to financial support from partners and detailed approval of spending plans by the Finance Committee, Eleanor Mackintosh reported that the Finance Committee had approved those details at the meeting that morning. All the points made by the Board in discussion on the 2<sup>nd</sup> September had been reflected in the conditions attached to the Grant. This was seen as being a good facility which hopefully would be enjoyed and used by many members of the public.

## **Declarations of Interest**

4. None

## **Audit Committee Annual Report (Paper I)**

5. The Chair noted at the start that the Board should consider endorsing this report rather than just noting it. The competent running of the organisation, and in particular risk management, was a responsibility of the whole Board, and though perfectly appropriate for this to be delegated within year to the Audit Committee to monitor, it remained a responsibility of the Board as a whole. David Cameron introduced the paper confirming that it was good governance for the Audit Committee to report annually to the full Board. The overview of the work of the Audit Committee comprised the scrutiny of reports from the internal and external Auditors; and monitoring of the trends in the Strategic Risk Register. Included as an annex to the report was the Audit Scotland report on the Accounts and Governance Audit for 2010/11.
6. The Chair of the Audit Committee, Ian MacKintosh, reported that the report from Audit Scotland was a good one. It was unqualified, which was rare; the Board should take comfort from the report noting that good controls were in place. There had been good discussion in the Audit Committee, and as the organisation moved forward into difficult times, it was important that the Committee continued to keep challenging the controls within the organisation. He drew attention to paragraph 64 of the Audit Scotland report which suggested that the CNPA was well placed for the future.

7. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) The Committee commended the working relationship with Elaine Barrowman, the external Auditor from Audit Scotland.
  - b) On page 11 of the Audit Scotland Report, the lowest scoring element of the Procurement Capability Assessment (PCA) concerned contract and supplier management, and an explanation was sought. It was noted that PCA had only started in 2010; a joint Procurement Management post had been established in partnership with Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority and this was developing into a base of expertise and advice which was working well. Action plans were in place to improve procurement arrangements. However, it was noted that in relation to two small National Park Authorities the realistic ambition was not to get all the way over to the right of the graph as 100% was not feasible (“superior performance”). The contract and supplier management area of assessment was really aimed at the challenges in larger organisations who were getting a continual supply of goods and services from a limited number of suppliers. This was simply not the case for the two National Park Authorities where contractors were generally commissioned to do particular pieces of work as a one off rather than as a continuous supply. So in summary, there would always be a tension between the assessment criteria for contract and supply management, and the nature of small organisations like the two National Park Authorities. It therefore simply did not warrant a high degree of effort to get the performance on procurement into the high ranking category.
  - c) In the Strategic Risk Register, it was noted that risk 6 should be updated to refer to March 2012 rather than March 2011. It was nevertheless noted that the column reporting progress update and action taken was up to date. It was also noted that the audit trail in this column showing the timeline of updates was useful.
  - d) The Scottish Government requirement for 2% efficiency savings resulted in the CNPA being able to retain and recycle these savings into other parts of its expenditure. As reported to the Finance Committee that morning, this had enabled the organisation to maintain its Operational Plan to spend in the face of the declining Grant-in-Aid (GIA). The requirement for efficiency savings was understood to be continuing into 2012/13, albeit the CNPA’s ability to use these to protect the Operational Plan expenditure against cuts in GIA were unlikely.
  - e) The Risk Register has been compiled on the basis of the existing National Park Plan and Corporate Plan. The organisation was developing a new Corporate Plan which would need to be completed by March 2012; alongside this, it was planned to have a Risk Management Workshop to develop a new Risk Register to accompany the development of the new Corporate Plan. The workshop would be facilitated by the Internal Auditor (KPMG). It was noted however that even the current Risk Register was constantly monitored and regularly revised by

Management Team and the Audit Committee, to add new risks or remove those that were outdated.

**8. The Board endorsed the Audit Committee's Annual Report to the Board.**

**Board Meeting Schedule for 2012 (Paper 2)**

9. Jane Hope introduced the paper which was self explanatory, setting out the schedule of dates and venues for meetings of the Board and its Committees for 2012. Ideas were invited for the programme of summer visits in 2012 and the suggestion of a session devoted to diversification of the National Park economy was noted.

**10. The Board approved the dates and venues for meetings of the Board and its Committees in 2012.**

**Proposed Landscapes Partnership (Paper 3)**

11. Hamish Trench and Matthew Hawkins introduced this paper which updated the Board on how the scoping of the proposed Landscape Partnership bid was developing, and which sought a steer from the Board on the focus for the bid. In summary the points made were:

- a) HLF Programme Outcomes
  - i. Conserve or restoring the built and natural features that create the historic landscape character
  - ii. Increase community participation in local heritage
  - iii. Increase access to and learning about the landscape and its heritage
  - iv. Increase training opportunities in local heritage skills
- b) Issues to Consider
  - i. Scope for positive Landscape change
  - ii. Cultural and Built Heritage
  - iii. Biodiversity
  - iv. Community Participation
  - v. Increasing Access
  - vi. Increasing Learning
  - vii. Increasing Training
- c) LP Bid Candidates
  - i. Transect across the Cairngorms massif: Kincaig following the ancient route through Glen Feshie, Glen Geldie to Mar Lodge and Braemar
  - ii. Tomintoul and Glenlivet Area: potentially linking Avon to the Dee
- d) Transect Strengths
  - i. Includes the mountains which are 'at the heart of the Park'

- ii. Route has rich cultural heritage as an ancient drove route and settlements at either end
  - iii. A significant natural landscape many Natura designations
  - iv. Connecting route for habitats, ideal for woodland connectivity and resilience to climate change
  - v. Support in principle from most main landowners – Glen Feshie, NTS, SNH, RSPB
  - vi. Current project work already taking place on Spey and Dee Rivers and RSPBs Futurescape initiative
- e) Transect Weaknesses
- i. Possible lack of capacity in Braemar community which has strong focus on Braemar Castle
  - ii. Strong feelings about woodland regeneration at both ends
  - iii. Little evidence of current residents focusing on this ancient link
  - iv. Woodland regeneration and other habitat improvements could happen with this project
- f) Transect threats
- i. Perception that it is a high quality landscape that doesn't need improving
- g) Tomintoul Strengths
- i. Rich cultural heritage, Scanlan seminary, castles, military roads, smuggling routes and mineral workings
  - ii. Presence of alder woodland, calcareous grasslands, both distinctive features to this area
  - iii. The landscape has potential for improvement, eg plantation restructuring
  - iv. Support in principle from the Crown Estate as a major land owner
  - v. Economic regeneration project happening currently. Good support from the community and agencies.
- h) Tomintoul Weaknesses
- i. Small population in the two communities
  - ii. Biodiversity improvements may have a localised benefit – there is some scope for connectivity of Avon to Gairn
  - iii. Much of the area is high ground and grouse moorland which would be harder for woodland cover
- i) Tomintoul Opportunities
- i. Opportunities to improve the balance of native species, particularly in woodland
  - ii. Well established trails within Crown Estate lands could be developed further
- j) Tomintoul Threats
- i. Possible perception that this is too small an area of the Park in which to channel so much resource
  - ii. Confusion between the HLF bid and the Economic regeneration project

k) Other LP bids in Scotland

- i. Applecross, West Scotland – A remote peninsula with a rugged landscape of mountains, crofting settlements and moorlands. Important buildings, such as Clachan Church, will be conserved, and the Gaelic language and culture promoted.
- ii. The Isle of Harris, Western Scotland – Celebrated for its combination of crystal clear seas and sandy beaches, as well as its tweed industry. The island's heritage of traditional skills and historic ceremonies will be promoted, and the native woodland protected.
- iii. The Ochils, Central Scotland – A dramatic hill range located in Clackmannanshire encompassing peaks, mines and villages. Access to the hills and wooded glens will be improved as will the quality of its rivers.

l2. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The Tomintoul and the Glenlivet area met the criteria for the bid for the Landscape Partnership fund and in practice the area covered could be as large as one wanted to make it. There was a huge amount of interest in the cultural heritage of the area – castles, battlefields, the Scallan, whiskey. The point about confusion between the Landscape Partnership work and the Regeneration Project was not a real one, as in practice the two pieces of work would dovetail quite successfully. The regeneration work, on which the report was yet to be published, seemed likely to flag up a whole range of possible projects.
- b) The caveat of community capacity was noted, and in practice the appointment of a project officer could be the way of dealing with this. One of the biggest caveats was likely to be the challenge of managing expectations.
- c) Selecting the target area as being Tomintoul and Glenlivet and its surroundings provided an opportunity to make a significant transformational change. There was the feeling that the Kingussie/Kincraig/Braemar transect was likely to involve work that would have been done anyway. In practice the choice of area needed to be driven by feedback from informal soundings from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).
- d) The idea of a transect covering a range of communities such as Kingussie/Kincraig/Braemar was equally applicable to the Tomintoul and Glenlivet proposal. A transect of Tomintoul Speyside to the Blair Atholl area (newly introduced to the Park) could be a credible transect. The proposal for Tomintoul and Glenlivet was a good one but the suggestion was made that this should be extended a bit more widely into Speyside and Strathdon. Together these areas embodied much of the trans-Cairngorms history.
- e) There was some debate as to whether more than one application could be pursued but it was felt that this could be unwise. Two bids were likely to dilute the effort and it was unlikely that both would be successful.
- f) In practice a successful bid was likely to involve a huge range of projects.

- g) It was important for the CNPA and its partners to focus efforts to maximise effectiveness. Focusing on one area in order to make a real difference was important.
- h) The Braemar Community Company was increasingly becoming very effective and it was engaging in more work than just Braemar Castle.
- i) There was some discussion about the importance of tree cover in the project and it was noted that there were limitations in how well trees could be established above 1,300ft.
- j) Connectivity between different parts of the Park was an essential element of the HLF bid regardless of which area it sought to concentrate on.
- k) There would undoubtedly be synergy between the regeneration project in Tomintoul, and any bid to the HLF partnership. It would be important to ensure that in doing so the HLF would not be funding something that would happen anyway; so there would be work to be done on integrating the two streams of work to minimise confusion, and maximise the benefits. HLF would want to see a project that was clear and distinct and that had to be borne in mind while also maximising the effectiveness and efficiency of public funding.
- l) While it was important to involve the community and this would undoubtedly add weight to the project, the National Park Authority would be taking the lead in prompting the project and setting it up. However, once set up it was envisaged that a steering group would be established involving all those with an interest.
- m) The Tomintoul/Glenlivet area was an excellent idea for this bid. It would be able to pick up a lot of the ancient routes. The need for this sort of project was largely in the Tomintoul area however, it would be important to overcome the potential difficulty that much of the surrounding land was managed for grouse and this may conflict with the objective of tree planting.
- n) It was however noted that the project was not just about woodland and the bid would encompass general habitat networks.
- o) £2million was not a huge budget. The limit of 200 sq km was also not a huge limit if looking for an extensive route for example to Braemar; the consequence could be a very thin transect and further thought was needed on this.
- p) The risks were similar in both of the possible areas under consideration. Glenfeshie already had a proposal for montane woodlands; woodland expansion at Mar Lodge was far from straight forward. It was therefore not certain in either of the areas what could be achieved in respect of woodland cover.
- q) It was important to be confident that the bid was one that was likely to succeed, and that probably pointed to the Tomintoul/Glenlivet proposal. The bid would be complimentary to the regeneration work. A plea was made to give more weight to Donside which in some ways was a forgotten part of the Park. Culturally and historically there were strong links there with Tomintoul.

- r) It was important to get a good and meaningful title – “transect” was a working title, and certainly not the final title which needed to be somewhat more inspirational.
  - s) There was some risk with CAP support, with landowners potentially locked into something they then could not get out of. This was recognised and needed to be kept in mind.
13. Summing up the discussion the Chair said that there was a strong steer towards focusing on the Tomintoul and Glenlivet area. In pursuing the bid, it was essential to do this properly and make sure sufficient staff time and resources were devoted to putting the bid together. If successful the bid would then lead to a project which would be closely tied into delivery targets, so resources also needed to be in place to deliver those targets.

#### **Corporate Plan Monitoring (Paper 4)**

14. This paper was for information. The Chair of the Finance Committee (Eleanor Mackintosh) made one observation namely that in the Balance Score Card there was only one factor marked as red indicating danger of non delivery. This indicator was Operational Plan expenditure being in line with budget (currently running at -30% below target). This had been considered at the Finance Committee that morning and the Committee were satisfied that this expenditure was under control and would be back on track at the year end. The vast majority of indicators were green and for this staff were congratulated.

#### **National Park Plan 4-Monthly Report 9 (Paper 5)**

15. This report was for information and was duly noted without comment.

#### **Community Heritage (Paper 6)**

16. This paper was for information, providing an update on this project. The Board recorded its thanks to Fiona MacLean, the Project Officer. A considerable number of projects had been supported getting communities engaged with their heritage. It was noted that at paragraph 3, more projects had come forward than had been expected indicating a clear demand. It was noted that heritage could add economic value for e.g. tourism. There were huge opportunities in guiding – telling the stories of the area was important and engaging visitors was not just about the environment. The CNPA had limited resources but a strategic perspective was emerging on cultural heritage and how we connect across communities and therefore add value. This role of the CNPA needed to be borne in mind at the future discussion of the CNPA Corporate Plan.



Board Members endorsed the report and thanked all the staff concerned in this project.

## **Update on Delivery Against Key Performance Indicators (Paper 7)**

17. This paper was for information. Two points were made:
- a) At paragraph 33, cumulative efficiency savings were shown which were considerably greater than the target of £90k each year. Savings were being fed back into the delivery of the Operational Plan.
  - b) At paragraph 10 chart 2 showed the annual increase in business use of the brand. This was felt to be confusing unless there was a target line shown on the same graph as it was inevitable the increase would slow over time. The point was made that under paragraph 9 the cumulative number of businesses awarded the brand was also shown and this might be the measure which was intuitively easier to understand.

## **AOCB**

18. Members reported on their activities as follows:
- a) Duncan Bryden had attended a Sustainable Tourism Seminar run by CIFAL; spoken at the Euro Montana Conference in Inverness where there had been considerable interest in the Scottish model of National Parks; spoken to a visit by Norwegians; attended the SCIDI Influencers dinner about renewable energy; attended the Community Consultation meetings on the National Park Plan and Main Issues Report at Aviemore and Boat of Garten (he noted the meetings had been constructive, with a good turnout, and with the focus still being on housing) Chaired an Outdoor Access event hosted by the CNPA.
  - b) Peter Argyle had attended the meeting of Planning Conveners hosted by the Scottish Government.
  - c) Angela Douglas had participated in the Training Session run by KPMG for the Audit Committees of both the Cairngorms and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Audit Committees.
  - d) Allan Wright had attended CoHI, attended by a number of Scottish Government Ministers, and jointly hosted by the Highland Council and the CNPA. The role and stature of the National Park and the National Park Authority had been raised as a result.
  - e) Gregor Rimell had attended a number of the Community Consultation events. He recorded thanks to the staff for the events which had been organised well, and he noted the great benefit of having independent Community Development Officers facilitating the meeting.

- f) Kate Howie noted that she was a Board Member of the Highland Perthshire DMO which was looking enviously at the Cairngorms Business Partnership and its development. It was noted in discussion that at the CoHI meeting the Cairngorms Business Partnership had received numerous plaudits for its work.
- g) Marcus Humphrey had attended the AGM of COAT; he noted the outstanding success of the Walking to Health Project.
- h) Katrina Farquhar had participated in the visit by the group of Norwegians.
- i) Dave Fallows noted the Community Consultation meetings and also noted the confusion between the National Park Plan and Local Development Plan Main Issues report, and the inaccessibility of some of the language used in the reports.
- j) Ian MacKintosh had participated in the Audit Committee Training.
- k) Gregor Hutcheon, as the CNPA representative, had also attended the AGM of COAT. He noted that COAT was starting to consult partners on its future priorities.
- l) Gordon Riddler had attended the Inclusive Cairngorms meeting as the CNPA representative; he attended the COAT meeting; he attended the Mar Area Partnership meeting; he attended the CBP lunch at Ballater.
- m) Willie McKenna had attended the Aviemore Community Council meeting, as well as the Aviemore Community Consultation meeting which had been positive.
- n) Eleanor Mackintosh was a member of the Steering Group for the Tomintoul Regeneration work. She had also participated in the visit by the Norwegians; and attended the Sustainable Estates Community Workshop.

**Date of Next Meeting:**

- 19. Next formal meeting Friday 20<sup>th</sup> January, 2012, venue to be confirmed.