

CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK VISIT FORUM
Draft minutes of meeting held on Wednesday 30th May at Glenavon Hotel, Tomintoul

Present:

Bruce Luffman (Chair)	Auld Cummerton, Strathdon
Sally Dowden (Vice Chair)	Speyside Wildlife
Robert Armstrong	Aberdeenshire Council
Elaine Booth	Scottish Enterprise Grampian
Pete Crane	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Sandy Dear	VisitScotland
Trish Eccles	Nethy Station
Murray Ferguson	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Heather Galbraith	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Fred Gordon	Aberdeenshire Council
Pamela Grant	Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce
Chris Hewitt	Mar Lodge Estate, NTS
Jane Hope	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Jacqui Horning	Tomintoul & Glenlivet Highland Holidays
Andrew Kirk	Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge
Rita Marks	Moray Tourism Forum
Pierre Masson	Moray Council
Bell Macaulay	Association of Cairngorms Communities
Elma McMenemy	Royal Deeside & Mearns Tourism Forum
Dennis MacFarlane	VisitScotland
Fiona Milligan	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Fiona Murray	Forestry Commission
Mick Pawley	Angus Council
Andy Rockall	Scottish Natural Heritage
Ian Reynolds	Scottish Enterprise Tayside
Colin Simpson	Highland Council
Deborah Tait	HIE Inverness & East Highland
Chris Taylor	Cairngorms National Park Authority

Apologies

Alex Burns-Smith	Pine Bank Chalets
Ian Dunlop	VisitScotland
Bob Kinnaid	Cairngorm Mountain
Garry Marsden	Balmoral Estate
Caroline Mitchell	Chivas
Silvia Woodier	Brooklyn Guest House

Welcome and Apologies

1. Bruce Luffman welcomed everyone and the apologies were noted. Everyone introduced themselves.

Minutes of the Last Meeting and Matters Arising

2. The minutes of the previous meeting were approved. The following matters arising were discussed:

- Para 3: Tourism Prospectus. Dennis MacFarlane will let the group know when VisitScotland's Tourism Prospectus would be available.
- Para 3: Tourism Research Network. Chris Taylor will feed comments from the last ViSIT Forum meeting into the Tourism Research network.
- Para 3: VS / CNPA meeting. The meeting will go ahead on 1st June and topics to be discussed include marketing, park plan delivery and quality assurance. There was discussion about the involvement of Visitscotland.com, but it was confirmed that this meeting will just include representatives from VisitScotland.
- Para 18: Highland Tourist Route. There has not been much progress on the development of the route since the last meeting. Funding may be available

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- from HIE Inverness & East Highland, and also Highland Council but this is not confirmed. ACDMO will also be contacted.
- Para 6: Tomintoul TIC. A meeting was recently held in Tomintoul outlining possible options for the continued provision of TIC services in the village. There are 4 options, including closure of the TIC, partnership delivery and community involvement. Several potential issues were raised including the promotion of only quality-assured businesses, retail competition between the TIC and local shops and the importance of looking at funding on a long-term basis.
 - Para 19-27: Website study. The website scoping document will be available in July and a meeting of all industry stakeholders will be held to discuss the way forward. The *Park i* website was briefly discussed and it was clarified that this is not run by the Chamber of Commerce.
 - Para 34: Royal Destination Award for Sustainability. The Cairngorms National Park was one of 3 finalists from across Europe shortlisted for the award. The winner of the award was Fiskars Village in Finland, a redeveloped industrial site, but the Cairngorms submission received very good feedback.

Future of Advisory Forum

3. Jane Hope introduced Paper 1. She stressed that existing advisory groups – ViSIT, Economic & Social Development Forum and Integrated Land Management Forum had been very useful in the initial stages of the Park's development. Now that the National Park Plan has been finalised, the forums will change slightly to focus on the 3 strategic themes of the National Park Plan. The ViSIT Forum will evolve into the forum on 'Enjoying & Understanding the Park'.

4. In discussion the following points were raised:

- It would be useful to have greater CNPA board member representation on the forums.
- The large size of the forum is a strength.
- All current ViSIT members will be invited to participate in the 'Enjoying and Understanding the Park' Forum, but are welcome to attend any or all of the 3 forums. It may be necessary to invite others onto the Forum as well.
- Communication between the forums is critical and all 3 forums will have the same secretariat, the CNPA Strategy Officer. It was suggested that papers for all forums be sent to everyone involved with any forum. Once a year all three forums will meet together.
- There may be some agencies that don't need to be represented on the Forum but may be invited to some meetings as appropriate. Topics for meetings will be agreed well in advance.
- Small businesses often find it more useful to discuss practical issues rather than higher-level strategic topics.
- There need to be good links between the relevant Priority for Action delivery teams and the Advisory Forums.
- It is suggested that the Forum meets twice a year, in addition to the annual meeting of all Forums, but this can be changed if necessary. More communication could take place electronically, but it was noted that face-to-face discussion was important.

Any further comments on the future of the Advisory Forum should be fed to Murray Ferguson at murrayferguson@cairngorms.co.uk or 01479 870525.

Visitor Information Review

5. Murray Ferguson introduced Paper 2 and Pete Crane expanded on the progress report on the review. A small survey of visitors' response to the publications had been carried out as a piece of student research. Feedback is currently being sought from people working on the frontline of tourism locally, particularly from accommodation providers and TIC staff.

6. The Cairngorms Visitor Guide 2007 was discussed and the following points were made:
- The layout, with adverts separated from editorial, was disappointing for advertisers.
 - The design of the guide could be improved, and a better cover image found. There is no consistency in typeface used in various branded publications.
 - There was a suggestion that CNPA should lead on production of the guide rather than VisitScotland, but it was agreed that VisitScotland would take on board feedback from the 2007/08 guide in planning for 2008/09.
 - There seem to be issues with distribution of visitor information. Business may collect bulk supplies of the visitor guide from TICs, but more needs to be done to promote this. A reminder will be issued through CCC e-bulletin.

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Green Tourism Business Scheme

7. Heather Galbraith introduced Paper 3. In discussion the following points were made:
- Businesses see marketing advantage as an important element of the scheme, but this does not seem to be a priority for VisitScotland. CNPA to raise with VisitScotland.
 - The new entry-level scheme that is proposed could undermine the marketing advantage of those already in the scheme.
 - There could be closer links between GTBS and Quality Assurance assessments.
 - The targets for uptake within the Cairngorms by March 2008 in the paper were seen as realistic.
 - Further funding for work to promote GTBS in the Cairngorms could be available from VisitScotland.

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Cairngorms Tourism Conference

8. Heather Galbraith introduced Paper 4. In discussion about plans for the conference, the following suggestions were made:
- The suggested topic of 'local produce' could be extended from arts & crafts and food & drink to include service providers as well, although it was generally felt that it would be better to keep things more focused.
 - Jim Mullen of Larderbytes was suggested as a speaker.

Cairngorms Awareness & Pride Project

9. Kate Christie gave an update on the Cairngorms Awareness & Pride Project, which has evolved as a result of wide interest in the free public benefit courses available previously for land-managers within the National Park. There have been 4 courses so far this year, including Tick Management and Pond Creation. Any feedback on the courses or suggestions for future courses should be fed to katechristie@cairngorms.co.uk.

Information Updates

10. Point of Entry Marker Project. Pete Crane advised that in light of recent discussions about potential changes to the National Park boundary, CNPA are taking stock of the current position regarding installation of the marker planned for Drumochter.

Achievements of the Forum

11. Bruce Luffman thanked members of the ViSIT Forum for their involvement and support in recent years and encouraged them to stay involved with the new forum structure. The ViSIT Forum has been an excellent example of partnership working and has led to the National Park being recognised internationally for its work on sustainable tourism. He advised that he would not be chair of the new forum, but would continue as an Aberdeenshire Council nomination to the CNPA Board.

Any Other Business

12. As chairman of the Brand Management Group, Sally Dowden updated on the group on the situation with the development of the Cairngorms National Park brand to

include family brands, for example Cairngorms Farmers Market and Aviemore and the Cairngorms DMO. The CNPA board had asked for expert advice on the matter so the Brand Management Group had approached Navy Blue Design, who have concerns about the execution of the work on family brands. A board paper on the subject will be presented on Friday 15th June and the views of the ViSIT Forum were sought.

13. There was extensive discussion on the subject of family brands. Some people were in favour of allowing family brands, to raise the profile of the visual image wherever possible. There was also a feeling that community use of the brand should be encouraged wherever possible. However, it was also suggested that the brand was not yet well enough established as an identity for the National Park to be used without the words 'National Park'. The Forum didn't reach any conclusion, but were asked to e-mail any further thoughts to murrayferguson@cairngorms.co.uk.

Heather Galbraith
June 2007