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# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## APPROVED MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held in the Lonach Hall, Strathdon on Friday 30 September 2016 at 10.30am

### PRESENT

Peter Argyle (Convener)	Gregor Hutcheon
Rebecca Badger	John Latham
Angela Douglas	Bill Lobban
Paul Easto	Eleanor Mackintosh
Dave Fallows	Willie McKenna
Jeanette Gaul	Gordon Riddler
Katrina Farquhar	Judith Webb
Kate Howie	Brian Wood (Deputy Convener)
Janet Hunter	

### In Attendance:

Grant Moir, Chief Executive,  
David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services,  
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning & Rural Development,  
Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation & Visitor Experience,  
Francoise van Buuren, Head of Communications and Engagement  
Pete Crane, Head of Visitor Services  
Sandra Middleton, Head of Rural Development  
Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board.

**Apologies:** Fiona Murdoch Gregor Rimell

### Welcome and Introduction

1. Peter Argyle, the Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting in Strathdon and gave the Board a brief history of the area.

2. The Convener said that interesting discussions with Andy Wells, The Crown Estate, David Frew, Mar Lodge Estate, Clive Meikle, Glenavon Estate, Tim Baynes, Scottish Land & Estates Moorland Group, Mark Nicolson, Mar Estate, Richard Gledson, Balmoral Estate and Angus McNicol, Invercauld Estate focussing on the East Cairngorms Moorland Partnership had taken place the previous evening. He thanked Hamish Trench and Will Boyd Wallis for the work they had done on the getting the Partnership to that stage.
3. The Convener highlighted that today was the last day of the National Park Partnership Plan Consultation. He advised that there had been a high rate of responses and a few more may be forthcoming in the next week.
4. The Convener informed the Board that the Housing Conference on the 20<sup>th</sup> September 2016 in Boat of Garten Community Hall had been extremely positive and successful. He added that those attending had had discussions focussing on possible solutions and the way forward.
5. Apologies were received from the above Members.

### **Minutes of Last Meeting held on 24 June, 2016 – for approval**

6. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 24 June 2016 were agreed with no amendments.

### **Matters Arising**

7. The Convener provided an update on the Action points from the minutes of the meeting on 24 June 2016:
  - Action Point at Para 15 (i.) – Closed – Help with the wording of a question to capture the training recipient's thoughts on the National Park was given and added to the training recipient's feedback form.
  - Action Point at Para 15 (ii.) – In hand – The CNPA's emphasis has been on Gaelic but possible courses on Scots may be looked into in the future.
  - Action Point at Para 15 (iii.) – Superseded – Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) have organised a Wildlife Crime Seminar on 14<sup>th</sup> October therefore this replaced the need for a CNPA event on the subject.
  - Action Point at Para 18 (i.) – Closed – David Cameron circulated the Strategic Risk Register to the Board following the Board meeting on 24 June 2016.
  - Action Point at Para 22 (iii.) – Closed – Paper on the successes of the Land Management Training on today's Agenda as Paper 2.

## Declarations of Interest

7. No interests were declared.

## CEO Report (Paper 1)

8. Grant Moir Chief Executive introduced Paper 1 which highlights the main strategic work streams that are being directed by Management Team. Grant explained that these are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver National Park Partnership Plan priorities. He highlighted the following areas:
  - a) Tomintoul & Glenlivet Partnership – the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) bid has been successful and will be made public on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October 2016. After which the work can be taken forward.
  - b) Snow Roads Scenic Routes – work at Glenshee is finished, the work at Tomintoul is taking a bit longer. The Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) bid to Scottish Enterprise had been successful.
  - c) National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) Consultation - as of yesterday 258 responses had been received. People from all across the National Park had been consulted. The Staff would now analyse the responses and bring it to the December Board meeting.
9. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) A Board Member praised the good work of COAT on Beinn a Ghlo in Perthshire on The Mountains and People Project. Was Scottish Government money being used to help fund the 8 apprenticeships? David Cameron confirmed that the funding was through HLF and not through the Scottish Government. He went on to advise that it was an aspiration of COAT's to secure funding directly from Scottish Government into the apprenticeship scheme.
  - b) Had the Scenic Routes route been formally agreed? Grant confirmed that it had from Blairgowrie to Grantown.
  - c) Disappointment to see the completion of the Speyside Way extension pushed back to 2018 - was there a reason behind the delay in the section to Insh causing a delay to the rest? Grant advised that it was as a result of funding and the timing of Forestry Commission felling. He advised that they did not want to build a path and for felling to take place on top. He added that it is likely that a planning application will be brought forward on this, in autumn this year.

- d) Would the Volunteering Co-ordinator be recruiting volunteers Park-wide?  
Grant confirmed that they would.
- e) A Board Member questioned whether the 'Make it Yours' campaign had slipped?  
Grant advised the opposite: staff had visited 15 organisations and given presentations to over 100 people. Sandra added that they had not been doing anything directly with businesses in the summer months as this was when businesses were at their busiest. Grant agreed to circulate an update to the Board on the 'Make it Yours' campaign. The Board were encouraged to get in touch with Sandra if they wanted to get involved or attend training sessions.
- f) Were Active Cairngorms involved in the 2017 Orienteering event in Ballater?  
David advised that a funding application had come through the Cairngorms LAG.
- g) Some concern was expressed following presentations to other initiatives by VisitScotland staff in terms of their commitment to the profile of the Cairngorms National Park and the withdrawal from local partnership Visitor Information Centre's. A plea was made to reinforce this at a strategic level. Murray Ferguson agreed to pick up on some of these issues in discussions with VisitScotland. Pete confirmed that Ranger bases and Visitor Information Centres were often happy to promote the Cairngorms National Park even if not part of formal VisitScotland schemes.
- h) Would the responses to NPPP consultation be in the public domain? Grant advised that they would so long as the resposdee had ticked the box agreeing to it being in the public domain.
- i) Which four communities in the National Park were being targeted in the Building Stronger Communities pilot project? Murray advised that they were: Blair Atholl & Killiecrankie, Tomintoul & Glenlivet, Kingussie & Newtonmore and Ballater.
- j) How will the volunteers be recruited? Grant advised that it would be through advertising, word of mouth and drop in evenings. Pete Crane advised that the key thing to remember is that volunteers are unpaid employees. Where a longer term commitment is being sought, volunteers will be recruited by an application and interview and for one-off volunteering it would just be a case of turning up. He added that both types of volunteer would be catered for.
- k) Concern was raised regarding the increase of deer and inadequate temporary fencing as a result of the A9 work. The fencing was allowing more deer to cross the road resulting in a higher risk of collisions. Suggestion was made to raise awareness of the impacts of the removal of fences. Sandra confirmed that her team had been looking at that when developing responses, specifically looking at underpasses that could be used better for the funnelling of mammals.

10. The Convener thanked Paul Easto for his contribution to the Paper and reminded Members that they could also put forward updates.

11. **The Board noted the Paper.**

12. **Actions:**

- i. **'Make it Yours' campaign update to be circulated to the Board.**

### **Cairngorm & Glenmore Strategy (Paper 2)**

13. The Convener reminded Members that they may be considering planning applications from Natural Retreats in future so keep that in mind when discussing the Paper.

14. Hamish Trench, Director of Conservation and Visitor Experience introduced Paper 2 which seeks the Board's approval of the Cairngorm and Glenmore Strategy.

15. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) Reassurance was sought that the areas of wildness would remain and that there would be no risk of overdevelopment. Hamish confirmed that the direction of the strategy is to consolidate existing development and rationalise signage thus not overdeveloping the area.
- b) A suggestion was made to ensure that the point of wild land being kept as wild land is carried forward in the spatial planning to avoid mis-interpretation. The Convener advised that it was an intrinsic part of it and would be unlikely to be mis-interpreted.
- c) A suggestion was made to add an additional management principle in relation to development and enhancement work. Suggested wording as follows: All development and enhancement work is carried out to high quality standards appropriate to the sensitive environment. Although planning conditions set out to do that, it would be good to see buy-in at this early stage from Partners, agreeing that this is what would be expected. Hamish agreed to make this suggestion to Partners.
- d) Question around the level of ambition of the strategy - Was the final strategy a reflection of the consultation process and/or of organisational capacities? Hamish confirmed that it reflected both the consultation but also the constraints on the land owning organisations; Forest Enterprise Scotland (FES) and Highland & Islands Enterprise (HIE) as to what it would be possible to deliver.

16. **The Board approved the strategy for Cairngorm and Glenmore and CNPA's role in implementation.**

17. **Action:**

- i. **An additional Management Principle to be added to the strategy subject to all Partners agreeing to the addition.**

**Board Member Committee/ Group Membership (Paper 3)**

18. Grant Moir, Chief Executive introduced Paper 3 which asks the Board to agree the Board Membership of Committees and Groups for the next year.

19. It was highlighted that the Board representative on the Inclusive Cairngorms group should be Gregor Rimell and not Gordon Riddler as the paper stated.

20. **The Board considered the current membership of the Groups and Committees and agreed the following:**

- a) **Janet Hunter to become the nominated Board member on the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT)**
- b) **Dave Fallows to become the nominated Board member for the Cairngorms Community Broadband Company.**
- c) **Gordon Riddler to become the observer to attend the Board meetings of VisitAberdeenshire with Paul Easto as his substitute.**
- d) **John Latham and Katrina Farquhar volunteered to join the Audit & Risk Committee.**
- e) **Members agreed that they were content with all the representatives as described in the Paper on the Board Committees and Groups.**

19. **Actions:**

- i. **Janet Hunter to become the nominated Board member on the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT)**
- ii. **Dave Fallows to become the nominated Board member on the Cairngorms Community Broadband Company.**
- iii. **Gordon Riddler to become the observer on the VisitAberdeenshire group with Paul Easto as his substitute.**
- iv. **John Latham and Katrina Farquhar volunteered to join the Audit & Risk Committee.**

## **Communications and Engagement Programme 2017/18 (Paper 4)**

20. Francoise van Buuren, Head of Communications and Engagement introduced Paper 4 which provides an update on the communications and engagement activities carried out during 2016/ 17 and seeks to gain approval for the proposed programme of activity for 2017/ 18. She explained that this programme of work has been guided by the Communications and Brand Board group chaired by Brian Wood consisting of Gregor Hutcheon, Paul Easto, Eleanor Mackintosh, Janet Hunter, Angela Douglas and Dave Fallows. She highlighted the following areas:
  - a) Special thanks to Board Members for having attended Community meetings during the summer and helping to spread the word of the National Park Plan Consultation.
  - b) A bid has been submitted to the Cairngorms LAG to employ someone to find out how to make the Cairngorms Nature Festival more self-financing possibly through the sale of tickets.
  - c) The 'Wee Walk Week' proved very successful with over 450 people having taken part across the National Park. There was also lots of sharing on social media.
21. The Convener commended Francoise van Buuren and her team on the presentation of the NPPP Consultation document.
22. Brian Wood Chair of the Communications and Brand Board group commended the Paper and thanked Francoise van Buuren and colleagues on work that had been done. He went on to advise that the level of engagement had increased and that the documents were friendly and enabled and encouraged people to get into them easily.
23. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) A Board Member commended the materials provided which enabled Board Members to attend meetings in their communities to spread the news of the National Park Partnership Plan Consultation and suggested that Board Members be used more often. Francoise advised that the Local Development Plan Consultation would take place in 2017 and Board Members support would be essential in supporting that process.
  - b) With reference to the table on page 4 of the Paper, what did 'bounce rate' mean? Francoise explained that it is the terms used when someone comes into a website and immediately bounces back out as it is not the page they were looking for. She added that 50% is the common average for most websites.

- c) A Board Member commented that at point e) under Active Cairngorms in the Paper which talks about supporting walking/ cycling festivals. Concern was raised as to whether this was the right place to target our activities? Inactive people would not necessarily be attending these types of events. It was also suggested that all types of events are targeted and that Board Members attend with a display to attract the inactive people. Françoise advised that it may be good to target less active people attending with a more active person. Pete advised that it was the initial intention however the issue is limited resources. He added that he would be happy to use Board Members to do more. Grant went on to say he hoped that would be the future role of volunteer rangers. The Board Member suggested that if resources did become available it may be better being targeted elsewhere to target less active types.

24. **The Board approved the proposed Communications and Engagement Programme for 2017/18. The final communications & engagement budget will be approved as part of the operational plan in March 2017. Indicative figures for the next year are set out in the Corporate Plan; however this will be subject to the outcome of the spending review and National Park Partnership Plan consultation.**

25. **Actions:                      None.**

### **Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report (Paper 5)**

26. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 5 which presents the Audit & Risk Committee Annual Report.
27. The Convener on behalf of the Board thanked Gordon Riddler for six years of hard work as Convener of the Audit & Risk Committee.
28. The current Audit & Risk Committee Convener made the following points:
- a) Thanks to John and Katrina for joining the Audit & Risk Committee.
  - b) The new internal auditor had produced a great report on the Authority's approach to risk management and the maturity of its risk management systems.
  - c) He thanked the Audit & Risk Committee and staff for all their hard work.
  - d) Reinforced the importance of Audit & Risk Committee Members receiving training to help their understanding of what it is all about.
29. The Audit & Risk Committee Members commended Gordon Riddler's contribution on the Committee to date and advised that he would be missed.



30. **The Board agreed and noted the report.**

31. **Actions:                      None.**

### **Governance: Declarations of Interest and Role of Convener (Paper 6)**

32. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced Paper 5 which presents a guidance note to members and Conveners on the process of declarations of interest and the roles of Conveners in that process.

33. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) Confirmation that the responsibility to declare an interest still remains with the Member. David confirmed that it did.
- b) With reference to the Planning Committee meetings that typically David Cameron does not attend, how in real terms would advice be sought and any required adjournment take place? How would the Planning Committee Convener take the adjournment forward and how would the adjournment be minuted? David advised that Members are encouraged to consider whether they have any declarations of interest as early as possible. He advised that Peter Ferguson of Harper MacLeod is often present at Planning Committee meetings and could be briefed on this guidance so that he could provide support in David's absence. David added that if there was a need to defer a decision this would be recorded in the minute, and if there were a break in business to deal with matters was required then this would also be recorded.
- c) A Board member asked how they would go about alerting the Convener during the course of meeting if they noticed a missed declaration of interest of a Member? David advised that the Member should always declare the interest as soon as they become aware of it, even if that interest only becomes apparent after the start of consideration of an item of business, by the member stating that they have identified a conflict of interest, what the conflict is, and their proposed action i.e. to leave the meeting if it is a prejudicial conflict.
- d) What happens if a Member is not forthcoming with a declaration of interest and the Convener suspects one? David advised that he would hope that the Convener would speak to the Member before the meeting begins. If the meeting were to adjourn business, the purpose of this is to give the Convener and Member privacy to discuss it out with the public domain. He added that the ultimate decision of whether a conflict had taken place would lie with the Member.
- e) The Convener thanked David for preparing the paper.

34. **The Board noted the guidance note.**

35. **Actions:**

- i. **David Cameron to brief Peter Ferguson of Harper MacLeod of this guidance so that Peter can support the Planning Committee Convener through the process should it be required.**

## **AOCB**

36. The Convener advised Members that the Board Dates for April 2017 to March 2018 had been published, paper copies had been given out today and that electronic copies would be circulated early next week.
37. The Convener advised that electronic travel and subsistence claim forms for the Board had been approved at the Staffing & Recruitment Committee meeting that morning. Hard copies, electronic or scanned receipts to accompany claims would be accepted, if the electronic claim form had been received.
38. A Board member advised that the Staffing & Recruitment Committee meeting scheduled for 18<sup>th</sup> November 2016 was being postponed with a new date to be confirmed.
39. A Board Member commented that two good meetings had taken place recently, one last Wednesday with the Strathdon community and the other last night with local Land Managers and asked how these meetings would be taken forward. The Convener advised that the Clerk to the Board had pulled together the comments which will be worked upon. Grant added that the staff would follow up on some of the items raised or point them in another direction.
40. A Board Member suggested that it would be good to get back in touch with the Community representatives that had attended the Housing Conference. Grant advised that Katie Crerar and Dan Harris were currently collating all the notes compiled as part of the conference and on the back of the meeting there were plans to meet community representatives at various forthcoming meetings.
41. A request was made that an Informal Board Discussion on the future of the Economic Forum be organised. Grant agreed.

42. **Actions:**

- i. **Murray to arrange Informal Board discussion on the future of the Economic Forum.**

**Date of Next Meeting**

43. Next formal Board meeting to be held on 9 December 2016, Blair Castle, Blair Atholl,
44. The Public part of this meeting concluded at 12.05 noon.