

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

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
held at Lonach Hall, Strathdon
on 30 October 2009**

Present:

Eleanor Mackintosh (Chair)	Richard Stroud
David Green	Dave Fallows

In Attendance:

Jane Hope, Chief Executive
David Cameron, Head of Corporate Services
Alistair Hight, Finance Manager
John Thorne, Economic Development Officer

Apologies

Mary McCafferty

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted apologies as above.

Minutes of Meeting 7 August 2009

2. The minutes of the meeting were agreed without amendment.

Matters Arising

3. On point 10 – lifetime project assessment – David Cameron reported that Management Team had discussed the need for a post-implementation review process and this was an area for further work.
4. Members noted they had also met informally on 4 September 2009 to have a discussion on the financial implications of Board papers being presented, in order to allow a more effective contribution to the Board meeting to be made. Formal discussion of these items was held at Board and recorded in the minute of the Board meeting.

Cairngorms Explorer 2010 (Paper 1)

5. John Thorne presented this paper, which sought the Committee's approval to a change in format to the Cairngorms Explorer publication and a consequent reduction in expenditure on this item. John highlighted that, since the "Explorer's" first publication, the manner in which people accessed timetable information had changed considerably, with the internet now a key resource for timetable information. There is less need to publish all timetables in a single paper format, and it is difficult to justify the £35k cost to duplicate information available elsewhere. In the first three years, the Authority obtained funding from Hitrans and Nestrans, the Regional Transport Partnerships, but their funding has been lost.
6. John proposed that some form of promotion of the public transport routes and information availability remains desirable. John proposed the possibility of A 1/3 A4 fold large map of the National Park showing bus routes, rail links, stations, national cycle routes, long distance paths, community path networks and visitor information centres. The publication would also highlight Cairngorms on a Shoestring and other partner's work such as walking festivals, ski areas etc., information about who to obtain up to date timetables on web and in print. This would be at a cost of around £10,000 rather than the current £35,000 for the Explorer. It is proposed that 50,000 copies are produced and distributed to 300+ locations.
7. In discussion, members welcomed the review of the current publications by officers and their consideration of future affordability. Members also welcomed the early presentation of options.
8. Members discussed the potential format of a replacement publication, and the points of information that could be contained.
9. Members welcomed the aim to continue to produce a more cost effective publication that could continue to promote public transport and access opportunities. It was noted that inclusion of information in a publication such as "Park i" is a good idea, perhaps as a trial in a transition year where the Authority also produces something in a leaflet format.
- 10. Members agree that the existing Explorer format at a cost of £35k no longer represents good value for money and should therefore not proceed for 2010/11.**
- 11. Members endorsed the investigation of alternative publication formats that were anticipated to reduce the cost to approximately £10k, and noted officers will continue discussions with partners on these options.**

2009/10 Second Quarter Review (Paper 2)

12. Alistair Hight introduced this paper, setting out a review of income & expenditure for the 6 months to 30th September 2009 and a projection of the financial outcome for the year to 31st March 2010.
13. Overall the projected outturn at this stage was a small over-spend, of £47,000. A full review of Operational Plan budgets had been undertaken, and all initial over-

programming budget elements removed to determine final budget targets for 2009/10.

14. Alistair highlighted that historically, some expenditure slippage can occur towards the end of the year. It is therefore probable that the final outcome for the year will be closer to break even. There had also been a gain of a further £29,000 in additional core expenditure savings from higher than target efficiencies in the year.
15. Members discussed the costs of the Local Plan process – the excess in cost over budget was in part a consequence of budgets being set too low and also additional costs falling into the current year which had originally been phased for 2008/09.
16. **Members asked that future reports show the additional planning costs for the current year as a separate item in the report.**
17. **Members noted finance updated and thanked Alistair for the clear and concise report.**

2010/11 Budget Flexibility (Paper 3)

18. Alistair Hight presented this report which sought to give an overview of CNPA's approach to any uncertainty regarding future levels of grant in aid funding arising from current pressures on public finance. The paper and the budgeting approach aims to demonstrate that CNPA is aware of the need to be flexible in its financial budgeting and commitments for the foreseeable future.
19. Alistair highlighted that the Authority is building a system that allows activity to proceed at differing levels of priority in recognition of this. This system will prioritise 2010/11 activity in the first instance.
20. Alistair highlighted that, as a result of anticipated budget restrictions and increasingly firm expenditure intentions, the operational plan is not being over-programmed for 2010/11. The identification of activities and associated financing in lower priority tiers of the operational plan effectively provides a "bank" of activity which can be brought into delivery at short notice and therefore replaces a more general over-programmed element as a means of dealing with slippage in expenditure plans.
21. Members discussed the extent to which the need to lever in additional funds as part of project delivery was understood and embedded through the organisation. David Cameron indicated he felt there was a strong level of awareness of this now amongst all programme managers, and that it is a definite area for focus when advising on the development of project expenditure plans.
22. **The Committee endorsed the approach to developing enhanced budget flexibility and reconsidering overall priority of activity.**

Any Other Business

23. No other items were raised.

Date of Next Meeting

24. 19 February, Kingussie.