

CAIRNGORMS TOURISM DEVELOPMENT GROUP

Meeting held on Wednesday 31st March 2004 at 10.30am
At the Albert Hall, Station Sq, Ballater

Present

Sally Dowden (Chair)
Daniel Alexander
Elaine Booth
Lucia Campbell
Andrew Coleman
Ruathy Donald
Patricia Eccles
Roger Edwards
John Grant
Alistair Gronbach
Andrew Harper
Paul Higson
Bob Kinnaid
Elma McMenemy
James Macfarlane
Christine Morrison
David Noble
Bob Severn
Syd Smardon
Debbie Strang
Bill Taylor

Speyside Wildlife
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Scottish Enterprise Grampian
Aberdeen and Grampian Tourist Board
Upper Deeside Access Trust
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Nethy House, Nethy Bridge
MBSE
Scottish Landowners Federation
Visitscotland
Cairngorms National Park Authority
ECAP Project Co-ordinator
Cairngorm Mountain
Royal Deeside and Mearns Tourism Forum
Muckrach Lodge Hotel, Dulnain Bridge
Rothiemurchus Estate
Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board
National Park Board member
Speyside Highland Leisure Park, Aviemore
Cairngorms National Park Authority
Scottish Natural Heritage

Apologies

Neil Black
Andrew Bruce Wootton
Ian Dunlop
Andrew Kirk
Bruce Luffman (Chair)
Gary Marsden
Meg Mearns
James Milne
Caroline Mitchell
Douglas Ritchie
Colin Smith
Tony Seaman
Elizabeth Thompson
Ken Thomson
Tim Walker
Andy Wells
Bob Wilson

Visitscotland
Atholl Estates
Aberdeen and Grampian Tourist Board
Carrbridge Tourist Association/ HOST AMC
Auld Cummerton, Strathdon
Balmoral Estate
Brandy Burn, Glen Clova
Kinross House, Grantown
Aberlour Distillery
Perth and Kinross Tourist Board
Angus and Dundee Tourist Board
Aviemore Mountain Resort
Dalwhinnie Distillery
Craigendarroch Hotel, Ballater
SportsScotland Glenmore Lodge
Glenlivet Estate, Tomintoul
Aberdeen & Grampian Tourist Board

Welcome and Apologies

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

Minutes of the Meeting of 10th February 2004 and Matters Arising

2. The minutes from the previous meeting were agreed and the only matter arising not otherwise appearing on the elsewhere on the agenda was an update on progress towards developing a sustainable tourism strategy. Paul Higson left the room as he is a potential consultant for this piece of research.

Action

3. Debbie Strang explained that the invitation to tender for the development of a sustainable tourism strategy to meet the criteria of the European Charter had been sent to 6 consultants, she noted that particular effort had been made to include 2 local consultants. For a variety of reasons only two tenders were received, and after consultation with Bruce Luffman and Andrew Harper (Head of Economic and Social Development at the NPA) it was agreed that the project should be re-tendered to ensure that there were additional submissions for comparison. The two existing tenders will be put forward into the selection process.
4. Debbie Strang went on to explain that although this should only mean a delay of one month for the start of the contract in May, it has a knock-on effect because the consultation with the private sector would fall within the peak tourist season. The length of the contract has therefore been extended until mid January 2005 rather than November 2004 to allow for consultation in early autumn. This should still allow for application to Europarc for the Charter in spring 2005 as planned

**TDWG
ST Sub
Grp**

Eastern Cairngorms Access Project

5. Andrew Coleman and Paul Higson gave a presentation on the ECAP, outlining the project and providing a snapshot of some of the initiatives involved. The marketing aims and objectives were outlined and how the project sat within the work of the TDWG. The Chair expressed her thanks for an excellent presentation and noted that many of the aspects faced by the TDWG were contained within ECAP.
6. The TDWG were interested in how the project might be continued after the project end date of 2006. It was explained that UDAT had to commit to a further ten years of maintenance beyond the project, and they had been able to do this because of the revenue from the Glen Muick car park. UDAT lease the land from Balmoral Estate, and through a compliance rate of 95% for the car park charges raise approximately £32,000 per year. Andrew Coleman added that the upgrading of car parks cannot be funded by the project, although the funders have allowed a distinction between 'satellite' parking areas (ie smaller sites) which may be improved. A copy of the ECAP newsletter was handed out to those who were present and will be sent out to those who were unable to attend.

RD

Cairngorms Marketing Strategy Update

7. Ruathy Donald said that the Marketing Sub-Group met on 9th March to review the draft marketing strategy and decided that most of the background information should be placed into appendices so that the strategy itself is a short concise document. This version will be circulated to the full TDWG following the next Sub-Group meeting and should be presented to the NP Board at their June meeting.

RD

Brand Development

8. The Sub-Group also decided to produce a brief for the further development of the Cairngorms brand, and this was being taken forward initially by Danny Alexander (Head of Communications).

DA

Cairngorms Visitor Guide

9. The Chair suggested that the discussion on the Cairngorms Visitor Guide should fall into two parts; the current guide and any relevant issues and the production of a future guide which needed to take the forthcoming changes in the ATB review into consideration.
10. Generally, the Group felt that the Visitor Guide has been well received. There was some feeling that the guide was perhaps too wordy and lacked focus. It was explained by some of the Group members that previous ATB guides had been produced without the input of ATB members with less than satisfactory results and to avoid this happening again members particularly in the Badenoch and Strathspey were keen to provide the detail for the Guide. It was agreed that a balance was required so that the text provided the necessary information without trying to meet the aspirations of all member's requirements.
11. The TDWG was in agreement that if funding can be secured a future Guide should be produced on the same basis, and that a meeting to brainstorm views and ideas for any changes should be arranged. This meeting should also involve NP staff from Visitor Services.
12. Currently, the distribution of the Guide is through normal ATB distribution channels. Once this is complete there will be approx 50,000 copies remaining unallocated.
13. The Group had previously discussed whether the Guide could be delivered to every household in the Park area, and Ruathy Donald explained that Royal Mail had not supplied an estimate of the cost of doing this, but based on the Park newsletter distribution costs she estimated that to distribute 22,000 copies would cost £2,500-£3,000. On this basis, if funding could be secured, the Group felt that this would be an extremely worthwhile exercise. It will increase awareness to local people about the Park area, and the many attractions and activities that exist for themselves and visitors staying with them. It will help to develop the identity and feeling of cohesiveness of the area, and also that the Park is involved in early practical projects that are beneficial to local people and visitors to the area alike.
14. It was agreed that if the Park was able to fund the distribution, this should be referred to in the forthcoming Park newsletter, due for distribution in June and July.
15. The Chair reminded the TDWG that they had previously agreed to a formal evaluation of the Visitor Guide and Ruathy Donald explained that she had obtained information on this from HOST.

DA/RD**ATB Review & Implications for the Cairngorms National Park**

16. It was agreed that the announcement on the ATB review had not provided much detail on the future changes, but the reorganisation was ambitious to be achieved within the stated timescale. The Group felt the changes were a tremendous opportunity for the Park, and that the TDWG might be able to provide leadership through these changes. A related issue was how the local authorities will be utilising their current grant to ATB's and it was agreed that although the local authorities are sent the papers and minutes to the meetings it would be worth working more closely with them.

17. It was agreed that the NPA might benefit from the simplification of the current arrangements and dealing with one organisation (albeit, one that is distributed throughout Scotland); as the hubs may not necessarily use the existing ATB boundaries. It was explained that the term hub has been selected to place emphasis on ‘pulling’ appropriate people together to work on joint initiatives, although more thought has to be given to the role of the hubs. It was agreed that the TDWG was ideally placed to offer their thoughts and ideas on the role, responsibilities and workings of the future hubs; and that the NPA should take the lead on how this might be achieved.
18. Within the new arrangements, the Park will be able to engage with all businesses throughout the area.
19. Although the TDWG may wish to develop into a Tourism Action Group, these should not be seen as future ‘mini’ tourist boards as this could revert back to disparate, uncoordinated arrangements.
20. The prospect for marketing the Cairngorms might now be simplified with VisitScotland, although concern was expressed that VisitScotland would need to explain clearly to all businesses that they are a separate organisation to VisitScotland.com.

Project Updates

21. The Aviemore, Badenoch, Strathspey and Cairngorms Group (ABSC) has been formally constituted and has attracted funding from the Cairngorms Attractions Group (CAG), MBSE and two major hotel groups. A marketing plan is currently being developed and work was being undertaken on a brand essence wheel with close regard to Cairngorms wide initiatives.
22. A brief update was provided on the Cairngorms Point of Entry Signage project by Debbie Strang. A consultant has been commissioned and has produced a photographic inventory of all the points of entry to the CNP.
23. Contact will be made with all the relevant authorities, roads departments etc to discuss the sites and any restrictions that may be imposed so that initial designs can then be formulated, although currently the Gateways Working Group is favouring markers constructed out of natural materials with the words ‘Cairngorms National Park’ only. However, this is inevitably raising issues about the state of the environment within which the marker will be placed, and whether sites should be chosen to provide additional visitor information within close vicinity. The TDWG will be kept informed as the project develops.
24. Comment was made on the need for consistency, in accordance with national guidelines, to be applied to the Quality Assurance Visitor Attraction roadsigns within the Park, with subsequent discussion on possibilities for rationalisation and updating of roadsigns in the Park in general. The Chair explained that in developing any policy or Strategy on visitor information, all parameters will be considered and discussed.

AOCB

25. The Chair said that arrangements for a presence at Expo were going well, and the aim was primarily awareness raising for the Cairngorms National Park. Specific enquiries that could not be answered by Park staff and Board Members would be redirected to appropriate ATB stands. It was agreed that some form of evaluation of attendance at the exhibition should be developed.

Dates of future meetings for the remainder of 2004.

26. The dates for the future meetings, with venues to be confirmed are:
- | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|
| 12 th May - | Badenoch and Strathspey |
| 30 th June – | Deeside |
| 1 st September – | Badenoch and Strathspey |
| 20 th October – | Strathdon |
| 15 th December – | Badenoch and Strathspey |

The meeting finished at 12.50pm

Debbie Strang

1/04/04