
CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING held at The Lonach Hall, Strathdon on Friday 31st October 2008 at 11.30am

PRESENT

Eric Baird
Stuart Black
Geva Blackett
Nonie Coulthard
Jaci Douglas
Dave Fallows
Lucy Grant
David Green
Marcus Humphrey
Bob Kinnaird

Bruce Luffman
Eleanor Mackintosh
Ian MacKintosh
Anne MacLean
Alastair MacLennan
Mary McCafferty
William McKenna
Andrew Rafferty
Richard Stroud
Susan Walker

In Attendance:

David Cameron
Pete Crane
Murray Ferguson
Bob Grant
Andrew Harper
Jane Hope

Karen Major
Sandra Middleton
Hamish Trench
Heather Trench
Francoise van Buuren

Apologies:

Duncan Bryden
Drew Hendry

Fiona Murdoch
Sandy Park

Welcome and Introduction

1. The Convener welcomed everyone to the meeting, noting that the Board had held a Community Engagement meeting the previous night with a focus on the path network in the Cairngorms National Park, and the work being taken forward by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT). This had been particularly relevant, given some interesting projects being taken forward in the Strathdon area, and the various Board papers being considered on the issue of access.

Minutes of Last Meeting – approval

2. Minutes of the last meeting on the 5th September were approved subject to amendment of some minor typographical errors.

Matters Arising

3. It was noted with reference to paragraph 4 that the intention had been to bring a paper to the 28th November Board reporting on the development of a collaborative business working model. This meeting was now being used for two site visits in respect of important planning applications. The proposed paper would therefore be brought to the Board meeting in January 2009. There were some advantages in this as it would provide opportunity for further development and refinement of the proposal, and in particular further discussion with other public sector funders.
4. In relation to paragraph 22, it was noted that this action was outstanding and would be actioned shortly. The intention was to provide for a provisional “spare” Friday in each month for use if necessary either for planning site visits, or for rescheduling Board meetings disrupted by bad water.

Declarations of Interests

5. Some declarations were noted as follows:
 - a) David Green noted in respect of paper 2 that he was now a director of the SAC (Scottish Agricultural College); however the interest was not sufficient to require him to withdraw from the discussion.
 - b) Geva Blackett declared an interest under paper 1 and proposed to withdraw from any discussion in relation to the proposal for houses at Ballater.
 - c) Dave Fallows, Marcus Humphrey, and David Cameron all noted an interest in paper 5 as directors of the COAT; they would not participate in any discussion in respect of funding.

- d) Alistair MacLennan noted that part of the Speyside Way ran over land which he owned; he proposed to participate in the discussion which focused on strategic issues.

Report of Findings of Consultation and Consideration of Further Modifications to the Local Plan (Paper 1)

6. Karen Major introduced the paper which sought approval to a number of second modifications to the Cairngorms National Park Deposit Local Plan; sought agreement to the next steps in the adoption process; and sought agreement to the timetable for the production of supplementary planning guidance. The paper set out the background to the Local Plan on which the Park Authority had been working for several years, during which time there had been extensive consultation. The Local Plan had been placed on deposit in July 2007 and consideration of the objections raised to that deposit version had led to a variety of modifications which were then the subject of further consultations. In light of the comments raised on those modifications, a number of second modifications were now proposed as set out in the Appendix to the paper. These did not propose any radical changes of policy, but clarified sections of text and corrected previous errors. Appendix 1 set out the reasoning behind each of the proposed changes. Particular attention was drawn to page 10 of Annex 1 and the reference to page 111 Appendix 2, Affordable Housing, 2nd paragraph. These two references lead to some discussion following which a further modification was agreed for insertion: additional 2nd sentence "social rented housing is allocated on the basis of need. Where houses are for purchase ..."
7. Subject to the Board's agreement, the changes proposed in Annex 1 would be publicised, including being put on the website, for a further period of consultation. All objectors would be notified.
8. No further modifications were proposed, and it was now intended that remaining objections should be taken to Public Inquiry. The Reporters Unit had been approached with the proposed date around April 2009; confirmation was awaited. Meanwhile work would continue on preparing for the PLI, including continuing to discuss objections to see if these could be resolved and removed prior to the Inquiry.
9. During this period work would continue on supplementary planning guidance as outlined at Annex 2. The intention of the Guidance was to have this available when the Local Plan was adopted to make the Local Plan itself more user-friendly. Work had already started on the Priority 1 Guidance and additional resources were being drafted in to work on the Priority 2 Guidance. Consultation was proposed to start on the second modifications on the 7th November, finishing on the 19th December. There would be a further paper to the Board around about February 2009,

setting out the remaining objections that had not been withdrawn, and the arguments being advanced on the substantial issues which would then be the subject of the PLI

[Geva Blackett left the room for the following discussion]

10. Don McKee drew Members' attention to a letter which had been circulated to all Board Members individually from a group of people in Ballater, objecting to the proposals for the building of a group of houses (initially 90, with a possibility of 250 in future local plans). Twenty objections had been received formally on this element of the Local Plan. The Planning Team had been advising those objectors on how to take forward their objections to the Public Local Enquiry. Quite recently there had been a petition put together, and a couple of public meetings. The CNPA had attended the second of these, and the Head of Planning and the Convener had met a spokesman for the objectors the previous day. The letter sought the suspension of the Local Plan process. However, Don McKee advised that the basis for the allocation in the Local Plan was well founded and long standing, and there was no proposal to Members to do so.
11. The Community Council had also objected to this particular item in the Local Plan, although not to the allocation per se but to the possible total number of houses in Ballater. The proposal in the Deposit Local Plan was for 90, with the possibility in future Local Plans being acknowledged as being 250. It was suggested that the allocation in the Local Plan was well founded and long standing (being based on the Aberdeenshire Local Plan which had been considered by the Reporter); the best way of resolving the objection was therefore through the PLI route.
12. The Convener noted that in these situations it was essential that Board Members should be listening to objectors, but listening only and not giving a view in advance of proper consideration at a formal Planning Committee meeting. The Convener and Head of Planning, having met the objectors the previous day, had undertaken to relay the objectors' main points at the Board meeting; this had now been done. In summary, the main points were that the objectors did not feel there had been adequate consultation, and they wanted the CNPA to start over again with a new consultation, taking account of the view that more land was wanted for recreational purposes in Ballater.
13. In further discussion, the following points were made:
 - a) The accusation of a lack of consultation was very hard to understand. There had been a whole range of meetings in Ballater right from the start of the process in 2004. At the start the consultation had been on the basis of a "blank sheet of paper" and Jean Henretty had been employed to facilitate the consultation

process. Following that there had been numerous consultation meetings as the Local Plan had been put together. To suggest there had been no opportunity to get involved was an unfair reflection on the staff who had taken a very thorough and professional approach over the last three years to the preparation of the Local Plan. Indeed, most of the complaints in recent years had been about consultation fatigue. It was noted in particular that Jean Henretty had visited every settlement in the area; there had been planning for real exercises; the Princes Foundation had held a whole series of meetings.

- b) Out of this, it was therefore suggested the real issue might be that page 42 of the Local Plan referred to "2016 indicative target" which may be giving a false impression that the target of 250 houses would be built regardless. The reality of course was not so much a target in that sense, but more allowing for the possibility of a maximum. Whether or not that maximum was built would depend on a whole range of circumstances.
- c) The question was asked as to whether it was technically possible to suspend approval of this particular provision of the Local Plan. It was noted that this was entirely up to the Board and whether Appendix 1 should reflect a modification to this effect.
- d) It was reiterated that the current proposed Local Plan provided for 90 houses in the area in question. The idea of 250 longer term was part of the view emerging from the Princes Foundation work which was aiming to plan a long way ahead.
- e) It was noted that the Aberdeenshire Local Plan had provided for housing in this particular spot. The Cairngorms Deposit Local had merely taken that as a start point given that it had already been approved by the Reporter.
- f) It was noted that the use of the word "target" throughout the document might be usefully changed to "indicative capacity".
- g) The arguments underpinning the provision for housing in this particular area were robust and had been considered by the Board several times. There remained a potential flooding issue on this piece of land and work was currently underway on a flood risk assessment and further consideration would be given to this by SEPA in the next few weeks.
- h) It was noted that there was no preferential treatment for any developer as a result of this provision in the Local Plan. The Local Plan simply made allowance for development in this particular area.
- i) Members expressed a certain amount of surprise that such a high level of concern had been raised at such a late stage in the Local Plan process.
- j) This allocation in the Local Plan was the only possible place for future development in Ballater; and further housing was needed in

the Ballater area but there were no alternative sites. The Reporter had concluded this some time ago in the Aberdeenshire Local Plan.

- k) In terms of responding to the letter to each Board Member by the objectors, the Head of Planning agreed to respond on behalf of all the Members acknowledging receipt of the letters and reporting on the discussion.

[Geva Blackett Returned]

14. It was noted there had been some confusion at recent Community Council meetings in respect of letters received in relation to the first round of modifications. This was acknowledged and the Planning Team confirmed they would be writing to all Community Councils and all those with an interest regardless of whether they had maintained their objection or not; this would not be a standard letter but would be tailored to what the recipient had previously said.

15. Some other changes were noted:

- a) A typo in Annex 2 in the reasons required for the development brief;
- b) There had previously been agreement that the expression "economic growth" should be "economic development" consistently, to reflect the wording in the National Park Scotland Act.

16. The Convener acknowledged the huge amount of work put in by both staff and Board Members and thanked all concerned.

17. **The Board agreed the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) Formally approved the second modifications to the Deposit Local Plan subject to the changes noted above;**
- b) Approved the associated publicity arrangements;**
- c) Noted the prioritised list of supplementary planning guidance.**

Scottish Government Rural Land Use Study and Royal Society of Edinburgh Enquiry – Opportunities for the National Park (Paper 2)

18. Hamish Trench introduced the paper which considered the opportunities presented by recent reports on the hills and uplands including the Royal Society of Edinburgh Report into the future of Scotland's hill and island areas and the current government review of rural land use. He noted that the variety of recent reports from the NFU, SAC, and RSE all flagged up issues which were important to the Cairngorms National Park and were therefore issues on which the CNPA and partners could usefully take a lead in finding solutions. At the same time the Scottish Government had launched the Rural Land Use Study to explore the capabilities of land for different uses and the multiple demands on areas of land. The Cairngorms National Park was a significant part of upland Scotland in which most of the issues covered in these reports and the Government

Study were particularly relevant. There was therefore an opportunity to promote the National Park as a focus for taking forward several strands from these reports and current Government research. These were set out at paragraph 6 of the paper.

19. It was proposed that the CNPA should take a proactive approach, setting up a group to scope the issues involved and identify those on which action could be taken in the National Park in conjunction with partners. It was emphasised, however that this should not be just further research (of which there was plenty), but the emphasis would be on action concentrated on a limited number of key issues for the Park. The intention was to have such a list available by the time of the RSE meeting in November being held in Tomintoul. The proposal in the paper was that a small group should be formed by the CNPA with partners to take this work forward and report back to the Board in March 2009. Delivery of the actions would be taken forward through existing groups and the National Park Plan mechanisms. The intention therefore was to use this range of recent reports and the Scottish Government's Rural Land Use Study to demonstrate the opportunities associated with Scotland's National Parks, and in particular the Cairngorms National Park Plan.

20. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) There was evidently enthusiasm from partners at the recent meeting of the relevant Advisory Forums; the problem was not identifying what needed doing but the funding to oil the wheels to allow the necessary actions to be taken forward. It was crucial to engage nationally to ensure funding was available from Government to allow for this.
- b) This was an opportunity to respond crisply to these various reports and the approach set out in the Board paper was the right one, namely that this unique area of Scotland was being offered as a way of helping to find solutions for all the challenges set out in these recent reports.
- c) It would be important not to duplicate work already underway.
- d) It was essential not to forget that the essence of farming was to provide for the basic need of food.
- e) In respect of point 42 in the Annex, it was noted that the Scottish Countryside Alliance would be happy to work with the CNPA in respect of mobile abattoir facilities.
- f) The focus had to be on action and the role of the proposed grouping should be to prioritise those action points and ensure therefore that limited resources were concentrated on these.
- g) The importance of publicising how this work was being taken forward was emphasised.
- h) The National Park was well placed to take an integrated approach to a wide range of complex and interrelated issues – indeed this was embodied in the founding legislation of the National Parks and

the National Park Authority; the National Park Plan was the very embodiment of this integrated approach.

21. **The Board agreed the recommendations of the papers as follows:**
- a) **Approved the establishment of a small time-limited group of Members, staff and partners. The Board Members would be Alastair MacLennan, Eric Baird, Eleanor Mackintosh, Sue Walker, Marcus Humphrey, and Stuart Black. This group would work with Hamish Trench to bring in further partner members which would then comprise the whole group with a draft report being brought back to the Board around March 2009.**

Sustainable Tourism Strategy – Mid Term Review and Forward Planning (Paper 3)

22. Heather Trench introduced the paper which informed the Board of the results of an informal mid-term review of the Cairngorms Sustainable Tourism Strategy and sought a decision on the timescale for reapplication for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECSTPA). The proposal was that Europarc should be approached for a one year delay in reapplication for the Charter. While a delay of two years would be ideal in terms of bringing the National Park Plan timescale into line with that for the Sustainable Tourism Charter, it was obvious from prior discussion that this was likely to lead to the loss of the ECSTPA in the meantime. A delay of up to one year was more likely to be acceptable and would allow the 09/10 Visitor Survey to inform the development of the next Sustainable Tourism Strategy and Action Plan which could then be submitted to Europarc in early 2011.
23. It was noted that while the paper referred to the intention to bring a further paper to the Board in November on private sector collaborative working on tourism, as noted earlier in the meeting, this would now be put back to January.
24. In discussion the following points were made:
- a) In the further paper coming to the Board in January, it would be useful to see a very brief indication as to how the issues raised in the mid term review were being addressed;
 - b) It was noted that at the last Advisory Forum there appeared to have been some fall off of support of partners. It was noted that the role and functioning of delivery teams and advisory forums was under consideration and would be brought to the Board in due course.
 - c) The relevant delivery team had not managed to meet for some time earlier in the year as a result of a number of factors, including the departure of a key member of staff. This was not a reflection of lack of interest by participants and there had been a good turnout to the meeting when eventually this was convened.

- d) The importance of keeping the momentum going was noted; losing the Charter would not be helpful in this respect.

25. **The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **Noted the key issues arising from the Interim Review of the Sustainable Tourism Strategy and the intention to bring a further paper to the Board in January on private sector collaborative working and National Park Plan delivery structures.**
- b) **Approved an approach to Europarc for a one year delay in reapplication for the European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas. This was on the basis that if a delay would cause the temporary loss of the Charter the issue of the timescale for reapplication would return to the Board for further consideration.**

Core Paths Plan – Final Amendments (Paper 4)

[Marcus Humphrey left the room for the duration of this paper]

26. Sandra Middleton introduced the paper which sought approval to make final amendments to the Core Paths Plan for submission to Scottish Ministers. She noted that there had been a number of papers to the Board at significant points during the development of the Core Paths Plan. There had been a significant amount of consultation with the public and the process was now coming to a close, and final approval was now sought to a number of amendments prior to finalising the Core Paths Plan for submission to Scottish Ministers. There had been very positive negotiations with objectors, however not all objections had been withdrawn and those that remained were substantial issues of principle which required Local Inquiry for them to be resolved. She noted that Strathdon was a very good example of the sort of positive action that was beginning to emerge on the back of the Core Path Plan process. The Core Path Plan was not simply a paper exercise, and the whole process had engaged communities in the matter of paths around their communities, and this was now providing the focus for the work by the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT).

27. It was noted that the PLI would base decisions on the “sufficiency argument” (as set out in the Land Reform Act, Part 1). Any enquiry was likely to be paper-based. So far there was no timescale. Negotiations with objectors would continue up until the point of the Local Inquiry, but a position did need to be established and that was the purpose of the current paper to the Board.

28. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The proposed designation of the River Spey as a core path remained an issue. The neighbouring councils were taking slightly different positions. Highland Council had finished its consultation and had removed seven miles of the Spey from its original proposal as a core path, despite having both support and objection to the designation of the river as a core path. Moray Council were still consulting; currently they are not proposing the Spey as a core path. Ultimately it will be for Ministers to take a view in light of all the proposed core path plans from the thirty four access authorities.
- b) The Cairngorms National Park Plan gives a strong policy imperative to designation of the Spey as a core path, given the importance of outdoor recreation in the Aims of the National Park.
- c) A cross-border working group existed, ensuring that the CNPA liaised closely with all its neighbouring access authorities. This had achieved a high degree of consistency of issues, with the one exception of the River Spey.
- d) Annex 1, page 2, item 3. It was noted that an access point on the River Dee had been removed from the Plan. It was suggested that an alternative river access point be investigated for development for a future review of the Core Paths Plan.
- e) Annex 1, page 5, item 13. The appropriate linkages with the Local Plan needed to be made here.
- f) Annex 1, page 10, item 37. The reason given in the table for accepting the objection to LBS4 was questioned. There had been reasonable support from the community at an early stage for this path linking Cromdale with Spey Bridge. The objection was on the grounds of potential impacts on fishing interests. The reason given for proposing to remove the path from the Plan was based on how well the path fitted with the Plan objectives and the sufficiency of the network. This lack of fit with the Plan objectives was questioned by the Board. It was noted that the Local Inquiry would make judgements based on whether or not a path added to the "sufficiency" of the Plan. However, it might be premature to make that judgement in advance of the Local Inquiry. The possibility of being overruled was not sufficient argument for accepting an objection, particularly if there was good community support for the path LBS4. Given there was good community support (40% of the original 20 questionnaires) there was a good argument for the CNPA sticking with the inclusion of that path. It was agreed that Jaci Douglas would raise the question at the upcoming community council meeting and would gauge the level of community support for this path.
- g) Annex 1, page 2, item 4. The issue for including core paths on OS maps was discussed. It was noted that the CNPA had made representation to Ministers expressing concern over this issue but without success.

- h) Annex 1, page 10, item 40. There was some discussion of the objection to the lack of inclusion of Thieves Road in the Core Path Plan and the proposal to reject this objection with the net result that the Thieves Road would not be included. Part of the reason for not including this route in the Plan appeared to be advice that there were environmental sensitivities on this route; further discussion revealed that this referred to the presence of nesting Capercaillie. There was some concern from Members that evidence on disturbance to Capercaillie was not robust and yet this continued to be advanced as a reason against pathways. The Thieves Road had not been included in the Interim Draft Core Paths Plan and if it were to be introduced at this stage it would need land management agreement and an appropriate assessment for Natura. Introduction at this stage therefore implied a considerable amount of work. Nevertheless, Members felt that the three relevant land owners should be approached with a view to including the path; SNH would also need to be approached for an appropriate assessment.
- i) Annex 1, page 11, item 44. The issue of identifying paths in the Core Path Plan without having certainty over the ability to maintain these paths was raised. This had been considered on several previous occasions, and indeed was part of the reason for the formation of the COAT. It was noted that inclusion in the Core Path Plan signified a degree of priority. There could never be absolute commitment to sums of money but designation as a core path clearly indicated priority for whatever limited sums of money were available. It was also noted that the majority of paths in the Cairngorms Core Paths Plan already existed; there was relatively little provision for new paths. The Plan was therefore a way of focusing resources on particular paths that already existed.
- j) In response to a question, it was noted that like Aberdeenshire Council, the Cairngorms National Park Authority had an "aspirational" list of paths for possible consideration in the Core Paths Plan at some stage.

29. Summing up, the Convener noted that the proposed amendments to the Core Paths Plan were largely approved subject to a further review of evidence of community support for the path listed at Objection 37; and further consideration of the potential for reintroduction of the Thieves Road (Item 40). In accordance with the recommendation of the paper, the Convener and Deputy Convener would be the final arbiters on these two outstanding issues.

30. **The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **Approved the proposed amendments to the Core Paths Plan as set out in Annex 1 subject to further work in relations to Items 37 and 40 as outlined above;**

- b) Delegated approval of further minor amendments to the Plan that may result from final negotiations with objectors to the Convener and Deputy Convener.

[Marcus Humphrey returned to the meeting; Andrew Rafferty departed.]

Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust – Business Plan 2009-2001 (Paper 5)

- 31. Bob Grant introduced the paper which highlighted the work already delivered in the first year of operation of the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust (COAT) and sought support for the range of work to be undertaken in the next two years as detailed in the draft Business Plan. Bob pointed to the successful and efficient transition from the former Upper Deeside Access Trust (UDAT) to the COAT. Rapid progress had been made, a good Business Plan for the next three years had been put in place and funds had been levered in from partners rapidly. The Business Plan outlined a number of significant improvements to the path network in the Cairngorms. On the detail of the Business Plan, Bob noted that the presentation of costs in Annex 1 was potentially misleading in implying that all the staff costs were general overhead costs, whereas in reality the Access Officers in particular spent the majority of their time delivering projects on the ground and so might more realistically be shown under the heading of project costs. With that adjustment the percentage of costs attributable to general running costs dropped to around 24%
- 32. In discussion the following points were made:
 - a) The Finance Committee had considered this paper and concluded that the levels of funding from other partners was disappointingly low in many cases. It was always recognised that the initial funding provided by the CNPA for year one of £150,000 was intended to provide a lead to other partners. In that respect it had been to some extent successful as other funders had been attracted in. Nevertheless, some of these levels of partner funding were somewhat disappointing. While it was recognised that the CNPA expected to make significant contribution to these projects, it was felt that the CNPA funding should remain at £150,000 for the duration of this Business Plan as a core commitment, but with the proviso that the COAT could come back to the Park Authority for further funding on specific projects, and on the basis that other funding could be levered in as match funding for those projects. This should provide more power to the COAT in leveraging in other funds.
 - b) The observation was made in relation to Paragraph 3(a) in the paper that the school path in Strathdon did not need to be built to all ability standards. A pavement had already been provided as a route to the school. The engineering work on the proposed new path would be difficult and expensive. In response the point was

made that the new all ability path did not duplicate the pavement which would only be usable by pedestrians; the proposed new route would provide a safe route for those cycling to school.

- c) It was noted that at the previous evening's discussion, the point had been made that there was potential for using the Army for building bridges and paths etc. The Trust Manager was encouraged to draw up an approach to the Army with some specific suggestions and projects that they might be interested in. In the same vein, the issue of sponsorship was raised as was the possibility of making an approach to NHS Trusts for whom opportunities for outdoor walking provided a useful way of improving general health.
- d) In response to the point above, it was suggested that leveraging in support in kind was good provided it did not compromise actual funding streams. Similarly with sponsorship one needed to be mindful that one should not attract sponsors who undermine the values that the Cairngorms National Park stood for.
- e) The question was asked as to whether the COAT had a policy on local procurement. While this was not known, it was noted that there were some very good examples (eg the bridge at Glen Tanar) where material and labour had all been local. This had been done under UDAT but the assumption was that the same ethos would continue.

33. The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:

- a) **Noted with commendation the progress being made towards achieving the agreed outputs in the 2008/09 Business Plan;**
- b) **Noted the close fit between the outputs in the future Business Plan for 09/11 with the priority for actions contained in the National Park Plan; and**
- c) **Approved a CNPA contribution of £150,000 per year over the next two financial years but on the basis that further funding of £30,000 (09/10) and £35,000 (10/11) could be available for specific projects if these could be match funded by other partners, and agreed by the Finance Committee.**

[Bruce Luffman departed the meeting]

Future Funding and Management of the Speyside Way (Paper 6)

34. Bob Grant introduced the paper which explained the current and potential future funding arrangements for the route. It sought the Board's views on how best to shape the future funding and management arrangements to deliver key aspects of the National Park Plan, Outdoor Access Strategy and implementation of the Core Paths Plan. There were a number of drivers for change concerning the management of long distance routes and the paper highlighted the changes and how they might best be managed to ensure that the Speyside Way continued to

meet the needs of all potential users. The paper proposed a review, with a report back to the CNPA Board in the Spring of 2009.

35. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) The review should be used to flag up to the Speyside Way Management Group that the existing route was not completely satisfactory in as much as for example the Duack Bridge at Nethy Bridge really was not suitable for walkers and traffic at the same time. A footbridge was needed.
- b) The proposal for a CNPA Board Member on the Speyside Way Management Group was supported. This was particularly important as changes were sought to the approach to management, and with the potential extension of the Speyside Way.
- c) It would seem sensible to consider in the review the possibility of integrating the management of the long distance route with the work of the COAT.
- d) The funding and the management of the Speyside Way was ripe for a review. A contribution of £71,000 from the CNPA was not sustainable in the long term and the COAT did appear to be a good way forward.
- e) The Speyside Way had originally been a walking route and the proposal was now that it became multi use but there had not been any consultation on this. It was noted that the Speyside Way was governed by a series of Management Agreements with landowners that reflected access by foot. The Land Reform Act of course gave the right by cycle, horse, or foot. Nevertheless, any upgrade to the long distance route had to be negotiated with the land managers along the route.

36. **The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) Noted the current funding and management arrangements;**
- b) Approved the funding for 2009/10 subject to undertaking a review of the current delivery mechanisms to inform decision making in future years;**
- c) Approved the key principles and area of work which the CNPA would wish to see included in the future development and management programme;**
- d) Agreed the nomination of Eleanor Mackintosh as the CNPA Board Member to sit on the Speyside Way Management Group; and**
- e) In addition, agreed that the unsatisfactory nature of access over the Duack Bridge at Nethy Bridge should be factored into the work of the development and management programme.**

Guidance on Path Signs and Outdoor Events (Paper 7)

37. Bob Grant and Pete Crane introduced the paper which highlighted the steps which had been taken to produce guidance on the path signs and outdoor events in the Park. The Board's approval was sought for both documents. Two particular points were made in introducing the paper. Firstly, the policy on outdoor events was a written document but was intended to also be web based and made more user friendly as a web-accessible document. Secondly, some partners still had concerns in respect to the guidance on path signs. The Crown Estate, RSPB and Scotways, all had issues in respect of integration of their own branding if the guidance was followed. FCS felt that the signage style in the guidance was too restrictive in terms of the range of approaches that could be used for interpretation and creating a sense of place. The guidance on path signage was just guidance and could not be used to impose changes on other partners. However, if the Board approved the guidance, where the CNPA or another public body was funding path signage there would be a requirement that the guidance should be followed.

38. In discussion the following points were made:

- a) Pete Crane was commended for attending a meeting of Inclusive Cairngorms to discuss the proposed guidance on signage. The point was made that other partners involved in producing signage that was different to that proposed in the guidance should do the same.
- b) It was felt that there was some contradiction between Paragraph 12(b) of the paper and Paragraph 25 (page 5) in Annex 2. Paragraph 12(b) of the paper appeared to be arguing against being prescriptive about steering events away from specific environmentally sensitive sites and defining when events could not take place. Paragraph 25 in Annex 2 appeared to be doing just the opposite by specifying the Aviemore-Glenmore area. The point was made that the reference to the Aviemore-Glenmore area had arisen from consultation and was a reflection of cumulative impact rather than site sensitivity or timing issue where the general guidance still held good.
- c) A minor change in wording was suggested to Paragraph 25 in Annex 2. The start of the 2nd sentence was suggested to be amended to read: "the area continues to come under considerable pressure from the number of events in the area...". It was also felt that the final phrase "and meet particularly high standards" might be better omitted.
- d) It was agreed that generic guidance such as this should not get into listing names and references to "organisations such as" would be fine with this wording making clear that the reference was merely for illustration.
- e) It was important that when considering environmental factors, decisions were based on best scientific evidence available.

- f) The whole point of the guidance was to try and strengthen the hand of land managers when approached, as well as giving clarity to event organisers.
- g) It needed to be absolutely clear at the introduction to the guidance that the decision on whether or not to go ahead with the event did not lie with the CNPA.
- h) Any path signage should meet DDA best practice. The CNPA would continue to point out and emphasise this.

39. **The Board approved the recommendations of the paper as follows:**

- a) **Noted the processes that had been followed in developing the two sets of guidance;**
- b) **Approved the guidance on path signs and approved the guidance on outdoor events.**

Committee Membership (Paper 8)

40. The paper sought revisions to the membership of the Board's Audit, Finance, and Staffing and Recruitment Committees in line with the Board's agreed practice of reviewing the operation and membership of the Committees annually. There were a number of vacancies and replacements were approved as follows:

- a) Geva Blackett to join the Staffing and Recruitment Committee
- b) Ian MacKintosh and Lucy Grant to join the Audit Committee

41. It was noted in passing that Nonie Coulthard would be coming off the Cairngorms Local Access Forum and a replacement would be needed in due course.

AOCB

42. A number of brief items were reported as follows:

- a) Board Members and staff had taken part in an internal workshop on the Sustainable Design Guide. Eric Baird had attended MLURI Workshop on Sustainable Communities.
- b) Eric Baird and Alison Lax had attended a public meeting in Ballater, convened by objectors to the housing provision in the Local Plan in Ballater.
- c) Alastair MacLennan reported that Richard Cooke was now taking over as Chair of the National Access Forum.
- d) Dave Fallows noted the excellent meeting recently on the Curriculum for Excellence and reported that he was beginning to look at options for delivering some of the actions that emerged from that meeting.
- e) It was noted that progress with agreeing a route for the Speyside Way extension was proving very difficult. This was now in the hands

of SNH, but the introductions of new options at a late stage was making progress very difficult.

- f) Geva Blackett reported that she had attended a recent SNH Conference which had included speakers from various countries and which considered amongst other things Beaver reintroduction.
- g) The Convener drew attention to the recently circulated forward programme of events involving Board Members and/or staff, and also the recently circulated issues briefing.
- h) The Convener drew attention to public meetings being convened in the Badenoch and Strathspey area on potential bylaws on alcohol.

Date of Next Meeting

43. Friday 23rd January at Community Hall, Boat of Garten.