

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

**THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY
held at Lonach Hall, Strathdon
on 31st October, 2008**

Present

Eleanor Mackintosh
Dave Fallows
Bruce Luffman

David Green
Mary McCafferty

In Attendance

Jane Hope
Alistair Highet
Andy Ford

David Cameron
Pete Crane
Hamish Trench

Apologies
None

Welcome and Apologies

1. The Chair welcomed everyone present to the meeting. There were no apologies.

Minutes of Previous Meeting

2. The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed with two minor typing amendments noted.

Matters Arising

3. Officers reported that no further progress had been made with Scottish Government on approving or finalising arrangements for transfer of funds to support rangers services' grants to the Authority. Officers continued to encourage the sponsor team to act on this point.

Asset Disposals - Pool Cars (Paper 1)

4. David Cameron introduced this item, reporting that he had identified that the financial regulations did not make provision for the disposal of fixed assets. As he was seeking to replace two pool cars which were currently fully owned by the Authority, David therefore brought the proposal to the Committee for their approval.
5. David reported that in due course he would bring a draft fixed asset disposal policy to the Committee for approval and incorporation into the financial regulations.
6. In discussion, members noted that while the disposal of the pool cars was to further the organisation's greening policies, the vehicles acquired to replace them would still have to be fit for purpose. David agreed, and reported that vehicles would be taken on trial prior to a final decision being made.
7. Members agreed that the vehicles should be disposed of and agreed the proposed disposal method.

Enhancing the Presence of the National Park in Tourist Information Centres (Paper 2)

8. Committee members considered this expenditure proposal, introduced to them by Pete Crane and Andy Ford.
9. In discussion, members noted that total costs of the proposal seemed expensive, in particular the "A-Boards". Andy Ford explained that costs of the proposal were based on his knowledge of previously produced equivalents.
10. Further points raised in discussion were:
 - a. The lifespan of the products of the proposal;
 - b. Noted that Ralia was not included as a proposed location;
 - c. Discussion on other potential sites for this work;
 - d. Discussion on the consequence of the project for Northern Perthshire;
 - e. Some discussion on the Authority inputting resources into these areas of work which should be more supported by others, for example Visit Scotland.
11. Officers reported that this proposal did not include the totality of work going on in this area. Ralia had already been branded, and that work was already underway in considering the appropriate approaches to take in North Perthshire. This strand of activity would therefore continue to feature in future operational plans and budget proposals.

12. Overall, the proposals were noted as representing a cost of only around £6,000 for each centre to become a National Park information centre.
13. Members thanked officers for their paper and responses, and approved the proposal.
14. Members noted in passing that it may be worthwhile reviewing the format of the Expenditure Justification Form to make the requirement to show the wider context of work and linkages with Corporate Plan more clearly.

2008/09 Second Quarter Review (Paper 3)

15. Alistair Hight introduced this paper, which set out the results of the most recent financial monitoring exercise. Overall, the Authority remained broadly on target to achieve its planned outturn figures. One positive sign was that expenditure on Operational Plan areas had been somewhat higher than in the equivalent period of previous years.
16. Members discussed the fact that phased expenditure remained significantly loaded into the final part of the year, while noting that the position was improving. Members also noted that officers were seeking to bring the phasing of expenditure into a more even spread through the year. However, many projects which involved multi-partner negotiations did result in contract agreement and consequential expenditure in the latter part of the year.
17. Members thanked Alistair for the report and welcomed the new format of the monitoring report, which they found to be concise, clear and very helpful.
18. Members noted that it would be helpful to continue to be provided with a copy of the priority expenditure areas in the final quarter of the year

Cairngorms National Park Biological Recording System (Paper 4)

19. Hamish Trench introduced the project proposal set out in this paper.
20. In response to members' questions, Hamish confirmed that SNH had put in place support of £25,000 for the project.
21. Members agreed the proposal.

Any Other Business

22. David Cameron highlighted that he was in the process of drafting the Authority's business case and proposal for the pay remit. This would cover the pay award effective for the 2009/10 financial year.
23. David reported that the Scottish Government's pay policy guidelines restricted pay proposals to maximum levels of 3.75% and 4.5%, with the higher maximum available only where a case could be made to address key pay priorities. The pay policy required the Authority's proposals and business case to be submitted by 22 December.
24. David commented that the budgets for 2009/10 were being developed with these pay policy guidelines in mind. David also indicated that the Staffing and Recruitment Committee was due to meet on 14 November to discuss pay remit proposals, which members of the Finance Committee would be welcome to attend if they wished.
25. As the Committee was not scheduled to meet again before the submission of the pay remit proposals, David invited members to give views on the financial consequences.
26. Members asked if there were any comparisons available with the local authority positions. David responded that comparisons were difficult in this regard as a result of differences in treatment of progression of staff salaries through salary bands. In local authorities this, he understood, tended to be of right and was not perceived as an element of an annual pay settlement. However, in the NDPB / Scottish Government sector, pay awards were assessed very much as a combination of salary increases arising from progression through salary bands and a award applied to all pay points.
27. The closest comparison was likely to be between the maximum "basic" award of 2% applied to all salary points permitted under the pay policy guidance and the salary awards being proposed within local authorities. In making this comparison, David requested that members note that it was not yet clear whether the Authority would be able to accommodate an award at the 2% basic award maximum as this depended on the level of increases due to staff as a result of salary progression within salary bands.
28. Members agreed the potential financial consequences of the Authority's pay remit for the 2009/10 financial year.

Date of Next Meeting

29. 20 February 2009 at 9:00 am in Kingussie.