

# **DRAFT MINUTES OF THE PERFORMANCE COMMITTEE MEETING of**

## **THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY**

**held via Lifesize  
on 29 October 2021 at 3.00pm**

### **PRESENT**

William Munro (Chair)  
Doug McAdam (Vice Chair)  
Janet Hunter  
Xander McDade  
Anne Rae Macdonald  
Willie McKenna

### **In Attendance:**

David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services  
Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development  
Stephen Corcoran, Peatland ACTIOM Programme Manager  
Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Place  
Andy Ford, Head of Conservation  
Grant Moir, CEO  
Vicky Walker, Governance and Reporting Manager  
Pete Mayhew, Director of Nature and Climate Change

### **Apologies:**

Peter Argyle  
Liz Henderson, Rural Development and Communities Manager

### **Welcome and Apologies**

1. The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting of Performance Committee. He informed the Committee that the meeting was being recorded and would be available on website. Committee reminded to look at the remit of the Committee. The Chair ran through the Members attending the meeting and Grant Moir, CEO, gave the names of the Staff members attending.
2. Congratulations given to Andy Ford re his recent appointment as Director of Nature and Climate Change.

## **Declaration of Interests**

3. Doug McAdam declared an interest in:
  - a) Item 5 sits on the Caper Board as CNPA Board Representative, and
  - b) Item 9 - HH project - Independent Chair of the South Grampian Deer Management Group.
  
4. Anne Rae Macdonald declared an interest in:
  - a) Item 5 - as she was involved with the Machinery Management Group.

## **Minutes of Last Meetings held – for approval**

5. The draft Minutes of the last meeting held on 13th August 2021 were agreed with the following amendments:
  - a) Wording in the Welcome and Apologies section – the word “Convener” to be changed to Chair.

## **Matters Arising**

6. Action point – Performance dashboard as a standard tool. This on the agenda to be discussed and looked at for next meeting.
  
7. Request for Performance Committee not to be last meeting in Committee day each time. This had been discussed at Governance Committee and Xander McDade, Board Convener, confirmed that this discussion had taken place and decision made that the Audit and Risk Committee would be moved to second slot of day as a permanent slot due to the fact that External Partners would be attending. Resources and Performance Committees would have alternate times in the afternoon. The Performance Committee were happy with this.

## **Cairngorms Capercaillie Project (Paper 1)**

8. Andy Ford, Head of Conservation, introduced the paper which asked the Committee to:
  - a) Review delivery updates and consider:
    - i. Progress towards the project’s agreed purposes;
    - ii. Any strategically significant impacts on delivery of the CNPA’s Corporate Plan and National Park Partnership Plan; and
    - iii. Any material impacts on the CNPA’s strategic risk management.
  
  - b) Head of conservation pointed out that issues were marked as either, amber and green.

- c) Risk Register was another area which should be considered, although all considered satisfactory at moment.
  - d) Cover paper – put the project in the context and read across to NPPP and Corporate Plan. NLHF funded project operates in much wider context in the Park. NPPP and Corporate Plan indicators covered a wider project than just the Caper Project.
9. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
- a) A Member asked if new risks/actions should be looked at due to red risks highlighted – Criticism directed at CNPA. Need to differentiate between the CNPA and the Project. Indicated that performance of the Caper populations was a real risk.
  - b) Head of Conservation said that the big challenge was to create a better understanding of the projects and how communication is done re this. Project staff aware of the risks involved and are working to address with a new communications plan. This not reflected in the report so far but will be in the updated paper. **Head of Conservation to discuss with Doug McAdam.**
  - c) Member asked about Research work in Deeside – no mention of this in paper.
  - d) Head of Conservation replied that this was reported in the NLHF reporting plan under approved Purpose 1 – Deeside Communities on Page 3.
  - e) Member pointed out that SAC sub group looking at wider Caper issues not mentioned.
  - f) CEO responded to this saying that Judith Webb sits on this group as an observer due to her background expertise. This was taken to the Governance Committee in August and was agreed as appropriate. No formal feedback would be given but an informal response will probably be done in the near future. Interim Report and Final report would come from this SAC Group, probably in New Year, and would then be taken to Board. This group had been set up at the instigation of the CNPA. Policy decision on how to save the Caper is a Government issue not a CNPA one.
  - g) A Member brought up their concerned that route being taken at the moment was not helping to save the Caper and also causing community concern in Carrbridge.
  - h) Head of Conservation agreed that there was a wider context of work happening outside Carrbridge. NLHF project was set up to look at the whole picture not area specific issues. Number of different factors affecting Capper, habitat loss, disturbance, climate change all contribute to loss of factor. Key issue of disturbance picked up by project but other areas such as predators needed to be accelerated.
  - i) Head of Conservation agreed changes were required but under this project the parameters could not be changed. The CNPA needed to accelerate work in

other areas and communicate better that the wider issues were being looked at as well as those affecting this project.

- j) Wildlife Park – proposing to release wild cats – Member asked how this would impact on Caper population. Head of Conservation to share Environmental Impact Assessment on this with Member to help inform them of the implications of the project.
- k) Member felt that the Committee remit to be taken into account. Risk factor are really for the Audit and Risk Committee. This Committee's role was more around the performance – was there a role for the Committee in joining the performance and the perception of the person on the street/community involvement.
- l) Head of Conservation agreed that there was a role for the Committee to look at how to communicate the project better to communities.

10. **The Chair concluded that:**

- a) **Project progressing well against the agreed outcomes of the project and the principal funder.**
- b) **Recognise that Communication Engagement issues around what the project was about needs to be addressed. National Task Force initiated to look at whole range of issues and hopefully report from this will help with this project and stop the decline in the Capers.**
- c) **Committee felt that Caper Project Board should look at its Communications and Engagement to try to get better clarity out to communities.**

11. **The Performance Committee approved the recommendations in the paper *with the following actions:***

12. **Actions:**

- i. **Head of Conservation to discuss Communications Plan with Doug McAdam.**
- ii. **Head of Conservation to share Environmental Impact Assessment on this with Willie McKenna to help inform them of the implications of the project.**

### **Cairngorms LEADER and Cairngorms Trust Delivery (Paper 2)**

13. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the paper which asked the Committee to:

- a) Review the delivery updates presented with this paper and consider:
  - i. Whether the programmes of activity are making the expected contribution to the Cairngorms NPA's agreed strategic outcomes;

- ii. Whether the delivery updates suggest any strategically significant impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's agreed performance objectives; and
    - iii. Whether any material impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's strategic risk management and mitigation measures arise from assessment of programme delivery.
  - b) Key matters were outlined. Covid had impacted on the roll out of the funds. Still a lot of work to be done by the Trust to get projects started.
14. The Performance Committee discussed the delivery updates and made the following comments and observations:
- a) Resource deployment in particular the Voluntary Giving Scheme – what was the timing on this.
  - b) Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that the Stakeholder Group had met and were in process of compiling a Progress Report looking at resource support necessary for this financial year and to keep Management Teams focused on this before March next year.
  - c) Member asked: With LEADER ending how would this be funded? Could it be linked to Green Investment which would help?
  - d) Director of Corporate Services replied that nationally the Rural Team in Scottish Government had identified a number of key links of the Government aspect for the project. 5% of LEADER funding had been used towards rural funding so this might play out across the UK Government funding with it being allocated at a more local level. Value of having a LAG network covering Scotland but as LEADER comes to an end then LAG might not have the same impact. CLAG set up as a charity which meant that it would be protected in the future.
  - e) Could LEADER component engage with UK Government levelling-up funding?
  - f) Director of Corporate Services informed the Committee that he had been part of a Scottish Government group looking at rural economy and was also sitting on a DEFRA group looking at UK Government levelling-up funding. This was still in the early stages and huge amount of work to be done. Open to having participation across UK and different sectors. He indicated that he was there as part of the LEADER network.
  - g) Para 8 – Integrated Transport Signage and Electric Minibus. Member asked if there was a risk that this might not come in in time.
  - h) Director of Corporate Services replied that:
    - i. **Integrated Transport Signage** – looks as though this might be done by December so should be ok.
    - ii. **Electric Minibus** - under some threat due to supplies. Procurement process had been done but if there was too much of a threat by supply and this cannot be done by Dec then it would not be able to go ahead. No contractual commitment at the moment as procurement stated that this had to be in place by December otherwise the contract was voided.

15. **The Chair concluded that:**
  - a) **All objectives had been covered with discussions on the LEADER of the future and the green investment.**
16. **The Performance Committee approved the recommendations in the paper with the following actions:**
17. **Action:**
  - i. **None.**

### **Badenoch Great Place Project (Paper 3)**

18. Murray Ferguson, Director of Planning and Place, gave apologies from Liz Henderson, Rural Development and Communities Manager, and introduced the paper which asked the Committee to:
  - a) Note the achievements of the Project and all that it has delivered;
  - b) Note the key challenges and learning points arising from the project; and
  - c) Consider the legacy arrangements that have been put in place and how the impact of the project can be maximised as the next NP Partnership Plan is developed.
19. He informed the Committee 3 Board Members sit on Project Board Deirdre Falconer, Pippa Hadley and Fiona McLean.
20. There should have been a 2 day conference at the end of the Project but this had to be cancelled due to COVID but celebration event with Kate Forbes attending and Lord Thurso Chair of Visit Scotland had taken place this year.
21. Colour copy of final evaluation report had been produced and would be circulated to Committee in next few days.
22. Legacy Plan in place and would be handed on to Community Organisation chaired by Karen Derrick which will take project forward in the future. Legacy activities were also held by Erin Glover and Hamish Napier.
23. Administrative burden had been very high. One project officer employed by one organisation not CNPA which worked out very.
24. Heritage Lottery fund did not take forward networking of other projects.
25. Final format project evaluation still to be done by Heritage Lotter Fund Group.

26. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
- a) Chair thanked Director of Planning and Rural Development and commended him and his team on a project which had been a great success.
  - b) Learning from this project would help with Heritage Horizons Project.
  - c) Legacy phase – measuring success – Member asked if there was a way of tracking visitor numbers/spend etc which could be taken forward in legacy.
  - d) Director of Planning and rural Development replied that the Project had been reported back through Cairngorms Business Partnership. Not a specific aim of project to increase visitor numbers so this not highlighted in indicators. This issue was being discussed with Cairngorms Business Partnership to take forward along with the Tourism Action Plan Group.
  - e) Four Aims – were any of the indicators/outcomes measured against these?
  - f) Some guidance given on the project focusing on building a strong case and would be conducted through the final report.
  - g) Member asked if there was a system for signing off a project and evaluating it to ensure that it had set out what was expected as this had not been possible for this Project due to Performance Committee being set in place after project was started.
  - h) In future it would be the role of the Performance Committee to look at projects and to ensure that they were going forward properly and also evaluate them at the conclusion of the project. This would enable the Committee to take forward any lessons learned from previous projects.
27. **The Chair concluded that:**
- a) **Achievements noted and agreed that they had been delivered.**
  - b) **Legacy arrangements – agreed that these are covered.**
28. **The Performance Committee approved the recommendations in the paper with the following actions:**
29. **Action:**
- i. **Director of Planning and rural Development to pass on Committee thanks to Liz Henderson for all the work she had done on this project.**

#### **Cairngorms Peatland Action Programme Delivery (Paper 4)**

30. Stephen Corcoran, Peatland ACTION Programme Manager, introduced the paper. He pointed out that this was the first time a Peatland project had been put in place.

Main emphasis was to put procedures in place and to get contractors organised. He asked the Committee to:

- a) Review the delivery update and consider:
  - i. Progress towards the project's agreed purposes;
  - ii. Be aware of the delivery risks posed by weather and contractor capacity;
  - iii. Understand the scope and scale of the Peatland Programme and the resource implications for the Authority;
  - iv. Whether the delivery updates suggest any strategically significant impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's agreed performance objectives; and
  - v. Whether any material impacts on the Cairngorms NPA's strategic risk management and mitigation measures arise from assessment of programme delivery.

31. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:

- a) Member referred to 2021/22 year target of 557ha and noted that possible delivery might be 900ha.
- b) Peatland ACTION Programme Manager confirmed that commitment and contracts in place to deliver 900ha but contractors only able to deliver around 500ha.
- c) Member pointed to the September to March window which had created problems from one estate and there could be problems with weather issues.
- d) Peatland ACTION Programme Manager replied that some work had been done in July. There was prospect of starting work earlier and some estates had allowed work to start in July. Looking to see if work could be done during the bird breeding season. Surveys had been done to see where there was a possibility of doing this with protocols in place to protect the breeding birds. Permission down to estates.
- e) Contractors – Member asked if discussions had been done with Machinery Rings.
- f) Peatland ACTION Programme Manager replied not so far but something to look at. Issue was not equipment but people to operate diggers. Need to look at helping to train operators. Government needs to think about providing loans to machine operators to buy equipment.
- g) Coconut based product being used – Member asked if there was no other sustainable options which had less mileage in bringing to sites which could be used.
- h) Peatland ACTION Programme Manager replied that logs are imported by ship from South-East Asia so this had a high carbon content. Heather bales were being looked at along with Peat based products hopefully to be used more in the future.
- i) Site visit – talked about the resource risk. Potentially when A9 kicks off again then there could be a massive shortage of drivers for Peatland work. Had any

discussions been held with Transport Scotland to try to get work schedule phased with Peatland one.

- j) McGowans one of the contractors had just been awarded a huge contract with SSE which would take away some of the drivers from this project. A9 still waiting for Scottish Ministers to send out their revised scheduling announcement.
- k) Economic Steering Group to discuss skills development in the Park.
- l) WeallScotland – discussions had been held on training and how skills training could be taken forward in future.
- m) Estate staff could possibly be trained up to use equipment but this was a very specialised area of work. Work being done with Rothiemurchus at the moment to train up one person to work machine. Issues around this as a single operator on the hill would cause lots of risks. Need 60 digger drivers to meet the targets.
- n) Member asked if we would need to employ our own drivers.
- o) This was being looked at by Project Management with the possibility of employing drivers over a 3 year period.
- p) Could this contracting work be sold to younger generation as a different type of job, not just as a digger driver who would work on other areas such as A9. This work would be in a skilled environment.
- q) Scottish Government Peatland Programme Board met this week for the first time and discussed a lot of the points mentioned above. Key issue was to get contractor base. Good rural opportunity to take this work forward with estate workers/young people being trained. Operational Group needs to be set up to look at this issue Scotland Wide – not just a Cairngorms level.
- r) No 21 on paper – looking at underspend and the delivery of a lot of drain blocking side of the project what does this mean?
- s) Most of Parks peatland was not drained but erosion was from further up the hill. This was the area which required a specific skill set. Programme is based on the more expensive high erosion areas but due to the lack of contractors, drain blocking work had to be focused on. By starting contractors on drain blocking they can quickly be moved onto the more specific work. Hopefully next year more hectares could be worked on with less spend incurred.
- t) All projects being done on estates just now are the more expensive type of erosion work.
- u) Sheep's wool – could this be used for blocking drains. This being looked at for next year. This had been tried elsewhere with varying success. Trial plots would be set out next year. If this was successful it would provide a good market for farmers.
- v) Area target ok but spend target not – can the underspend be carried forward?
- w) Director of Corporate Services highlighted that potential opportunity of being in long-term capital environment so this would enable report to Scottish Government that although capital had not been spent it could be passed on as a re-profiling of the more expensive work which would be done in following years.

Capital resources were more easily re-profiled. Discussion still to be held on this with Scottish Government.

- x) Para 25 – At the moment the Project gives out funding as a grant but in the future the CNPA might change to be in charge of the contracts via direct delivery. Peatland Programme Board at Government level would need to take this forward. If this does happen then joint liability will need to be looked at with estates as CNPA do not own land, there would also be insurance issues to be considered.

**32. The Chair concluded that:**

- a) **Action programme is a major contribution to getting to Nett Zero**
- b) **Review progress – this was done noting that the area targets were achievable but the spend targets were not.**
- c) **Delivery risks by contractor capacity – this not Committee remit but ongoing work to see if the season can be extended was being done.**
- d) **Contractor capacity – this not unique to CNPA and impacts on other industry sectors. Committee encouraged officers to look for opportunities to work with other groups such as machinery cooperatives to try to get delivery done.**
- e) **Understand the resource implications and positive that CNPA managing impacts.**
- f) **Performance objectives – this down to contractor capacity and also welcomed using local materials.**
- g) **Risk to CNPA – this came back to contractor capacity.**

**33. The Performance Committee approved the recommendations in the paper with the following actions:**

**34. Action:**

- i. **Staff to get contractors in place as soon as possible.**

### **Heritage Horizons Project Update (Paper 5)**

35. David Cameron, Director of Corporate Services, introduced the paper which updated the Committee on the Heritage Horizons: Cairngorms 2030 Programme and the planned development work to end December 2021.

36. Paper highlighted to Committee that lot of work had been done since the beginning of July until the formal start date which was 1<sup>st</sup> October. Key appointments had been made. Kate Christie, Head of Organisational Development and her team had been supportive in recruitment of these appointments.

37. Information had been sent out to Stakeholders on work and Programme Board/Advisory Board meetings to be held in November.
38. The Performance Committee discussed the paper and made the following comments and observations:
- a) Thanks given to David Clyne for paper.
  - b) Interactions with land management community – missed opportunity to liaise with this sector. Only direct interaction is with Factor of Balmoral Estate but this might not be truly representative of land management sector. Scottish Land Commission was down as to improve the accountability on how the land was used, how will this cover productivity?
  - c) CEO replied that this was their remit so could not be changed.
  - d) Project Advisory Group – looking at membership of group when they hold their first meeting.
  - e) Project Board – this Board will look at funding managers so is set and will not be changed.
  - f) Funding going into this project was from private interests including land management groups. Should this group be included in the Project Board:
  - g) CEO to think about this but this area probably fits better with Advisory Panel work.
  - h) Member pointed out that farming was under the conservation heading in the paper as opposed to being under land management. Concern that this may send out the wrong message to those involved in land management. Active farming involvement would be useful.
  - i) Private funding should perhaps have a voice on the Advisory Panel. CEO to take this on board.
  - j) CEO replied that all sectors would contribute to all of the areas not just land management etc. Each of the different projects had their own group of people involved so only the top level was highlighted at the moment.
39. **The Chair concluded that:**
- a) **Advisory Panel – membership would be looked at to see if there were any gaps.**
40. **The Performance Committee approved the recommendations in the paper with the following actions:**
41. **Action:**
- i. **CEO to look again at the Advisory Panel membership**
  - ii. **Any changes to the Advisory Panel to be taken forward after their first meeting.**

## **Update on Private Finance (Oral Update)**

42. Grant Moir, CEO, gave an update to the Committee on Private Finance.
43. Launch of the Nett Zero re nature. This looks at taking private finance into NPs. Work with Palladium being taken forward in CNPA. Also working with them to get Santander funding for the Peatland Project. Still work to be done over the next two years.
44. CEO asked Palladium to do a session with the CNPA Board. Video Conference to be set up over the next couple of months to take this forward. Date would be separate from normal Board Days. Relationship with Palladium was non-exclusive. Land Managers would be able to work with other companies. Community benefits being discussed to see how the benefit could flow back into Communities.
45. The Performance Committee made the following comments and observations:
  - a) Chair felt that a Board session would be very useful.
  - b) Worth giving some thought about how to give reassurance to the wider community about the work with Palladium. CEO to take this forward.
46. **The Chair concluded that:**
  - a) More information to both Board and wider community would be useful.
47. **The Performance Committee thanked the CEO for his update and recorded the following actions:**
48. **Action:**
  - i. **CEO to look into better communication with Board and wider community.**

## **AOCB**

49. Chair wished Pete Mayhew all the best in his retirement and gave thanks for all his work with the CNPA.
50. Minutes – timeline of the issue of the draft minutes. Draft of minutes should be issued before next Formal Board meeting so that Committee Members have sight of them before they are sent to the Formal Board.

## **Date of Next Meeting**

51. The next meeting of the Performance Committee 11 February 2022 via Lifesize (all Committees to be held on the same day so will remain via Lifesize)
52. The meeting finished at 16:50 hours.