

# CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

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## FOR INFORMATION

**Title: ANNUAL REPORTS OF BOARD COMMITTEES**

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### **Purpose**

This paper presents the Annual Reports of the Performance, Governance and Resources Committees to the Board.

### **Recommendations**

**The Board is asked to note the Annual Reports to the Board from the:**

- a) Performance Committee**
- b) Governance Committee**
- c) Resources Committee**

### **Background**

1. The Authority has now completed the first year of operation of its revised Committee structure.
2. In line with internal audit recommendations and as an element of the remit of the Committees, each Committee submits an annual report covering its activities and reflecting on its operations over the course of the last year to the full board. This paper presents the reports for those Committees which have now completed their annual cycle. Due to the Audit & Risk Committee meeting being scheduled on 23<sup>rd</sup> September, its Annual Report will be presented to the Board at its November meeting.

**David Cameron**  
**12 August 2022**

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## **Performance Committee Annual Report to Board for Period August 2021 to August 2022**

### **Activity in Period**

1. The Performance Committee was established following a review of the Cairngorms NPA's board committee structures over the first quarter of 2021/22.
2. The Committee met for the first time in August 2021 and has met a total of five times up to and including the meeting of 12 August 2022.
3. The Committee has sought assurance over the performance of the following programmes and major projects where the Cairngorms NPA leads deliver or holds significant responsibility as a lead applicant and / or accountable body for funding deployed:
  - a) Cairngorms Capercaillie Project;
  - b) Cairngorms LEADER and Cairngorms Trust delivery;
  - c) Badenoch Great Place Project;
  - d) Cairngorms Peatland ACTION Programme;
  - e) Cairngorms 2030 Heritage Horizons Programme;
  - f) Evolution of Community Led Local Development Funding approaches.
4. The Committee has also considered the following aspects of its operations:
  - a) Review of terms of reference.
  - b) Development of a standard format of programme and project reporting to the committee.
  - c) Development of a performance dashboard for overview of performance by the committee.
  - d) Development of private finance approaches.
  - e) Initial consideration of criteria for identifying appropriate areas to report to the committee.

### **Review of Activities and Commentary**

5. The Committee, as a new aspect of the Cairngorms NPA assurance processes, has worked over the year to understand its remit and its role in the context of other committees and governance structures and evolve appropriate reporting structures and points of focus. Overall, the committee feels it has been successful in this work. Appropriate areas of overlap with other committees on resource and risk management have been recognised and minimised. Key areas of the Cairngorms NPA managed, and partner led activities have been identified for reporting with a template reporting structure established. Use of existing reports has been maximised to minimise additional reporting burdens on staff.
6. The Committee had a consistent membership over the course of the year with excellent attendance and engagement by members in matters covered.

7. The Committee has not identified any changes required to its terms of reference over the course of this reporting period.
8. There have been no instances of need for escalation of concerns to the full board. Some matters of concern around levels of resourcing and capacity falling below requirement for Heritage Horizons and Peatland Programmes and the assessed potential risks around those have been made known to other committees to enhance coordinated assurance over organisational performance. Generally, performance reports have been positive. Activity on significant programmes and projects has generally secured agreed objectives with minor deviations noted, as has been more fully represented in corporate performance reporting to the full board.
9. The initial scheduling of four committees on the same day has been challenging for timing of meetings; keeping meetings to time while allowing full and valuable discussions to take place; and on officer support time. The change to holding performance committee meetings as part of a schedule of three committees is welcomed and will be monitored for effectiveness.
10. The Committee has evolved a standard format for reporting over the year, based on experience and feedback over several committee cycles and the development of a template by the Director of Corporate Services with the approval of the Senior Management Team.

## **Conclusions**

11. The operation of the Performance Committee has provided an important and effective additional element of assurance to the Cairngorms NPA's governance and assurance systems. This has been reinforced by preliminary internal audit reports on performance management conducted in the year and to be reported to the Audit and Risk Committee.
12. The Committee believes there are no significant changes needed in the Committee's operations over the coming year. Committee members will continue to work with senior officers to evolve and adapt reporting structures as required.
13. The Committee is grateful to the support of officers provided over the year, for full and clear papers and effective, helpful engagement at our meetings.
14. The Committee has been keen to foster a trusting and open approach to its work and, as a result, it has been possible to have some very full and frank discussions on some of the reports it has considered.

## **Governance Committee Annual Report to Board for Period August 2021 to August 2022**

### **Activity in Period**

1. The Governance Committee was established following a review of the Cairngorms NPA's Board committee structures over the first quarter of 2021/22. The Committee formalised the "Governance Group" of Convener, Deputy Convener and Committee Chairs which previously met to support management of governance, strategic development, and Board management activities.
2. The Committee met for the first time in August 2021 and has met a total of five times up to and including the meeting of 12 August 2022.
3. The Committee has sought assurance over the following key aspects of the Cairngorms NPA's operations over the course of the reporting period:
  - a) Operation of Board committees within their terms of reference.
  - b) Communication strategy and its implementation.
  - c) Development of private finance and green finance initiatives.
  - d) Board complaints procedure.
  - e) Board development, evaluation, and training.
  - f) Board appointment processes including development of skills matrix.
  - g) Appointment of Executive Director role.
  - h) Liaison with Scottish Ministers.
  - i) Oversight of Board business scheduling and Board agendas.
  - j) Oversight of Scottish Government strategic spending and budget review exercises.
  - k) Oversight of Board's digital and virtual operations: hybrid meetings, development, support requirements and implementation of Board portal.
  - l) Oversight of evolution of COVID19 business continuity responses.
  - m) Checkpoint reviews of key programmes and projects: including Heritage Horizons Cairngorms 2030 Programme, Cairngorms Capercaillie project, and peatland restoration green finance activities.
  - n) New Model Code of Conduct development and implementation.
  - o) Board members' commitments to external organisations.

### **Review of Activities and Commentary**

4. The Committee, as a new aspect of the Cairngorms NPA assurance processes, has worked over the year to understand its remit and its role in the context of other committees and governance structures and evolve appropriate reporting structures and points of focus. Overall, the committee feels it has been successful in this work. Appropriate areas of overlap with other committees on performance, resources and risk management have been recognised and duplicate work has attempted to be minimised.
5. The Committee had a consistent membership over the course of the year with excellent attendance and engagement by members in matters covered. The

Committee is open to for attendance by any Board member where members have an interest on any specific matter under discussion.

6. The Committee has not identified any changes required to its terms of reference over the course of this reporting period.
7. Part of the Committee's role is to consider the schedule of business for the full Board. There have been no instances of need for escalation of concerns to the full Board in terms of events identified requiring matters to be raised with the Board as exceptional items. Some minor matters have been made known to other committees to enhance coordinated assurance over organisational performance.
8. The initial scheduling of four committees on the same day has been challenging for timing of meetings; keeping meetings to time while allowing full and valuable discussions to take place; and on officer support time. The change to holding Governance committee meetings as part of a schedule of three committees is welcomed and will be monitored for effectiveness.
9. The Committee are of the view that the adaptation and enhancements made to the Cairngorms NPA committee structure in 2021 have made a positive contribution to the overview and scrutiny of the work of the organisation and significantly enhanced levels of assurance. The Performance Committee in particular has led to a material improvement in levels of assurance, enabling regular deep dives into major project and programme work and, through doing so, improving board governance and scrutiny. The combination of oversight of both staff and financial resource deployment into a single Resources Committee has also provided for enhanced overview and assurance through more integrated analysis and review of deployment of the Authority's total resources.

## **Conclusions**

10. The Committee believes that the establishment of the Committee has made a positive enhancement to the assurance processes of the Cairngorms NPA, formalising and scheduling key governance overview activities and discussions which had previously been on a more ad hoc basis. The operation of the Resources Committee has provided an important and effective element of assurance to the Cairngorms NPA's governance and assurance systems.
11. The Committee believes there are no significant changes needed in the Committee's operations over the coming year.
12. The Committee is grateful to the support of officers provided over the year, for full and clear papers and effective, helpful engagement at our meetings.

## **Resources Committee Annual Report to Board for Period August 2021 to August 2022**

### **Activity in Period**

1. The Resources Committee was established following a review of the Cairngorms NPA's board committee structures over the first quarter of 2021/22. The Committee combined many of the responsibilities of the previous Finance and Delivery and Staffing and Recruitment Committees.
2. The Committee met for the first time in August 2021 and has met a total of five times up to and including the meeting of 12 August 2022.
3. The Committee has sought assurance over the following key aspects of the Cairngorms NPA's operations over the course of the reporting period:
  - a) Staff pay award effective from 1 April 2022;
  - b) Development of 2022/23 budget;
  - c) Budget monitoring for both 2021/22 and 2022/23;
  - d) Draft financial outturn position for 2021/22;
  - e) Delivering the Cairngorms NPA's Equality Duties;
  - f) Staff engagement, including the results of the staff survey and Staff Consultative Forum discussions;
  - g) Evolution of staff terms and conditions, particularly around the development of 35 hour working week proposals;
  - h) The Right to Disconnect Charter;
  - i) Health and Safety operations;
4. The Committee also initiated consideration of the potential for developing commercial income and the committee's future consideration of this aspect of the Authority's activity toward the end of this reporting period. The Committee will take this aspect of work forward in future years.

### **Review of Activities and Commentary**

5. The Committee, as a new aspect of the Cairngorms NPA assurance processes, has worked over the year to understand its remit and its role in the context of other committees and governance structures and evolve appropriate reporting structures and points of focus. Overall, the committee feels it has been successful in this work. Appropriate areas of overlap with other committees on performance and risk management have been recognised and minimised.
6. The Committee had a consistent membership over the course of the year with excellent attendance and engagement by members in matters covered.
7. The Committee has not identified any changes required to its terms of reference over the course of this reporting period.

8. There have been no instances of need for escalation of concerns to the full board, while some minor matters have been made known to other committees to enhance coordinated assurance over organisational performance.
9. The initial scheduling of four committees on the same day has been challenging for timing of meetings; keeping meetings to time while allowing full and valuable discussions to take place; and on officer support time. The change to holding performance committee meetings as part of a schedule of three committees is welcomed and will be monitored for effectiveness.

## **Conclusions**

10. The operation of the Resources Committee has provided an important and effective element of assurance to the Cairngorms NPA's governance and assurance systems.
11. Members believe the combination of the remits of two committees into a single committee scrutinising the key areas of financial and staff resources, in addition to some oversight of wider resources work in the deployment of offices and other facilities, has given an enhanced level of assurance over these key areas. The Committee's view therefore after the first year of operation is that the Committee should be retained as an element of the Cairngorms NPA's governance and assurance framework under its current remit.
12. The Committee believes there are no significant changes needed in the Committee's operations over the coming year. Committee members will continue to work with senior officers to evolve and adapt reporting structures as required.
13. The Committee is grateful to the support of officers provided over the year, for full and clear papers and effective, helpful engagement at our meetings.