



CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

DRAFT Minutes of the Staff Consultative Forum

**Held via MS Teams & In Person, Morlich Meeting Room, GoS Office
1:30pm, on Thursday 14 September 2023**

Present

Adam Streeter-Smith
David Cameron
Ed Swales
James Lee
Kate Christie
Mariaan Pita
Nasim Mehrabi
Pip Mackie
Richard Hardy (Prospect)

Apologies

Derek Ross (Board Member)
Russell Jones (Board Member)

Item 1:

Welcome and Apologies

1. David Cameron (DC) welcomed everyone.
2. Apologies were received from the above.

Item 2:

Review of Minutes of 19 June 2023 Meeting and Matters Arising

3. Minutes were agreed and action points were reviewed.

Item 3:

Paper 1: Gender Diversity Policy

4. Kate Christie (KC) introduced the policy. She explained the following:-
 - a. The policy was being tabled now because i) the LGBT Charter Action Plan which was consulted with and agreed by staff included the development of such a policy as one of the actions; ii) the Park Authority's interactions with the transgender community is growing;



- iii) the trans community faced significant and disproportionate discrimination and harassment as identified through the EqlA process; iv) the recent equalities and LGBT training identified a lack of clarity in this area and uncertainty about how to interact, what to say etc
 - b. The policy does not create a hierarchy of protected characteristics. In fact, the section on managing conflict was specifically added to the policy to note the rights of people with gender critical beliefs, and this was reflected also in the EqlA
 - c. This policy will be one of a suite of equalities policies – some are still to be developed
 - d. The Dignity at Work Policy was also a key policy that interacts closely with the Gender Diversity Policy, and we recognise the need to review this policy as well. The review will be brought back to the SCF
5. The following points were raised:
- a. A member said that they had had several representations made to them by staff which were in support of the policy, and that it was particularly helpful for managers to be clear about what was expected of them in supporting employees
 - b. With regards the section on Behaviour and Respect at Work, it was asked if setting out such explicit examples of behaviours (that might prompt reference to the Dignity at Work policy (DaW) might suggest a hierarchy of protected characteristics, and should the Gender Diversity Policy include reference just to those behaviours that might have a specific impact on transgender people only? Behaviours which could relate to any of the protected characteristics could be adequately covered by the DaW policy. The possibility of including the behaviour examples in a guidance briefing to staff instead of specifying in policy was suggested as a potential solution. DC advised that given that this was a new policy on a sensitive and evolving subject, and the need for managers and staff to have clarity and understanding about behaviours in this context, it was useful to have all guidance in the one place without having to cross reference between policies. He said that there had also been positive feedback from staff regarding the inclusion of the examples of behaviours. On this basis it was agreed to retain the examples of behaviours in the policy, whilst also ensuring the DaW policy adequately covered all behaviours relevant to all protected characteristics. It was further agreed that when advising staff about the adoption of this policy, there would be clear communications to



- c. staff that there was no hierarchy amongst the protected characteristics – i.e. no protected characteristic was more important than any other. DC advised that the policy would be reviewed in 12-18 months time for refinements, which would include a review of the behaviours section.
 - d. KC advised that it was proposed to review the DaW policy with the involvement of our lawyers to ensure alignment with other existing policies, and we hoped to bring this policy review back to the next SCF.
 - e. The glossary of terms being kept under review annually to ensure that it was as up to date as possible.
 - f. Clearer wording required regarding events organised/sanctioned by the CNPA and those organised by staff in a social setting e.g. as friends and the need for the culture of the organisation to be clearly set out. DC advised that this would be picked up in the Staff Handbook covering when are staff working as a representative of the CNPA as opposed to their own volition socially.
6. DC thanked everyone for the feedback and the policy was adopted.

Item 4:

Paper 2: Staff Register of Interests Policy

7. DC introduced the paper, explaining the key changes as being that a register was required only from staff at band C and above, ie. those who were most likely to engage with stakeholders or assess bids and/or budget allocations; and that the executive team would publish their registers on the website. Feedback was provided as follows:
 - a. The level of detail staff are required to disclose regarding other remuneration. DC advised that the guidance usually given is if an employee own shares of £25k or more in an individual company it should be declared, so that there is clarity to level of financial interest in one organisation. Regarding more generic trust funds, these may not be registerable, as the individual would not be actively influencing where the trust funds were invested. For other one off smaller company interests who may tender for work, the employee may not wish to be involved in the tender process. The advice is to ask for guidance. However, the register is to ensure that there is transparency internally and so staff cannot be accused of doing work in their own interest instead of in the interests of the CNPA.
8. DC thanked everyone for their input and feedback. The policy was adopted.



Item 5:

Paper 3: Hybrid Working Policy

9. KC introduced the paper, explaining that it was broadly based on the Trial Hybrid Approach, and that there were no significant variations from that approach. Feedback was provided as follows:
 - a. The guidance around hybrid working being applied inconsistently across the organisation and teams – with some teams being requested to have a higher level of office presence than others. KC advised that there may be some roles where there is more of a requirement to be office based e.g. reception / facilities. If any particular team feels they are being treated unfairly in this regard then the HR team are happy to discuss how to support those staff and the wider organisation.
 - b. Feedback that as any Flexible Working Request for more than 50% home working does not include a change to hours or location there would be no need to reissue staff with a revised contract. This could be dealt with via a letter of confirmation.
 - c. There being an issue of visibility and availability for some managers under hybrid working. KC advised that the policy applies to all staff including managers. It was advised that in supporting the policy the Resources Committee requested training to be delivered covering managing in a hybrid working environment. This training was currently being contracted and would take account of visibility and availability. DC advised that visibility and availability were 2 very different things and should be kept as separate items.
 - d. The possibility for staff to feedback to line managers through a 360 review regarding visibility/availability. KC advised that Performance Development Conversations should be a 2 way discussion with staff able to bring this up. It was also advised that the Best Companies survey would be coming up which would look at Leadership and Line Management and also provided the opportunity for for staff to provide any other comments anonymously.
 - e. Inconsistency across the organisation regarding diary management and scheduling of time out of the office. It was advised that this had also been discussed at a recent ODS group meeting. KC advised that this could be picked up under the ODS Action Plan discussions.
 - f. The need for the Right to Disconnect policy to be referenced. KC advised that this would be included in the links to other policies section.
9. DC thanked everyone for their input and feedback. The policy was adopted.



Item 6:

Verbal Update: 2023/24 Pay Award inc. Status Impacts for Leavers

10. DC advised that an update had been issued in July to all staff, setting out the Park Authority's proposed direction of travel and interpretation of the SG Pay Strategy for our staff. The required approvals had now been received from the Scottish Government (SG) sponsor and the finance pay policy teams. He advised that staff may be aware that SG staff have also now had a pay offer accepted, this was a 2-year offer and varies to the position of the CNPA.
11. The intention is to make formal pay offer to staff for 2023/24 in line with update previously given. There are two reasons for this, the CNPA have now received sign off for the award and can therefore proceed with the offer and, secondly, this doesn't require the start of a new pay award process, which would further delay implementation. DC confirmed that if our budget position allowed flexibility to make further changes later in the year, we would consider that, but for now affordability constraints meant that we would make an offer based on our existing modelling and proposals. The reps generally accepted that the Park Authority's proposed direction on staff pay was in keeping with the pay policy and knowledge of our budgetary position and gave general support for the proposals.
12. RH advised that the union had met with the Deputy First Minister to discuss the direction of travel for public sector pay. At the moment the process was ongoing. However, it was not wished to create a tiered system of staff who work for SG and those who work for other public sector organisations.
13. A rep raised disagreement with the organisational position whereby leavers are not entitled to any pay award if they leave before the pay award had been implemented following formal offer and agreement. DC advised that this has always been the organisation's position for several reasons; - firstly how could we apply a pay award that had not yet been agreed – what percentage would we apply when there had not yet been formal agreement; secondly, once a staff member leaves they get a P45 and are removed from the payroll system. We would have to recreate them as an employee to implement the pay award after they left which was not possible to do as they are not an employee at that point. This would also have pensions and tax implications. DC said that when staff tender their resignation, they do so on the basis of their salary at the time they leave. So the position is that if someone is still active on the payroll in the month when we process the agreed pay awards, they will receive backdated pay. If they have already been P45'd out of the payroll, they will no longer be on the payroll and not



14. able to get any backdated pay. He acknowledged that the pay award has been implemented late this year, but this did not change the organisational position. It was recommended that going forward the position re date of pay award implementation and impact on leavers should be made explicit to staff. DC agreed that this was an appropriate action point.
15. The union advised that although the pay award does feel late it had been one of the quicker pay rounds to be agreed. Usually public sector pay is set in December, which included the pay policy position. However, this last year the pay policy had not been set until April and therefore the ability for organisations to speak to the sponsor team etc couldn't happen until that point. There was an understanding why people might be upset by the lateness of an offer coming through but this pay award had been processed and approved by SG quicker than for many other public sector organisations and was not the fault of CNPA as there had been considerable delay across whole public sector.
16. If pay awards are going to be delayed in the future, the scope for the CNPA to implement the progression award only was raised. This was something other organisations had done with the Cost of Living award being implemented at a later stage once agreed. DC advised that this may be easier for other organisations to implement due to having specific salary band incremental progression points. This was something that CNPA did not have, and pay progression was an affordability consideration from one year to the next, forming a part of the overall pay proposals that had to be agreed by SG before we could implement. However, the possibility of considering implementing the pay award this way would be kept on the radar.
17. DC advised that the next step was to get the formal pay offer to staff which we hoped to do within the next few weeks. Should staff accept the offer, it would be implemented in the October pay.
18. Ed Swales left the meeting.

Item 7:

Discussion: Health and Safety Update

19. There were no updates.



Item 8:

Discussion: Leadership

20. DC advised that there were still two live appointments for Board Members and this process would be concluded within the next few weeks. The new Members would be looking to join the Board in November.
21. DC advised there would be an election for a Planning Convener in November.

Item 9:

Discussion: Equalities

22. KC advised that there had been recruitment for new volunteers to the Equality Advisory Panel, with 8 applications being received. KC and Board members, Fiona Mclean & Hannah Grist were due to interview the applicants next week and make the appointments. There were currently 10 members on the EAP and there was no limit to the number. KC advised that Hannah Grist will also now attend the EAP in a Board capacity.

Item 9:

AOB

23. There was no other business.

The meeting concluded at 3pm.



Ref	Action	Responsible	Due Date
09.12.19 Para 6	Amend Terms & Conditions: Any staff dealing with payroll to be consulted regarding having a specific confidentiality clause inserted into their contract. 05.10.20: Ongoing 06.12.21: Ongoing 27.06.22: Ongoing 07.11.22: Ongoing 25.01.23: Ongoing 20.03.23: Update: Wording has now been provided by lawyers and discussions are ongoing. 19.06.23: Still in discussion	KC	June 20
06.12.21 Para 19	Electric Car Salary Sacrifice Scheme Future updates to be brought back to SCF 27.06.22: Finance team looking into and any proposal will be brought to MT 07.11.22: Still progressing 25.01.23: Ongoing 20.03.23: Update: Support had been received from NatureScot who had recently launched a similar scheme. Any proposals would go to MT then be brought back to SCF 19.06.23: still progressing	KC	June 22
27.06.22 Para 12a	Staff Induction Process Feedback from staff survey on induction process to be presented at SCF 25.01.23: Ongoing 20.03.23: Ongoing 19.06.23: Ongoing	PM	Sep 22
23.03.23 Para 25	Pigeonholes Current system to be looked at and revised if necessary. 19.06.23: Ongoing	KC	June 23
14.09.23	Gender Diversity Policy		



Para 5b	Policy to be reviewed in 12-18 months time Guidance briefing issued to staff inc. there being no hierarchy amongst the protected characteristics,	KC	Mar 25 Dec 23
Para 5c	The Dignity at Work policy to be reviewed and brought back to SCF for discussion		Mar 24
Para 5e	Addition to Handbook re organisational culture and event organisation.		
14.09.23 Para 9f	Hybrid Working Policy Right to Disconnect policy to be referenced in the links to other policies section	KC	Oct 23