



Draft minutes of the Formal Board meeting

Held at Cairngorms National Park Authority office, Grantown-on-Spey

In person

28 November 2025 at 09.30am

Present in person

Sandy Bremner (Convener)

Jackie Brierton

Kenny Deans

Dr Hannah Grist

John Kirk

Lauren MacCallum

Dr Fiona McLean

Derek Ross

Eleanor Mackintosh (Deputy Convener)

Dr Peter Cosgrove

Paul Gibb

Russell Jones

Bill Lobban

Ian McLaren

Duncan Miller

Michael Williamson

In attendance

Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer

David Cameron, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Director of Corporate Services

Gavin Miles, Director of Planning and Place

Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services

David Berry, Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer

Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations

Dan Harris, Planning Manager (Forward Planning)

Alix Harkness, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Geva Blackett

Steve Micklewright

Ann Ross



Welcome and introduction

1. Sandy Bremner, the Board Convener, welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

Matters arising not covered elsewhere

2. The draft minutes from the meeting on 26 September 2025 were approved with no amendments.
3. There were no matters arising.

Action	Status
Action Points from meeting on 22 November 2024:	
Paper 1 - CEO Report	
At para 6b	In hand
i. Review the Planning call-in protocol and discuss at a future planning committee.	
Update: An informal discussion on call-in criteria was held following the Formal Board meeting on 26 September 2025, and an update will be reported to Planning Committee on 12 December 2025.	
Paper 5 - Active Cairngorms and end of season visitor report	
At para 23a	Complete
i. Include key challenges in mitigation and learning in future papers.	
At para 23c	Complete
ii. Statistics on camp site and luxury camping options within the National Park	
Action	Status
Action Points from meeting on 28 March 2025:	
Paper 2 – 2025/26 Budget and Operational Plan	
iii. Information on the number of ecological barriers that are being removed on catchments to be sought and circulated to the Board and thought to be given to putting this into a staff members forward work plan.	In hand
iv. Scope of extending the work on species management specifically geese further up the Spey into Badenoch to be investigated.	Complete



Update:	
Information is being sought for the number of ecological barriers that are being removed on catchments, but not yet available. This is one of the indicators in the Cairngorms Nature Index. Will be shared with the Board once available.	
Action	Status
Action Points from meeting on 27 June 2025:	
Paper 1 CEO Report	
At para 6 c	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Clerks to the Board to share the minutes from group meetings that Board Members sit on to the board portal. 	
Update:	
Advisory group meeting minutes that have been approved have been added to the website and linked to via the Board Site. Outstanding advisory group minutes will be added following the approval of the minutes at the next meeting.	
Action	Status
Action points from meeting on 26 September	
Paper 1 CEO Report	
At para 8 e)	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. CEO to write to SG to request a change in LDP consultation process. 	
Update: CEO has been in contact with SG. SG have also scheduled a summit event in early December to look for ways to address current challenges with the Evidence Report 'gatecheck' process. Park Authority Officers will provide views to feed into this event.	
Paper 2 Revision of Planning Committee Standing Orders	
At para 12 a)	Complete
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Amend the wording in the Standing Orders to read: Members should have their camera switched on (unless there is a specific technical reason for that meeting). 	
Update: Wording amended and updated Standing Orders published.	
Paper 5 Agricultural land use and farming activity	



At para 24 i) <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Head of Land Management will investigate the figures and amend the data, update paper and share figures with Board Members.	Complete
Update: The figures being queried were taken directly from information supplied by Rural and Environmental Science and Analytical Services Directorate (RESAS). On contacting RESAS, the discrepancy is most likely due to respondents not supplying complete information on age range.	

Declarations of interest

4. There were no declarations of interest.

CEO Report (Paper 1)

5. Grant Moir, CEO, introduced the paper which was to highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by the Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver, with partners, the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.
6. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A member congratulated the team and praised them for entering and winning the Herald and S1Jobs Top Employer award in the "Best Diversity and Inclusion Dynamic in the Workplace" category. She recognised the hard work the team had undertaken over the last few years.
 - b) A member asked for an update on the progress of transport activities in Nethy Bridge and whether the community's requested improvements would be implemented. CEO advised the next stage was for designers to review all the community requests and points of feedback that were collected a couple of years ago and come up with a plan that details what could be practically implemented for the community, to be consulted on as part of the community roadshow.



- c) A member praised the news that the CNPA Agriculture Officer, would be providing a regular column to the Press and Journal and asked if those articles could be sent onto the Board prepublication? CEO agreed.
- d) An update on the wildfire policy implementation was sought. CEO reported that a meeting had taken place between public sector bodies followed by another meeting which was chaired by Minister for Agriculture, Jim Fairlie in Grantown on Spey. He advised that the Director of Planning and Place had attended the Moray Council Community Planning Board recently and Moray Council may have their own wildfire plan and are considering having their own byelaw, with work still to be done on that.
- e) A member noted the increase in social media channels and asked if it would be possible to obtain some feedback and statistics on the engagement of the new website? Recognition that the Communications team make connections and responding to comments was that having an impact on team capacity and resources? CEO advised that a paper on that would be brought before the Performance Committee. He agreed that it has an impact on staff capacity, explained that the right balance was needed as the new website had driven up engagement which was also positive. The Board Convener praised the work of the Communications team.
- f) Member asked about the new signage to inform people of the fire bylaw coming into force on 1 April 2026 and asked for clarity on how communities would be brought up to speed? CEO advised that the managing for visitors group have been looking at this, working with an external company setting out assets during December. He added that they have spoken to the Cairngorms Business Partnership (CBP) who would be running a seminar for businesses in February/ March time and something similar would be run for communities. He added that there would be a communications campaign on fire byelaw implementation too.
- g) A member asked for further information on the working arrangements for current peatland projects. CEO advised that this year, peatland staff were directly delivering 50% and the remaining 50% had been contracted and outsourced programme managed. The headcount in the team would be unlikely to increase in future years; more would be put out to third parties to project manage. He explained that the Park Authority offer a grant of 10% of capital fees (capped) to cover project fees. He added that next year likely to be 40% our staff and 60% outsourced to third parties.



- h) A member asked if the capercaillie emergency plan was working or was it too early to say? CEO advised that work was being done on diversionary feeding which was showing good signs, there was work on cattle in woodland and removal of fences at the moment, and that real impact would not be seen until next year's data and the year after that. He reminded members that the funding only came through this summer, therefore it was still too early for significant results to be seen.
 - i) A member praised the bike busses and asked if other primary schools could apply to be involved? Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that it began with Deshar and Aviemore schools and then was rolled out to Grantown. He explained that the tender for Nethy Bridge and Newtonmore had recently gone out and that discussions for introducing it in the Deeside and Donside side too were ongoing.
 - j) Was there an update on the creation of an app for the Cairngorms National Park? CEO advised that he would seek an update from the Head of Communications and Engagement and circulate it to the Board after the meeting.
7. The Board noted the paper. The Convener thanked the CEO and all staff on behalf of the Board.
8. Action Points Arising:
- i. **Press and Journal columns written by Malcolm Smith, Agricultural Officer to be circulated to the Board prepublication.**
 - ii. **CEO to seek an update on the development of a Cairngorms National Park app and circulate this to the Board.**

Local Development Plan – Development Plan Scheme 2025 (Paper 2)

9. Dan Harris, Planning Manager introduced the paper which seeks approval of the Development Plan Scheme 2025, as set out in Annex 1.
10. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) A member noted that local plans were mentioned, could it be explained how many local place plans there were in the Cairngorms National Park and how many would be feeding into it? Planning Manager confirmed that there were



no local place plans at the moment but the preparation of new community action plans being carried out by Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS), and Marr Area Partnership (MAP) would be fed into the Local Development Plan (LDP).

11. The Board approved the Development Plan Scheme 2025.

12. Action Point Arising: None.

Active Cairngorms (Paper 3)

13. Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel introduced the paper which sets out the [Active Cairngorms Action Plan](#) which is one of a series of plans that sit below the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP). Along with the Sustainable Tourism and Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plans, these plans collectively describe the Park Authority and partners' work in relation to tourism, visitor facilities and services and the management of visitor impacts on the Cairngorm National Park. This report gives Board members oversight of progress towards the plan's objectives and is being presented to the Board in autumn to give a timely overview of visitor related activity that took place over the preceding summer season.

14. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:

- a) The Convener raised concerns around the timescales to meet requests in time for delivery? Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that there was lots of cooperation with local authorities however weather conditions may prove challenging,
- b) A member queried the reduction in fires reported by our Ranger service while partners have reported the number of fires having doubled. Head of Visitor Services reported that to some extent it was unknown as we do not have detailed access to the information our partners have. However, in cases such as National Trust for Scotland (NTS) who have focussed their patrols much more on fire related incidents and putting people out into these locations at times when it is more likely fires are being lit that will feed though into the fire statistics being recorded.



- c) A member asked for clarity on the action plan, with several activities on hold for no reason given, was this a staffing issue or something else? Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that staff had been devoting time to fire byelaw preparation in recent months, so guidance and communications had been put on hold as want to wait until we have the bylaw information. CEO agreed to update the table so there is commentary against the yellow rated items.
- d) Reassurance sought that there would be training for rangers to ensure that they feel capable and confident to implement the bylaw. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that there would be, and training would be carried out with partners too.
- e) A member asked if there would be training for Board members out and about in the community coming across someone lighting a fire, or advice to give at a Community Council meeting. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that he would be happy to adapt guidance in development and do a presentation on practical information to the Board in an informal session.
- f) Reassurance sought that the Park Authority would have enough rangers recruited to enforce the bylaw. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel confirmed that they would.
- g) With regards to the fire bylaw were there any plans to have signage at rail stations and within carriages and had Transport Scotland been approached for permission. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that conversations have started and agreed to keep the Board abreast with developments as that progressed.
- h) Plea made for the message to be delivered into local schools as much as possible. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel confirmed that the Park Authority rangers go into schools across the National Park, over the winter months and responsible approaches to use of fires is part of the information they get,
- i) A member queried the metrics provided by partners, we were showing litter down and number of dogs off leads down, and partners showing upward trend on both those statistics resulting in a huge variation. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that it was down to interpretation of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code which was not too precise: 'under close control' as interpreted by conservation partners may likely differ from non-



conservation focused partners and their statistics recorded consequentially differ.

- j) Regarding the steam railway, would they need to follow guidance set out in the fire bylaw during periods of its enforcement and switch to diesel power? Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel advised that their work was high risk, and the bylaw does not directly affect them as they follow their own cautious protocols.

15. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:

- a) Note the progress towards delivery of the objectives contained within the Active Cairngorms Action Plan.
- b) Note the report on the visitor focussed activities of the Park Authority and partner ranger services during the 2025 summer season.

16. Action Points Arising:

- i. Risk Register to be updated to include commentary on each rating.**
- ii. Fire bylaw guidance to be adapted for a session with the Board providing practical guidance out and about in communities for when the bylaw comes into force.**
- iii. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel to keep the Board abreast with developments with Transport Scotland on installing signage on their train carriages and at train stations.**

Annual report and accounts (Paper 4)

17. Louise Allen, Head of Finance and Corporate Operations introduced the paper which presents the Park Authority's final signed annual report and accounts to the Board, following their approval by the Audit and Risk Committee. The external audit is complete, and the financial statements have been given a clean audit report.

18. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services provided a point of clarity that the draft final accounts (Annex 1) was the version that would be laid in Parliament subject to the Board's approval.

19. Fiona McLean, Audit and Risk Committee Chair on behalf of the Committee made the following point:



- a) Thanks to Deputy CEO and Head of Finance and Corporate Operations and team for work over the year, recognizing it had been a challenging year.
20. Russell Jones Resources Committee Chair commented that it was an interesting and exciting read and praised the staff for their work over the past year.
21. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- b) Praise for the fantastic documents, recognition of the hard work that had gone into compiling it. Member asked if it was easily accessible via the Park Authority website as it provided a good overview of the work of the Park Authority and could be used to promote the organisation? Head of Finance and Corporate Operations advised that was too big to be appealing in a general sense however producing highlights could be considered. CEO advised that the information within it was at this stage, seven months old; and has already been communicated outward during that time.
 - a) Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services added that he had been looking at making improvements through the NPPP monitoring and performance framework to make the sections dealing with performance against corporate objectives more like a live database to inform what was being done in real time.
22. The Board noted the draft annual accounts for the 2024/25.
23. Action Point Arising: None.

There was a short comfort break at 10.21am that resumed at 10.38am.

Corporate plan delivery update (Paper 5)

24. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which draws the performance report for 2024/25 against our corporate plan objectives specifically to the board's attention. This takes a more focused look at the Park Authority's delivery toward agreed strategic objectives in the context of the wider update on Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) delivery considered by the Board at its previous meeting.



Mariaan Pita joined the meeting at 10.51am.

29. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) A member highlighted the importance of the retention of panel members interest to avoid them dropping out. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services agreed and advised he would ensure retention was brought into the risk management of the recruitment process.
 - b) A member raised concern about the decision makers allocating funds. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services clarified the decision-making process was yet to be determined, and as with other elements of this project would require balancing co-design with the National Park Authority's accountability as the Lottery fund lead. He provided reassurance that it would come back to Audit and Risk Committee and the full Board with further updates in due course.
 - c) Suggestion made to change the wording at point 4 setting out what the priorities are, expectation management and what the outputs could look like. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services agreed workable criteria should be brought in.
 - d) A member raised concern around the current stage risk related to accountability in the co-design process, ensuring clarity that decisions are implemented and supported. The future stage risk would involve consequences of unpopular or unsuccessful funding decisions, which would be separate from the current process. Member suggested emphasising transparency and clear wording about accountability at this stage. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services agreed to include a process to distil options into a workable scale and criteria, balancing openness of the process to co-design with practicality of implementation. He noted that the immediate reputational risk was tied to criteria development for assessment of grant applications and community reaction to published grant criteria, not final decisions. He agreed that wording would be adjusted to reflect this distinction.
 - e) Member suggested there should be a clause where if the project development and co-design does not work out as envisaged, it should not be developed further? Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services provided reassurance that we wouldn't go on ahead regardless, if the co-design of the



- grant scheme wasn't working. He advised he would have a think of how to draw that in perhaps through key decision-making milestone or risk register.
- f) A member raised concern about ensuring the correct people with the right mix of skills and experience were on the panel and avoiding places being filled for the sake of it. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services agreed and advised this could be brought into the risk register and designed panel with requirement to cover specified range of skills and experience, and mitigation in place to hold back on the project until this has been satisfied.
 - g) A member queried if only community projects would be eligible, and wanted to ensure social enterprises, small businesses, business partnerships, would not be excluded. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services confirmed this grant program is expected to be open to all community entities. There is an open field in this regard, with the panel codesigning the process being the group that will consider the eligibility of applicants.
 - h) A member stated that the Park Authority would need to be clear about what our process was, what we can manage in participatory design, have got right mix of panel members and that we cannot make a back track if we don't like the decisions the panel makes.
 - i) A member warned about the reputational risk should the application process be too complex for community volunteers and then the limited timing being available for applications and project delivery. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services provided reassurance that he was aware it was an issue, he advised it was a real opportunity for the Cairngorms National Park to offer a grant programme to the breadth of communities, businesses, and social enterprise over multiple financial years, which tended not to be available through other funding routes. He agreed the need for a reasonable lead time between idea lead in, application development funding and delivery.
 - j) A member queried the fund being open to people inside and outside the National Park. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services advised that the co-design panel would come up with the answers to those questions, but the parameters are expected that grant funded actions would need to be a Cairngorms centred activity.
 - k) A member recognised that there were lots of risks associated and an innovative approach was required and sought reassurance that there was a plan B if it did not all go to plan. CEO advised that whatever is taken forward would need signed off from the National Heritage Lottery Fund, and the



£1million would be reallocated within the communities' side of the Cairngorms 2030 programme.

30. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:
- a) To review the risks and accompanying mitigation measures identified and approve our overarching approach.
31. Action Points Arising:
- i. Add risk and mitigation for panel members**
 - ii. Adjust wording to reflect the distinction between current stage risk (criteria development and community reaction) and future stage risk (consequences of funding decisions). Include a process to distil options into a workable scale and criteria, balancing openness with practicality.**
 - iii. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services to consider how to incorporate a safeguard clause, possibly through key decision-making milestones or the risk register, ensuring the project does not proceed if it is not working as envisaged.**
 - iv. Add a risk that if the panel lacks the right mix of skills, the project will be paused.**

Election of Audit and Risk Committee Chair (Paper 7)

32. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which notifies the Board that the current Chair of Audit and Risk Committee's term will come to an end 31 January 2026. This paper sets out proposed arrangements for undertaking the election of the Audit and Risk Committee Chair.
33. The Board agreed the election process for the Audit and Risk Committee Chair as set out in this paper.
34. Action Point Arising: None.



Board Committee's annual reports to the Board (Paper 8)

35. Mariaan Pita, Executive Support Manager introduced the paper which presents the annual report of the Audit and Risk Committee, Performance Committee and Resources Committee to Board members for comment.
36. Fiona McLean, Audit and Risk Committee Chair made observations of the great work of the internal auditors and advised that they had now been replaced with new auditors. She praised the new controls put in by staff as a result of auditors recommendations and thanked Audit and Risk Committee members staff teams.
37. The Board noted the annual reports to the Board from the:
 - a) Audit and Risk Committee
 - b) Performance Committee
 - c) Resources Committee
38. Action Point Arising: None.

Committee Minutes (Paper 9)

39. Sandy Bremner, introduced the paper which the minutes for meeting between 14 June 2025 to 12 September 2025 and the confidential minutes for the meetings from 20 June 2025 to 12 September 2025
40. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:
 - a) Note the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee, Performance Committee and Resources Committee.
 - b) Note the confidential minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee and Resources Committee.
41. Action Point Arising: None.

AOCB

42. None



Date of Next Meeting

43. The date of the next meeting is 27 March 2026 in person.

44. *The meeting concluded at 11.15am*

Action	Status
Action Points from meeting on 22 November 2024:	
Paper 1 - CEO Report	
At para 6b	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Review the Planning call-in protocol and discuss at a future planning committee.	
Action Points from meeting on 28 March 2025:	
Paper 2 – 2025/26 Budget and Operational Plan	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Information on the number of ecological barriers that are being removed on catchments to be sought and circulated to the Board and thought to be given to putting this into a staff members forward work plan.	
Action Points from meeting on 28 November 2025:	
Paper 1 - CEO Report	
At para 8	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Press and Journal columns written by Malcolm Smith, Agricultural Officer to be circulated to the Board prepublication.i. CEO to seek an update on the development of a Cairngorms National Park app and circulate this to the Board.	
Paper 3 - Active Cairngorms	
At para 16	



<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Risk Register to be updated to include commentary on each rating. i. Fire bylaw guidance to be adapted for a session with the Board proving practical guidance out and about in communities for when the bylaw comes into force. ii. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel to keep the Board abreast with developments with Transport Scotland on installing signage on their train carriages and at train stations.	
Action	Status
Paper 6 - Cairngorms 2030 Communities Fund – risk register	
At para 31	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">i. Add risk and mitigation for panel members. ii. Adjust wording to reflect the distinction between current stage risk (criteria development and community reaction) and future stage risk (consequences of funding decisions). Include a process to distil options into a workable scale and criteria, balancing openness with practicality. iii. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services to consider how to incorporate a safeguard clause, possibly through key decision-making milestones or the risk register, ensuring the project does not proceed if it is not working as envisaged. iv. Add a risk that if the panel lacks the right mix of skills, the project will be paused.	