



# Draft minutes of the Formal Board meeting

**Held at Albert Hall, Ballater**

**In person**

**27 June 2025 at 09.30am**

## **Present in person**

Sandy Bremner (Convener)

Eleanor Mackintosh (Deputy Convener)

Geva Blackett

Peter Cosgrove

Russell Jones

Bill Lobban

Fiona McLean

Duncan Miller

Derek Ross

Jackie Brierton

Hannah Grist

John Kirk

Lauren MacCallum

Steve Micklewright

Ann Ross

Michael Williamson

## **In attendance**

Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer

Andy Ford, Director of Nature and Climate Change

Gavin Miles, Director of Planning and Place

Colin McClean Head of Land Management

David Clyne, Head of Cairngorms 2030

Nancy Chambers, Cairngorms Trust Manager

Bridget Trussell, Community Grants Manager

Heather Trench, Sustainable Tourism Officer

Karen Johnstone, Clerk to the Board

## **Apologies**

Kenny Deans

Paul Gibb



## Welcome and apologies

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

## Approval of minutes of previous meetings

2. The minutes from the previous meeting held on 28 March 2025 was approved with no amendments.

## Matters arising not covered elsewhere

3. There were not matters arising.

Action	Status
<b>Action Points from meeting on 22 March 2024:</b>	
<b>Paper 1 CEO report</b>	
At para 7 i. CEO, to prepare a briefing note on farming activity and statistics within the Cairngorms National Park and distribute to the Board.	In hand
<b>Update:</b> Work being carried out with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and should be available for the September Board meeting.	
Action	Status
<b>Action Points from meeting on 22 November 2024:</b>	
<b>Paper 1 - CEO Report</b>	
At para 6b i. Review the Planning call-in protocol and discuss at a future planning committee.	In hand
<b>Update:</b> Informal discussion on call-in criteria being held with committee members after planning committee on 29 August.	
<b>Paper 5 - Active Cairngorms and end of season visitor report</b>	
At para 23a i. Include key challenges in mitigation and learning in future papers.	In hand To be included in 2025 report



At para 23c ii. Statistics on camp site and luxury camping options within the National Park.	In hand To be Included In 2025 report
Action	Status
<b>Action Points from meeting on 28 March 2025:</b>	
<b>Paper 1 - CEO Report</b>	
At para 10 i. List of Cairngorms 2030 projects currently going through procurement processes to be circulated to the Board.	Completed
<b>Update:</b> Board will be updated biannually a list of the procurement underway and completed.	
<b>Paper 2 – 2025/26 Budget and Operational Plan</b>	
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.	In hand
ii. Scope of extending the work on species management specifically geese further up the Spey into Badenoch to be investigated.	In hand
<b>Update:</b> In the first of those two points, information is being sought for the number of ecological barriers that are being removed on catchments, but not yet available. This will be shared with the Board once it is available.	
<b>Paper 3 - Consultation response to Highland Council Visitor Levy Proposal</b>	

i.	Sentence to be added to end of consultation response as detailed in paragraph 18a.	Completed
ii.	CEO to keep the Board abreast with any developments in the discussions between HMRC and the UK Government with regards to the impact any future tourism levy would have on VAT thresholds in Scotland.	Completed

## 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) Praise was given to the work being carried out on the Deeside way and to see the progress of the Cairngorms 2030 projects.
  - b) Further information was requested on the Convener's update relating to Scottish Land Commission (SLC) and the King's Foundation. Board Convener explained he would get back to the Member with an update on the SLC. Board Convener then explained that the King's Foundation was a follow up meeting to an event at Mar Lodge in October where landowners across the National Park met to have a high-level discussion about affordable housing and land management.
  - c) A Board member requested updates on the advisory groups that Board Members sit on, asking if the minutes be made available for Board Members to view. CEO noted that the minutes are available on the website to view and the Clerks to the Board will add a link to these on the Board Portal.
  - d) A question was raised regarding the funding for nature recovery and deer management through Cairngorms 2030 being oversubscribed and how the Park Authority aims to fill this funding gap. CEO noted that some applications fit better with other grants schemes available and applicants are guided



towards this. It was explained there will always be demand exceeding supply from landowners, but the Park Authority will work closely with landowners to find a way to try and help.

- e) Praise was given to the new website, acknowledging the amount of hard work that has gone into the project from the Communications Team. It was highlighted that delivery of communications is greatly improved with the new website. A question was raised if there was any data available for the evaluation and impact from a strategic point of view. CEO explained there is analytics data available which will be gathered after a few months of the new website running and brought to the Performance Committee.

- 7. The Board noted the paper. The Convener thanks the CEO and all staff on behalf of the Board.
- 8. Action Points Arising:
  - i. Clerks to the Board to share the minutes from advisory group meetings that Board Members attend on behalf of the board via the board portal.

## **Integrated Wildfire Management Plan – final approval (Paper 2)**

- 9. Colin McLean, Head of Land Management introduced the paper which presents a final version of the Integrated Wildfire Management Plan (IWMP).
- 10. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) Board members all agreed to the amendment to the action for "All muirburn practitioners to adhere to the requirements of the new statutory muirburn licensing system".
  - b) Peter Cosgrove, the Chair of the Cairngorms Upland Advisory Group (CUAG) highlighted that all issues from that forum were addressed and concluded.
  - c) CEO highlighted the role the Climate Adaptation fund has played in supporting the IWMP with funding, training and equipment for estates.
  - d) A Board Member questioned if there was an update available on the Fire Byelaw. CEO explained this was with the Scottish Ministers and an announcement of the Ministers decision would be shared with Board Members once available.



11. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:
  - a) To approve the Integrated Wildfire Management Plan.
12. Action Points Arising:
  - i. Update action at 2.2 Muirburn: "All muirburn practitioners to adhere to the requirements of the new statutory muirburn licensing system".

### **Cairngorms Trust and Community Led Local Development update (Paper 3)**

13. Bridget Trussell, Community Grants Manager and Nancy Chambers, Cairngorms Trust Manager introduced the paper which updates the Park Authority Board on the progress made by the Cairngorms Trust in delivering funding to projects across the Cairngorms. In 2026, it will be the 10-year anniversary of the Cairngorms Trust becoming a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), marking a significant milestone in its development.
14. This paper highlights the impact and outcomes of the Trust's funded initiatives to date and seeks views from the Park Authority board on the charity's potential future operations.
15. The paper also presents progress in the evolution of new approaches to Community Led Local Development (CLLD) funding, following the loss of European Union (EU) LEADER funding as a consequence of the UK's exit from the EU.
16. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
  - a) Board Members praised Officers for their work on these projects, highlighting great examples of ambitions of communities. It was explained that ideas are being created within the National Park and funding allows them to take off, show they can be successful and allow others within the National Park to roll out similar projects to support local communities, including as a response to rural poverty.
  - b) Comments were made regarding the evaluation of the meaning / impacts on communities of the projects which have already been funded to inform future spend. It was also noted that plans need to be in place to allow projects to be sustainable when funding ends.



- c) Board Members noted that they would like to continue to see a focus on grants / funding distributed across the full National Park.
- d) Discussions were had around third sector organisations having to put funding into projects and local initiatives that may previously have been supported by discretionary funding from local and health authorities. It was noted that unfortunately local and health authorities cannot fund all provisions and that third sector organisations have always supported educational needs where possible to allow young people to thrive.

*Steve Micklewright left at 10.23am*

- e) A question was raised regarding applications and projects growing, how much consideration is in Place Plans. Trust Manager explained the applications are opened for everyone across the park and the team try to spread the funding park wide, as much as possible. Community Grants Manager explained Place Plans will be taken into consideration on a strategic level when setting funding priorities; alongside Community Action Plans that are more localised, and it's important to liaise with local authorities and develop funding strategies aligned with them.

*Steve Micklewright returned at 10.26am*

- f) A Board Member questioned that the allocation for this year is largely capital and what impact that will have on the CLLD's ability to fulfil projects, and if there is any impact evaluation on any of the assessments that have been carried out. Regarding evaluation the Community Grants Manager explained Scottish Government requested local action groups to input into the Social Value engine to evaluate impact, however this is more on national scale, therefore the team are working with the Information Manager to capture previous data, once collated this will be shared with the Board.
- g) A question was raised regarding how CLLD supports entrepreneurship and promoting enterprise. Community Grants Manager explained that funding is available to all, and they actively encourage social enterprises and small business. The team work alongside Grow Biz and other organisations to support projects. CLLD has a robust formation, along with the support from



the Park Authority which allows the funds to support a dynamic range of projects.

- h) A question was raised regarding the lived experience panel. Trust Manager explained the lived experience panel was put together with assistance of an independent contractor who has previously worked with the Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) community. Head of Cairngorms 2030 highlighted the Park Authority were also working in partnership with the lived experience panel as part of the C2030 effective engagement project.
- i) A Board Member commented that a strength of the work of the Cairngorms Trust is that it can be more responsive to short term needs, while still creating long term relationships, highlighting this was a quality of what the fund can offer.
- j) A question was raised regarding the connection and ambitions of the role of the Cairngorms Trust, the Park Authority and the local communities. Cairngorms Trust Manager explained that the Cairngorms Trust are regularly over subscribed for funds, highlighting there is a need which then feeds into the CLLD funding. Cairngorms Trust are in discussions with Scottish Government to see if it is possible for the funding to become more long term with multi-year funding allocations a consistent ask to government from the CLLD sector. There is ambition to return to previous partnership work with communities in delivery of their longer-term ambitions.
- k) A question was raised regarding the percentage of capital verses revenue with this year's funding application, if less revenue, can the team identify the sources and if there is support the Board can offer. Community Grants Manager explained a plan is created with the CLLD funding from Scottish Government (SG) based on what the fund aims to deliver, using community action plans to develop and meet needs, ensuring there is a bottom-up approach. It was noted that capitalisation of funds is not ideal for some communities, therefore the expressions of interest were opened as early as possible, to maximise potential for the £275,000 funded to be allocated to communities / projects. Community Grants Manager went on to explain that the approach to capitalisation has been flexible from SG allowing the team to work closely with communities to support early stages of capital projects as well as progressing small capital projects. It was also noted that the grants team work with all enquiries to identify suitable funding, whether from a Cairngorms Trust, the Park Authority or source an alternative. The grants





team also work closely with the Rural Development team and Voluntary Action Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS), Marr Area Partnership (MAP) and other Third Sector Interfaces (TSI) to support communities with this.

17. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:
- a) Note progress to date in delivery of National Park Partnership Plan and Corporate Plan objective in respect of CLLD.
  - b) Discuss value of CLLD actions to date.
  - c) Note, discuss and provide strategic advice on forward plans in support of future CLLD programmes of work.

18. Action Points Arising: None

*Formal Board broke for a comfort break at 10.55am*

*Formal Board meeting resumed at 11.05am*

## **Cairngorms 2023 – 2024 and Q1 2025 progress report (Paper 4)**

19. David Clyne, Head of Cairngorms 2030 introduced the paper which presents the status of programme and risk management, based on information in project reports for the first year of the delivery phase (2024) and the period from January to March 2025, and updated where appropriate to reflect current position as at the time of writing together with the planned work to end June 2025.
20. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) Board Convener shared appreciation to staff on delivering a vast amount of work, noting Board Members had the privilege to see the work transform lives through these projects, such as the deer larders. It was noted the Convener and CEO are pursuing the specific point of transport funding at a senior level.
  - b) A Board Member asked for clarification on the meaning of gamification. Head of C2030 explained this was a project designed in partnership with Edinburgh university and the Park Authority's Planning Team, which uses a gaming element to gather information through an exciting and interesting way,



allowing discussions on local priorities. The C2030 Team then gather this information and evaluate the findings.

- c) A Board Member commented that there was no mention of a cycle hub in Tomintoul. Head of C2030 explained that there are proposals to develop cycle hubs in all main villages including Tomintoul and a future report will capture more of these.
- d) A question was raised regarding the bio security of community deer larders asking if these issues have been resolved yet. Head of C2030 explained that they were still evaluating the process of the setup, the current deer larders have only been operational for six months, and all issues will be assessed as part of long-term delivery strategy.
- e) Discussions were had around the funding issues with active travel, asking if there had been improvements on bus stops and questioning if it would be a possibility to have a road crossing at the Highland Folk Museum as this is a dangerous section of the road. Head of C2030 explained that the road crossing would not be part of the C2030 projects, but this will be highlighted to the Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel. It was noted there was work being carried out alongside the Highland Council relating to the bus stops, to help improve bus travel and make use of public transport easier and transport greener.
- f) Discussions were had around bike storage and the importance of having bikes safely stored. Head of C2030 agreed that secure bike storage is a fundamental part of cycle hub proposals.
- g) A Board Member requested further information on community benefits from nature restoration alongside the Scottish Land Commission (SLC) to better understand how land is exchanging hands and how this affects the community. Board Convener noted that the Board can look at doing a further session on this, explaining SLC will be involved in a future Board Business session.
- h) A Board Member questioned the long-term financial viability of the outdoor dementia resource centre and if this was taken into account when founded. Head of C2030 explained that the sustainability and financial plan was a key component which will be provided by 2028 and over the next six months explore the long-term plan, focusing on brain health and whole lifetime care.
- i) A Board Member questioned the role of the Wellbeing Economy project. Head of C2030 explained that the wellbeing economy project is aligned to the Parks



Wellbeing Economy Action Plan and will primarily serve a monitoring and evaluation role in measuring the impact of Cairngorms 2030.

21. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:
- a) Note the progress to date and future plans for Cairngorms 2030 delivery
  - b) Note specific points of Cairngorms 2030 delivery risk.
  - c) Highlight any issues arising that members may feel need specific consideration by staff from a strategic and board perspective.
22. Action Points Arising: None

### **Committee Minutes (Paper 5)**

23. Sandy Bremner, Board Convener introduced the paper which sets out the minutes from for the following meetings from 24 January 2025 to 14 March 2025 (Annex 1) Resources Committee, 24 January 2025 and Performance Committee, 14 March 2025. This paper also presents the confidential minutes for the following meetings from 24 January 2025 to 14 March 2025 (Annex 2) Resources Committee, 24 January Performance Committee, 14 March
24. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations:
- a) Note the minutes of the Resources Committee and Performance Committee.
  - b) Note the confidential minutes of the Resources Committee and Performance Committee.
25. Action Points Arising: None

### **AOCB**

26. None

### **Date of Next Meeting**

27. The date of the next meeting is 26 September 2025 in person.
28. The meeting concluded at 10.43am

Action	Status
Action Points from meeting on 22 March 2024:	



<b>Paper 1 CEO report</b>	
At para 7 i. CEO, to prepare a briefing note on farming activity and statistics within the Cairngorms National Park and distribute to the Board.	In hand
<b>Update:</b> Work being carried out with Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) and should be available for the September Board meeting.	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Action Points from meeting on 22 November 2024:</b>	
<b>Paper 1 - CEO Report</b>	
At para 6b i. Review the Planning call-in protocol and discuss at a future planning committee.	In hand
<b>Update:</b> Informal discussion on call-in criteria being held with committee members after planning committee on 29 August.	
<b>Paper 5 - Active Cairngorms and end of season visitor report</b>	
At para 23a i. Include key challenges in mitigation and learning in future papers.	In hand To be included in 2025 report
At para 23c ii. Statistics on camp site and luxury camping options within the National Park.	In hand To be included in 2025 report
<b>Update:</b>	
<b>Action</b>	<b>Status</b>
<b>Action Points from meeting on 28 March 2025:</b>	
<b>Paper 2 – 2025/26 Budget and Operational Plan</b>	



<p>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.</p> <p>ii. Scope of extending the work on species management specifically geese further up the Spey into Badenoch to be investigated.</p>	<p>In hand</p> <p>In hand</p>
<p><b>Update:</b></p> <p>Information is being sought for the number of ecological barriers that are being removed on catchments, but not yet available. Will be shared with the Board once available.</p>	
Action	Status
<p><b>Action Points from meeting on 27 June 2025:</b></p>	
<p><b>Paper 1 CEO Report</b></p>	
<p>At para 6 c</p> <p>i. Clerks to the Board to share the minutes from group meetings that Board Members sit on to the board portal.</p>	<p>In hand</p>
<p><b>Paper 2 - Integrated Wildfire Management Plan - final approval</b></p>	
<p>At para 10 a</p> <p>i. Update action at 2.2 Muirburn: All muirburn practitioners to adhere to the requirements of the new statutory muirburn licensing system.</p>	<p>Completed</p>