

Note of Cairngorms National Park Strategy Group Meeting 14 March 2008

Present

Name	Position	Organisation
Alastair MacLennan	CNPA Board Member & Chair	Chair, NP Advisory Forum
Eric Baird	Vice Convener	CNPA
David Green	Convener	CNPA
Jane Hope	Chief Executive	CNPA
Francoise van Buuren	Head of Strategy & Communications	CNPA
Gavin Miles	Strategic Planning & Policy Officer	CNPA
Les Allan	Marr Area Manager	Aberdeenshire Council
Anne Robertson	Leader of Aberdeenshire Council	Aberdeenshire Council
John Zimny		Anaas Council – rep
Alasdair Colquhoun	Convener	Association of Cairngorms
Duncan MacKellar	Chair	Cairngorms Chamber of
Pauline Innes	Area Director – Grampian	Communities Scotland
Drew Ratter	Chairman	Crofters Commission
Nick Reiter	Chief Executive	Crofters Commission
Nick Halfhide	Director	Deer Commission for Scotland
John Milne	Chairman	Deer Commission for Scotland
Calum MacDonald	Non-executive Commissioner for	Forestry Commission
Dominic Driver	Social Policy Advisor	Forestry Commission
Mike Cantlay	Chair	LL&TNPA
Robert Stewart	Director of Environmental Services	Moray Council
Cllr Allan Wright	Councillor	Moray Council
Lorna Duquid	Manager Priority Industries	Scottish Enterprise Grampian
Jill Farrell	Operations Director	Scottish Enterprise Tayside
John Mayhew	Chair	Scottish Environment LINK
Michael Russell	Minister for the Environment	Scottish Government
Ian Hooper	Head of Countryside and Natural	Scottish Government
Andrew Thin	Chairman	Scottish Natural Heritage
Kevin McCreath	Strategy & Planning Area Coordinator	Scottish Water
Mark Wells	Education and Campaign Manager	SEPA
Tim Walker		sportscotland
Jean Urauhart	Vice Convener	The Highland Council
William Gilfillan	Corporate Manager	The Highland Council
Martin Price		UHI - Perth College
Scott Armstrong	Area Director for Highland	visitscotland

David Green;

Welcomed the group and thanked for attendance. David reminded the group that the meeting was about the National Park and everyone's contribution towards it as well as delivery of the National Park Plan. He then introduced the four case studies and contributors.

Case Studies on our shared successes:

Case study 1 *A single service point for Highland Council and the CNPA* **Jean Urquhart & William Gilfillan**

Jean stated Highland Council's ambitions to improve opportunities for people in the highlands and stated the importance of organisations like Highland Council working together with others to lead and to demonstrate the importance and value of the National Park to the people of the highlands and Scotland.

William noted the National Outcomes provide the public sector with a clear role across Scotland but also require cooperation and working together at local levels.

Highland Council and CNPA are investigating a single service point, firstly in Grantown on Spey and then in Aviemore. Others welcome to be involved and enterprise company is likely to join. Working towards a purpose built single service point in the future community school in Aviemore.

Case study 2 *Development and Use of the Cairngorms National Park Brand*

Duncan MacKellar

Highlighted the enthusiastic role the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce (CCC) sees for itself in the National Park and in contributing to the delivery of the National Park Plan. Duncan used the example of the development of the CNP Brand, to which the CCC contributed, and which the CCC want to see used to help grow businesses and economic opportunities in the Park.

Case study 3 *Development of Forest Crofts* **Calum MacDonald and Dominic Driver**

Calum introduced a range of Forestry Commission activities and partnerships in the CNP, noting that local staff now felt "proud to be part of the National Park". The main topic was the development of woodland crofts as secure, heritable tenancies linked to a common area of woodland, and providing economic opportunities, high quality local woodland management, affordable housing and sustainable rural communities.

Dominic described the Dalnavert pilot site in the CNP, where the FCS will sell land to a community group, and land for affordable housing to an RSL at affordable housing rates. The Crofters Commission are closely involved to help FCS clarify where the public benefits are derived by the sale. The process is still being piloted, with nobody yet clear on an effective model for success. However, there are clear elements that can be highlighted such as the need for the process to

be community-lead and a supporting role for the public sector to allow communities to innovate and develop their own models for success.

Case study 4 Management of the Cairngorms National Nature Reserves

Andrew Thin

Highlighted that the Cairngorms National Park is for all the people of Scotland and must deliver benefits for all those people. SNH has developed a new management strategy for the NNRS in the National Park to deliver a wider range of benefits and opportunities linked to the National Park. The Cairngorms NNRs are now managed differently from others because of work between SNH, the CNPA and other partners: Branding to increase their visibility; an interpretation strategy that provides more opportunities to learn about the National Park and other NNRs; access and ranger services promoting more recreational use of NNRs; work to improve the accessibility of NNRs to groups who have been excluded or have difficulties in accessing them; and management for a wider range of biodiversity.

The case study illustrated how SNH is working differently in the National Park because of its partnership with the CNPA to provide better value for the people of Scotland. The lessons being learnt through working closely together, integrating services and providing better value for the public can be taken elsewhere to join up services in other organisations and parts of Scotland.

Michael Russell, Minister for the Environment's response

The Minister started by summing up the debate on Scottish National Parks held in the Scottish Parliament yesterday (Thursday 13 March 2008) and highlighted the key announcements linked to the strategic review of National Parks:

- The first part of the review will focus on the structure of the NPAs, including consideration of the sizes of the Boards;
- The second part of the review will look at the functions of the NPAs and will involve stakeholders and communities;
- The southern boundary of the CNP will be changed, and potentially be effective during 2008.
- The Government will consider new National Parks where there is community support for them

The minister highlighted the Scottish Government's ethos of celebrating the good, improving things and passing on benefits to others before responding to the themes raised in the case studies:

1. the minister supported the working together towards the single service point highlighted by Highland Council, and pointed out that he would want his own services to also be delivered from the same point;
2. the government wants thriving rural businesses so the involvement of the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce in the development and use of the National Park Brand fits with the governments agenda;
3. The minister supports the development of woodland crofts and wants to see faster development and in more places;
4. SNH's work within the CNP to improve its performance for Scotland reflects the overall strategy of the government. The Minister wants to see the regulatory aspects of the public sector driving the best development and practice rather than just stopping the worst.

The Minister congratulated the CNPA and LLTNPA on their work so far.

Informal Discussion on strategic opportunities and challenges facing the Park

Drew Ratter

Reiterated the Crofters Commission's support for woodland crofts and the enthusiasm for speeding up the process.

Calum MacDonald

Agreed the need to speed up woodland croft development and noted that some successes on the ground should provide impetus for future development.

Michael Russell

The Scottish Government considers sustainable rural housing to be a priority so strongly supports work, such as woodland croft development, to deliver it.

John Milne

Noted that deer management in the CNP is another success story both in terms of on the ground results and for joint working between agencies.

Andrew Thin

Noted that the planning system in Scotland is good at stopping bad development but not at encouraging good development. National

Parks provide a good opportunity to develop new and improved approaches to implementing the planning system .

Jean Urquhart

Highland Council would like to see more people using the CNP and would like to be involved in better promotion of the Park and its benefits and opportunities.

Michael Russell

The Government's Greener Scotland programme may help.

Bob Strachan

Agreed that the planning system can be difficult work with but highlighted the challenges it faces by drawing attention to the many complicated technical issues that are tied to it and need to be simplified.

Mike Cantlay

Observed that the Scottish National Parks are beginning to demonstrate good practice, and that as they are responsible for Scottish assets they may be able to more to ensure that the good practice they develop and lessons learnt are spread beyond their own boundaries.

Scott Armstrong

There is now some evidence that the CNP is pulling visitors from other areas in the highlands so is driving some competitive advantage to the tourism industry in the Park. It helps to have a range of attractions and events that bring people to the highlands. The Highland Year of Culture and Aonach Mor mountain bike events are good examples.

Duncan MacKellar

Reminded the group that it is important to involve the private sector as much as possible, and even better to help them take the lead.

Tim Walker

Noted the recent outdoor education summit at the Scottish Parliament and highlighted the National Parks as an opportunity to support outdoor education.

Kevin McCreath

Highlighted the need to clear planning guidelines and infrastructure planning, particularly in rural areas in order to support Scottish Water's investment.

Anne Roberston

Highlighted a number of areas where Aberdeenshire Council may be able to improve its links and working in the CNP and reiterated the Council's commitment to the National Park and to working even more closely with the CNPA.

Martin Price

Glad to see a monitoring framework for the National Park Plan being developed and highlighted the need for a clear evidence base and good information to inform management decisions. Noted the work that UHI are doing with the National Parks on responses to climate change.

David Green

Thanked everyone for the contributions and support, noting the continued support for joined up working and the opportunities that the CNP and Scottish National Parks provide.