



First Annual Report  
2003/04



**CAIRNGORMS**  
NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

ÙGH DARRAS PÀIRC NÀISEANTA A' MHONAI DH RUaidH

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## Foreword

Andrew Thin, Convener

The creation of the Cairngorms National Park fulfils an aspiration that for some people dates back several decades. It is also the culmination of several years of detailed work involving a great many organisations and individuals to whom we owe a substantial debt of gratitude.

For the 17,000 people who live locally, the National Park is something that has been welcomed with enthusiasm but also with a degree of trepidation. The changes now in train in the Cairngorms will have profound implications for the future of the area, for those who live here and for the many hundreds of thousands of visitors who come here annually.

Change does not happen overnight, nor in the context of the Cairngorms should it. The landforms that we now see emerged from beneath the ice over 10,000 years ago. It is 6,000 years since human beings first settled in the area. The National Park Authority is by contrast a mere blink of an eye.

Inevitably people have high expectations of us however, and all of those who have been involved in this first year of our existence have tackled the task with a sense of urgency and tremendous energy. The hard work and commitment exhibited by members of our Board, our staff and our many partners have been both inspiring and profoundly moving. At least as significant, however, has been the tremendous

atmosphere of public goodwill that has prevailed throughout these early months. We could not have asked for a more auspicious start to the long process that we are now engaged upon.

Unavoidably the first year of operations has been dominated by the minutiae of finding offices, establishing systems, recruiting staff and creating a strong foundation on which to build an effective future for the National Park Authority. Successful organisations require more than just robust operational mechanics however. Much of the Board's time in these early months has been spent thinking through and refining the core cultural values on which the work of the next decade or more will be based.

In keeping with the traditions of the Cairngorms this will be an organisation that is as close as it possibly can be to the people who it serves. It will be visible, transparent, and accessible to all. It will promote compromise and balance so that everyone, whatever their interest, can be part of what we are creating here. It will take many years, but ultimately this will be a truly National Park, with something to contribute to the lives of every citizen, whoever they are.

## Introduction

This annual report covers the first year of the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA), which was established on 25 March 2003, and became fully operational, taking on all its statutory powers, on 1 September 2003.

The CNPA was established under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and the Designation Order\* which was approved by the Scottish Parliament in December 2002. This sets out the Park's boundaries, the detailed constitution of the Park Authority Board, and the unique planning powers which are vested in the CNPA.

## The Cairngorms National Park

This is Scotland's second National Park, and currently the largest in the UK at 1,467 square miles. It stretches from Grantown-on-Spey to the heads of the Angus Glens, from Ballater to Dalwhinnie and Drumochter, and includes much of the Laggan area in the south west and a large area of the Glenlivet estate and the Strathdon/Glen Buchat area.

Further information about the Park, including a map of the Park and key facts about the area, is provided in Annex 1 - see page 18.

\* The Cairngorms National Park designation, Transitional and Consequential Provisions (Scotland) Order 2003

## Operations and Powers

The CNPA is a Non Departmental Public Body, and receives its core funding from Scottish Ministers. In addition it can, and does, secure funding for specific projects from other sources (such as European funding schemes, Heritage Lottery Fund, etc). The operations of the CNPA are guided in a number of ways.

- The aims of the National Park are set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 as:
  - Conservation of the natural and cultural heritage of the area
  - Promotion of sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
  - Promotion of understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public
  - Promotion of sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities
- The National Park Authority is given a general purpose by the same legislation, namely to ensure that these 4 aims are collectively achieved in a coordinated way i.e. to ensure that the aims are seen not in isolation from each other but in a joined up way, recognising they are inextricably linked. The legislation adds the rider that where there appears to be a conflict between the aims, the first of these should be given greater weight.

- Like any other Non Departmental Public Body receiving its funding from Scottish Ministers, the CNPA agrees a Management Statement and Financial Memorandum with its sponsoring department in the Scottish Executive (the Environment and Rural Affairs Department). This sets out the rules and guidelines under which the CNPA exercises its functions, duties and powers, conditions attaching to the Grant in Aid paid by the Department each year, and how the CNPA is held to account for its performance. (This document is in the public domain once agreed with Ministers).

The CNPA is essentially an enabling organisation, achieving its objectives by leading, coordinating and facilitating. It has very few regulatory powers. It can:

- Call in planning applications and determine these if they are of significance to the Park's aims.
- Make management rules and byelaws to protect the natural and cultural heritage of the Park; to prevent damage to the land; to secure the public's enjoyment of and safety in the Park.

Its enabling and facilitating powers, set out in the legislation, include:

- Giving grants and loans.
- Providing information, educational services and facilities to promote understanding and enjoyment of the Park.

## Operations and Powers continued...

- Providing facilities to encourage visitors for leisure purposes including camping sites, accommodation, meals and refreshments where necessary.
- Entering into agreements with any person in the Park with an interest in land to ensure that the aims of the Park are met.
- Securing the provision of nature reserves.
- Carrying out research and related activities.
- Being a consultee on a range of matters undertaken by other public bodies (for example the creation of SSSIs, forestry activities, and traffic regulation orders).
- Anything which will help the Park Authority achieve its aims.

The CNPA is also under a duty to:

- Prepare and consult on a National Park Plan for managing the CNP and Co-ordinating the exercise of the CNPA's functions and the functions of other public bodies (inasmuch as these affect the Park).
- Use its resources economically, efficiently and effectively.

The way the CNPA exercises these functions and duties is set out in a Corporate Plan submitted to Scottish Ministers each year, setting out its estimate of funding needs. At the end of each financial year, the organisation is also expected to report on how it has spent those funds, and what it has achieved, in the Annual report. Both documents are available to the public and can be obtained at [www.cairngorms.co.uk](http://www.cairngorms.co.uk) or by contacting the CNPA's office.

## The People in the Organisation

The CNPA comprises a Board and the organisation's staff. The Board of 25 includes 5 members directly elected by residents (in open elections every 4 years); 10 appointed by Ministers on the nomination of the four relevant local authorities covering the Park, and 10 appointed directly by Ministers following a competitive recruitment process. Of the 25 members, 18 live within the National Park. A full list of the CNPA members is given in Annex 2 - see page 22.

Staff working for the Cairngorms Partnership until April 2003 were transferred to the CNPA on 1 April 2003. These 16 staff, together with three interim appointees on secondment (Jane Hope as Interim Chief Executive, Denis Munro as Interim Head of Planning, and Andy Rinning as Interim Head of Corporate Services), formed the nucleus of the staff of the new organisation. During 2003/2004 a number of staff were recruited, giving a total staff complement of 35 by 1 April 2004 (see section on Staff under the heading The First Year). A full list of the staff is given in Annex 3 - see page 26.

## The Annual Report, Annual Accounts and Corporate Plan

In keeping with the need to ensure that a public body properly accounts for its use of public money, the CNPA is required by law to formally submit to Ministers, and hence to the Scottish Parliament each year, a trio of reports:

- The Annual Report (a report on the past year).
- Annual Accounts (a detailed account of expenditure and income for the past year, audited by Audit Scotland).
- Corporate Plan (setting out the CNPA's funding needs for the coming three years).

This annual report fulfils part of this requirement.

However, seeing any one of these reports in isolation does not give a complete picture of the work of the CNPA. In order to provide a better overview, looking forwards as well as back, we are preparing a succinct summary for wide public distribution.

## The First Year

Prior to the Cairngorms National Park being set up, the Cairngorms Partnership had been in existence for 10 years, and as the name implies, built a solid foundation of partnership working in the area. This first Annual Report of the CNPA acknowledges the good work by the Cairngorms Partnership which has provided the springboard for the CNPA.

Inevitably in its first year the CNPA has focused on "building up", ie putting in place the organisation and structures to support it, developing its thinking on delivering its role, and preparing a Corporate Plan for the first 3 years to reflect its priorities.

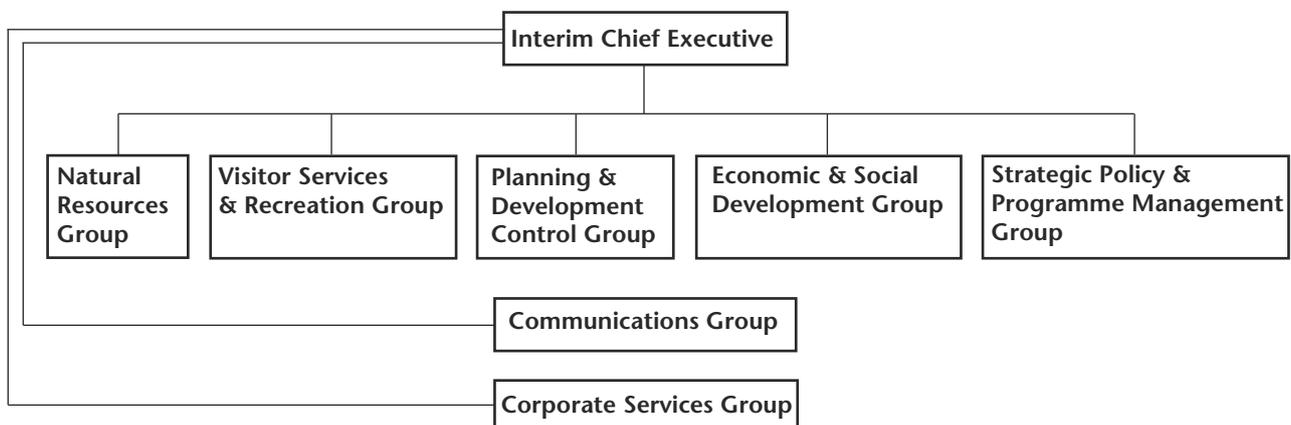
## Staff

Staff numbers grew over the year from 16 (the original complement transferred from the Cairngorms Partnership) to 35. A new structure was agreed (see graph below) reflecting the importance of an integrated approach to the Park's aims and of communicating effectively within and outwith the organisation. Some secondments have been used to bring in essential expertise as well as reinforce working links with partners. Posts that were not filled internally were filled through open competition.

The senior management team of 7, and the Chief Executive were in place by early May 2004. Expert functions such as Human Resources (including recruitment), Press/ PR (until March 04), Legal, Accounting, IT Support, were bought in under contract, pending the organisation being of a size which might justify these functions being provided in-house.

## Offices

The lease on the office at 14 The Square, Grantown-on-Spey, was taken over from the Cairngorms Partnership. The lease on the adjoining properties at No 15 and No 16 was also taken over, and the properties refurbished to create a single office to accommodate the newly expanded staffing complement. The Board also recognised very early in the year that in a Park as large as this, comprising areas that are in many ways quite distinct from each other, it was essential to avoid a culture developing that was too orientated towards one part of it. A second office was therefore opened at Ballater, housing the Planning and Development Control Group.



## Infrastructure/Support Systems

The essential internal control systems for a public organisation were put in place during the first year, including:

### Finance

Systems for authorising and recording expenditure; scheme of financial delegation; an accounting system.

### HR

Payroll; advertising & recruitment; flexitime. A pay and grading review was undertaken to devise a pay structure appropriate to the CNPA's needs. (Approval for the new structure was given by the Scottish Executive in July 2004).

### IT

An IT system was installed as an essential element in ensuring rapid and efficient communication internally and externally. A new website was commissioned to meet the need for the CNPA to reach a wide audience, making up-to-date information about the CNPA's activities available quickly to a wide and dispersed audience, as well as meeting the demands by potential visitors and others to find out more about the Park.

The new website was launched on 1 September 2003, and although the extensive task of filling out the content will not be completed until the end of 2004, the construction of the site allows for expansion and also for regular posting up of Board papers, Planning Committee papers and other public documents.

## Operation of the Board

Over the past year the Board held 10 formal Board meetings (it met once a month, always on a Friday, with the exception of the summer recess and the Easter recess). Attendance of Board Members is shown in Annex 4 - see page 27. Board meetings were open to the public and are advertised in advance in the local press. Papers were made available on the website, as well as at local authority and CNPA offices, and at the meeting itself.

The Board has adopted a policy of holding its meetings at different venues throughout the National Park so that the Members can get to see first hand the different areas of the Park, and provide an opportunity for local communities to see the Board. Details of venues and agendas of these meetings are shown in Annex 5 - see page 28. An open meeting for the local communities was generally held on the Thursday evening prior to the Friday Board meeting (and advertised locally) to provide an opportunity for contact between Members and local communities.

At its very first formal meeting on 15 April 2003, the Board elected Andrew Thin as Convener and Eric Baird as Deputy Convener, the appointments to run for 18 months in the first instance. (Under the standing orders later agreed by the Board, it was agreed that future appointments of Convener and Deputy Convener would be for 3 years.)

## Operation of the Board continued...

The Board agreed standing orders, and submitted its Code of Conduct to the Scottish Executive (as required under the terms of Ethical Standards (Scotland) Act 2000).

Four formal committees of the Board have been set up:

- The Planning Committee
- The Staffing and Recruitment Committee
- The Finance Committee
- The Audit Committee

Details of remit and membership are shown in Annex 6 - see page 30.

In the period up to becoming fully operational on 1 September 2003, the Board concentrated on becoming familiar with the area and its issues. It took briefings on a range of topics from a range of individuals and organisations, and visited different parts of the Park, including a number of different estates. It attended training sessions on:

- Planning and Development Control
- The role and responsibilities of a Non Departmental Public Body
- Chairing meetings

## Working Groups

Formal Committees were set up to deal with operational matters and Planning and Development Control (see above). As a short term measure while staff numbers were low, and to allow the Board to develop its thinking (prior to developing worked-through policies) a number of small internal working groups were set up, with specific and time limited outputs, to scope some of the key issues facing the Park. These are shown at Annex 7 - see page 33.

An advisory group on the National Park Plan (referred to as the Advisory Panel on Joined Up Government) was established, bringing together senior figures in a wide range of public agencies who would be partners in putting together and ultimately implementing the National Park Plan. (The Group was established during 2003/04, but met for the first time in May 2004.)

## Communications

Communicating well with the many stakeholders and all the people who live and work in the Park, was identified as a priority for the CNPA (reflected in the decision to appoint a Head of Communications as a member of the CNPA's senior management team). The necessary infrastructure for good communications (IT systems and a website) has been put in place as described above.

A regular newsletter, "Parklife" has been established, and is delivered to every household in the Park. Two editions were published in the year in question, with a third immediately after the year end. Regular contributions to local newspapers have been made, and opportunities taken to produce articles and contributions to a range of magazines to raise awareness of the Park.

## Opening Event

The CNPA became fully operational on 1 September 2003. An opening event was held to mark the occasion at the Ptarmigan station near the summit of Cairngorm Mountain – a central high point of the Park. The formal opening was conducted jointly by Liz Hannah, the great great granddaughter of John Muir, the Scot who became the founding father of the very first National Parks in the USA, and by Allan Wilson the then Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Development.

The event was attended by an audience of over 300, comprising the partner organisations, communities and individuals who had contributed to the work of the Cairngorms Partnership and in so doing helped to lay the foundations for partnership working in the National Park. The flavour of the event was encapsulated in the speech given by Andrew Thin, Convener (please see Annex 8 - page 35).

## Planning and Development Control

The role of the CNPA in Planning (Town and Country Planning) and Development Control is unique. Its statutory powers are set out in the Designation Order which provides for the establishment of the Cairngorms National Park, and comprise two elements:

### Development Control

All planning applications for development within the Park area are made to the relevant local authority in the usual way. The CNPA can decide that an application is "of general significance to the Park aims", in which case it may "call-in" the application within 21 days of the application being registered. In that case the CNPA determines it (in which case the local authority does not determine it – but it will determine all the applications in the normal way which are not called in).

### Local Plan

The CNPA has responsibility for the Local Plan and planning policy within the Park. The CNPA is working to prepare a single Local Plan for the whole National Park, but until this is completed, the 4 existing Local Plans (from Highland Council, Aberdeenshire Council, Moray Council and Angus Council) set the planning framework within which decisions on development control are made.

The CNPA took on its planning powers on 1 September 2003. Considerable time and effort was spent prior to this date preparing to deliver this function, with its demanding timescales. In the previous 5 months a planning team was recruited,

electronic systems put in place which would allow the necessary quick and effective communication of information between the 4 different local authorities and the CNPA, and a planning protocol agreed between the CNPA and the 4 local authorities to ensure effective and efficient working between the parties.

The CNPA Board decided that its Planning Committee should be a committee of the whole Board, in view of the fact that it would be determining only the most significant applications in the Park, and would be deciding on the Local Plan for the whole Park. All members attended planning training. At its first meeting the Committee elected Andrew Thin as Chair and Peter Argyle as Deputy Chair.

Since 1 September 2003, the Planning Committee met every 2 weeks (always on Friday morning). Attendance is shown in Annex 4 – see page 27. Average attendance was 20 Members. Agenda items were of four types:

- Decisions on whether or not to call in applications made within the Park in the previous 2 weeks.
- Decision on comments to be made to the planning authority on applications not called in.
- Determinations of applications that had been called in.
- Approval of policy (including responses to consultations on planning matters).

During the period 1 September 2003 to 31 March 2004, the CNPA Planning Committee:

- Called in 40 planning applications out of the 334 made within the Park (a call-in rate of 12%).
- Commented on 17 applications (of the 294 which were not called-in).
- Determined 11 applications (8 approved and 3 refused).
- Agreed draft interim policies on renewable energy, radio telecommunications, vehicle hill tracks, and mineral workings.

Between late January and early May, the CNPA Planning Committee did not feel able to comment on planning applications which it had not called in. This arose from an unintended consequence in the guidance from the Standards Commission. The net result of this was that if the CNPA made such comments, those of its members who were Councillors were debarred from taking part in the subsequent determination in their parent council (even if they had taken no part in the discussions by the CNPA). This situation was rectified on 4 May by the issue of a revised dispensations note by the Standards Commission.

The CNPA's first Corporate Plan was submitted to Scottish Ministers in December 2003, setting out the organisation's aims and objectives for the following three years, and its best estimate of funding needs to deliver those objectives. Ministers agreed

the funding for 2004/05 as £3.55m, and for 2005/06 as £4.3m.

The first Corporate Plan set out the CNPA's vision for the next 3 years as 6 main themes:

- To foster A Park for All.
- To encourage the enjoyment, understanding and appreciation of the special qualities of the area.
- To develop clear, cohesive strategies for the stewardship of the natural resources of the National Park.
- To encourage and support balanced, thriving, stable communities in the Park.
- To ensure an integrated approach to the Park's 4 statutory aims by all public bodies through the preparation and implementation of the National Park Plan for the Cairngorms.
- To develop an enabling organisation that is trusted and respected.

The Corporate Plan set out the actions planned to deliver a range of objectives within these broad themes. The plan acknowledges that it is difficult to be precise at this early stage of the CNPA's life, and that action plans will be refined over the next few years as the National Park Plan is developed and working relationships with stakeholders and partners become clearer. As part of that process of refinement, specific targets will be set, and outputs defined, so that progress can be measured.

## Projects

As part of delivering its aims and objectives, the CNPA ran (either as sole funder or as a partner) a number of projects, and offered a number of grants. A number of these were inherited from the Cairngorms Partnership, and some were started during the year. The following are of particular note:

### **John Muir Award**

A three year project to promote and develop the John Muir Award in and around the National Park was set up in August 2003 with funding from CNPA, SNH and LEADER+. The Award is an environmental Award scheme, which encourages participants to discover, explore and help conserve wild places and share their experiences with others. The Project Manager has been working with existing and new Award Providers such as outdoor centres, youth organisation and schools, to develop Award activities in the National Park.

### **Affordable Health and Fitness Project**

The Project was established to provide quality affordable personal advice on healthy lifestyles to people living in Badenoch and Strathspey who would not normally have access to this advice. The two year project, which ended in March 2004, has been successful in helping over 1000 participants as individual referrals from GPs or through groups such as Family First, Arthritis Care and Walking to Health schemes.

### **Youth Communication**

The CNPA has developed its links with the 7 secondary schools whose catchments lie within the Park, and convened a first meeting of the Schools Youth Group in March 2004. The Group will help to inform the CNPA on issues for young people, as well as increase awareness of the NP within their schools, eg through the ongoing development of their Young Cairngorms website.

### **Cairngorms Tourism Marketing Strategy**

The need for a common strategic approach to the tourism marketing of the National Park was identified as a priority by those in the industry, both in private and public sector. Consultants were engaged in developing this Strategy in November 2003, with the finalised Strategy approved by the National Park Board in July 2004.

The tourism vision for the future is to establish the Cairngorms as one of the most spectacular National Parks in the world with a reputation for superb visitor facilities and services, and access to a landscape of unrivalled natural beauty in which businesses can flourish in harmony with the natural environment.

The key aims of the Strategy focus on utilising the opportunities created by the designation of the area as a National Park, encouraging both new and returning visitors to the area and the delivery all of tourism marketing activity in an integrated way. An

## Other Major Issues

Action Plan to implement the delivery of these key aims, working with public and private sector partners is currently being developed.

### **Moorlands Project**

This project aims to develop two demonstration moors and a programme of interpretation to improve management and appreciation of the area's heather moorlands.

### **LEADER +**

Worth £2.41m in total, this programme has approximately £1m of European Structural Funds to pilot innovative approaches to rural development that will promote the sustainable economic, environmental and social development of the area's rural communities. A wide range of partners is involved in managing this programme and in providing match funding for individual projects.

In addition to its development control functions, the CNPA has three other important statutory duties:

- To prepare a Local Plan(s) for the area.
- To prepare a National Park Plan for the area.
- To be the Local Access Authority for the area (under the terms of Part 1 of the Land Reform Act).

Priority has been given to starting work on all three of these important tasks during 2003/04. Key milestones will be in future years, with the finalised draft of the Local Plan expected at the end of 2005; consultation draft of the National Park Plan expected at the same time; and the formal responsibilities as Access Authority being taken on in late 2004.

## Summary Accounts

### Income and Expenditure Account

for the period ended 31 March 2004

	£
<b>Income</b>	
Grant in Aid	1,494,290
Released from Government Grant Reserve	44,042
Programme income	386,663
	<u>1,924,995</u>
<b>Expenditure</b>	
Board members and staff costs	675,438
Programme contributions	512,885
Other operating costs	679,531
Notional costs	3,202
Depreciation	44,042
	<u>1,915,098</u>
<b>Surplus on operating activities</b>	9,897
Bank interest received	1,138
	<u>11,035</u>
<b>Surplus on ordinary activities</b>	11,035
Add back: Notional costs	3,202
	<u>14,237</u>
<b>Retained surplus for the period</b>	<u>14,237</u>

### Notes

- 1 Board member's remuneration (excluding expenses) totalled £175,775 in the period covered by these accounts.
- 2 The financial information contained on pages 14 to 15 does not constitute statutory financial statements within the meaning of Section 240 of the Companies Act 1985. The Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet have been extracted from the Authority's statutory financial statements.
- 3 A copy of the statutory financial statements, upon which the auditors issued an unqualified opinion, can be obtained from the Cairngorms National Park Authority, 14 The Square, Grantown-on-Spey, PH26 3HG.

## Balance Sheet

as at 31 March 2004

	£
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
Tangible assets	401,603
<b>Current Assets</b>	
Debtors	159,776
Cash at bank and in hand	193,272
	<u>353,048</u>
<b>Creditors: amounts falling due within one year</b>	<u>(338,811)</u>
<b>Net Current Assets</b>	14,237
	<u>415,840</u>
<b>Financed by:</b>	
Government Grant Reserve	401,603
Reserves	14,237
	<u>415,840</u>

### Report by the Auditor of Cairngorms National Park Authority on the Summary of Accounts for the Period to 31 March 2004

I have examined the summary of accounts set out on pages 14 and 15.

### Respective responsibilities of Cairngorms National Park Authority, the Chief Executive and Auditor

Cairngorms National Park Authority and the Chief Executive are responsible for preparing the Summary of Accounts. My responsibility is to report to you my opinion on the consistency of the Summary of Accounts within the Annual Report with the full annual accounts.

### Basis of Opinion

I conducted my work in accordance with Bulletin 1999/6 'The auditors' statement on the summary financial statement' issued by the Auditing Practices Board for use in the United Kingdom.

### Opinions

In my opinion, the summary of accounts is consistent with the full annual accounts for the period ended 31 March 2004 and complies with the requirements of Section 251 of the Companies Act 1985 and the regulations made thereunder.

Robert W Clark FCCA, Senior Audit Manager  
Audit Scotland, Ballantyne House  
84 Academy Street, Inverness IV1 1LU

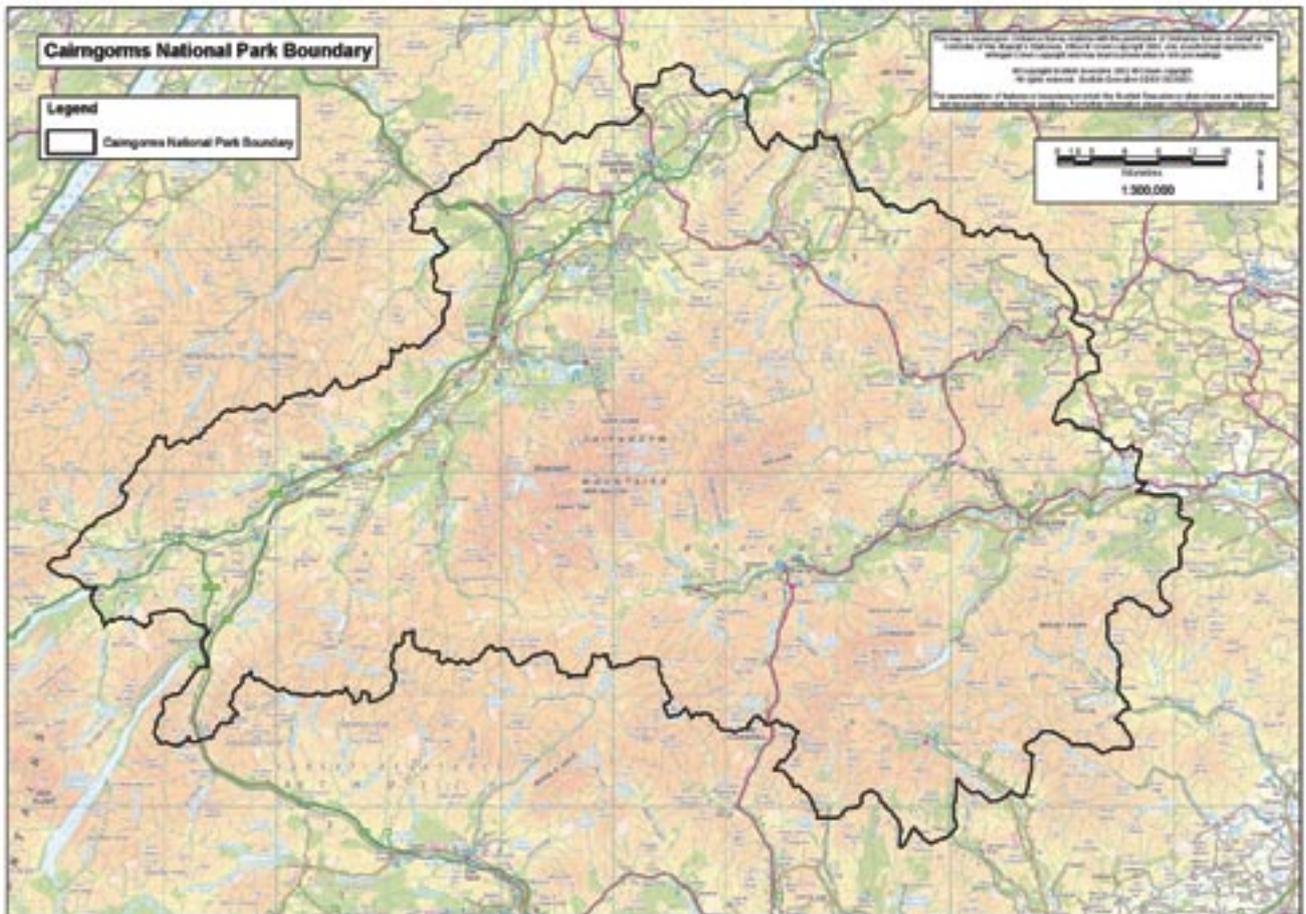
28 April 2005



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## Annex 1 Cairngorms National Park Boundary



## The Cairngorms National Park Key Facts

- Scotland's second National Park. Stretches from Grantown-on-Spey to the heads of the Angus Glens, from Ballater to Dalwhinnie and Drumochter, and includes much of the Laggan area in the south west and a large area of the Glenlivet estate and the Strathdon/ Glen Buchat area.
- Britain's largest National Park at 1,467 sq miles.
- Both Scotland's National Parks together occupy 7.2% of Scotland's land area.
- 39% of the National Park area is identified as designated sites (including: SSSI, NNR, SAC, NSA, SPA, and RAMSAR\*). 25% is identified as Natura sites (ie SAC or SPA which are of European importance)
  - contains the finest collections of different landforms on the planet rarely seen outside arctic Canada
  - Western outpost of natural forests of conifers and birch that grow around the northern world, with a rare kind of pinewood – found only in Scotland and Norway – a speciality
  - best place in the world for Scottish Crossbill, the only bird unique to Britain
  - increasing population of the globally endangered freshwater pearl mussel
  - home ground for a quarter of Scotland's native woodland
  - biggest continuous stretches of near-natural vegetation in Britain, along glens and up and over the mountains
  - refuge for a host of rare plants and creatures, including a quarter of the UK's threatened species
- No precise tourism statistics for the whole Park area, but Badenoch and Strathspey area received 350,000 staying visitors in 2001 (excluding day visitors) who spent £82million.

National Park	Area (sq km)	Area (sq mile)	Population	Pop per sq mile
Lake District	2,292	885	42,239	47.7
Loch Lomond & The Trossachs	1,865	720	14,110	19.6
North York Moors	1,432	553	25,500	46.1
<b>The Cairngorms</b>	<b>3,800</b>	<b>1,467</b>	<b>16,973</b>	<b>11.6</b>

## The Cairngorms National Park Key Facts

Annex 1 continued...

- 1997 survey of recreational mountain users in the Cairngorms revealed that 82% of people participating in any form of activity were walkers.
- Outdoor recreation opportunities are extensive: walking at high and low ground level, mountaineering, climbing (rock and ice), snowsports (downhill skiing, ski mountaineering, snowboarding cross country skiing), cycling, horse riding, orienteering, watersports (sailing, canoeing, windsurfing, angling).
- 52 summits over 900 meters, including 4 of Scotland's five highest mountains. 43 Munros.
- The highest point in the Park is Ben Macdui at 1309 metres above sea level (masl); lowest point is at the river Dee, 2km west of Aboyne at 134 metres masl.
- 10% of the Park is more than 800masl; 68% is more than 400masl
- Land use/type in the park area:
  - 42% dwarf shrub heath
  - 28% montane habitats
  - 11% coniferous woodland
  - 2% broad leaved/mixed woodland
  - 3% improved grassland
  - 0.4% built-up areas and gardens
- 26 community councils and associations, most of which are represented on the Cairngorms Community Councils Group (now the Association of Cairngorms Community Councils).

\*

SSSI Site of Special Scientific Interest

NNR National Nature Reserve

SAC Special Area of Conservation

NSA National Scenic Area

SPA Special Protection Area

RAMSAR not an acronym, but refers to a town in Iran at which the international convention on wetland habitats and birds was initiated in 1971.

## The Area

(Abstracted from “Common Sense and Sustainability”, report of the Cairngorms Working Party, 1992)

The landscape of the area is characterised by openness, wildness and “naturalness”; a complex mix of heather moorland, farmland and woodland in the straths and glens, and the mountains. Each part of the mix is unlike anywhere else in the UK, and in combination they make the Cairngorms special.

**The montane zone** (above 600m) of the Cairngorms is the highest and most massive range of arctic mountain landscape anywhere in the British Isles (a piece of the Arctic transported 800 miles south) and is the largest self-contained block of truly high hill country. A wide plateau of rock and boulders, out of which glaciers have gouged deep high altitude valleys and corries. No motor roads go through – it can only be visited on foot. The altitude and exposure, and poor soils, combine to produce a harsh but very special habitat for a unique assemblage of vegetation, insects and animals. The montane zone may be fierce, but it is also fragile and deserves proper safeguard.

**The forests** round the foothills of the Cairngorms represent one of the largest tracts of comparatively natural and largely untouched woodland. They contain fragments of the original Caledonian pine forest which is home to a variety of animal species, some unique to the area – pine

martens, red squirrels, badgers, wildcats, crossbills, crested tits, Capercaillie.

The open rolling **heather moorland** of the Cairngorms is remarkable for its ecological diversity and beauty. It is a product of a particular form of land use. It is largely derived from woodland and scrub, and is the result of grazing and burning practised over a long period to produce a patchwork of different-aged stands of heather to provide food and nesting cover for red grouse.

The **straths and glens** and other low ground provide the home and workplace for most people of the area. The valleys of the Spey, the Dee and The Don are major features of the landscape. Diversity is the most obvious and visually attractive feature here and is one of the keys to the natural heritage value of the low ground. The river systems, freshwater lochs and marshes are an important asset for the ecological, social and recreational life of the area. River water quality is high and is important for the commercial activities of whisky production and salmon fishing.

## Annex 2

### Board Members of the The Cairngorms National Park Authority

**Andrew Thin** (Convener) is also a Board Member of the Crofters Commission and holds senior non-executive positions in a number of other charitable, public and private organisations.

**Eric Baird** (Deputy Convener) is the immediate past Convener of the Cairngorms Community Councils Group and Head Ranger on the Glen Tanar estate. He also has a specialist knowledge of countryside issues and is a member of the Grampian Regional Forestry Forum.

**Peter Argyle** (Liberal Democrat Councillor for Aberdeenshire) has a lifelong interest in conservation issues and natural history. He has worked on a local level with the Cairngorms Partnership on projects for the Aboyne area. At one time he was employed as a Countryside Ranger by Aberdeenshire Council.

**Francis (Stuart) Black** (Scottish Liberal Democrat) is a Board member of North Area Board of Scottish Natural Heritage. He is also Chairman of Explore Abernethy, a community project involving the creation of a local footpath network. He serves on a number of the Highland Council's committees. He is a former member of the Cairngorms Partnership Board. He has been a Strathspey hill farmer for over 40 years.

**Duncan Bryden** is a self employed Rural Development consultant and has a professional ecological background. He has undertaken a wide range of recreational and tourism-related activities within the Park.

**Sally Dowden** is one of two managing partners in Speyside Wildlife International, one of Scotland's largest wildlife tour operating companies, and is a Director of the Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce.

**Basil Dunlop** (Independent Councillor for Highland) is Chairman of Planning for the Badenoch and Strathspey area. In addition to being a member of various Highland Council committees and the Northern Joint Police Board, he is a director of several local groups such as Moray Badenoch & Strathspey Enterprise and the Grantown Museum and Heritage Trust. He is a chartered forester who has specialised in the native pinewoods of the Cairngorms area and is Chairman of Anagach Woods Trust. He has lived in the Cairngorms for over 40 years and is a keen hillwalker and photographer.

**Douglas Glass** was elected for ward 5. He is a full time general practitioner at Ballater clinic since 1986. He lives on Dee Castle Farm, Glentinar, Aboyne. A Board member of Crathie Opportunity Holidays and partner on Dee Castle Farm, his interests include farming, medicine and environmental issues.

**Angus Gordon** (Independent Councillor for Highland) is Chairman of the Badenoch and Strathspey Area Committee of the Licensing Board. He sits on various committees including the Sustainable Development Select Committee and the Land and Environment Select Committee. He is a local tenant farmer and is a member at area and local level of the NFU.

**Lucy Grant** is a partner in the family livestock farm and has developed a good general knowledge of the area's issues.

**David Green** lives in the Ross and Cromarty area and is currently Chair of the Crofters Commission. He was a Crofters Commissioner until September 2002 and Convener of Highland Council until 1 May. He was the Independent member for the Lochbroom Ward. He is also a self-employed crofter who has diversified into tourism based on the croft.

**Marcus Humphrey** (joined the Board on 25 September 2004) (Scottish Conservative Councillor for Aberdeenshire) is a chartered surveyor and has been involved in farming, forestry, tourism and land management in the Cairngorms area for many years. He is currently Chair of the Marr Area Committee and is on the Infrastructure Services and Policy and Resources Committees. He also serves on COSLA's Economic Development Executive Committee.

**Bruce Luffman** (Scottish Conservative Councillor for Aberdeenshire) is a member of a number of organisations. These include the North Board of SEPA, The North East Scottish Agricultural Advisory Group and the Strategic Forestry Working Group. He is also a Director of the Aberdeen and Grampian Tourist Board. He has been on the Cairngorms Agricultural Forum for some 4 years and is a member of the National Farmers Union. He and his wife run a guesthouse at Strathdon that is within

the Cairngorms National Park.

**Willie McKenna** was elected for ward 2. He worked locally in the skiing business for over twenty years and is now a countryside manager, looking after everyone who enjoys Rothiemurchus Estate. He is currently involved with Aviemore Community Company and the Citizens Advice Information Service.

**Eleanor Mackintosh** was elected for ward 4. She worked in the Clydesdale Bank for 25 years, ending up as financial adviser, and now helps at home on the farm. She lives in Glenlivet, and has served in the past on various community groups.

**Anne MacLean** retired from Trade Union work in 1990. She has an interest in measures that promote access for disabled people and is a Board member of the Highland Society for Blind People and RNIB Scotland. She is also a Board member of Albyn Housing Society and an Independent Assessor for Ministerial Appointments.

**Alastair MacLennan** is a farmer who has diversified into tourism and other business ventures. Mr MacLennan has also been at the forefront of the LEAF initiative (Linking Environment and Farming) and has been a demonstration farmer since 2000. He had formerly served on the Cairngorms Partnership Board.

## Board Members of the The Cairngorms National Park Authority

Annex 2 continued...

**Sandy Park** (joined the Board on 25 September 2004) (Independent Councillor for Highland) is the Provost of Nairn and is Chair of Highland Council's Planning, Development, Europe and Tourism Committee. He also sits on the Council's Transport, Environment and Community Services Committee and the Northern Joint Police Board. He has been involved in outdoor pursuits in the area for over 40 years.

**Andrew Rafferty** was elected for ward 3. He is the principal vet in the Strathspey Veterinary Centre, which covers four out of the five wards in the National Park. Born in Grantown he lives at a smallholding at Invertruim near Aviemore. He is a Director of Anagach Woods Trust.

**Gregor Rimell** was elected for ward 1. For 12 years he has been sub-postmaster in Kingussie. He lives at Newtonmore.

**David Selfridge JP** (Scottish National Party Councillor for Angus). He currently serves on a number of bodies including Scottish Enterprise (Tayside), Angus & Dundee Tourist Board and Angus Economic Development Partnership. He is Convener of the Infrastructure Services Committee (Planning & Transport Policy, Roads and Economic Development) and a member of several other committees. He is formerly an Assistant Director of Water Services with Tayside Regional Council.

**Robert Severn** was nominated to the Board by Highland Council. He lives in Aviemore

and is a co-opted member of Aviemore Community Council. He is a Director of Dachaidh Care and Support Scheme. He has lived and worked in the area for over 30 years and was a member of the Cairngorms Mountain Rescue Team and is heavily involved in other outdoor sporting pursuits.

**Joyce Simpson** is a retired solicitor who has been involved for many years with outdoor activities for youth organisations. She is a member and former Chair of the Cairngorms Community Councils Group.

**Sheena Slimon** (Independent Councillor for Highland) was involved in setting up the Laggan Rural Partnership and the Community Information Resource Centre and the Laggan Forrest Trust. She works closely with a number of local agencies and other parties concerned with the wellbeing of the Laggan community. She is also a member of several Highland Council committees including Sustainable Development and Education, Culture & Sport and is Vice-Chair of Housing & Social Work with responsibility for housing.

**Richard Stroud** (Liberal Democrat Councillor for Aberdeenshire). He previously worked with Community Education Service in the Upper Deeside/Donside areas and has considerable contact with community organisations, communities and individuals in these areas through professional work. He is currently Convener of Aberdeenshire Council's Education and Recreation

Committee and an active mountaineer and ski mountaineer.

**Susan Walker** is a former Professor of Geography and Environment at Aberdeen University and a part time environmental consultant. She is a specialist in water management and related ecological and conservation issues. She is currently a Board member of Scottish Natural Heritage, the Deer Commission for Scotland, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, and a member of the Fisheries (Electricity) Committee.

**Bob Wilson** (Independent for Moray) serves as Chairman of the Grampian Valuation Joint Board. He has been Chairman of the Speyside Way Management Committee and has a keen interest in local community issues and those issues that will fall to the remit of the Park Board.

## Annex 3 Staff details at 1 April 2004

### Corporate Services

<b>Jane Hope</b>	<b>Interim Chief Executive</b>
Andy Rinning	Head of Corporate Services (Interim)
Morag James	Accounts Officer
Margaret Smith	Administration Officer
Laura Grant	Administration Officer
Catriona Campbell	Administration Officer

### Visitor Services & Recreation

<b>Murray Ferguson</b>	<b>Head of Visitor Services &amp; Recreation</b>
Kristin Scott	Senior Access Officer
Fran Potheary	Access Officer
Alastair MacLeod	Speyside Way Development Officer (4 month post)

### Strategic Policy & Programme Management

<b>Nick Halfhide</b>	<b>Head of Strategic Policy &amp; Programme Management</b>
Dicken Higgins	Programme Manager
Andy McMullen	Moorland Project Manager
Juliet Robinson	Moorland Liaison Officer
Gail Renwick	Moorland Liaison Officer
Patricia Hamilton	Leader+ Programme Manager
Jackie Farquhar	Leader+ Support Officer

### Communication

<b>Danny Alexander</b>	<b>Head of Communications</b>
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### Natural Resources

<b>Fiona Newcombe</b>	<b>Head of Natural Resources</b>
Peter Cosgrove	Countryside Officer
Amy Moggach	Forestry of Spey Project Officer
Stephen Corcoran	Local Biodiversity Action Plan Officer
Sam Masson	Land Based Business Project Assistant

### Economic & Social Development

<b>Andrew Harper</b>	<b>Head of Economic &amp; Social Development</b>
Debbie Strang	Sustainable Tourism Officer
Ruathy Donald	Business & Marketing Officer
Elsbeth Grant	Social Inclusion Policy Officer
Rita Callander	Communities & Cultural Heritage Policy Officer
Robbie Nicol	John Muir Award Manager

### Planning & Development Control

<b>Denis Munro</b>	<b>Head of Planning &amp; Dev Control (Interim)</b>
Neil Stewart	Development Control Officer
Norman Brockie	Local Plan/Policy Officer
Gavin Miles	Local Plan/Policy Officer
Sandra Middleton	GIS Officer
Pip Mackie	Admin Support Officer

## Annex 4 Members' Attendance at Board Meetings

Board Member	Board Meetings attended (out of 10)	Planning Committee meetings attended (out of 14)
Peter Argyle	10	14
Eric Baird	10	13
Stuart Black	9	13
Duncan Bryden	10	12
Sally Dowden	8	13
Basil Dunlop	9	13
Douglas Glass	10	11
Angus Gordon	9	9
Lucy Grant	10	13
David Green	8	7
Bruce Luffman	10	12
Eleanor Mackintosh	10	13
Anne MacLean	9	11
Alistair MacLennan	9	12
Willie McKenna	8	12
Andrew Rafferty	9	14
Gregor Rimell	9	12
David Selfridge	9	12
Robert Severn	9	12
Joyce Simpson	8	8
Sheena Slimon	9	11
Richard Stroud	10	13
Andrew Thin	8	11
Susan Walker	10	9
Bob Wilson	9	8

## Annex 5

### CPNA Board Meetings for 2003/2004

Date	Morning	Afternoon	Venue
15 April	<b>First Formal Board Meeting</b>	Informal briefing	Kingussie
30 April	Informal Briefing - where we are now (1)	Out & about Glenmore and Rothiemurchus	Forest Enterprise, Glenmore
9 May	Informal Briefing - where we are now (2)	Out & about Invercauld Estate	Braemar
16 May	Informal Briefing - where we are now (3)	Out & about Glenlivet Estate	Glenlivet area
23 May	<b>Board Meeting</b>	Out & about with UDAT (Upper Deeside Access Trust)	Ballater
13 June	Informal Discussion/briefing - moving forward	Informal discussion - continued	Balmoral
27 June	Course on Being a Board Member of a Public Body	<b>Board Meeting</b>	Grantown-on-Spey
<i>July</i>	<i>Recess</i>		
22 Aug	Planning Training	Planning Training	Aviemore
01 Sep	Formal Opening Event		Cairngorm Mountain
12 Sep	<b>Board Meeting</b> followed by <b>Planning Committee</b>	1.30 - 4.00 Out & about Glen Esk Retreat; community issues	Edzell (Panmuir Arms)
26 Sept	Media Training 10.00 - 12.30	Agriculture briefing	Grantown-on-Spey
10 Oct	<b>Board Meeting</b> followed by <b>Planning Committee</b>	Presentation from SNH Visit to Spey Fishery Board	Tomintoul
07 Nov	<b>Planning Committee</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>	Laggan
21 Nov	Informal Briefing		Braemar
05 Dec	<b>Planning Committee</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>	Nethy Bridge
05 Jan Monday	<b>Planning Committee</b>		Ballater
16 Jan	9.00 - 10.30 Committees & Working Groups <b>Planning Committee</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>	Braemar
23 Jan	Informal training discussion session with Sam Ham on interpretation		Strathdon

Date	Morning	Afternoon	Venue
30 Jan	<b>Planning Committee</b>	1.30 - 2.30 Informal discussion on how Board engages/consults	Grantown-on-Spey
13 Feb	Committees & Working Groups <b>Planning Committee</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>	Kingussie
20 Feb		12.00 - 1.00 Formal opening of Ballater office by Mike Rumbles MSP	Ballater
27 Feb	<b>Planning Committee</b>	1.30 Disability awareness training for Board Members (re-scheduled due to bad weather)	Ballater
12 Mar	Committees & Working Groups <b>Planning Committee</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b>	Strathdon
26 Mar	<b>Planning Committee</b>		Carr-Bridge

## Annex 6 Committee Remits and Membership

### CNPA Audit Committee

**Membership:** 5 (quorum 3)  
**Members:** Eric Baird (Chair)  
Sally Dowden  
Sheena Slimon  
Bob Wilson  
Duncan Bryden

**Staff in Attendance:** Chief Executive (Accountable Officer) – non voting,  
Head of Corporate Services – non voting.

**External Attendance:** To include external auditor (Auditor General for Scotland) and internal auditor as required.

**Remit:**

- a) To agree appointment of an internal auditor.
- b) To oversee and monitor the development of the CNPA's internal audit plan (in accordance with the Scottish Public Finance Manual).
- c) To receive and consider reports by the internal auditor.
- d) To monitor the adequacy of the CNPA's internal control systems.
- e) To consider reports by the external auditor on the CNPA's annual accounts and other matters.
- f) To oversee the CNPA's arrangements for ensuring use of resources economically, efficiently and effectively (as required by s.19 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000).

**Committee Life:** Permanent, but with a review of membership, chairmanship and remit each year (in September).

### CNPA Finance Committee

**Membership:** 5 (quorum 3)  
**Members:** Andrew Thin  
Joyce Simpson  
David Selfridge  
Eleanor Mackintosh (Chair)  
Gregor Rimell

**Staff in Attendance:** Chief Executive (Accountable Officer) – non voting,  
Head of Corporate Services – non voting.

**Remit:**

- a) To oversee the preparation of annual budgets for the CNPA.
- b) To oversee the preparation of the Corporate Plan and seek approval of the whole CNPA Board prior to submission to Scottish Ministers.
- c) To monitor income and expenditure during the year against budget and report to the CNPA Board once per quarter.
- d) Seek approval of the CNPA Board to the annual accounts.

**Committee Life:** Permanent, but with a review of membership, chairmanship and remit each year (in September).

### CNPA Staffing & Recruitment Committee

**Membership:** 5 (quorum 3)

**Members:** Andrew Thin (Chair)  
Eric Baird  
Anne MacLean  
David Green  
Douglas Glass

(Bruce Luffman – added by agreement 7/11/03)

**External Attendance:** For appointment of the Chief Executive, the Committee should include the Head of Environment Group, Scottish Executive (since the appointment is subject to approval by Scottish Ministers).

- Remit:**
- a) To oversee the recruitment of the CNPA's senior management team and Chief Executive, including agreeing the job descriptions, adverts and salary.
  - b) To take responsibility for interviewing and selecting the successful candidates, and seeking the endorsement of the whole CNPA Board (and of Scottish Ministers in the case of the Chief Executive).
  - c) To oversee and monitor the HR (human resources) systems put in place for the CNPA.
  - d) To provide an interface between staff representative group(s) and the Board.

**Committee Life:** Permanent, but with a review of membership, chairmanship and remit each year (in September).

### CNPA Planning & Development Control Committee

**Membership:** The whole CNPA Board  
Andrew Thin (Chair)

**Staff in Attendance:** Head of Planning,  
Planning Officers as required.

- Remit:**
- a) The determination of planning applications called in by the CNPA. This includes: applications for planning permission; listed buildings consent; conservation area consent; advertisement consent; review of minerals consents; prior notifications of applications for the demolition of buildings; erection of farm/forestry buildings; the development of Crown land.
  - b) The approval of enforcement actions or the serving of any other notices under the Planning Act which may control the development of a site.
  - c) The approval of non-statutory planning policy documents such as statutory planning advice, design guides or other interim policy statements.
  - d) The approval of formal responses to consultations on statutory planning related

## Committee Remits and Membership

Annex 6 continued...

### *CNPA Planning & Development Control Committee...*

matters such as Scottish Executive consultations on NPPGs (National Planning Policy Guidance), PANs (Planning Advice Notes) and other policy documents in cases where there may be an adverse impact on the CNPA's interests.

- e) The approval of formal requests to consultations by neighbouring local authorities on structure plans and neighbouring Local Plans in cases where there may be an adverse impact on the CNPA's interests.
- f) The approval of TPOs (Tree Preservation Orders).
- g) Decision on call-in of planning applications within the Park.

**Committee Life:** Permanent, but with a review of membership, chairmanship and remit each year (in September).

## Annex 7 Working Groups

Working Group	Purpose	Membership
Ranger Services	To formulate, agree and then implement arrangements for provision of a CNP wide approach to ranger services.	Eric Baird Willie McKenna Richard Stroud Sally Dowden
Food Marketing	To develop and implement new approaches to produce marketing under a CNP brand and/or umbrella mechanism.	Andrew Rafferty Bruce Luffman Alastair MacLennan Eleanor Mackintosh Lucy Grant
Housing Development	To develop and implement new approaches to affordable housing through housing investment and ownership based on as yet undefined local residency criteria (i.e. measures in addition to the existing Cairngorms Housing Strategy and focused on promoting private investment in, and ownership of, houses within the CNP by local people).	Sheena Slimon Anne MacLean Eleanor Mackintosh Andrew Thin
A Park for All	To develop and take forward measures and initiatives to remove barriers and make the benefits derived from the NP fully socially inclusive.	Eric Baird Anne MacLean Sheena Slimon Lucy Grant
Tourism Development	To establish better coordination of tourism related activity (mainly but not exclusively marketing) in the CNP, including between the three different ATBs within the Park, and to develop and implement CNP wide initiatives as appropriate.	Bruce Luffman Sally Dowden Bob Wilson Bob Severn

## Working Groups

Annex 7 continued...

Working Group	Purpose	Membership
Access	To plan and coordinate delivery of the CNP's duties under the access legislation, including the core path network.	Willie McKenna Richard Stroud Alastair MacLennan Joyce Simpson Bob Severn Stuart Black
Park Gateways	To develop and implement a coordinated approach to establishing appropriate "gateways" at the main entry points to the CNP.	Gregor Rimell Bob Wilson David Selfridge Andrew Rafferty
National Park Plan Project	To steer the process agreed at the CNPA meeting on 12th September, and to report periodically to the Board on progress.	David Green Duncan Bryden Peter Argyle Angus Gordon Sue Walker
Local Plan Project	To steer the process of producing a Local Plan for the CNP, and to report periodically to the Board on progress.	Bruce Luffman Basil Dunlop Duncan Bryden Douglas Glass Peter Argyle Sue Walker
Agriculture	To guide the CNPA's response to and involvement in the consultation on and implementation of CAP reform.	Stuart Black Alastair MacLennan Lucy Grant Eleanor Mackintosh Bruce Luffman Andrew Rafferty Duncan Bryden Angus Gordon

## Annex 8

### Convener's Speech at Cairngorms National Park Opening on 1 September 2003

Let me start by welcoming you to Scotland's (and Britain's) largest National Park. My apologies for the crush, but a great many people wanted to come. Indeed every second person that I have met over the last few weeks seems to have been offended by the lack of an invitation – although I am told that a handful of tickets have mysteriously turned up on the black market as well. An inability to please everybody all of the time seems to be a feature of this job.

In case you think that large numbers of people on Cairngorm are a recent phenomenon, let me quote to you from the Rev Hugh MacMillan's book about the area published in 1907 – almost 100 years ago. "The ordinary road to Glenmore Lodge is crowded with vehicles and bicycles during the season...most visitors wish to ascend Cairngorm...At the lodge there gather visitors from all parts of the world, and parties can be traced...all the way up the mountain." He goes on to say "There is room for all, and...it is to be hoped that the crowd of visitors take back with them to the busy haunts of man the visions and inspirations that come to them from the everlasting hills". Just as apt today I think.

This occasion has been planned for a very long time. The idea of a National Park in the Cairngorms was first mooted (so I am told) 59 years ago. My first (and slightly more recent) memory of this Park is of standing on

the shores of Loch an Eilein with my mother while my father skied across the ice to visit the ruined castle on the island. To a small boy there was something simply wondrous in the way nature could bring about such circumstances. The crisp cold, the silence and the sheer beauty of the scene made a huge impression, even at such a very young age. I have many other memories of the Park that span the years since that January day. Camping one autumn during the rut at Derry Lodge, and lying in the dark listening to the stags roaring all around. Plunging into deep pools in the river below Feshiebridge, and then taking my 8-year-old daughter to do the same many years later. Meeting my wife (as she now is) at a ceilidh in Braemar Village Hall, and more recently taking our children for a meal at the Skiing Doo restaurant in Aviemore – a welcome refuge of idiosyncrasy and character in an increasingly uniform world. Only a few weeks ago, bivvying on the plateau above Loch Einich, listening to a sandpiper calling in the dusk, and wondering how on earth such a peaceful place could on occasions be the focus for so much ridiculous and unnecessary conflict.

This is a very special place. The mountains, forests, rivers, lochs and wildlife are quite extraordinary by any standards. 39% of the Park (and it is a very big Park – twice the size of LL+T) is designated for its

## Convener's Speech at Cairngorms National Park Opening on 1 September 2003

Annex 8 continued..

natural heritage interest. 25% is identified as being of European importance. It is a place that people care passionately about, and it attracts visitors from all over the world. It is not, however, a wilderness area like many National Parks in and elsewhere. People have lived here for thousands of years, and you will find ruined settlements and abandoned cultivations in areas of the Park that many people now regard as wild. 17,000 people still live in the Park, and many more would like to do so if they could find housing and employment here.

There are villages, towns and communities scattered throughout, and these contain people for whom the Park is home, and who hope that it will be home for their children too. As with all communities there are people who are rich and poor, fortunate and unfortunate, happy and sad. For these people the creation of the National Park has been an uncertain process. What advantages and disadvantages will it bring? What problems will it solve, or cause? Perhaps most crucially, what say will local people have over the way in which it progresses, and to what extent will the Park become a licence through which outsiders may be able to impose their views? I have been told that I stand on a very unstable knife-edge.

I do not think that this need be so. This Park has an incredible range of

potential benefits to offer all of us, and as a consequence the Park Authority is tasked through its founding legislation with looking after a remarkably diverse range of interests. We must make sure that the natural and cultural heritage are cared for, conserved, and in places enhanced, as they are unique assets that can never be replaced. We must promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area, so that they can make a material and vital contribution to human welfare (and thereby be even more highly valued). We must promote understanding and enjoyment of the special qualities of the area, including (of course) helping to realise the huge and diverse recreational potential that is on offer here. This should be a place where people, both visitors and locals, have fun. Fourthly, and integral to making this a happy place, we must promote sustainable economic and social development of the communities that are such a vital part of this Park. There is no inherent conflict between any of these. We are all conservationists at heart, and we all need houses, services, incomes, and a future for our children. In an area such as this, environment and economy are inextricably interlinked.

I am, among other things, a mountaineer and a conservationist. There have been times in recent months when I have almost been ashamed to admit this, because a tiny minority of people who share the same

interests as I do seem unable or unwilling to understand the priorities and interests of anyone else. I would ask you, however, to be patient. Passion can easily lead people astray, and the relationship that many of us have with the Cairngorms is a profoundly passionate one. I do not think that there is any deliberate intention here to be selfish or to ignore the democratic process. It is, however, important that we all take time to think about the process that we have gone through over the past few years in getting this National Park established. I have been told that people are now suffering from consultation fatigue, and that it is now up to the Park Authority to just get on with it, yet I have also been told that all the endless discussion has been very worthwhile. My view is that while there may well have been enough consultation by government agencies, there has been nothing like enough dialogue between the various interest groups in the Park, and in particular not enough constructive listening by the more vocal ones. I think it essential not only that the Park Authority continues to consult with all relevant interests over the coming months, but also that it demands of all those interests a degree of "other-centredness" that at the moment seems to come more easily to some than to others.

I inherited my love of this place. My grandfather was an early member of the

Cairngorm Club. In a letter to his mother, smuggled out of a German prisoner of war camp in 1916, he said that he missed his beloved Cairngorms "more than anything else". It has been a special place to a great many people for a very long time, and designating it a National Park in some senses changes very little. We are at the start of a very lengthy process and there is a long way to go. We can only make progress at all through the actions of others. We are an enabling agency – the nearest thing there is to a connective system for delivering joined up government – and we need all of the public agencies (whose boundaries do not, of course, coincide with ours) to think and act in terms of the Park as a distinct and special entity.

The public sector, however, is not alone in making things happen on the ground. This is what the private sector does, and it does it very well. Delivering the changes that we all want to see in practice must therefore be the result of actions by a myriad of landowners, farmers, crofters, gamekeepers, accommodation providers, restaurateurs, retailers, manufacturers, visitor service providers, and many others. We want to work with all of them. They are the delivery mechanism for this Park, not us.

There are many issues and priorities on which we might focus, and it is important to recognise that we cannot do everything

## Convener's Speech at Cairngorms National Park Opening on 1 September 2003

Annex 8 continued..

overnight, but there are perhaps four things about which the new Park Authority feels particularly strongly:–

We believe that we must ensure vibrant, balanced and stable communities throughout the Park. This must be a Park where young people can see a good future for themselves, where they can find work, training, affordable housing, and where they wish to and are able to bring up their families.

We believe that we must ensure that everyone who comes to the Park can fully appreciate, understand and enjoy its special, and in many ways unique, natural and cultural heritage. In particular this must be a place where people from the more populous areas can literally “re create” themselves, and where they can find some of the physical, psychological and even spiritual sustenance that John Muir held so dear.

We believe that we must have structured and focused land stewardship schemes for the Park coupled with effective visitor management systems (paths, signposts, information, etc.) so that this wonderful landscape can be enjoyed by everyone and yet at the same time be managed in a way that provides for good local food production, traditional field sports where appropriate, and a diversity of habitats.

Above all we believe profoundly that this must be a Park for All. Not just a Park for the fit and the few; not just a Park for the better off; but a Park that is widely known about; that is welcoming and attractive to all; and that is accessible and enjoyable to everyone; whatever their age, ability or circumstances.

I notice a few wry, even sceptical, smiles around the room. I have listened carefully in recent weeks to what all sorts of people have had to say about the Park, and I have heard views ranging from the deeply cynical to the wildly optimistic. I think that the reality will depend on the actions, and reactions, of all of us. I try hard to be a good listener, but I have also spent much of my adult life sticking my neck out, regretting it, and then sticking it out again. Occasionally, however, I do not regret it – and it is a wonderful feeling. I am not afraid to take risks, or to say and do what I believe to be right. None of this will have much effect, however, without your support and cooperation. More than that the Park Authority will need your active help. We will also need your patience, your understanding, and at times, your courage. This is your opportunity as much as ours. It will be very easy to blow it, and if we do then I believe that our children and grandchildren will rightly curse us for fools.

Let me close, then, with this final thought. Many people seem to see the challenge of this National Park in terms of land management, conservation, planning control, recreation management, business development or visitor services. I do not believe that any of these things are inherently very difficult. The real challenge seems to me to lie in the way in which people locally and nationally think about this Park and their interests in it. There has been far too much of “what can I get out of this” and “how can I protect my interest here”. What we need is a different sort of mindset for the future, one that cares about the interests of others, one that cares about society as a whole, and one that is based on common vision and reasoned compromise. These are not exactly novel concepts.

I am delighted to welcome two very distinguished people to formally open the Park for us. One represents the vision, in the form of Liz Hannah - John Muir’s great great granddaughter. John Muir was a Scot who founded the whole idea of National Parks – but went to North America to do it, although of course the US President in office at the time (Ulysses Grant) came from very near here. Our other guest represents the political will to make things happen, in the form of Allan Wilson, Deputy Minister for Environment and Rural Affairs. I am sure that the irony would not be lost on John

Muir in the fact that we first had to get our own Scottish Parliament before we could get our first National Park.

To mark the opening of the Park, I am delighted to present Liz and Allan with paintings featuring different parts of the Cairngorms. To Liz and the John Muir family, this painting of Frazer’s Bridge on the old road to Braemar, painted by Arni Lancaster whose family have lived on Deeside for many generations. Her picture encapsulates, I think, much of the atmosphere of Glenshee. The painting that we have chosen for Allan is of the Lairig Ghru. Ann Vastano, brought up on Rothiemurchus and now living in Aviemore, has captured the splendour and the wildness of the Cairngorms in this picture, but in the past of course the Lairig was the equivalent of the A9 today. Thousands of cattle, men and boys must have passed through here on their way to markets in the east and south. Seton Gordon in one of his books talks about young women in groups of three or four carrying baskets of eggs through the Lairig to sell in Braemar. Economic links between west and east sides of the Park are not a new idea.





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