



Minutes of the Formal Board Meeting

Hybrid

22 November 2024 at 10.00am

Present in person

Sandy Bremner (Convener)
Jackie Brierton
Kenny Deans
Russell Jones

Eleanor Mackintosh (Deputy Convener)
Peter Cosgrove
John Kirk
Bill Lobban

Present virtually

Chris Beattie
Paul Gibb
Dr Fiona McLean
Ann Ross
Michael Williamson

Geva Blackett
Hannah Grist
Steve Micklewright
Derek Ross

In Attendance

Grant Moir, Chief Executive Officer (CEO)
David Cameron, Deputy Chief Executive Officer and Director of Corporate Services
Gavin Miles, Director of Planning and Place
Andy Ford, Director of Nature and Climate Change
Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel
Oliver Davies, Head of Communications and Engagement
Dan Harris, Planning Manager
David Berry, Head of Planning and Chief Planning Officer
Karen Johnstone, Clerk to the Board

Apologies

Lauren MacCallum

Duncan Miller



Welcome and introduction

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

Approval of minutes of previous meetings

2. The draft minutes of the last meeting held on the 13 September 2024 were agreed.

Matters arising not covered elsewhere

3. The Board Convener provided an update on the action points from 13 September 2024 minutes:

| Action | Status |
|--|---------|
| Action Points from meeting on 22 March 2024 | |
| Paper 1 CEO report | |
| At para 7 ii.CEO, to prepare a briefing note on farming activity and statistics within the Cairngorms National Park and distribute to the Board. | In hand |
| Update at Sept Board meeting: Preliminary data received, staff capacity to progress is limited by vacancy in Agricultural Officer post. Recruitment for that post is about to begin. | |

| Action | Status |
|--|-----------|
| Action Points from meeting on 28 June 2024: | |
| Paper 1 – CEO Report | |
| At para 7 i. Ensure maintenance of signs and surroundings on granite markers entry points | Completed |
| Update at Sept Board meeting: Glenlivet Marker was main issue as overgrown. Glenlivet Estate now undertaking maintenance | |



| | |
|--|-----------|
| Paper 4 – Gaelic Language Plan | |
| At para 16 ii. Share affordability of translation with local businesses. | Completed |
| Update at Sept Board meeting: Head of Communications and Engagement has emailed Craig Mills (CEO of the Cairngorms Business Partnership) with full information on translation services, and we have asked this to be included in an upcoming newsletter to partner businesses. | |

| Action | Status |
|---|---------|
| Action Points from meeting on 13 September 2024: | |
| Paper 1 – CEO Report | |
| At para 9 iii. Board session to be scheduled to allow members to reflect, consider and adopt the organisational values. | In hand |
| Update: CEO, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services, and Head of Organisational Development to discuss. | |
| Paper 2 – National Park Partnership Plan | |
| At para 13 i. Future report on carbon footprint to be circulated to the Board and published on the web ii. Future updates to include more detailed traffic light ratings to clearly show activities at risk of being delivered. | In hand |
| Update: | |



| | |
|---|---|
| Paper 3 – Seasonal Fire Management Byelaw | |
| At para 18 <ul style="list-style-type: none">i. CEO to look into the enforcement powers of NatureScot regarding muirburn and report these back to the Board. | Completed - will give update on 22 November |
| Update: 22 November 2024: The CEO updated the board - "The version of the muirburn code was introduced by section 14 of Wildlife Management and Muirburn (Scotland) Act 2024. The Muirburn Code will play a key role in the licencing of muirburn as set out in that act. Licensing conditions can be drawn from the code and a requirement that a licence holder must have regard to the code. Nonadherence to the requirements set out in the code can result in a licencing sanction. Further details for the sanction and triggers for sanction will be set out alongside the muirburn license guidance and applications which will happen in 2025 from NatureScot. An update of this will be shared with the Board when available." | |
| Paper 7 – Board Committee Minutes | |
| At para 38 <ul style="list-style-type: none">ii. Governance Committee to consider and decide whether Planning Committee minutes should be included in this paper going forward. | Completed |
| Update: Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services updated Convener and Deputy Convener that the Planning Committee minutes would not come to the Formal Board in the future as board members have already had sight of these following each Planning Committee meeting. | |

Declarations of interest

4. There were no declarations of interest.

CEO Report (Paper 1)

5. Grant Moir, CEO, introduced the paper which was to highlight to Board Members the main strategic areas of work that are being directed by the Management Team. These are areas where significant staff resources are being directed to deliver, with partners, the aspirations of the National Park Partnership Plan.



6. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A board member praised the work being carried out in active and sustainable transport in the Strathspey area and questioned what work was underway throughout the rest of the National Park. Head of Visitor Services noted there was a range of different projects underway in different areas of the park; cycle friendly, bus and cycle hubs and projects to get bikes on buses.
 - b) Discussions were had around the planning call-in protocol as a board member felt this has not been reviewed in a long time and could be improved. CEO noted officers would look into the protocol and take it to the Planning Committee.
 - c) A board member requested an update on Brand use at a future meeting. CEO agreed to this.
 - d) A question was raised regarding if the board will see the flood bank condition survey and if it is being discussed with farmers and landowners. CEO noted farmers and crofters are involved in the discussions and the final report of flood banks will be shared with the board when available.
 - e) A board member questioned if there was currently work being done on wildlife crime and if any hotspots are identified in the National Park, and if this can be shared with the Board. CEO commented that there are surveys being undertaken, which will provide some insight into issues around wildlife crime to give officers a better understanding of the areas of concern.
 - f) A question was raised if due to the current budget situation the Park Authority would be able to hire as many seasonal rangers next year. CEO noted this question would not be able to be answered until the budget has been released on 04 December.
 - g) A board member updated the board on the Nature and Climate Change Action Plan, noting there were meetings being held in the background and there would be a strategy meeting in early January. An update would be brought to the board later in January.
7. The Board Convener gave an update on a previous action from a Formal Board meeting regarding Capercaillie. Board Convener and CEO met with the Minister of Agriculture and Connectivity and discussed the Cairngorms National Park Authority Capercaillie emergency plan. They raised concerns expressed by some of the Park Authority Board about the impact of predation and the specific issues of pine martens, highlighting the inclusion of diversionary feeding as part of the plan following successful trials of this method. They also highlighted the request for work on the population survey of pine marten survey to be prioritised.



The minister agreed the five-year plan provided a robust way forward and should be given every opportunity to succeed. If any part of the predation work was found failing ministers would be open to further discussions towards the end of the plan about whether a different approach was needed in the future.

On the prioritisation of the pine marten survey, NatureScot put the commission out to tender earlier this year but failed to find a suitable contractor. They are now gathering further information to inform a revised methodology which will be re-tendered next year. Board Convener reassured members they are urging NatureScot to make progress with this piece of work.

8. The Board noted the Paper. The Convener thanked the CEO and all staff on behalf of the Board.
9. Action Points Arising:
 - i. Review the Planning call-in protocol and discuss at a future planning committee.
 - ii. Give an update on Brand use at a future meeting.

Wellbeing Economy Action Plan (Paper 2)

10. Gavin Miles, Director of Planning and Place introduced the paper which asks the Board to approve the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan as a working document for the Economic Steering Group and its partners. The draft plan proposes action on three priority areas for the economy in the National Park where focussed collaboration and coordination can better add value to other actions delivered by the Partnership Plan and Regional Economic Strategies.
11. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
 - a) A Board member highlighted that there was commitment from stakeholders to work together on this. Skills Development Scotland suggested looking to do a skills collaborative. It was also shared there was a meeting being held in August for youth related organisations coming together and the Economic Steering Group would help to coordinate and share updates with the Board. Scotland Rural College (SRUC) have offered to gather evidence and data to forecast the future.
 - b) Reassurance was sought regarding how to manage protections around smaller communities their cultural identities within the Park while maintaining the social



vibrancy. It was explained that the sustainable tourism action plan is promoted across the whole National Park and there was emphasis on winter campaigns and dark skies, encouraging tourism into different areas.

- c) Discussions were had around supporting and starting community groups, such as walking, cycling, running, cold water swimming and men's sheds and the benefits of these groups to communities. Director of Planning and place agreed and highlighted the green health prescriptions through C2030 will promote these community groups.
- d) Questions were raised regarding how the matrix of success was being measured. Director of Planning and Place commented that data from partners such as GrowBiz and other partners will help to create a database, and information gathered from SRUC with accurate data from HMRC will help to ensure that funds are being shared effectively between small businesses, communities and enterprises.
- e) Clarity was sought on the meaning of items five and six. Director of Planning and Place stated this was through Voluntary Action, Badenoch and Strathspey (VABS) have been leading on this and pulled community actions plans closer to bring in the local place planning. The Park Authority are treating this as statutory local place planning documents.
- f) Clarity was sought on where the funding comes from to support new community lead funding stream. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services noted funding was sourced from a range of grants from the Park Authority and Cairngorms Trust together with Scottish Government domestic funding which has replaced LEADER funding.
- g) Discussions were had around ensuring trades and apprenticeships are promoted and emphasised within the National Park as concerns raised related to the challenges faced with Green Port.
- h) A board member commented that they felt the Park Authority would need to manage their expectations, feeling a lot of this it out with the Park Authority's control as they need to rely on partners. Director of Planning and Place explained this document would focus partners' action: this working document would demonstrate the difference and make better use of the money available from different partners.

12. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendation to:

- a) Agree the Wellbeing Economy Action Plan as a working document for the Economic Steering Group.



13. Action Points Arising: None.

Local Development Plan – Development Plan Scheme 2024 (Paper 3)

14. Dan Harris, Planning Manager introduced the paper which presents the Development Plan Scheme (2024) for the next Local Development Plan (LDP). The Development Plan Scheme is an important communications tool. It is key to supporting deliverable and people-focussed plans by letting stakeholders know when and how they can get involved in the preparation of the next Local Development Plan and keeping them informed of progress. The Park Authority must publish and submit a Development Plan Scheme to Scottish Ministers each year.

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

- a) A board member referenced the youth engagement in Kingussie High School, asking if work is undergoing in other areas of the National Park. Planning Manager noted that there was also work underway with Grantown High School, Cairngorms Youth Action Team and the team have been exploring similar exercises in Blair Atholl and Aboyne. It was highlighted that there was progress being made with Edinburgh University, Highlife Highland and other youth groups to engage young people out with the school systems and gaining data from surveys. The report from Kingussie High School will be shared with the Board once available.
- b) Discussions were had around engagement with small business communities and acknowledging that not all businesses are part of the Cairngorm Business Partnership (CBP). Planning Manager commented that work is evidence based, and sufficiency of information is considered. The Economic Steering Group will carry out further surveys once reports on economic development are ready.
- c) It was highlighted by the Chair of the Economic Steering Group that the engagement would go to Federation of Small Businesses (FSB), Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and Growbiz.
- d) A board member raised a question about the capacity to introduce supplementary guidance. Planning Manager explained that the Park Authority has full supplementary and statutory guidance in the LDP. Questions were raised if there was an emergency, would the Park Authority be able to make amendments, it was noted that this would be possible however this would affect the next LDP and there is guidance in place to stop these situations occurring.
- e) Discussions were had around the process, noting that it is a difficult balance of cost effective and local development. Board members would like to see this



improved to include local character. Director of Planning and Place noted that the Board and Planning Committee will discuss this when preparing the next LDP.

16. The Board agreed to the recommendations to:

- a) Agree the updated Development Plan Scheme 2024

17. Action Points Arising:

- i. Share report from Kingussie High School.

Review of Board Standing Orders (Paper 4)

18. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which presents an update to the Park Authority's Standing Orders, which were last reviewed in 2019.

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

- a) The Board Convener and Deputy Convener highlighted concerns over point 53b in Annex 1, all board members agreed to remove point 53b. Board members agreed that decisions and discussions should be with the quorum number and not ratified by email or a future meeting, commenting that board members minds can be changed while taking part in a discussion. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services acknowledged this and agreed to amend.
- b) A board member noted at paragraph 32 in the paper it mentioned telephone link instead of video call. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services thanked the board member for noticing this and agreed to make the amendment for consistency. A discussion was then had relating to telephone link continuing to be an option in case of any IT issues, it was decided that video calls would be the preference for hybrid or online meetings, however in exceptional circumstances a board member can make arrangements with the Committee Chair or Board Convener if telephone link was the only option available to allow the member to attend the meeting.
- c) Members discussed paragraph 34 regarding processes for resolving decisions with multiple amendments and the original recommendation. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services appreciated different amendments can come from different points of view, while respecting the recommendation had also been developed from extensive work and taking advice in development of proposals. The board need to make a majority view and agree on a decision and the Standing Orders give a structured process of narrowing down a range of



amendments to allow for one amendment to be considered against the recommendation.

- d) Discussions were had around the pressure of securing a substitute within a seven-day period at short notice or late changes of meeting times. Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services noted that sufficient notice should be provided to members to ensure they can make scheduling arrangements or arrange for substitutes if required. If they are unable to secure a substitute, then apologies will be noted.
- e) Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services explained that the seven-day substitute notice period was for Board Members to have sufficient time to review the papers and come back to officers with questions or clarification if required, particularly where they may not have been engaged in the detail of business prior to the meeting in question. It was agreed to remain as it is and review again in six months.

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

- a) Consider proposed changes to the Park Authority board's Standing Orders
- b) Agree standing orders.

21. Action Points Arising:

- i. Remove point 53b in annex 1
- ii. Add in the additional wording to allow flexibility to allow phone calls if this is the only possibility.
- iii. At paragraph 32 amend telephone link to video call to for continuity in the paper.

Active Cairngorms and end of season visitor report (Paper 5)

22. Colin Simpson, Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel introduced the paper which complements the Sustainable Tourism and Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plans, which collectively describe the Park Authority and partners' work in relation to the tourism industry and the management of visitor impacts on the Park. This report is intended to give Board members oversight of progress towards the plan's objectives while also providing an overview of visitor related activity over the preceding summer season.

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



- a) A board member noted the good progress being made and suggested for future reports it would be useful to learn about the key challenges and any mitigation efforts and learning. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel agreed to do this in the future.
- b) Discussions were had around enforcing a no bin policy due to an increase in fly tipping and rubbish being left at sites, encouraging visitors to take rubbish home. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel noted Rangers have experienced people behaving responsibly with their rubbish and unsure if no bin policy would encourage more rubbish being left behind. It was also mentioned there was less fly tipping and abandoned camping equipment than previous years.
- c) A board member questioned if there had been records of more motor homes in the National Park, if there was statistics or information on the reduced space in camp sites, and if tourists are going towards luxury end of the camping market. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel explained there are a number of camp sites where pitches have been reduced and peak times are full, but noted this is something that can be looked into to identify trends or useful information from this.
- d) A board member noted that the water access guidance does not include access points to the Spey. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel explained the finalised report following a meeting on this matter had just been completed and this would be shared with the board members.
- e) Discussions were had around the possibility of a visitor app and if there would be problems around having one of these for the Cairngorms National Park. Head of Visitor Services and Active Travel explained there is a lot of work to be undertaken to confirm the purpose and function of the app. Head of Communications noted that there is to be one app rolled out across the two National Parks in Scotland hence there is more of a delay on this.

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

- a) Note the progress towards delivery of the objectives contained within the Active Cairngorms Action Plan.
- b) Note the report on the visitor focussed activities of the Park Authority and partner ranger services during the 2024 summer season.

25. Action Points Arising:

- i. Include key challenges in mitigation and learning in future papers.
- ii. Statistics on camp site and luxury camping options within the National Park.
- iii. Share finalised report on water access guidance.



Corporate Plan Delivery Update (Paper 6)

26. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which draws the performance report for 2023 / 24 against our corporate plan objectives specifically to the board's attention. This takes a more focused look at the Park Authority's delivery toward agreed strategic objectives in the context of the wider update on Cairngorms National Park Partnership Plan delivery considered by the board at its previous meeting. The paper also presents the Park Authority's draft annual report and accounts to the board, following the approval of this document by the Board's Audit and Risk Committee.
27. The Board considered the detail in the Paper and discussions took place around the following:
- a) The board convener noted the formidable achievement by the Park Authority for those who live and work in the National Park as well as those who visit the area, noting the major achievement for nature and for delivery against the wide range of objectives the Park Authority are working to meet. The Convener also highlighted the record-breaking year for income despite the challenges currently being faced.
 - b) A board member questioned if the amber indicators related to housing should now be red. Director of Planning and Place explained that this was a finely balanced matter. At the time the paper was written amber was the right decision, however they could also now be at a red rating.
28. The Board noted the paper and agreed to the recommendations to:
- a) To note the draft annual accounts for 2023 / 24
 - b) To note the status of delivery toward Corporate Plan objectives as set out in the Annual Report
 - c) To consider any actions needed to address delivery of those Corporate Plan objectives highlighted as at increased delivery risk.
29. Action Points Arising: None.

Audit and Risk Committee annual report (Paper 7)

30. David Cameron, Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services introduced the paper which presents the Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee to the Board.



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

- a) Audit and Risk Committee Chair thanked the internal and external auditors for their professionalism, being highly supportive and a pleasure to work with. Thanks, were also given to Deputy CEO and Director of Corporate Services and Head of Finance and Corporate Operations and the team for the exceptional results in difficult circumstances and ongoing changes. Further thanks were given to the Deputy Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee as well as all committee members for their support and efforts.

32. The Board agreed to the recommendations and noted the paper.

33. Action Points Arising: None.

Minutes from Committee Meetings (Paper 8)

34. Sandy Bremner, Board Convener introduced the paper that presents the approved minutes and confidential minutes of the Performance Committee, 14 June, Audit and Risk Committee, 21 June and Resources Committee, 09 August

35. The Board agreed to the recommendations and noted the paper.

36. Action Points Arising: None

AOCB

37. None

Date of Next Meeting

38. The date of the next meeting is 14 February 2025.

39. The meeting concluded at 12.01pm