

National Park Authority Board Meeting



Minutes of Meeting held at 2.00pm on 9 December 2013
John Muir Suite, Carrochan, Balloch, G83 8EG

Present: Linda McKay (Convener) Colin Bayes
Owen McKee (Depute Convener) Fergus Wood
David McKenzie William Nisbet
Angus Allan David Warnock
Lindsay Morrison George Freeman
James Robb Kate Sankey
Petra Biberbach David McCowan
Martin Earl

In Attendance: Gordon Watson Jaki Carnegie
Bridget Jones Tony McInnes
Iain Nicolson Scott Nisbet
Peter Stevenson

Apologies: Bob Ellis
Hazel Sorrell
Fiona Logan

Item	Title / Discussion	Action by
1	<p>Welcome and Apologies</p> <p>The Convener opened the meeting and welcomed all those present. Apologies were received from Board Members Bob Ellis and Hazel Sorrell. The Convener also noted apologies from Fiona Logan, Chief Executive Officer, due to illness. The Board wished Fiona Logan a speedy recovery. The Convener noted that Gordon Watson would perform the role of Depute Chief Executive Officer in Fiona Logan's absence.</p>	
2	<p>Declarations of Interest</p> <p>William Nisbet suggested a possible interest under item 10, specifically paragraph 3.3.1 relating to RSPB Loch Lomond. He outlined an interest based on the proximity of his land to the Estate. It was agreed that this was not relevant and would not preclude him from discussion of the agenda item.</p> <p>The Convener noted that the agenda had been re-ordered prior to the meeting, and that new agenda item 10 – Commercialisation – was to be discussed in closed session. She suggested that this item be discussed at the end of the public part of the meeting.</p> <p>Jaki Carnegie confirmed that the Board were entitled, via the provisions of the Local Government (Scotland) Act 1973, to exclude members of the public from any discussion which would result in the release to the public of 'exempt information'. She clarified that the content of agenda item 10 would be considered to be 'exempt information'.</p>	

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	<p>On this basis, the Board agreed to exclude the public from the meeting for the duration of all discussion of agenda item 10 – Commercialisation, on the basis that information relating to the financial or business affairs of third parties would be disclosed. It was further agreed that this item of business would be considered as the last item of business.</p>	
3	<p>Minutes of Meeting held on 9th September 2013</p> <p>Fergus Wood proposed and Lindsay Morrison seconded the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting.</p>	
4	<p>Minutes of Meeting held on 28th October 2013</p> <p>David McKenzie confirmed that the Planning & Access Committee had been asked by officers to recommend changes to the Committee's Standing Orders for the NPA Board to then make a final decision. He also clarified that the Convener had allowed the opposing view to be heard and paper circulated for the meeting.</p> <p>George Freeman proposed and Petra Biberbach seconded the minutes as an accurate record of the meeting, subject to the foregoing amendments.</p> <p>ACTION: Peter Stevenson to update and finalise minutes of 28th October 2013 meeting.</p>	Peter Stevenson
5	<p>Matters arising</p> <p>Jaki Carnegie introduced the report, noting that the bulk of matters arising had been closed in the period since the last meeting. She clarified that the one outstanding action would be taken forward by Gordon Watson.</p> <p>Kate Sankey noted that she had requested an update on the cross-boundary benefits of a National Park Local Area Group under LEADER. Gordon Watson clarified that this would not be taken forward as the decision by the Board in June 2013 had been to negotiate an acceptable proposal within the existing LAG system, and that progress had now been made in this area. The Convener noted that officers were working to the initial decision of the Board.</p> <p>Iain Nicolson confirmed that the Heads of Planning Scotland Network had been consulted on LRB procedures adopted in other planning authorities. He noted that there were a variety of approaches, but that only two authorities contract out for support. He undertook to put the survey responses on the Board Microsite.</p>	

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	<p>ACTION: Iain Nicolson to arrange for the LRB survey responses to be placed on the Board Microsite.</p> <p>DECISION: Members noted the report.</p>	Iain Nicolson
6	<p>Calendar of 2014 Board Meetings</p> <p>Jaki Carnegie introduced the report, confirming that the proposed calendar of events took into account the requirements of the organisation's standing orders and followed the 2013 schedule in terms of pattern of time of year for meetings. She noted that the first quarter of 2014 would be busy with two additional meetings beyond the normal commitment. She confirmed that Members were being asked to approve the calendar for 2014.</p> <p>Owen McKee asked that Planning Committee meetings be added for 28th April and 28th July.</p> <p>ACTION: Peter Stevenson to add Planning Committee meetings for 28th April and 28th July to the schedule.</p> <p>DECISION: Subject to the foregoing additions, Members approved the 2014 calendar of Board and Committee events.</p>	Peter Stevenson
7	<p>Convener Election and Board Appointments 2014</p> <p>Jaki Carnegie introduced the report, noting that in 2014 there would be a Convener election, election of local Members, and review of the terms of ministerial appointments. These various processes could, theoretically, result in a maximum 11 changes within the Board Membership. She outlined the process of convener elections and key dates, noting that nominations should be received by 24th January 2014. She clarified that in the event of multiple nominations, Members would be asked to vote by secret ballot.</p> <p>Jaki Carnegie highlighted that early and very positive discussions had taken place with Stirling Council about the election of local Members. It was noted that the Chief Executive of Stirling Council was obliged by statute to act as the returning Officer on behalf of the NPA.</p> <p>Jaki Carnegie noted that the appointment of the ministerially-appointed Board Members would come up for renewal on 30th September 2014, with the exception of Kate Sankey who had exceeded the 8 year limit on Board Membership recently introduced by Scottish Government. She clarified that this eight year limit only applied to ministerial appointees. It was open to all other five Ministerial appointment members to apply for extensions to their term of office.</p>	

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	<p>Linda McKay confirmed her intention to stand again for election as Convener.</p> <p>Members noted the potential turnover in Board Membership and suggested lack of continuity may be an issue if significant numbers of Members were to leave. It was confirmed that Member turnover had been highlighted on the Authority's risk register.</p> <p>Members asked how more candidates for Board Membership could be attracted. Jaki Carnegie confirmed that a project plan was being put in place, and that the Scottish Government public bodies unit could be used to advertise the Board Member role. Members suggested that the Authority's own website should also be used to advertise the role.</p> <p>Members queried whether ministerial appointees would automatically be re-appointed if they expressed an interest. Peter Stevenson clarified that Scottish Government had advised that any process of re-appointment was less onerous than the initial appointment process.</p> <p>Members requested clarification on the cost of the local elections. Gordon Watson confirmed that this cost had to be budgeted for and Stirling Council's recharge would encompass staff time, postage costs and other elements.</p> <p>Members enquired whether electronic returns could be used to reduce cost. Officers confirmed that the vote would be counted electronically but that it would be a postal ballot as per the Election Order.</p> <p>Members noted that a joint training session had been proposed with the Board of Cairngorms National Park Authority, and that Members had not considered this a priority. Members also suggested that any training should take place later in the year, once new Board Members were known</p> <p>ACTION: Member training to take place after September 2014.</p> <p>DECISION: Members noted the contents of the report.</p>	<p>Jaki Carnegie</p>
8.	<p>Managing Visitors and Recreational Pressures</p> <p>Gordon Watson introduced the report, noting that visitor management was central to the delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan vision on Visitor Experience. A report on the operation of the East Loch Lomond Camping Byelaw will be prepared by March 2014.</p> <p>He confirmed that the existing operating Ironworks partnership with Police Scotland functioned well across the Park however this was effective in</p>	

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	<p>responding to anti-social events rather than preventing them. He highlighted that the report proposes looking at pressured visitor sites in the National Park as a whole, and presenting options for managing local issues drawing from a core set of principles and tools. He clarified that a paper would be brought to the March 2014 Board Meeting containing a set of potential options, and noted that the Authority would consult informally on the range of available options during summer 2014.</p> <p>In discussion the following points were raised;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The need for a clear communication plan supported by a strong evidence base • Clarity of how any options relate to the NPA's plans for infrastructure investment • The importance of securing the co-operation of landowners in affected areas <p>The Convener queried the likely timescale of further Board consultation and wider public consultation. Gordon Watson clarified that proposals would be brought back to the Board in March 2014; however a period of lead-in time would be required prior to public consultation to discuss issues with stakeholders.</p> <p>DECISION: Members agreed to the preparation of and consultation on a suite of National Park-wide visitor management proposals as a single process during 2014. Members also agreed the programme for consultation during 2014 as set out in paragraph 9 of the report.</p>	
9.	<p>LEADER</p> <p>Gordon Watson introduced the report and noted that officers had been working towards the agreement reached at the Board Meeting in June 2013. He confirmed that agreement had been reached that both existing Local Area Groups (LAGs) will create a National Park sub-LAG, and include National Park Strategic Priorities in their LAG Strategies. He confirmed agreement that both LAGs would establish a joint-administration for applications within the National Park area.</p> <p>He advised Members that the Convener had written to both LAG Chairs, and that responses had been received from both supporting the proposal. He sought confirmation that, having secured this support, the NPA could now proceed to formally withdraw its Expression of Interest to form a new Park area LAG.</p> <p>In response to questions Gordon Watson clarified that;</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • While the sub-LAG would consider Park area applications, the expectation would be that decisions would have to be ratified by the main LAGs, however that this should not be a re-consideration of an application. • The joint administration for Park area applications should mean that the front-end would be a single process for applicants, but the detail of how the administration would work was yet to be agreed. • All efforts would be made to ensure new processes did not delay the processing of applications and that ultimately it was the role of LAG members or sub-LAG members to ensure good processes. • There was no scope for a trial period and that in agreeing to the proposal, this would set the process of LEADER programmes in the Park area for the next 6 years. The Scottish Government indicated that they were comfortable with the proposals. • Work was ongoing to develop strategies and the Scottish Government was ultimately responsible for approving LAG Local Development Strategies and Business Plans which should reflect all stakeholder interests in the Park area. • It was noted that Argyll & Bute Council had set up a procedure for providing bridging finance for applicant communities to allow projects to proceed. <p>Fergus Wood left the meeting.</p> <p>Kate Sankey requested that the NPA did not withdraw its Expression of Interest until a letter of reassurance was received from the Scottish Government that the proposal for the joint administration of LEADER in the Park area would be supported.</p> <p>DECISION: Members:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) Approved the proposal for joint working arrangements for LEADER in the National Park area set out in Appendix 1 of the report; (b) Authorised officers to work jointly with LAG partners to put these arrangements in place; (c) Agreed to withdraw the Expression of Interest for the National Park area to be a LEADER LAG subject to the receipt of a satisfactory letter of reassurance from the Scottish Government. 	
10	<p>Conservation Update</p> <p>Scott Nisbet introduced the report. He highlighted specifically:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraph 3.1.2 – input from SNH on the Peatland project had been well received. He commented that the project was unusual insofar as it 	

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	<p>focussed on the involvement of private landowners. He confirmed that the Authority was considering a two-year project officer post fully funded by SNH.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paragraph 3.4.1 – the Wild Park 2020 document was out for consultation and over 100 individual comments had been received. He noted that responses had been received from all key partners. He confirmed that the document would be brought back to the Board in March 2014. • Paragraph 3.3.1 – the goat cull at Wards Estate by RSPB had raised a great deal of public concern. He clarified that the cull was limited, and that the impact of herbivores on a Site of Special Scientific Interest meant that a cull was necessary. <p>Members queried whether, under paragraph 3.5.1, the National Park Authority was now considered a flood authority. Gordon Watson clarified that this step was taken to highlight the Authority’s supporting role as planning authority; however this did not mean that we are also a flood authority.</p> <p>Members queried whether the temporary quay being constructed at Taret could potentially be permanent. Gordon Watson noted that the Authority’s position had been for the quay to be temporary, however that the scale of future works to the A82 was significant and a longer-term option of a permanent facility might be considered.</p> <p>Members asked for an update on the Countryside Trust. Lindsay Morrison suggested that this be provided at the next Board Meeting.</p> <p>ACTION: Countryside Trust update to be included on agenda for next Board Meeting.</p> <p>Members asked whether officers were content with the Wild Park 2020 process. Scott Nisbet confirmed that officers were content with the level of input received.</p> <p>DECISION: Members noted the report.</p>	<p>Peter Stevenson</p>
11	<p>Visitor Experience Update</p> <p>The Convener introduced Tony McInnes, acting Head of Visitor Experience.</p> <p>Bridget Jones introduced the Visitor Management element of the report, noting several key areas:-</p>	

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The two Loch Lubnaig sites had opened on the 23rd November, with full operation of all visitor facilities commencing in April 2014. • A proposal was about to be submitted to Transport Scotland in relation to clearway designations within the 5 Lochs area. • Tarken Bridge had connected the Lochearnhead and St. Fillans communities. • A formal Notice had been served on a landowner under s14 of the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, which was being appealed to the Sheriff Court. • An event had taken place at Dounans Centre on educational exchange. • Volunteer Rangers had been recruited, and the Authority had developed a waiting list for candidates unsuccessful in the initial process. <p>Members queried whether the effort of Volunteer Rangers would be formally recognised. Bridget Jones confirmed that this was under consideration.</p> <p>Owen McKee highlighted that the St. Fillans community had thanked staff member John Forth for his assistance in developing the Tarken Bridge project.</p> <p>Tony McInnes introduced the Visitor Experience element of the report, noting several key areas:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Revised locations for Killin and Gartmore threshold signage had been agreed and the signage would be in place for the 2014 visitor season. • A head lease had been negotiated for the Gateway Centre, Balloch. A Bird of Prey centre had opened near the Gateway Centre in November 2013. A proposal was being considered for a ropes course using the trees on site. • Tender returns had been received for the construction of a pontoon adjacent to the Gateway Centre, with 50% of construction costs being met by Scottish Enterprise. • A varied events programme would take place in 2014, including the John Muir Conference, Great Scottish Swim, Artist in Residence, and construction of a Tom Weir Memorial Statue. • Local firm Rabbie's Travel had held a tourism event at Carrochan, which had received good feedback. <p>Members queried which individuals sat on the Authority's Events Steering Group. Gordon Watson clarified that this was an internal staff group.</p> <p>Members asked for more information on the John Muir Festival. Gordon Watson indicated that this would tie in with the opening of the John Muir</p>	

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	<p>Way, as would the Artist in Residence and Island Drift projects.</p> <p>Members queried the likely timing of the 2014 Great Scottish Swim. Gordon Watson clarified that it would be timed around the English August bank holiday to maximise the potential audiences coming to the National Park area from other parts of the UK.</p> <p>Members asked if formal contact had been made with the Commonwealth Games 2014 Committee. Tony McInnes confirmed they had been approached however there was nothing to report. Members asked that locally-elected and local authority appointee Members are advised of ongoing dialogues with communities in relation to events. Members asked that officers ensure Members are specifically invited to events within their Ward. The Board Microsite would also be better used to keep Members informed.</p> <p>ACTION: Officers to ensure that Members kept apprised of events within their Wards / Council Areas, and communications with communities in relation to events within their Wards / Council Areas.</p> <p>Members asked how the Island Drift project had been funded. Gordon Watson advised that the project had not taken place yet, and that it would be a scaled-down piece using the Speed of Light equipment used at Arthur's Seat in Edinburgh during 2012. He noted that an exhibition would be held in 2014, with the possibility of re-opening Balloch Castle as exhibition space.</p> <p>Members welcomed the comprehensive report on the End of Season. They advised that the local communities appreciated the level of action on the ground. Bridget Jones clarified that a report was expected imminently on Operation Ironworks, and that this would be uploaded to the Board Microsite.</p> <p>ACTION: Bridget Jones to arrange for Operation Ironworks report to be uploaded to the Board Microsite.</p> <p>DECISION: Members noted the report.</p>	<p>Officers</p> <p>Bridget Jones</p>
12	<p>Rural Development Update</p> <p>Iain Nicolson introduced the report. He confirmed that excellent feedback from Scottish Government had been received on the annual performance report. He noted specifically a dip in performance relating to the conclusion of section 75 legal agreements, however that this arose from a high number of complex cases being handled. He highlighted the current high volume of</p>	

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	<p>workload in respect of hydro schemes, noting that 15 hydro schemes were currently under consideration, and that prior to the current period the Authority had only handled 15 schemes since 2006.</p> <p>He noted that a Scottish Quality in Planning Award had been won for the Authority's Sustainable Design SPG, and other awards had been won by the Community Development team.</p> <p>He clarified that the Local Development Plan Main Issues Report would be submitted to the Board Meeting in March 2014.</p> <p>Members queried how many Charettes would take place in 2014. Iain Nicolson noted that the Blairmore Charette was being developed, however the focus for 2014 was on the Main Issues Report.</p> <p>Members queried whether economies of scale could be found in the process of auditing Community Funds.</p> <p>Members asked for an update on the goldmine at Cononish Farm near Tyndrum. Gordon Watson clarified that there was no specific start date and that there was a constant dialogue with the applicants.</p> <p>Members agreed to receive an update at a future meeting of the Board.</p> <p>David McKenzie left the meeting.</p>	
13	<p>Planning & Access Committee Update</p> <p>Owen McKee, Chair of the Planning & Access Committee, highlighted that twice recently he had had feedback regarding the high quality of service provided by the Authority's Planning Department, and ensuring that an appropriate design standard was achieved.</p> <p>David Warnock indicated that the Local Access Forum would be looking for new members following its last meeting.</p>	
14	<p>Audit Committee Update</p> <p>Lindsay Morrison, Chair of the Audit Committee, gave a brief verbal update on the recent Audit Committee meetings and reported that recent internal audits had resulted in minimal recommendations. He also confirmed that feedback had been provided to KPMG regarding their performance.</p>	
15	<p>Delivery Group Update</p>	

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	<p>Colin Bayes, Chair of the Delivery Group, commented that the November meeting had had a full agenda. He confirmed that the Delivery Group had gone through recent updates to the Business Plan in detail. He advised that the Corporate Plan was largely on track. He advised that almost all Members had logged into the Board Microsite. He acknowledged that the Delivery Group had received reports clarifying the circumstances that had delayed completion of the Loch Lubnaig and impacted on costs. A post-project appraisal would be submitted to the Delivery Group for review.</p> <p>Petra Biberbach left the meeting.</p>	
16	<p>AOB</p> <p>No other business was raised.</p>	
17	<p>Date of Next Meeting</p> <p>17th February 2014</p>	

Signed _____

Linda McKay
Convener