

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 12a



John Muir Conference

John Muir Conference Summary

The John Muir Conference was held on 12 and 13th May at Perth Concert Hall. This was a key project with partners to celebrate the legacy of John Muir by considering the management of protected areas in the 21st century. There was a stunning line up of speakers who challenged current and future management of protected areas and how to safeguard for future generations. The conference began with a day of study tours to some of the country's finest and most sensitive landscapes. These included visits to Loch Lomond to consider the pressures of high visitor numbers; Glen Feshie to hear about the re-wilding of the area; Blair Atholl to look at estate management and Glen Falloch to see hydro-electric schemes in action.

The second day opened with a keynote speech from Paul Wheelhouse, Minister for Environment and Climate Change. William Tweed, former chief naturalist for the US National Park Service and Nigel Dudley from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature gave an international perspective while George Monbiot, writer and environmental campaigner, challenged established notions of how we manage protected areas in the UK. Jason Leitch and Louise Macdonald particularly challenged traditional views and posed questions about the value of protected areas for health and wellbeing and how to make them relevant to everyone. Mike Cantlay gave his personal perspective of the role of tourism in protected areas. The stimulating debate that followed engaged the audience of 260 delegates, who attended from across the UK and beyond. All delegates left with much to consider. The conference was a huge success, with feedback from attendees that it set a new standard for quality of speakers, raising the level of debate UK wide about the management of protected places and attracting significant media coverage.

Conference Steering Group: The conference was proposed by LLTNP as imaginative way to celebrate the legacy of John Muir and timely to explore the innovative management of Parks with Scotland two National Parks now established for 10 years. It was funded and co-ordinated by a steering group made up of LLTNPA, Cairngorms National Park, SNH, National trust for Scotland and the John Muir Trust with event funding from Homecoming Scotland. A professional conference organiser, Stark Events was engaged by the steering group to deliver the conference with content being agreed across the steering group members.

The contributions were as follows:

LLTNPA	£12,000
CNPA	£12,000
SNH	£12,000
JMT	£6,000
NTS	£6,000
Homecoming Scotland	£34,000

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 12a



John Muir Conference

Origination: The concept, proposed by the National Park in the run up to John Muir's anniversary, was to bring together respected experts in the fields of conservation, visitor management and rural and economic development to examine John Muir's legacy in the light of our 21st century society, asking if his philosophies and principles are fit for the modern day. In early 2013 our application to Event Scotland for support was successful and partner organisations agreed to join the steering group. Given the inclusion of John Muir Trust and the National Trust for Scotland as conference funders and contributors, the scope of the conference was widened to include protected areas as well as National Parks as the focus for the speakers and the study tours. It was also felt by the steering group that this would widen the potential audience for the conference.

Venue: the venue was chosen chiefly as it is central enough to allow easy access to both National Parks. The first day of the conference involved study tours to various locations that delegates had the chance to see first-hand projects in action. Each partner was keen to host at least one study tour so these were quite wide spread, but all within reach of Perth.

Audience: the conference attracted 260 delegates from the land management, visitor management and tourism development sectors from a UK wide and beyond audience. The steering group worked very positively with National Parks UK who held their own meeting in Perth on the day after the conference and offered an all in package for both.

Media Coverage

There was impressive media coverage of the conference on radio, tv and social media. Including:

TV - STV News

Radio- BBC Good Morning Scotland

BBC Scotland Newsdrive

BBC Scotland Out of Doors

BBC Radio 4 Shared Planet

Newspaper - Strathspey and Badenoch Herald

Online- BBC online

Twitter - On the day of conference 122 tweets and retweets reaching over 20,000 followers