



Draft minutes of meeting held on 11 September 2023

Agenda Item 3

National Park Authority Board Meeting 11 December 2023

Paper for approval

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Present

Heather Reid (Convenor) (HR)
Martin Earl (Depute Convner) (ME)
Sarah Drummond (SD)
David Fettes (DF)
Christopher Spray (CS)
Maurice Corry (MC) – from Agenda Item 6
William Sinclair (WS)
Gerry McGarvey (GM)
Claire Chapman (CC)
Rhona Brock (RB)
Sid Perrie (SP)
David Mackie (DM)
Zain Sehgal (ZS)
Hazel Sorrell (HZ)

Apologies

Ronnie Erskine
Iain Shonny Patterson
Richard Johnson

In Attendance - National Park Authority Staff

Gordon Watson (GW), Chief Executive Officer

Stuart Mearns (SM), Director of Place

Simon Jones (SJ), Director of Environment and Visitor Services

Dougie Smith (DS), Corporate Performance Manager & Proper Officer

Samantha Stubbs (SS), Head of People and Assets

Kenny Auld (KA), Head of Visitor Services

Susan Brooks, Communities and Place Planning Manager

Laura Mowat, Place Planner

Jane Kemp (JK) Head of Governance and Performance

Ayeasha Temple (AT) Minute taker

Items and Actions**Item 1: Welcome and Apologies**

The Convenor opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees to Kinlochard Village Hall.

HR advised that due to cyber security concerns and technological constraints, this meeting in the community would not be able to be livestreamed on our website, but that it remained physically publicly accessible.

HR reminded all Members to speak clearly into the microphones provided and not to speak over each other.

HR welcomed Cate Turton, Nature Division Depute Director, Scottish Government. Ms Turton is participating in the Board strategy day on Tuesday 12th September and attended this meeting in an observational capacity.

HR asked the Members and National Park representatives participating in this meeting to introduce themselves.

Apologies were received from Ronnie Erskine, Iain Shonny Paterson and Richard Johnson.

HR restated the Board's commitment to ethical standards in public life and highlighted Members' responsibilities under the Code of Conduct and the Convenor's role in upholding those responsibilities.

Item 2: Declarations of Interest

HR congratulated CS on being appointed to the Board of Environmental Standards Scotland and advised that this has been added to his register of interests.

No declarations of Interest were received.

Items and Actions

Item 3: Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 12 June 2023

An adjustment to the record of the Convenors report was raised by HR: to reflect that the programme of Board appraisals is ongoing as planned.

The minutes were proposed by DM and seconded by WS. The minutes were approved by Members present.

DECISION: The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 12 June 2023 were approved by majority vote with the adjustment above.

Item 4: Matters Arising

DS introduced matters arising

- DS gave an update on item 8 - *Board Members to be included in staff weekly updates on NPPP*: due to staffing changes within the Communications department, the weekly updates were not issued as planned. There was regular communication on progress to staff, and this was received by Members through the Board Bulletin and the bespoke briefing email prepared for Members on the NPPP.

No further comments were received.

DECISION: Members agreed to **note** the report.

Item 5: 2022/23 Annual Report and Accounts

The paper was introduced by GW and JK.

HR noted thanks from the Board to JK and her team for their work in getting the report and accounts complete.

HR advised that the paper presents the draft Annual Report and Accounts (Appendix 1). The paper also highlights the governance responsibilities of the Board, Audit & Risk Committee and Chief Executive (section 5) and the process to finalise the Annual Report and Accounts (section 7) for signing and then laying before Parliament.

GW and JK presented the key points from Annual Report and Accounts, discussion and questions from Members followed.

The key points highlighted were:

Items and Actions

- Receipt of assurances from the appointed auditor of Strathclyde Pension Fund and final engagement leader review and associated quality and compliance checks
- Review of the letter of representation by External Audit
- Final review of the Annual Report and Accounts for cross-referencing, casting, formatting and page references.
- Changes to be made to the report after the A&R Committee meeting, including wording used on pg 85 around income and expenditure, and a note of approval on the recent changes to the Byelaws, this will be reviewed and ready to send to the Scottish Government by the end of October.

The key areas of discussion and feedback from the Members were:

- Noting the award won by Bracklinn Bridge
- Clarification that payments to/from related parties in note 17 are between the Authority and related party not the Board Member

ACTION - JK to follow up with ME on the Affordable Housing section for Stirling Council and copy in the A&R committee.

HR asked each member in turn to confirm their vote for the motion.

12 members voted to affirm the motion. SP requested his dissent from the motion be noted.

SP raised the absence of a Place Plan and a Strategic Tourism Design Initiative Study for Balloch as the reason for his dissent.

GW confirmed that the creation of Place Plans is community-led and that the National Park Authority offer assistance in their creation when it is sought and will do so for Balloch if support is requested. GW reiterated that the park-wide Strategic Tourism Design Initiative will include Balloch.

DECISION: Members agreed, by majority decision, to:

- **Note** the draft Annual Report and Accounts for 2022/23 (subject to finalisation of external audit procedures and consideration by Audit & Risk Committee)

Items and Actions

- **Consider and reaffirm** the Audit & Risk Committee recommendation (at the meeting on 5th September 2023) that the Annual Report and Accounts are signed by the Chief Executive following External Audit clearance and resolution of outstanding matters. Members will be advised upon completion of the audit and receipt of the external audit report. Any significant changes would be highlighted to Members.

Item 6: National Park Partnership Plan Consultation Update

HR welcomed MC to the meeting.

HR advised that a separate Consultation Update Report has been prepared and provides details on the engagement activities undertaken and a summary of the consultation responses received to the Draft Plan and in relation to people's views and experiences of the National Park. HR stated that this is appended to the report alongside an additional report which contains verbatim copies of all the comments received (with individual respondent details anonymised). The verbatim responses report is lengthy and is therefore best viewed online.

The paper was introduced by GW and SB.

Robust discussion and extensive questions followed from members. The key areas of discussion from Members on the engagement and consultation approach were:

- The importance of accessible language in our consultation processes
- The methods used to engage with communities and stakeholders, and the responses received and importance of a balance between online and more traditional channels.
- Ongoing engagement with the stakeholders who participated in this process of consultation – and those that did not, including the specific example of Health Boards.
- The concept and importance of co-design and co-production.
- The prospect of locally elected Members being involved before consultation processes launch to help ensure as wide a reach as practicable and agree what role they can play.

Items and Actions

The key areas of discussion from Members on the initial findings of the consultation response were:

- Residual lack of clarity over what the enabling a greener economy and sustainable living stream means in practice
- Need to address perceived lack of attention to Visitor Management and highlight how actions for Climate and Nature also achieve Visitor Management outcomes.
- The potential of using 'day in life' approach to explain key terms and concepts

ACTION: SD offered to provide an online training session for interested Members on co-design and co-production

ACTION: SB to provide list of locations where physical material relating to the Draft NPPP was distributed for DF

ACTION: SP to respond to AM email requesting information regarding community engagement opportunities

ACTION: Locally elected members to be invited to discuss with staff engagement opportunities for the upcoming Local Development Plan

DECISION: All Members agreed to:

- **Note** this report
- **Note the publication of Appendix One to this Report - Draft National Park Partnership Plan: Consultation Update Report** subject to making design improvements and editorial amendments prior to formal publication on our website.

Item 7: Sustainable Transport Update

KA provided an update of progress on the emerging sustainable travel work which has developed in recent years. Topics discussed included:

- Sustainable Travel Programme
- Futures Group role and legacy
- Sustainable Travel Options Appraisal & Modal Shift Report
- Shuttle Bus Pilot Initiatives

Items and Actions

- National Park Journey Planning App
- Data gathering
- Partnership, Governance and Resourcing

The key areas of discussion from members were:

- Leadership role of National Park Authority but dependency on partners such as Local Authorities to take forward
- The complexity of running a bus service was noted and it was highlighted that this means community led services cannot be seen to be the main answer
- The need to look beyond the economic benefits of sustainable transport and see the wider accessibility and wellbeing benefits
- The need for pilots to be reliable if they are to be a tool to assess and drive behaviour change

ACTION: KA/SD to circulate the Futures Group statement of intent on sustainable travel to all Members.

DECISION: Members agreed to

- **Note** the contents of this report for information

Item 8: CEO Report

GW introduced the paper and the following topics

- Consultation On Biodiversity Framework And Natural Environment Bill (including The Future for National Parks in Scotland)
- Visit by Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Biodiversity, Green Skills and Circular Economy
- The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill
- Loch Lomond Navigation Byelaw Review
- Four Local Place Plans Registered at Callander, Drymen, Luss & Arden and Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui

Decision: Members agreed to

Items and Actions

- **Note** the contents of the report for information.

Item 9: Convenor Report

Verbal update presented by HR. Topics of discussion included:

- Interviews held on the 29 August for the current vacancy on the Board, confirmed appointment will be known by November.
- GM stepping down as Stirling representative, new nomination is with Lorna Slater
- HR thanked the NP Board for the recent engagement opportunities
- Cairngorms NP Board has appointed a new Convener
- HR will be attending the NP Chairs forum 2-day visit in the Lake District and will feedback at the December meeting.

DECISION: Members agreed to **note** the update provided by the Convenor.

Item 10: Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report

The paper was presented by DM. The following topics were covered:

- Corporate Risk management
- Risk Management Framework.
- Governance Statement
- Policy updates
- Best Value.
- Statements of Assurance
- Register of Interests.
- Internal and external Audit

DM stated that The Audit & Risk Committee considers that it has been successful in progressing the Board's governance and internal control priorities during the period covered by this annual report.

The Committee welcomes the success in finalising the annual accounts and completing the external audit process this year. The Committee recognised that the process has been effective. The Committee would like to take this

Items and Actions

opportunity to register its thanks to both the Authority Finance team and the Mazars LLP team

DECISION: After a vote all Members agreed to

- **Approve** the contents of the report.

Item 11: 2023/24 Annual Operational Plan Progress Report

The paper was introduced by DS, he reported that most deliverables are on track, with one marked as complete, six currently behind schedule and one deliverable is categorised as 'At Risk'.

A discrepancy in the number of Future Nature deliverables marked as 'behind schedule' was highlighted for adjustment from two to one.

DECISION: Members agreed to note the report.

Item 12: Finance Update

JK presented the financial update and management accounts as at the end of the first quarter (30 June 2023).

DECISION: Members agreed to:

- **Noted** the contents of the report.

Item 13: Committee and Group Highlights

Verbal updates were provided by the Chairs of the various Committees about the significant activity they have undertaken since the last Board meeting.

Planning & Access Committee

- Fish Farm appeal is going live 25 September
- West riverside currently waiting statutory consultee responses
- Community LPP number been submitted
- Next Planning and Access meeting on 25 September

Audit & Risk Committee

- DM assured the Board that everything was in order with the Committee

Furtres Group

- Session held on the 15 August, SD to meet with AM

Items and Actions

- Affordable Housing session to be arranged, SD asked members to email any other Topics they would like to bring the FG

Countryside Trust

- CS noted that the Director of the Countryside Trust would be presenting to the Board on day 2 of the Board Strategy Day.

Local Access Forum

- Last site meeting to Conic Hill called off due to low last-minute attendance, another meeting still to be arranged.

Youth Committee

- Active junior ranger and young volunteers program
- YC attended the Sustainable travel session at the FG
- Career ready program was successful
- Board apprenticeship through the SG starting 1 January 2024

Item 14: AOB

SP raised his desire for a definition of the term 'Cultural Heritage' in relation to the aims of the National Park and the important role that the local community should play in this. There was broad agreement of importance of cultural heritage to communities and businesses within the National Park and a discussion took place around examples of cultural heritage work currently undertaken by the National Park Authority.

SP referred to his perceived lack of regard to cultural heritage during the review of the Loch Lomond Byelaws. HR reminded all Members of the rigorous process followed in the review and that they have been signed off by Scottish Ministers. She also reminded all Members of the Code of Conduct's clarity on the matter of collective responsibility in relation to Board decisions.

ACTION: DF to send SS details of signs in his electoral ward to determine whether they are part of our maintained estate or not

Item 16: Date of Next Meeting

The next scheduled meeting of the Board is Monday 11 December 2023. This will be another community-based meeting, due to the scheduled work to HQ in Balloch as part of our Net Zero Strategy. Location will be confirmed in due course.

Signed

Heather Reid, Convener

DRAFT