



# Draft minutes of meeting held on 11 December 2023

## Agenda Item 3

### National Park Authority Board Meeting 11 March 2024

Paper for approval

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<b>Present</b>
Heather Reid (Convenor) (HR)
Martin Earl (ME)
Sarah Drummond (SD)
Christopher Spray (CS)
Maurice Corry (MC)
William Sinclair (WS)
Chris Kane (CK)
Rhona Brock (RB)
Sid Perrie (SP)
Richard Johnson (RJ)
Ronnie Erskine (RE)
Claire Chapman (CC)
David Mackie (DM)
Hazel Sorrell (HZ)
Colin Lee (CL)

<b>Apologies</b>
Zain Sehgal
Iain Shonny Patterson
David Fettes

<b>In Attendance - National Park Authority Staff</b>
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Gordon Watson (GW), Chief Executive Officer
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Stuart Mearns (SM), Director of Place
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Simon Jones (SJ), Director of Environment and Visitor Services
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Anna MacLean (AM), Director of Engagement & Innovation
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Dougie Smith (DS), Corporate Performance Manager & Proper Officer
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Annie Fitzpatrick (AF) Governance and Information Advisor
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Ayeasha Temple (AT) Business Support (Minute taker)
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Susan Brooks (SB), Communities and Place Planning Manager
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Jane Kemp (JK), Head of Governance and Performance
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Sarah Ormerod (SO), Strategic Communications Manager
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Sue Hilder (SH), Sustainable Travel & Access Manager
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Jo Wright (JW), Insights and Innovation Advisor
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<b>Items and Actions</b>
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<b>Item 1: Welcome and Apologies</b>
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The Convenor opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees to Loch Lomond Parish Church.

HR reminded all Members to speak clearly into the microphones provided and not to speak over each other so that those following online are able to follow proceedings with clarity.

The Convenor welcomed all members of the public observing today's meeting.

HR welcomed CK and CL to their first Board meeting.

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

Apologies were received from Zain Segal, Iain Shonny Paterson and David Fettes.

HR thanked Zain for his contribution to the Board over the last 18 months.

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.

## Items and Actions

### Item 2: Declarations of Interest

RJ declared his interest in peatland work, resulting from a contract awarded to his company by a third party within the NPA boundary. RJ will not take part in any section of the meeting dealing directly with peatland management.

CS declared his role as a director of Countryside Trust and will not take part in any section of the meeting dealing directly with the arrangements between the Countryside Trust and Scot Gold at Cononish.

HR reminded Members that the Standards Commission for Scotland had determined that all Members of the Board have an inherent conflict of interest relating to Section 7 of the Scottish Government's consultation on the Strategic Framework for Biodiversity (Item 10)

The National Park Authority applied to the Standards Commission to grant a dispensation for all Members, to allow them to take part in the discussion, decision-making and voting on this matter on the grounds of public interest and that dispensation was granted.

### Item 3: Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11 September 2023

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

**DECISION:** The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 11 September 2023 were approved by majority vote.

### Item 4: Matters Arising

DS introduced the matters arising.

- Locally elected members to be invited to engage with staff engagement opportunities for the LDP is ongoing and will be progressed further in Q3 and 4.
- Details of signs to be sent to SS to determine whether they are part of our maintained estate, ongoing for DF.

No further comments were received.

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

## Items and Actions

### Item 5: National Park Partnership Plan 2024-2029

The paper was introduced by SD and CS, who thanked everyone involved and who set out the context of the plan.

HR advised members that this paper presents a text version of the proposed final National Park Partnership Plan 2024-2029 for the Board to approve for submission to Scottish Ministers under the terms of Sections 11-13 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000.

The report also sets out the considerations that have informed the amendments to the Plan following a consultation that was held from 26 April to 19 July 2023.

Content of the paper was covered by GW, AM and SB using slides.

Discussion and questions from Members followed, focused around

#### Our approach to the Final plan and how it is set out

Topics covered included:

- Updating National Parks Scotland Act
- Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity
- Leadership role in the Nature and Climate crises
- Impacts of Climate Change on the National Park
- Need to support community and business resilience and adaptation
- The Why – explaining the context for this Plan, the challenges facing the National Park, Scotland and the world, and the role the Park must play in addressing these.
- The What, Who, How and When – setting out a framework for delivery through clear Outcomes, Objectives, Actions, and Measurements.
- The Plan's vision to 2045

#### The main changes in the plan

Topics covered included:

- Delivery Focus for final plan – reflected in style and structure

## **Items and Actions**

- Content strengthened where necessary in response to comments and partner engagement
- Clear and more concise narrative
- Cross cutting themes removed
- Restructured chapters 1 and 2
- SMARTer and consolidated set of objectives and actions

### Our approach to monitoring

Topics covered included:

- Tracking measuring and monitoring each of the 9 objectives
- Tracking green jobs and skills in the area

### Next steps

Topics covered included:

- Board approval
- Submit the plan to ministers at Scottish Government for approval
- Launch and deliver the Plan in March 2024

The key areas of discussion from Members on the Plan were:

- Restoring Nature delivery and actions
- Creating a low carbon place
- New woodland creation and peatland restoration
- Community Involvement/response
- Resources and prioritising Funding
- Muirburn and grazing
- Farmers and Land Management
- Youth Committee

## Items and Actions

- Risks and politics

**Action:** HR to contact the Convener of Caringorms to discuss the prospect of a joint meeting with the Minister for Green Skills, Circular Economy and Biodiversity.

An **amendment** to the motion was proposed by RE and seconded by MC.

The original motion was proposed by ME and seconded by CS.

In line with the Board's Standing Orders, ME spoke first as the mover of the original motion and RE had the right of reply as the mover of the amendment. The Convener then closed the debate.

The original motion and the amended motion were then voted on together, in line with the Board's Standing Orders:

### The Original Motion:

- Approve the Final National Park Partnership Plan attached as Appendix 1 for submission to Scottish Ministers for approval under the terms of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and
- Note that officers will prepare a designed version of the document where minor editorial and presentational changes may be made.

### The Amended Motion proposed:

- Approve the Final National Park Partnership Plan attached as Appendix 1 for submission to Scottish Ministers for approval under the terms of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 **subject to availability of resources and subject to the development of a 5-year resourcing plan as part of the organisation's Corporate Plan**, and
- Note that officers will prepare a designed version of the document where minor editorial and presentational changes may be made.

By a majority decision of the Members present, the original motion was passed.

### DECISION: Members agreed to:

- Approve the Final National Park Partnership Plan attached as Appendix 1 for submission to Scottish Ministers for approval under the terms of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, and
- Noted that officers will prepare a designed version of the document where minor editorial and presentational changes may be made.

## Items and Actions

### Item 6: Scottish Government Framework Agreement

HR advised members that this paper sets out the proposed Framework Agreement between Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority and the Scottish Government.

The paper was introduced by DS, he advised that this document will replace the Management Statement and Financial Memorandum (MSFM) which was last updated in 2010 and has governed the relationship between the Scottish Government and the National Park Authority up until now.

The following topics were discussed:

- Summary of changes proposed
- Composition of the Board and locally elected members
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**DECISION:** Members agreed to

- The adoption of the proposed Framework Agreement between Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, and the Scottish Government as set out in Appendix 1.

### Item 7: Boardroom Apprentice Update

DS advised that the NPA Board have been paired with Navid Foroutan from the Boardroom Apprentice Scheme and he will be joining the Board officially from January until December 2024. He brings with him lots of experience and we look forward to working with him.

### Item 8: CEO Report

GW introduced the paper and the following topics

- Visit by Lorna Slater MSP, Minister for Biodiversity, Green Skills and Circular Economy
- The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill
- Cononish Gold Mine update
- End of Visitor Management Season Report

The key areas of discussion from members were:

- The Visitor Strategy Group

## Items and Actions

- Penalties and Enforcement
- The volume of patrols undertaken by patrol boats
- Continued commitment to promoting Water Safety
- Accessibility throughout the National Park
- The possible impacts of a Visitor Levy
- The implications for the National Park Authority of the ongoing challenges facing the goldmine operation at Cononish

SM outlined to Members the ongoing work being undertaken to manage the NPA's responsibilities in relation to the site at Cononish under the conditions of the approved planning application. SM outlined that the NPA continue to work with the company and partners at SEPA. Members will continue to be informed on the situation through updates to the Planning and Access Committee, Audit and Risk Committee and correspondence to all Members as appropriate.

**Decision:** Members agreed to

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

## Item 9: Convener's Report

Verbal update presented by HR. Topics of discussion included:

- The Convenor is chairing the UK National Parks Forum in 2024
- HR advised that she attended partners event with SJ at SEPA to support the development of their corporate plan.
- HE advised that she has undertaken various visits with Members and thanked the Members for the recent engagement opportunities
- HR attended a recent Youth Committee meeting to discuss the agenda for today's Board meeting and hear their views
- HR thanked Members for their engagement in the appraisal process, which has nearly concluded

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



## Items and Actions

### Item 10: Organisational Response to Scottish Government Consultation on Scotland's Strategic Framework for Biodiversity

SJ presented section A of the proposed response.

The key areas of discussion from members were:

- Budget implications
- The importance of cultural and societal attitudes to the success of the vision
- River Basin Management Planning

**ACTION:** SJ to update wording in proposed response at paragraph 5.13 to suggest that greater clarity is required on the proposed commitment to implement a programme of measures to restore catchments and rivers through River Basin Management Planning

### GW talked members through the National Park proposals section of the Response.

The key areas of discussion from members were:

- The importance of accessibility and inclusion
- The role national parks can play in protecting, restoring and enhancing natural assets.
- The importance of the functions and responsibilities of other public bodies operating within the park in supporting the aims of National Parks
- The use of fixed penalty notices
- Resourcing
- The importance of, and difficulty in defining, Cultural Heritage

GW talked members through the Governance section of the proposed response.

Following comprehensive discussion and agreement amongst Members, an addition to the proposed response was agreed:

*“The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority Board strongly supports the existing governance structures for the NPA. The Board believes the current arrangements regarding size and balance of membership allows the Park Authority to administer its responsibilities at both national and local levels.”*

## Items and Actions

*“The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority Board strongly believes that the roles of convenor and deputy convenor should continue to be elected from within the Board membership.”*

It was agreed that an additional line should be included in the final submission recognising the importance of – and challenges in achieving – diversity in Board Membership.

**ACTION** – DS to draft additional line on diversity in Board Membership for approval and inclusion in final response

**DECISION:** Members **agreed** the Recommended Responses outlined in the paper as the Park Authority responses to the questions outlined in the Scottish Government consultation – with the revision to paragraph 5.13 outline above.

Members **discussed and agreed** a position on the Governance proposals set out in Paragraph 5.52 where a specific recommended response had not been proposed. This response is outlined above and the final version will include an additional line on diversity of Board membership.

### Item 11: 2023/24 Annual Operational Plan Progress Report

The paper was introduced by DS, he reported that most deliverables are on track and highlighted the few that are behind schedule have predominately been held back due to alignment with the National Park Partnership Plan.

**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 second quarter (30 September 2023).

**DECISION:** Members agreed to:

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

### Item 13: Committee and Group Highlights

Planning & Access – Congratulations to SM and team for their work on the Fish Farm appeal. Encouraged planning committee to attend on 18<sup>th</sup> Dec.

Audit & Risk – Annual Report and Accounts successfully concluded. Feedback on procurement audit, where the actions are well in progress and

**Items and Actions**

on track. Deep dives have been agreed for the upcoming Audit and Risk Committee meeting in March 2024.

Futures Group – Affordable Housing session held – SD thanked SM for detailed presentation. All Member session on Housing being arranged Members were encouraged to contact SD with any ideas for future topics and outlined plans for meetings in 2024.

Countryside Trust – CS noted that the Countryside Trust will be looking to recruit Board members in the near future and he is keen to help promote the opportunity.

Local Access Forum – Zain will leave the LAF at the end of the year when his shadowing position with the Board comes to an end. A new LAF Board nominee will need to be appointed.

Youth Committee – Looking at structures and how it can better interface with Board. Will revisit this in March. Recruitment campaign in the new year. Looking to colleges and universities for students working in the environment sector.

**Item 14: AOB**

None

**Item 15: Date of Next Meeting**

Monday 11 March 2024

Signed

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**Heather Reid, Convener**