

# Draft minutes of meeting held on 30 September 2024

## Agenda Item 3

**National Park Authority Board Meeting**  
9 December 2024

Paper for approval

### Contents

<b>Present</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Apologies</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>In Attendance - National Park Authority Staff</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Items and Actions</b> .....	<b>2</b>

#### Present

Heather Reid (Convenor) (HR)
Sarah Drummond (SD)
Maurice Corry (MC)
William Sinclair (WS)
Rhona Brock (RB)
Sid Perrie (SP)
Richard Johnson (RJ)
Ronnie Erskine (RE)
David Mackie (DM)
Navid Foroutan (NF)
Martin Earl (Depute Convener) (ME)
Claire Chapman (CC)
Christopher Spray (CS)
Iain Shonny Patterson (ISP)

#### Apologies

Anna MacLean (AM)
Hazel Sorrell (HS)
Colin Lee (CL)

<b>In Attendance - National Park Authority Staff</b>
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
Annie Fitzpatrick (AF) Governance and Information Advisor (Minute Taker)
Jane Kemp (JK), Head of Governance and Performance
Kenny Auld (KA), Head of Visitor Services
Sam Stubbs (SS), Head of People and Assets

<b>Items and Actions</b>
<b>Item 1: Welcome and Apologies</b>
<p>The Convenor opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Headquarters in Balloch.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>The Convenor welcomed the members of the public observing the meeting online through a livestream on our website.</p> <p>HR asked Members and National Park staff participating in this meeting to introduce themselves.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Hazel Sorrell and Colin Lee.</p> <p>HR restated the Board's commitment to ethical standards in public life and highlighted Members' responsibilities under the Code of Conduct, emphasising section 3 on bullying and harassment and the Convener's role in upholding those responsibilities.</p>
<b>Item 2: Declarations of Interest</b>
None.
<b>Item 3: Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 16 September 2024</b>
<p>The minutes were proposed by DM and seconded by RJ. The minutes were approved by Members present.</p> <p><b>DECISION:</b> The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 30 September 2024 were approved by majority vote.</p>

## Items and Actions

### Item 4: Matters Arising

DS presented the paper.

KA gave an update on two open Actions.

CS raised the matter of Gaelic language training. DS advised that a date will be confirmed before the next meeting of the Board.

**ACTION** – AF to arrange a date in November for Gaelic language training and communicate to Members

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

### Item 5: Annual Report and Accounts 2023/24

JK presented the paper.

JK confirmed that the draft annual report and accounts were considered by Audit and Risk Committee on 3<sup>rd</sup> September 2024 and that confirmation had been received from the Authority's external auditors that all final reviews are complete.

JK confirmed that a further information request has subsequently been received from external audit and so further confirmation that all reviews are in fact complete is required before the accounts are signed.

JK confirmed that the accounts are scheduled to be signed in October subject to discussion by Members, final account checks and any additional confirmation on anything that may be required by the auditors.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- RE confirmed to Members that the Audit and Risk Committee had the opportunity to go through the accounts in depth and thanked JK and team.
- ME requested an amendment to the tense used in a section of the narrative section of the annual report
- The role of the National Park Authority and key partners in delivering key projects
- The classification of water bodies and reference to the water environment

### Items and Actions

- How the aims of the National Park are included in the annual reporting.

HR confirmed that Members will be advised upon completion of the audit and receipt of the external audit report and that any significant changes will be highlighted to Members should they arise before the accounts are signed.

**ACTION:** DS to amend the tense of section of Annual Report as highlighted by ME.

**ACTION:** CS to report back to Members on meeting with DH and SEPA at December Board meeting regarding water bodies classification.

**DECISION:** By majority, Members **noted** the draft Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24 (subject to finalisation of external audit procedures and consideration by Audit & Risk Committee).

Members **considered** and **reaffirmed** the Audit & Risk Committee recommendation that the Annual Report and Accounts are signed by the Chief Executive following External Audit clearance and resolution of outstanding matters.

### Item 6: Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report to the Board

RE presented the report to Members.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- The process undertaken for identifying areas of the organisation to be Audited.
- The application of the Risk Management Framework
- The committee's role in overseeing strategic risk and risk management providing assurance on the effectiveness of the operational framework
- Consideration of approach taken to risk by comparative external organisations and the potential to enhance approach through sharing best practice

**DECISION:** By a majority, Members **approved** the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report to the Board.

## **Items and Actions**

### **Item 7: Convener's Report (Heather Reid)**

HR made a verbal report to the Board, including updates on:

- The ongoing appraisal process with Members.
- The launch of *Trossachs Explorer* bus service
- Visit to McLaren High School in Callander
- Visit to Crainlarich to attend the Countryside Trust Wild Strathfillan partners event
- UK National Parks Conference 2024
- Personal thanks to the Board from HR for the work undertaken in September and over the summer and for being available, reading reports and papers.

### **Item 8: CEO Report (Gordon Watson)**

GW presented the paper to Members and provided updates on significant organisational developments, including:

- Scottish Government discretionary spending controls
- Consultation process for potential new National Park
- The Visitor Levy Scotland Act 2024
- Update on status of Cononish goldmine.
- Local Place Plans
- Race for Zero.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- Visitor Levy – the approach being taken by the four local authorities in the National Park area and the National Park Authority can work with them. The importance of engaging businesses in the process. Confirmation that administration of the levy will sit with the Local Authorities and not the National Park Authority.
- Feedback from communities on Local Place Plan process and the need for capacity and resource for delivery.

### Items and Actions

- The role and status of Local Place Plans, the Local Development Plan and National Planning Framework 4 in the planning process
- The Scottish Government's decision to withhold Nature Restoration Fund awards in 2024/25 and the impact of the absence of the funding on current and future operational delivery , as well as the organisation's ability to lead work with partners and deliver for climate and nature.
- RE raised a potential amendment to the motion of noting the CEO Report to highlight the Board's disappointment in the Scottish Government's decision to withdraw the award of the Nature Restoration Funding for 2024/25 and express a view that it is essential that it be reinstated for future years. Members unanimously agreed that rather than an amendment, it would be more effective for the Convener to send a letter expressing those sentiments to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands on behalf of the whole Board.
- Ongoing engagement with the Natural Environment Bill process as it works its way through the Scottish Parliament.
- The potential impact on the work of the organisation if a total recruitment freeze is implemented by Scottish Government – assurance was given that 'essential' roles are still able to be recruited.
- Cononish Goldmine – confirmation of ongoing monitoring of the site, status of the Bond held and update on the current outstanding money owed to the NPA.

**ACTION:** Further update on status of site at Cononish Goldmine to be included in CEO Report to December Board

**ACTION:** HR to write, on behalf of the Board, to the Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands to highlight the Board's disappointment in the Scottish Government's decision to withdraw the award of the Nature Restoration Funding for 2024/25 and express a view that it is essential that it be reinstated for future years

**DECISION:** Members **noted** the CEO Report.

### Item 9: 2024/25 Annual Operational Plan Progress Report

DS presented the report.

## Items and Actions

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- Use of acronyms – request to see fewer in future reports.
- The status of the deliverable around the preparation of a masterplan for Balloch Pierhead area and the role of the NPA and that of West Dunbartonshire Council. Confirmation was sought from SP that Balloch and Haldane Community Council will be engaged in the process. SM confirmed that the Community Council have been approached and the NPA will be continuing to share information on the process as it continues.

**DECISION:** Members **noted** the report.

### Item 10: Finance Update

JK presented the report.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- RE expressed concern over not being able to recruit a finance manager and sought reassurance on the approach proposed to address the challenge.
- RE requested an update to the information in the paper to reflect Year To Date Budget.
- MC – thanked JK on behalf of the Board for all the work.

**ACTION** – HR to meet with JK, GW, RE and ME to provide an update on Year to Date Budget and how this information can be included in future Finance updates. JK and GW will provide an update on the finance function staff resource. Confirmation of the meeting and assurance provided to be circulated to Members following the meeting.

**DECISION:** Members **noted** the Finance Update.

### Item 11: Committee and Group Highlights - Verbal updates

CC updated Members on Planning and Access Committee activity including work done recently to complete training for all Members of the Board on deciding Major Planning Applications, the ongoing work on the Local Development Plan and the continued implementation of NPF4.

<b>Items and Actions</b>
<p>RE updated Members on Audit and Risk Committee activity including the upcoming Internal Audit tender exercise. RE raised the committee's concerns about internal audit recommendation dates being repeatedly extended as a result of resourcing issues.</p> <p>SD updated Members on Futures Group activity including the recent session on 'Engaging with nature' and plans for the next session on 27<sup>th</sup> November.</p> <p>CS updated Members on Countryside Trust activity, including recruitment, governance matters and ongoing operational activity.</p> <p>HR updated Members on Youth Committee activity including input to the Trossachs Explorer launch and a resect Arrochar beach clean-up. Youth Committee representation is expected at the December meeting of the Board.</p> <p>DF updated Members on the Local Access Forum including a recruitment update and focus on a new training and development programme.</p>
<b>Item 12: Any Other Business</b>
<p>DS confirmed that Board Leadership elections and Committee membership will be confirmed at December meeting. Members will be asked to submit nominations and committee preferences in advance and communication will be sent out about the process in October.</p> <p>DS confirmed that Stirling Council have nominated a representative for the vacant Board position and we are awaiting confirmation of appointment from the Cabinet Secretary.</p> <p>AF confirmed that Gaelic Language training will be offered to Members in November and details will be sent out in October.</p>
<b>Item 13: Next Board Meeting</b>
<b>Monday 9 December 2024</b>

Signed

---

**Heather Reid, Convener**