

Draft minutes of meeting held on 11 March 2024

Agenda Item 3

National Park Authority Board Meeting
Monday 10 June 2024

Paper for approval

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Present

Heather Reid (Convenor) (HR)
Martin Earl (Depute Convener) (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)
Iain Shonny Patterson (ISP)
Claire Chapman (CC)
Colin Lee (CL)
David Fettes (DF)
Navid Foroutan (NF)

Apologies

Ronnie Erskine
Hazel Sorrell
David Mackie

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
Anna MacLean (AM), Director of Engagement & Innovation
Dougie Smith (DS), Corporate Performance Manager & Proper Officer
Annie Fitzpatrick (AF) Governance and Information Advisor (Minute Taker)
Sam Stubbs (SS), Head of People and Assets
Jane Kemp (JK), Head of Governance and Performance
Kenny Auld (KA), Head of Visitor Services
Alan Bell (AB), Natural Heritage Programme Manager
Stuart Goudie (SG), Health and Safety Officer
Jo Wright (JW), Insights and Innovation Advisor

Items and Actions
Item 1: Welcome and Apologies
<p>The Convenor opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees to Lomond Parish Church.</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 all members of the public observing the meeting.</p> <p>HR welcomed NF to his first Board meeting.</p> <p>HR asked the Members and National Park representatives participating in this meeting to introduce themselves.</p> <p>Apologies were received from Hazel Sorrell, Ronnie Erskine and David Mackie.</p> <p>HR restated the Board's commitment to ethical standards in public life and highlighted Members' responsibilities under the Code of Conduct and the Convener's role in upholding those responsibilities.</p> <p>HR acknowledged the recent passing of Willie Nesbit, a former Board Member.</p> <p>HR confirmed that the Proper Officer received a request to speak through deputation from a member of the public relating to the Goldmine at Cononish. As had been previously communicated to members, this request was declined on the basis that the deputation process is designed to bring to members attention matters that they do not have a comprehensive oversight. The Board</p>

Items and Actions

was the decision-making body for the original application, there have been annual updates each year since and following recent developments members have had updates at Board, Planning & Access Committee and Audit & Risk Committee. The topic is on the agenda for this meeting under item 8.

Item 2: Declarations of Interest

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.

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

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

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

Item 4: Matters Arising

DS presented the matters arising.

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

Item 5: 2024/25 Annual Operational Plan (AOP) and Budget

The paper was introduced by JK and DS.

JK advised members of the high level context, that the AOP and budget have been developed to be in line with NPPP. Corporate plan is still under development and going forward the AOP and budget will be developed with the corporate plan as a reference point.

DS presented the next section on the AOP. The AOP is structured around the chapters of NPPP. AOP includes set-piece work and key priorities and does not reflect all of the organisation's 'business as usual'.

DS highlighted that alongside structuring activity under the three Chapters of the NPPP (Restoring Nature; Creating a Low Carbon Place; and Designing a Greener Way of Living) a fourth Chapter was included – A Developing and Efficient Organisation, to capture work across the entire organisation.

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DS confirmed that the AOP had been developed in collaboration with Operational Managers and the Executive team and submitted to Scottish Government.

JK presented the Budget. Key Points highlighted were:

The 2024/25 Grant & Aid allocation was 1.9M capital 9.6M revenue. From a capital allocation perspective this represents a reduction versus 2023/24 but this was in line with our expectations.

For 2024/25 we haven't received separate funding for visitor management however our core Grant & Aid allocation has been increased to incorporate this.

Our spend profile for 2024/25 is slightly different to previous years as the organisation has a number of ongoing multi-year projects due to complete in the first half of 2024/25.

Key spends are highlighted in the paper for the 4 Chapters of the AOP.

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

- Challenges in Restoring Nature re woodland
- Organisational priorities for Mission Zero
- Measuring success against the deliverables
- Expansion of Peatland Action work
- Tourism infrastructure route mapping – the need for community co-design and consultation
- The importance of digital skills and service design skills in delivery
- Rationale on assumptions made about salary spend
- Rationale of deficit projection

ACTION: JK to organise session to induct CK in organisational budget approach and finance function

DECISION – Members voted by a majority to **approve** the Annual Operational Plan and Budget for 2024/25

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Items and Actions

Item 6: Committee Membership Update

DS presented the paper and explained that following the appointment of new Members, additions to committee memberships were required.

CL will join the Planning & Access Committee.

CK will join Futures Group.

DF will be our Local Access Forum representative.

All memberships of committees will be reviewed in December.

DECISION: Members **approved** the paper.

Item 7: Draft Gaelic Language Plan

AM presented the paper and explained that Members are being asked to approve the Draft Plan for consultation. Public Consultation will last for a minimum of 6 weeks and a final version will come to members for approval at a future meeting before being submitted to Board na Gaelic.

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

- How to best measure success of the plan
- Collaboration with Local Authorities across the National Park Area on Gaelic Language Plans
- Plans for training NPA staff
- Cost of implementing the plan and prospect of rising costs – opportunity to utilise Board na Gaelic's Gaelic plans fund.

DECISION – Members **approved** the Draft Gaelic Language Plan and public consultation.

Item 8: CEO Report

GW introduced the paper and the following topics:

- Ministerial approval of the National Park Partnership Plan
- Recent visit of the Housing Minister to the National Park.

Items and Actions

- The Visitor Levy (Scotland) Bill and the ongoing discussions of the role of National Parks
- Update on the proposals for a new National Park
- Visitor Management: Pre-season report
- Update on the gold and silver mine at Cononish given by SM. Status of site remains unchanged – it is in ‘care and maintenance’ and the operating company is not in administration.

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

- Assurance was sought and given about the monitoring provisions at the gold mine site by the NPA and partners including SEPA.
- Ongoing operations at the gold mine site, including confirmation from Members that they are assured by the level and frequency of updates being provide. Suggestion that a site visit would be helpful for understanding if possible.
- Agreement on the usefulness of the Housing Minister visit and the opportunity to discuss the challenges of affordable housing.
- Public engagement on visitor management issues.
- Statutory nature restoration targets
- Assurance was sought and given that we are communicating with Local Authorities on the Visitor levy proposals.

NOTE: CL has been invited by the Scottish Government to participate in the team assessing the bids for Scotland’s new national park which will make a recommendation to the minister.

ACTION: SM to look at possibility of organising a site visit to the gold and silver mine at Cononish for Members

Decision: Members agreed to **note** the contents of the report for information.

Items and Actions

Item 9: Convener's Report

Verbal update presented by HR. Topics of discussion included:

- HR having monthly meetings with the convener of Cairngorms. Extended an invitation to CNP to the Futures Group session in April. Been discussing shared topics, looking for opportunities for collaboration in the future.
- UK NP Forum. Pleased to report working alongside Catherine Jones, CEO Brecon Beacons and organising an in-person meeting in June and online in November.
- Thanks to RB. Facilitated a session in St Fillans to meet with Drummond Estates and chair of St Fillans Community Council.
- Day at Arrochar and Tree Planting Nursery for the Board Information and Education day.
- HR attended Audit & Risk Committee in March and participated in the Climate Change risk deep dive.

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

Item 10: Mission Zero Update

HR introduced the paper.

SJ presented Mission Zero Update.

JW presented the highlights of the paper.

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

- The methodology used to calculate emissions related to home working.
- Back up generation capacity at Loch Achray.
- Practical difficulties for National Park to have a supplier for electricity generation that only uses renewable energy.
- Installation of e-bike charging stations at NPA estate.
- Renewable Guarantee of Origin certificate

Items and Actions

- Mission Zero Route Plan.

Action: SS to provide update on Renewable Guarantee of Origin and feedback to CC.

JW shared the links to the Public Bodies Climate Change Reports.

- All of the [reports](#)
- [Main page](#) with links to all individual public sector bodies' annual reports and annual summary analysis reports

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

Item 11: Future Nature Update (inc. Biodiversity Duty Report)

CS introduced the paper and spoke of the threat of the loss of Biodiversity.

SJ gave a Future Nature update and presented the highlights of the paper.

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

- The role of volunteers and volunteering in contributing to Future Nature work.
- The role of the Local Development Plan in embedding and driving the Future Nature work.
- Improving the water environment and the need for active engagement with other public bodies to drive this.

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

ISP has left the meeting.

Meeting resumes at 14:15, SP returns at 14.20.

Item 12: Annual Health and Safety Update

SS introduced the paper and SG spoke to the highlights of the paper.

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

Items and Actions

- Process of staff reporting incidents.
- Inclusion of volunteers in statistics.
- Process of assuring Health and Safety policies are updated and distributed appropriately to ensure understanding.
- Animal bites - primarily referring to ticks.
- Training and awareness sessions offered to staff – including mental health training tools and the potential for financial awareness information.
- Managing aggressive behaviour from members of the public.
- Equalities recording in Health and Safety statistics..
- Mental Health First Aid training.

Action: SS to explore possibility of financial awareness training for staff

Action: SS to review reporting of reports relating to protected characteristics

Action: SS to include number of Mental Health First Aiders in report for 2025

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

Item 13: 2023/24 Annual Operational Plan Progress Report

DS stated the final report will come to the June Board.

The key areas of discussion from members were:

- Key staff absences affecting ability to meet some deliverables.
- Latest status of the proposed Shuttle Bus Pilot Project.

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

Item 14: Finance Update

JK presented the finance update.

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

Items and Actions

- The number of electric vehicles chargers being delivered by the funding provided.
- Status of spend in the last two months of the year with position of large projects meaning a large amount of projected capital spend is still to take place. Assurance was sought and given that this was appropriate practice and that the potential underspend would be managed.

DECISION: Members agreed to **note** this report and management accounts.

Item 15: Committee and Group Highlights

Planning & Access

Planning meeting held in the community in St Fillans with large attendance from the public.

Audit & Risk

Positively received internal audit papers. Went through risk register and commend Exec for the detail provided. Members undertook a deep dive on the Climate Change Risk as recorded in the Corporate Risk Register.

Futures Group

Aim to run 4 sessions a year. Designing an Affordable Housing session for April and will bring in external guests to have an in-person workshop. 28th August looking at embedding education across our visitor experiences on climate change and biodiversity.

Countryside Trust

Looking for a new board member. Salary structure and grades are being reviewed. Looked for assurance and discussed how to work with major projects.

Local Access Forum

DF has been appointed. Looking to enter a recruitment drive.

Youth Committee

Recruitment campaign been successful to bring members up to 20. There is a meeting later in March to look at working effectively with the Board. A Youth Action Worker has been recruited to be the link between the Youth Committee and the Education, Inclusion and Volunteering team.

Item 16: Any Other Business

The Board formally recorded its respects to the late Willie Nesbit.

Item 17: Date of Next Meeting

Items and Actions
Monday 10 June 2024

Signed

Heather Reid, Convener

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