

CRAGG

CAIRNGORM, ROTHIEMURCHUS AND GLENMORE GROUP

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THURSDAY 8th June 2006

1) Present

Keith Duncan	SNH (in the Chair)
Caroline Doyle-McManus	SNH
Monica MacMillan	Badenoch & Strathspey Local History Group
Andrew Harper	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Johnnie Grant	Rothiemurchus Estate
Hamish Trench	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Debbie Greene	SNH
Bob Kinnaid	CairnGorm Mountain Ltd
David Jardine	Forestry Commission Scotland
Philippa Grant	Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce
Tim Walker	Glenmore Lodge
Mary Ferguson	Rothiemurchus & Glenmore Community Association
Allan Bantick	Scottish Wildlife Trust
Anne Angus	I.N.B.S.E.
Willie McKenna	Rothiemurchus & Glenmore Community Association
Gregor Rimell	Highland Council

Apologies

Iain Fraser	I.N.B.S.E.
Neil Sutherland	
Stuart Benn	RSPB
Sally Dowden	Cairngorm Chamber of Commerce
Audrey Mackenzie	Aviemore & Vicinity Community Council
William Gilfillan	Area Manager, Highland Council
Richard Green	Rothiemurchus & Glenmore Community Association

The Chair introduced the meeting and confirmed that all present had received:-

- a copy of the minutes of the last meeting
- the agenda for this meeting
- a copy of the NNR Consultation Document
- A copy of Hamish Trench's document summarising CRAGG action plan priority links to the draft National park Plan

2) Minutes of the meeting of 30th March 2006

1. There was one amendment to the last draft minutes. It is noted that Philippa Grant was at the meeting representing Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce, and not Rothiemurchus Estate.

There were no other amendments to the draft minutes.

3) Matters Arising

As all matters arising would be covered by the agenda, it was agreed to proceed directly to the agenda.

3.1 The History Project

Update: Richard Green is hoping to hand the History Project over to Alison Grant, who is now a member of the Community Association.

Action: Richard Green/Alison Grant to update the next meeting.

3.2 Sale of HIE Estate

David Jardine - Work on transfer proposal structure is progressing, there are a lot of transfer issues to work through. The proposal is being structured so that it will meet sustainable solutions. The parties are working on the financial process, social process and the transfer process to include environmental gain. Once the jigsaw for the financial process has been pulled together it is likely that a consultation process will be available. David Jardine asked that the community bear with them as they are sure that in the long run they will find a solution that will benefit the area. FCS will make sure that they seek views, however there are one or two things that still need to be worked through. FCS are hoping to have the consultation ready during this summer. Progress is being made.

Action: David Jardine to keep the meeting updated.

3.3 Development of CRAGG website (Community Association)

Willie McKenna - The association has been in contact with the CNPA and are working together, things are looking positive. RGCA has had an exchange of e-mails with Andrew Harper, and this will continue on an ongoing basis.

3.4 Development of CRAGG website (CCC funding)

Philippa Grant advised that the Chamber of Commerce website went live last week. If CRAGG wish, CCC is happy to include the CRAGG web site as part of the Chamber of Commerce web site. The CNPA are willing to raise the funds to create the website. The CCC is happy to put forward the application for this including ongoing costs, updates, and web site maintenance. The CCC has left it for discussion at the next CRAGG meeting before any decisions are made.

The RGCA will liase internally to decide if to go ahead. RGCA has spoken to David Fallows in relation to the CRAGG website where CRAGG has control with links to

other web sites. There was a query of ongoing maintenance, and Links update by CRAGG. Philippa Grant - proposed to Liaise with Chamber, to find the easiest solution of implementation for CRAGG. It was suggested that the key point for CRAGG is that it has control over their web site.

Action: Willie McKenna to put the proposal to the Community Association and the CA to liaise with the CCC and report back to the next CRAGG meeting. Options to be discussed and updated at the next meeting.

3.5 ACC to consider meeting with DMO – actioned

3.6 Fiona Newcombe, CNPA to organise meeting to discuss Rothiemurchus Concordat and Public benefits study – actioned on 8 May

4. CAIRNGORMS NNR

4.1 Consultation on proposed extensions to Cairngorms NNR

A public consultation about potential extensions to Cairngorms NNR was raised by SNH at the last meeting and SNH offered to provide further information to CRAGG members if required. The offer was accepted and Debbie Greene (SNH) attended the meeting to provide a briefing. A copy of the consultation document was provided in advance of the meeting.

Debbie Greene – A consultation was launched in relation to the first round of the extensions to the Cairngorms NNR in mid April. The three month consultation period ends in mid July. Debbie explained the background on what SNH's overall aims, and where SNH is heading in relation to the Cairngorms NNR. Debbie explained that the proposed changes to the Cairngorms NNR was due to SNH developing a new policy on NNR's in the late 1990's. All other NNR's in the country except two have made the changes to meet this new policy. It was decided to delay the process in the Cairngorms until the Cairngorms National Park had been established. When NNR's were introduced back in the 1950's they were initially a protection mechanism for key nature conservation sites, so their main role was protecting them. Over the decades new types of designation have come into being such as SSSI and Natura Sites which give more protection than NNR's and this is what led to developing this new NNR policy. NNR's are now not so much related to protection but are an accolade, given to where land is managed for nature conservation according to best practice. NNR's will also be a showcase where people can come and learn more and enjoy the Natural Heritage. There is no compulsion on a land owner to have an NNR on their land. Each NNR must have four essential attributes, these are explained in the consultation leaflet. One of the main aims of this process is to raise National Awareness, in relation to learning and enjoyment of the Natural Heritage, and to be places where people can participate in various outdoor activities. SNH have decided to re-launch and extend the Cairngorms NNR in phases. There are currently five land ownerships to liaise with on the NNR policy. Some discussions with estates are moving faster than others, some have met the NNR policy. The estates that meet the policy will be integrated in to NNR status. There are three areas which will be proposed for extension to the NNR in Tranche 1, one of these is ground owned by the RSPB around Abernethy. The second and third is ground owned by the Forestry Commission Scotland, around Glenmore and, Inchriach. The long term plan is

to extend the current NNR. Any further proposed extensions will involve further consultation.

In terms of the link with the National Park Plan, it has been concluded that NNR's can deliver quite a lot for the National Park, by raising awareness and understanding of the parks special qualities, demonstration of good practice, and also economic and social factors, to encourage visitors to stay and spend more to benefit the local economy. In terms of what will happen next, SNH will investigate opportunities for better infrastructure in order to help visitors understand more in relation to what NNR's are. For example, a new all abilities access route was recently opened at SNH Creag Meagaidh NNR.

All SNH owned NNR's have been issued with a new style of management plan to cover the next five years. There will be Consultations regarding these management plans. One of the main objectives is to change the name of the Cairngorms NNR under the advice of the National Park. This is because of potential name confusion between a large Cairngorms National Park and a smaller Cairngorms NNR. It is proposed to name the individual estates within the NNR individually after the names of the estates. This is currently under discussion with various land owners and managers. Any comments on this aspect can be made within the consultation process.

RGCA proposed that the NNR names be given historical/cultural names instead of estate names, in order to establish a more local cultural connection. Debbie asked that this proposal be made in writing to SNH.

It was asked if Beglans would be within the proposed NNR at Glenmore and it was confirmed that Beglans would be outwith the NNR boundary.

One of the NNR aims is the Primacy of nature conservation. It was put forward that everything that Rothiemurchus does is primacy of nature. A question was asked what does primacy of nature mean to the whole community and furthermore, what the public think particularly with respect to Rothiemurchus because this will help determine whether they should decide to have an NNR and where its boundary would be.

It was suggested that internationally the word Reserve might have connotations in the wider sense. Is SNH aware that the word reserve might have wider connotations now. Given that some nature reserves in Africa are actually large farms. Debbie Greene acknowledged the point and advised that SNH had to abide by the legislative Act that is now in use.

A question was asked about boundaries in relation to Glenmore Lodge and Debbie advised that the boundary was away from the lodge. A discussion followed about perceptions about primacy of nature boundary and that the boundary will be away from buildings and the existing designated area could be re-defined by the SSSI review.

Action: SNH to check proposed NNR boundary in relation to Glenmore Lodge.

Debbie was asked what an NNR is about, in relation to the disturbance of wildlife, does this mean intentionally or non-intentionally and how does it affect the new right to roam.

The question was asked in relation to a potential prohibition issue with what exactly NNR's would constitute in terms of access. Debbie suggested this can be remedied by careful planning/management of NNR's. Debbie explained that people appreciating the natural heritage can have positive benefits to biodiversity by calling for politicians to support good management of NNR's and by donating money to reserve management.

A question was asked why a small area around Cairngorm was excluded. It was explained that first principles – nature, is what Cairngorm Mountain is all about. A discussion followed regarding why part of the Cairngorm Estate is not being considered for NNR status. Debbie suggested that there will be opportunities for consultation during Tranche 2 or 3, to go through at a later stage, regarding HIE area. Discussions regarding this topic should precede these subsequent consultations. There would also be an opportunity to comment on primacy of nature through consultations on NNR management plans.

Action point: CRAGG will at a future meeting discuss what do we mean about the term primacy of nature and what does it mean in relation to declaration of a piece of land an NNR.

A question was asked what kind of help would be given to land owners in relation to establishing an NNR on their land. Debbie Greene stated that land should meet certain requirements before becoming an NNR and that funding would be available to make extra things available such as accessibility in relation to the general public.

5. INFORMATION SHARING

5.1 Tim Walker stated that an event, at the early stages of planning, which was won in competition with Lochaber. It is being managed by Unique Events, who are Edinburgh based. It is part of Highland Year of Culture and has already attracted considerable funding. Land managers were asked to attend a meeting on the 5th July at 2pm at Glenmore Lodge. It will be a potentially exciting event, including music, wildlife observation, family orientated, possibly hydrogen buses. Dates 22-24 June 2007. It can be best practice and should satisfy any needs or concerns. They expect 4-8,000 visitors. A high profile TV slot is being arranged.

5.2 Keith Duncan - wrote to inform CRAGG of two proposed changes at Cairngorm ski area. 1. To promote use of the Windy Ridge Path and 2. to allow walkers to purchase a one way ticket to descend the funicular railway. A consultation is underway and finishes on 17th August and members were encouraged to comment on the proposal.

5.3 Johnnie Grant - the Rothiemurchus Forest Plan is due to be given a final approval, one of the things to be included is the reinstatement of some of the paths and forest tracks. This would provide the turning points within the forest for carrying out work. Also included is work on the lay-by's on the Glenmore Road. Ian Wallace will be consulted. This may result in a press notice.

Johnnie Grant - asked about the off-road route project that has fallen by the wayside. Johnnie mentioned that movement would be required in relation to planning permission.

Members were advised that funding from Sustrans that fell through for this year. However he acknowledged that members would continue to work on seeking funds.

Action point, Off road route issues opposite the Mountain rescue to be raised as an agenda item at next meeting if no response is made to RGCA by THC.

David Jardine – advised that the Glenmore Forest Design Plan would go out to consultation in the next few weeks. FCS developing a project for Highland Year of Culture and will involve the community as requested. FCS received confirmation from Scottish Water that subject to completion of upgrades, SW will adopt the sewerage treatment plant in Glenmore. Campsite transfer completed 26th May to a new company.

6. LINKAGE BETWEEN DRAFT PARK PLAN AND CRAGG AREA STRATEGY

The Chair thanked Hamish Trench for carrying out the review of linkages between the draft Park plan and the CRAGG area strategy. The Chair noted that there was an action for CRAGG members to check what elements important to members in the CRAGG strategy and if they were covered in the draft Park Plan.

Hamish Trench – summarised the process of the review and asked for comments from members.

Members were advised that SWT reserves had a change in policy. A quote from the Vision document *important habitats better connected* was raised. This sentence is very much at the heart of the SWT vision for the next 30 years. From a wildlife point of view this is an interesting comparison. Another observation, the vision document states that the Park wants to be a leading model for other Parks and protected areas, this for the first time allows comparisons and leads to a question what is it about the Cairngorms National Park that others will admire and wish to copy? Another question, the use of the term protection is used a lot, will the Plan stop habitat loss through house developments, is house development ever going to stop and are we coming to a point, what is being protected, is it the wildlife and habitats or is it the interests of developers?

Action: Alan was encouraged to put his points on paper and Alan agreed to do so.

A comment was made on the excellent document that Hamish has produced and what it does is demonstrate how much the two documents integrate. A gap in provision of water was raised, is this a problem and is there a solution?

Action: Members were asked to write to CNPA with any comments before the consultation closing date of 30 June.

A general point of how we define the special qualities of the Park was raised, because so many of the policies refer back to the special qualities. We should spend more time on this topic and on monitoring and review. Hamish asked that CNPA would welcome CRAGG views on the special qualities of the area and the monitoring side.

Action: Members to discuss what are the special qualities in CRAGG area. Use as a starting point the description in the draft park Plan and ask what is missing from that. what else is there to deliver, the off road route, monitoring & review, for September meeting.

A question was asked why transport was not given a high priority in the draft Plan. Andrew Harper raised areas where transport is raised but acknowledged that an overall priority is a topic usefully raised. Hamish Trench took a clear message to review this topic.

7. AOCB

8. Date and Chair of Next meetings

Thursday 21st September at Glenmore Lodge, at 6pm.
Keith Duncan to chair the meeting.

Thursday 7th December at Glenmore Lodge, at 6pm.
Chair - TBA