

# CRAGG

## CAIRNGORM, ROTHIEMURCHUS AND GLENMORE GROUP

Meeting on Wednesday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2007

6pm at Glenmore Lodge, Glenmore

### DRAFT MINUTES

#### **Present**

Sally Dowden	Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce
Johnnie Grant	Rothiemurchus Estate
Willie McKenna	Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Association
David Jardine	Forestry Commission Scotland
Mary Ferguson	Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Association
Dave Fallows	Highland Council
Audrey MacKenzie	Aviemore Community Council
Philippa Grant	Cairngorms Chamber of Commerce
Alan Rankin	ACDM
Anne Dempster	Rothiemurchus and Glenmore Community Association
Walter Dempster	Local History Group
Murray Ferguson	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Gus Jones	BSCG
Jeremy Roberts	RSPB
Keith Duncan	SNH

#### **In attendance**

David Keegan	Bothy Bikes and other members of the ACDM OAP Group
Jane Hope (Minutes)	Cairngorms National Park Authority

#### **Apologies**

Tim Walker, Bob Kinnaid, Alan Bantick, Sally Thomas, Sue Palmer, Gregor Rimell, Deborah Tait, Richard Green

#### **Minutes of meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> June 2007 and Matters Arising**

1. It was noted that minutes should be circulated as soon as possible after a meeting; if there were no comments the draft minutes would be uploaded to the website two weeks after the meeting.
2. A number of comments were made on the minutes of the last meeting:
  - a) Paragraph 6, first sentence: insertion of the word Authority after each mention of Park.
3. Subject to these points the minutes were approved.

## **Matters Arising**

4. **History Project:** it was noted there was a report from Richard Green under the information sharing item of the agenda. Alan Rankin reported that the next step was to identify the scope of the project, what the project needed to deliver and who should be involved. Support would then be sought; there were a number of avenues to follow up but a proposal was needed before this could be taken forward.
5. Other matters arising were dealt with under information sharing.

## **Presentation from ACDMO Outdoor Activity Providers Group**

6. Alan Rankin introduced Dave Keegan who gave a short presentation on mountain biking in the CRAGG area. Copies of the presentation are attached to the minutes. The nub of the presentation was that the area has potential to be an outstanding mountain biking destination but there was a need to promote and sign the trails better. In discussion the following questions and points were made:
  - a) The vision for the area envisaged connecting trails across the area so that someone on holiday in Grantown-on-Spey could go to, for example, Newtonmore by public transport which could accommodate a mountain bike.
  - b) Mountain biking provided a good way to enjoy the Cairngorms National Park and had lots of potential. A lot of suggestions were expensive and difficult so it made sense to focus on the paths and tracks already in place and to sign these better. The core path planning process would result in all paths being supported better. (in the sense that this would provide a focus for funding. Core paths would not necessarily be signed specifically for mountain bikes.) Many of the issues were about marketing and information provision. Customers could go anywhere in theory, but if they asked in surrounding retail and other outlets, it was important that the information providers knew what to say. The reality was that a huge amount of information was available which nobody could control, promoting where to go mountain biking. Where the public sector are promoting the activity, it was important to only do so with the willing cooperation of the landowner. It was important to think about the effect on other visitors of the concentration of mountain biking in any particular area. If people were to be encouraged into an area it was important to have the right facilities, and this might include black/challenging routes as well as the blue/green end for family use.
  - c) There was an issue of "conflicting" uses. Under the Outdoor Access Legislation paths were open to use by everybody. This could lead to potential safety issues. It was noted that because of the legislation it was not possible to stop people using a path for mountain biking or walking; but it was possible to avoid promoting paths for both uses. The point was also made in this context that mountain bikers should be encouraged to have some facility such as a bell with which to warn other users of the path that they were approaching.
  - d) Successful promotion would inevitably lead to an increase in conflict between the various users of paths and this needed further thought. Trail maps for the Badenoch and Strathspey area appeared to have been prepared by someone in Nairn but it was not clear how reliable these were. The feeling was that given the attempt of these maps to grade trails (doddle, doggy, deadly!) this was helpful in directing people to the right types of trail.
  - e) There was a need for responsible promotion, responsible biking and land management – there were a whole series of issues which needed to be brought together.

- f) It was noted that some routes went through designated sites. It was therefore useful that the Core Path Plan would be subject to an environmental assessment.
  - g) As the Access Authority, the CNPA was the recipient of complaints in respect of implementation of, and compliance with, the access legislation; the Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum had been set up to advise on these sorts of problems. It was noted there had been very few problems over the last few years. There had been some complaints of mountain bike users wanting to use a route but finding locked gates; there had been few complaints about mountain bikers by land owners or environmentalists.
  - h) The question was asked as to whether there had been any study about possible displacement of walkers by mountain bikers (noting that walkers were relatively high spenders). Similarly, the question was asked whether there was any research about the revenues that mountain biking brought into an area, given that this could usefully inform how best to promote the area. It was noted that a visitor segmentation study by Visitscotland might cover this question; David Jardine reported that the study of the Wolftrax facility was also useful information in this regard and he would circulate this.
  - i) The contrast was noted between the Wolftrax facility (in the forest where there is no other recreational use) and Glenmore where there was good potential for riders to stay and do other things. It would be essential to look at how to make the visit by mountain bike users a better experience and in particular how to make it a winter activity. It was particularly important to look at how mountain bikers could cycle to tracks.
  - j) Increased mountain bike use meant increase in maintenance cost of trails. At the Wolftrax facility, the benefits of increased use accrued to the accommodation providers and cycle hire businesses. But it was important to remember that there was also an increased maintenance cost and the money for this had to be found.
7. The ACDMO/Activity Providers group acknowledged the points that had been made. Everyone recognised the huge potential for the area provided the use by mountain bikers was managed properly. There were potentially good health benefits across the complete age spectrum; also economic benefits provided the activity was managed properly; and there would also be costs. Alan Rankin agreed to consider these points further, prior to a further discussion as a future CRAGG meeting.

## **Information Sharing**

### ***Badaguish***

8. It was noted that Craig Little's update had been received; (copy attached) he could not come along to the meeting but if people had questions they should direct these to Craig. It was noted that the half marathon had been successful, but it did raise the question of whether one needed to set a size limit on such events. (This point would be taken up again under the events item.)

### ***Events***

9. Jeremy Roberts had circulated an email about the Maxamillian Event. (copy attached) This event was the Barnardos Cairngorms Fifty Challenge. The hub of the event was the hayfield; the expectation was 30 teams of 4 people. The event itself consisted of a walk from the hayfield up to Cairngorm and back. The second part consisted of a cycle ride from Glenmore through Sluggan, Tulloch, Abernethy and Ryvoan. The event was to be run by an event organiser; 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> September for set up, 15<sup>th</sup> September for the event, and 16<sup>th</sup> September dismantling. It was noted that the event managers did not have a good reputation; it was

also noted that trying to work with them had not proved a good experience to date. That experience reflected the need to ensure that in the future the event managers respected the needs of local land managers.

10. There was some discussion about how events such as this could be used to encourage the participants to spend more in the area. One possibility was to ask for donations to local charities. It was crucial to ensure some sort of pay back into the area given what these events “cost”. It was crucial to pin the details down early in the process.
11. An email had been circulated from Bob Grant of the CNPA (copy attached) pointing out that in relation to the development of guidance on events, a small group had been set up to take this forward comprising Murray Ferguson, Bob Grant, Paul Corrigan and Mark Wrighton of SNH. There was likely to be a workshop planned for early the following year to which relevant parties would be invited. The output from the work would be a published set of guidance by the CNPA for land managers and event organisers on organisation of outdoor access events that fits with the policy in the “Enjoying the Cairngorms – the Outdoor Access Strategy for the Cairngorms National Park”.
12. Murray Ferguson went on to say that “events” often meant different things and it was important to clarify what was meant.
13. Organised outdoor access events. These required access to land and were therefore governed by SOAC. (For example, the Maxamillian Event would be so governed, whereas the Motor Mania event would not.) There was now a policy for outdoor access in the Cairngorms National Park which had been previously circulated. Further supplementary guidance was being produced to back up that policy. The project planned for developing that supplementary guidance was as follows:
  - End of September: invitations to workshop participants.
  - Mid November: report on workshops.
  - End of January: paper to Cairngorms Local Outdoor Access Forum.
  - End of May: publish and disseminate guidance to compliment the policy on Outdoor Access in the Cairngorms National Park.

The supplementary guidance would be distributed along with good practice advice which it was hoped would include advice on maximising economic benefit, the importance of using local food etc. It was also hoped that issues of voluntary contributions would also be covered in the good practice advice.

14. In discussion the following points were made:
  - a) It was crucial to combine and coordinate the policies of all the public bodies involved so that there was only one port of call. It was also crucial that business interests were properly reflected – workshops were not necessarily the appropriate way of doing this.
  - b) Given the previous discussion about events organisers, it was important that charities should know who could and could not be trusted.
  - c) The comment about land manager involvement and business involvement was accepted.
  - d) On the issue of fees, it was for a land manager to negotiate whatever fee might be appropriate. However, it was important to note there could not be a charge for access per se, although there could be a fee for services etc.

- e) A separate issue was the matter of putting money back into the community/local charities etc.
  - f) It was noted that the volume of noise from some events was disturbing to some residents and constituted a “cost”. This also needed to be thought about in terms of other visitors, some of whom came up to the area precisely for peace and quiet.
  - g) What was missing from the process of organising events was an effective first contact. What was needed was an all encompassing check list – things to be considered early on. This would be part of the guidance being developed.
15. It was important to have consistency in deciding which types of events the public sector was going to support. The area needed to be welcoming enquiries, and then being in a position to make consistent judgements on which would and would not be supported. What was needed was a “landing point”. It was crucial that the business community were involved in this. A master list of events was being collated and distributed; this was being taken forward by the DMO and the CNPA. The idea was to put it on a portal website in one place for everybody to be able to access.

#### *History Project*

16. A report had been circulated by Richard Green. (copy attached) Alan Rankin was happy to work with someone from the group but was not in a position to lead. It still was not clear if anyone had the capacity – Alan agreed to contact Richard Green and bring back to a later meeting. It was noted that a similar project was being conducted in Ballater and there might be some useful lessons from there.

#### *DMO Update*

17. Alan Rankin reported that it was critical for the DMO to have a broader church of business involved and to that end had been discussing options. There had been a recent meeting at Boat of Garten to discuss how to develop this idea. Current thinking was to have a wider range of product development groups – businesses would join a products development group and through this would be able to buy services. One person from each product development group would sit on the DMO Board whose role was to take a strategic overview of the benefits for the area as a whole. There would be further discussion sessions in other locations over the coming months.

#### *SNH*

18. A UK Biodiversity Conference was being held in Aviemore on the 11<sup>th</sup> October. SNH were holding an open evening for the general public on the 9<sup>th</sup> October. Details to be circulated by Keith Duncan.

#### *CNPA*

19. A number of points were made for information:
- a) The Deposit Local Plan for the National Park was out to consultation which closed on the 28<sup>th</sup> September.
  - b) The Vital Spark International Conference on Interpretation was being held in the first week of October. The conference was well subscribed but there were still subsidised places available for communities.
  - c) The Glenmore Off Road Route – Planning permission had been granted, the finance arrangements, were in place, the tender had been awarded for path building, and

there had been a constructive site visit. Substantial issues remained as the estate were still not able to give its permission for the path to be constructed.

#### ***Forestry Commission Scotland***

20. A number of points were made for information:
- a) The event "Between Two Worlds" was being held in early November as a collaboration between FCS and CML. There was to be a preview event.
  - b) The planning application had been submitted on the Glenmore Sewage Works; it was therefore possible that work might start early in the new year.
  - c) The National Nature Reserve at Glenmore had been launched earlier in the week.

#### ***History Group***

21. The John Roy Festival had received positive feedback; it had been well organised with a good turnout. The banner had been unfurled at the top of Cairngorm; it was hoped to repeat this every year. Future talks were to be given on the 9<sup>th</sup> October (Romans in the North East) and second Tuesday in November – cemeteries.

#### ***Carnegie Convention***

22. The Carnegie Convention was being held on the 24<sup>th</sup>/25<sup>th</sup> September. The DMO were hosting a series of journeys for delegates to hear and see how the private and public sector were working together. Given the three year funding agreement between the DMO and Carnegie it was important to build up a good relationship.

#### ***The Olympian Project***

23. The unveiling ceremony was planned for the 16<sup>th</sup> October in Aviemore.

#### ***Ward Forum***

24. The second Ward Forum would be held on the 24<sup>th</sup> September, covering out of hours GP cover.

#### ***New Roundabout***

25. Philippa Grant was acting as "letter box" for ideas on what should go in the middle of the new roundabout. The business associations and other had already met to consider what might be appropriate.

#### ***Rothiemurchus***

26. A number of points were made:
- a) Rothiemurchus were embarking on an interpretive strategy and would like to contact the community association and would also like comment from CRAGG. The estate would write to all members accordingly. The strategy was being done in conjunction with the CNPA.
  - b) Following a report on the provision of public benefits by the Rothiemurchus Estate, the estate had an interim agreement with a range of public sector partners.
  - c) Marcus MacBain had moved the agricultural shed from Kinrara to Rothiemurchus.
  - d) Scottish and Southern had been undergrounding electricity cables for several months on the estate, causing some disruption.
  - e) The timber felling programme would be starting soon in accordance with the forest plan. A map was available to anybody who was interested.
  - f) If anyone was submitting comments on the Deposit Local Plan it would be helpful if Rothiemurchus estate could have a copy so they could take account of the comments in as much as they related to the estate ground.

- g) The totem poles were going to the village green at Aviemore (but it was noted that these were movable and could be used again at the Outsider Festival in the future if necessary).

#### **Protocol for Information Sharing**

- 27. The Chair pointed to the fact that the information sharing section of the agenda included a large amount of information much of which could be submitted in advance of the meeting. It was agreed that whoever was due to Chair a meeting should ask for pieces of information two weeks ahead of a meeting so that these could then be amalgamated and circulated to everyone.

#### **AOB**

- 28. Gregor Rimell was bowing out of CRAGG and handing over to Dave Fallows.
- 29. VisitScotland used to have a seat on CRAGG but never attended. The tourism perspective was important, it was therefore agreed that the DMO should come in place of VisitScotland.

#### **Date of the Next Meeting**

- 30. Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> November, Jeremy Roberts to Chair.