

**Minutes from 4 February 2009 Lunch Event
The Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey
Collaborative Business Partnership**

The meeting was opened by Duncan Mackellar giving an outline on the proposed Collaborative Business Partnership (CBP) including progress to date and the organisations involved. He referred to the report compiled by Jan Polley, the consultant funded by the Cairngorms National Park Authority (CNPA,) which had been presented to the CNPA Board. (The report can be downloaded from the Special Notices section of the Chamber website.)The support of the public sector needs to be secured. They have agreed to the proposal in principle and given an overwhelming positive response to the proposal.

The next step is to gain a mandate from the private sector to move the proposal forward. Five local authorities and two Enterprise agencies have already been in discussions and bought in to the process.

At this point the proposal was opened to the floor for discussion and questions.

Q. Is the proposed organisation to replace the ACDMO and the CCC, and membership of other organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses?

A. The new group will form an umbrella and not replace the existing organisations. It should reduce membership fees but it is up to the Private Sector to decide how it will work. For example, by combining the administration functions of the existing groups it should be more effective and create joined-up thinking. It will give some groups access to administration support as the Chamber is doing at the moment for Creative Cairngorms and Cairngorms Hostel.

Q. If the Chamber is already doing that why create another organisation?

A. It won't be another organisation. It should cut down on duplication e.g. private sector attendance at meetings and administration.

An example was given from Cairngorm Hostels: when they do their marketing plan they will have to liaise with every Destination Management Organisation (DMO) in the Park. If the CBP was in place they would only have to contact the CBP. Most organisations are run by volunteers so it would help reduce the workload.

Q. Is there a timetable for the structure? An agreed process?

A. That's why the discussion was being held. Agreement and engagement is needed from the Private Sector before the proposal can go any further.

The timetable will depend on the groups/people involved but outcomes will be expected by the CNPA and their expertise can be used in this regard.

Q. I'm still confused. There's lots of representation already? If the CNPA support the CCC then expand the CCC to encompass the proposal?

A. If members want one organisation then that is something that could be looked into.

A single mechanism is needed to grow tourism in the Park. There is currently no pan-Park engagement process. The mechanics of the proposed group will evolve as there is a need to consolidate functions in existing organisations, such as marketing, and to stop the duplication.

Q. Can't there be one DMO and one Chamber Park wide?

A. The existing groups are working in isolation. Today's discussion had to happen to ask the membership what they thought. It couldn't just go ahead without feedback.

Q. How will you get the feedback and mandate? It's possible that you'll end up with 200 variations dependant on the individual response?

A. More meetings will need to take place. This is the first step in the process. The feedback from today will help the steering group.

Comment. Members are happy to be members of various groups. The proposed group will add value especially if it has lobbying capability.

Q. Are we saying that the CBP will represent every business in the Park? Farmers would be represented by the CBP rather than the National Farmers Union?

A. The CBP will not stop businesses being members of any other group. Businesses located in the National Park have a great opportunity. There is a period of change in the public sector. The Business Gateway no longer comes under Highlands and Islands Enterprise but individual Councils.

Comment. We need to step back from the mechanics of how the CBP will work and ask has business in the National Park benefited by being in the National Park?

There is a lack of focus. How can businesses maximise the benefit? By coming together.

There is a common cause to all existing organisations. Marketing businesses is a job for businesses that should be done by businesses and not the local authority.

By coming together, it can happen and we should get behind the idea and then look at how it can be done.

Comment. Can the CCC or other existing organisations extend their remit? Anything that reduces the number of organisations and subscription fees would get support.

Q. Quoting from the Jan Polley report, the separate organisation will distribute funding?

Q. The only is common is the National Park. There is confusion as to what it will represent.

A. The worth of the National Park brand has barely been scratched. There won't be one single message to cover the whole of the Park. Local areas will remain. We are not maximising the benefits of the National Park. There will be common thought, with local flavour.

Comment. An annual customer survey conducted by a local business added a question to their survey asking if being in a National Park influenced their choice. 62% of respondents said 'yes'. The results have been repeated in a subsequent survey.

As businesses we know our business and we know our guests.

Q. Does this mean tourism is the only business in the National Park?

A. Quoting from a recent newspaper article in the, the Trossachs National Park will lead Scotland out of recession.

Tourism is the number one driver of our economy.

Q. Is there a similar structure in any other National Park?

A. Not that we are aware of. Business groupings have been developed e.g. in Banff, where they objective is sustainability of their Park. They have a mix of a Chamber of Commerce and a DMO.

Q. Is there a structure chart, proposed hierarchy or a list of objectives?

A. Not at this time. If consensus is reached then an audit of existing organisations will be required.

Comment. A business audit has already been done by the CNPA. AN Economic Base Line Study was done prior to the formation of the CNPA and it is being repeated soon by the CNPA.

The meeting was drawn to a close. Those attending were asked for their support for the motion, which was given.

Comments received from non-attendees:

Andrew Kirk, The Cairn Hotel, Carrbridge.

"I am unable to attend but fully endorse the initiative."

James Armour, Highland Property Services, Aviemore.

"I am unable to attend the inaugural meeting on 4th Feb. but wish to be included in any updates and in principle would support such a proposed alliance."

Elma McMenemy, Elma McMenemy Marketing and PR, Stonehaven.

"Sorry I can't make the 4th Feb event, but this sounds like a great idea - well done and good luck. Hope to be involved at some point in the future."

David C Jardine, Forest District Manager

"It may be helpful to confirm Forestry Commission Scotland's position - while we are a significant operator in the tourism sector we are also a public body and as such will probably have to remain independent of the CBP but will work collaboratively with it.

I have forwarded the material on to Forest Holidays who manage the campsite at Glenmore for their information.

With very best wishes for the successful development of CBP."

Ian Bishop, Chairman, Cairngorms Hostels

"This is an area that CH supports."

Stephen Rowan AIBC, IT Adviser (appointed by Development Partners for Highlands & Islands Enterprise), Highland IT Support Limited

"The Partnership sounds like a good idea - anything that helps network local businesses in a productive way is worth considering!"

Attendees:

Rebecca Reid	CCC Vice Chair
Alan Rankin	CCC Director
Deborah Strang	CCC Director
Geoff Laing	CCC Director
Sally Dowden	CCC Director
Jacqui Bell	CCC Administrator
Duncan Mackellar	Mackellar Sub Sea
Johnnie Grant	Rothiemurchus Estate
Carol Bulloch	The Dulaig
Gordon Bulloch	The Dulaig
Keith Ballam	Craggan Outdoors
Jamie Williamson	Alvie Estate
Andrew Harper	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Peter Ord	Balmoral Estate
Joan MacDonald	RossMor Guest House
Ed MacDonald	RossMor Guest House
Murray Ferguson	Cairngorms National Park Authority

Andrew Bateman	Mountain Innovations
Alan Woodier	Brooklynn
Silvia Woodier	Brooklynn
David Carrott	Tigh na Fraoch B & B
Jenny Carrott	Tigh na Fraoch B & B
Janette McCool	Abernethy Golf Club
Jack McCool	Abernethy Golf Club
Chris Bremner	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Patrick Harrison	Beallich
Dave Fallows	
Peter Coon	Cairngorm Guest House

The minutes of today's meeting will be posted on the Chamber website.