

Cairngorm Advisory Group

NOTE OF MEETING

10.00 – 12.00

Wednesday 14 December 2022

Macdonald Aviemore Resort



Present

Member	Organisation
Alistair Dodds	Chair, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (Chair of meeting)
Bill Lobban	Convenor, Highland Council
Uwe Stoneman	Abernethy Forest Estate (RSPB)
Kirsty Bruce	Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust
Mark Tate	Cairngorm Business Partnership
Susan Smith	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Jim Cornfoot	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Colin Matthew	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Bruce Cranston	Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd
Gavin Miles	Cairngorms National Park Authority
Shaun Roberts	Glenmore Lodge
James Gibbs	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Douglas Cowan	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Dave Macleod	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
James Palmer	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Chris Roberts	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Chris Donald	NatureScot
Debbie Greene	NatureScot
Johnnie Grant	Rothiemurchus Estate
Euan Baxter	Snowsport Scotland

Apologies were received from: Davie Black, Rachel Davies, David Frew, Grant Moir, Scott Simon, Uwe Stoneman, Duncan Swarbrick, Mark Tate and Ruari Watt.

1	Welcome and introductions
	Alistair Dodds welcomed everyone to the meeting. He informed the group that that HIE's project lead for Cairngorm, Elaine Hanton, had moved on to another role within the development agency. Mr Dodds expressed appreciation for Ms Hanton's contribution in delivering a highly challenging programme of work.
2	Note of previous meeting and matters arising
	The note of the meeting held on 25 August was approved. Previous actions: The following actions since the last meeting were noted:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Douglas Cowan (HIE) advised that briefing had been provided to Cairngorm Business Partnership before their meeting with the Minister for Business, Trade, Tourism and Enterprise. • Dave Macleod (HIE) had met Chris Donald of NatureScot and attended the Cairngorms Connect conference. • CMSL had responded to a request for information on stakeholder engagement activities. • The Chair and Chief Executive of CMSL had updated the Board of HIE on progress with a range of operational and governance matters. <p>Matters arising:</p> <p>There were no matters arising from the meeting note.</p>
3	Update from HIE / Q&A
	<p>Funicular</p> <p>Dave Macleod reported that reinstatement of the funicular railway was nearing completion, with final testing and commissioning under way. The Department for Transport were due to visit on 20 December and it was expected that safety cases for the infrastructure and control system would be submitted before Christmas, as planned.</p> <p>Geothermal feasibility</p> <p>HIE had received a draft report from ARUP, concluding that there was insufficient data to determine whether there could be sufficient heat potential at depth to sustain an effective geothermal energy solution. Options to gain more information on underground conditions were being explored and CAG would receive updates.</p> <p>Scottish Centre for the Mountain Environment</p> <p>HIE had engaged Turnberry Consulting and had taken part in a workshop with CMSL to explore ideas. It was planned that Turnberry would start engaging with key stakeholders including CAG members in early 2023.</p> <p>Operating and governance review</p> <p>Members noted legal advice obtained by HIE, indicating that it would be unwise to consider making changes to the mountain resort operating model until current litigations have concluded. However, input from CAG and others would continue to be welcome as alternative models are reviewed.</p> <p>Q and A</p> <p>Lesley McKenna stressed that an effective operating model at Cairngorm would optimise opportunities for collaborative working – both between individuals and organisations – and community and stakeholder engagement, noting that collaboration between small business owners was a key characteristic of the local economy. Shaun Roberts noted that SportScotland currently operated two national centres and could bring valuable experience into operating model discussions.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIE staff to follow up suggestions from Lesley and Shaun.

4	Update from CMSL / Q&A
	<p>Capital works on site</p> <p>Susan Smith provided an update on capital works. The ‘magic carpet’ conveyor system had been installed and would be a boon to beginner skiers and family groups this winter. Tenders had been issued, inviting contractors to bid to create three mountain bike trails, with a view to these opening in June 2023. Orders had been placed for mountain bikes.</p> <p>The Ptarmigan building had been transformed, with a revamped retail area, restaurant and exhibition space featuring a 270 degree curved screen. This would feature a specially-commissioned film about Cairngorm. In addition, any CAG members, friends or associates who would like to share film were invited to contact Jim Cornfoot at CMSL.</p> <p>Car park improvements had been largely concluded, with some finishing works to be carried out in spring 2023. An application for better ‘sense of arrival’ signage was going out to the Highland Council.</p> <p>CMSL had taken over the role of principal contractor from Balfour Beatty and were preparing to relaunch the funicular services as soon as the safety cases had been approved by the UK Transport Minister. There would therefore not be much lead-in time, but HIE would inform stakeholders including CAG once the Minister’s approval had been confirmed. It was hoped that this could be achieved in January.</p> <p>Following recent snowfall, winter opening was being brought forward by four days for beginners, to Saturday 17 December. CMSL would issue social media to let customers know. A new PR company had been appointed and were showing great promise.</p> <p>Susan Smith outlined CMSL’s commitment to stakeholder engagement, stressing the importance of the operating company being a listening organisation and noting that she had met around 30 individual stakeholders, community organisations and businesses in the previous month. The relaunch of the funicular would begin a new chapter, with a focus on developing a year-round attraction and scope for involvement from all CAG partners and others.</p> <p>Q and A</p> <p>Johnnie Grant commented that briefing should be provided to Scottish Government ministers across a range of portfolios and a variety of organisations in advance of an official opening in 2023. It was important to reflect Cairngorm’s importance not only to outdoor sports and tourism in Scotland, but in other areas too, including education, environment and the wider local economy.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anyone wishing to share Cairngorm footage for public showing is invited to contact CMSL (Jim Cornfoot) • HIE to issue stakeholder communication once funicular safety cases are signed off by UK Transport Minister. • HIE and CMSL to ensure government briefing across portfolios in advance of official opening (likely to be in spring or summer).

5	<p>Update from CAG members / Q&A</p>
	<p>Mountain users and Avalanche Information Service – Glenmore Lodge</p> <p>Shaun Roberts gave a presentation on winter participation, focusing on access and safe enjoyment of the Cairngorms for health and wellbeing and highlighting areas that attract the highest numbers of visitors. The presentation featured information on the important role played by the Scottish Avalanche Information Service (SAIS) and how to access and use its mobile app.</p> <p>Actions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shaun offered to share his presentation after the meeting. • CAG members were asked to share information on SAIS and the app through their networks. <p>Heritage Horizons – Cairngorms National Park Authority</p> <p>Gavin Miles provided a short update on the Heritage Horizons programme, through which 26 projects are currently being developed to deliver transformational change and address the climate emergency. These included new initiatives to promote sustainable transport, restore landscapes, empower communities and improve health and wellbeing. Consultants had been engaged and were due to complete their work early in 2023.</p> <p>Aviemore Ice Rink – Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust (AGCT)</p> <p>Kirsty Bruce delivered a presentation on the success of the Aviemore Ice Rink, which AGCT had developed as a highly popular attraction over the previous year. The rink had become an important facility for the trust, generating income and bringing the community together to enjoy skating and other ice sports, including hockey.</p> <p>Rising energy costs were a concern, however these had been balanced by reduced consumption thanks to investment in insulation which had proven effective. Positive relationships had been established with CMSL and Macdonald Hotels, both of whom had supported the venture.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kirsty offered to circulate her presentation following the meeting.
6	<p>Role of CAG – discussion</p>
	<p>Alistair Dodds invited members to discuss the future role of CAG, noting that the group had originally been set up as a forum for HIE and Cairngorm stakeholders to share information, experience and views that would inform effective decision making. Terms of reference had been circulated in advance of the meeting.</p> <p>Various members endorsed the importance of collaboration and the need for this to happen outwith CAG, with all organisations playing their part. There was agreement that CAG had become a useful vehicle for open and frank discussion between the partners. With the funicular almost ready to come back into service, there was an opportunity to strengthen the group’s focus on the longer term vision and short and medium-term actions outlined in the Cairngorm masterplan, in which all stakeholders had a part to play.</p> <p>Following discussion, it was agreed that the terms of reference remained fit for purpose and that CAG will continue to have a strategic focus to optimise the role of Cairngorm as an economic, environmental, educational and sporting asset for the area and for Scotland. Meetings will continue to be arranged up to four times a year.</p>

	<p>Advance notice of subjects to be discussed would be helpful and all members were invited to put forward ideas for agenda items that could be covered in future meetings. It was also agreed that information on membership should be collated and circulated, with each member invited to contribute a short paragraph.</p> <p>Action:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HIE to contact all members for a few lines of information that can be shared with the wider group.
7	Any other business
	<p>Date of next meeting – HIE will look to arrange for the next meeting to be held at Cairngorm Mountain, following the end of the winter season.</p>

Chris Roberts
14 December 2022