

CAIRNGORM FUNICULAR RESPONSE GROUP
MEETING NOTE

Coylumbridge Hotel
Thursday 23 October 2019, 10.00 - 12.00

Present: Bill Lobban (Chair), Convener, The Highland Council
James Gibbs, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Dave MacLeod, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Susan Smith, Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Limited
Colin Matthew, Cairngorm Mountain Scotland Limited
Danny Gallagher, Business Gateway
Chris Taylor, VisitScotland
Keith Taylor, Cairngorms Business Partnership
Duncan Swarbrick, Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust
Alex Ash, Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust
Grant Moir, Cairngorms National Park Authority
Chris Roberts, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Adrian McNaught, 360 Architects
Paul Jardine, Jura Consultants

Apologies: Shaun Roberts, Glenmore Lodge / sportscotland
Megan Griffiths, Glenmore Lodge / sportscotland
Mike Gale, Aviemore Business Association
Rhona Fraser, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Ghillean MacLeod, Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Mark Tate, Cairngorms Business Partnership
Euan Baxter, Snowsports Scotland
Lesley McKenna, Cairngorm Mountain Trust
Mike Dearman, Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust
Jim Cornfoot, Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Limited

1. Welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. Apologies were noted.

Before matters on the agenda got under way, tribute was paid to Gary MacLennan, a member of the group since its inception, who had, sadly, passed away. The Chair noted that, as a prominent local businessman and member of the community, Gary had attended meetings on behalf of Aviemore Business Association, consistently providing helpful and challenging input. The group would be a sadder place without him.

2. Note of the meeting of 29 August 2019

The note was agreed.

3. Introduction to masterplan and planners

360 Architects and Jura Consulting, who have won a contract from HIE to lead on Cairngorm masterplanning, gave a presentation outlining the approach they plan to take. They emphasised that this will be an open, consultative process, designed to invite and draw on the knowledge, views and aspirations of a wide range of stakeholders. Open meetings will be held, and opportunities provided to view plans as they develop, both in physical locations and online.

The starting point will be agreeing a vision, and the resulting masterplan will seek benefits for the economy, environment and community, setting a pattern for development over coming decades. The planners will seek to learn from experience, both locally and from other locations, and the anticipated impacts of climate change will be considered.

Suggestions from the group included:

- Hold at least three community events in different locations to reach as many people as possible
- Establish a presence at Cairngorm itself as a means of reaching visitors to the area as well as local people.
- Promote online information and questionnaire by seeking partnerships with other organisations such as walking, cycling and ski clubs, and by distributing business cards.
- Consider a 'town hall meeting' event, possibly at a later stage of the process when a draft masterplan can be shared for discussion.

It was noted that the CNPA visitor survey and local Business Gateway Facebook pages could provide valuable information, and that the AGM of the Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust on 23 November would provide an opportunity to raise awareness.

4. Update from Cairngorm Mountain (Scotland) Ltd

Susan Smith reported that CMSL staff were currently focused on preparing for the upcoming winter snowsports season, which was due to be launched on Saturday 7 December. The team ethos placed an emphasis on delivering excellent customer service at all times. They would aim to be operational by 0900 each day, and have the car park cleared by 0830 when possible. Early warnings would also be issued through social media and the website on days when the slopes were full or there were problems with access.

More than 580 season tickets had been sold and these would be valid from December 2019 to November 2020.

Positive meetings had been held with accommodation providers and season pass holders, and a new ambassador programme, involving 10 volunteers, was expected to make a difference.

New equipment to replace old stock had been purchased by HIE for lease to CMSL, including a road-clearing Unimog, Cas borer and 3 skidoos.

Alex Ash asked whether CMSL was considering an app for online booking. Susan explained that current technology and broadband made a bookings app impractical at present, but confirmed that it would be considered in future.

- **Action – CMSL:** Keith Taylor suggested that it would be helpful if people could buy tickets and hire skis for Sunday on Saturday night. Susan said the team would look into this.

5. Update from HIE Property and Infrastructure team

Dave MacLeod reported that HIE had appointed Atmos for environmental work and Ryden as planning consultant. HIE was also engaging, without obligation, with a potential civil engineering contractor who would liaise with the design team. This arrangement would save valuable time, in the event that a programme of repair works may ultimately be approved.

Good progress was being made towards the detailed design stage. The internal team in HIE had also been strengthened following recruitment of an experienced structural engineer / project manager.

The group noted the complexity of the engineering challenge presented by the funicular and recommended that this aspect be spelt out clearly in communications concerning future solutions.

The Chair underlined the importance of being well prepared to meet planning timelines that were both lengthy and time-consuming, even for relatively simple applications.

- **Action - HIE:** With reference to the business plan, Duncan Swarbrick said it was important for the community to be aware of the importance of the funicular in economic terms. Bill Lobban endorsed this point. Chris Roberts confirmed that it was planned to include economic impact figures in HIE's communications.

6. Update on masterplan

It was agreed that this subject had been covered fully under agenda item 3.

7. Update from HIE

James Gibbs reported that a member of staff had been assigned to the new role of Cairngorm project manager. Along with the new post in the Property and Infrastructure team, this represented a strengthening of the internal resource within HIE. RSM had been procured as consultants to support business case development.

Cairngorm continued to have a high public profile and was again attracting a large volume of Freedom of Information requests, placing further demands on staff time. The area team continued to work closely with CMSL, and had held a positive meeting with AGCT.

- **Action - HIE:** In response to a request from Grant Moir, James Gibbs agreed to provide an organogram, or similar one-pager, showing HIE's Cairngorm team members, RSM, 360 and Jura Consultants.

8. Update from Aviemore and Glenmore Community Trust

Alex Ash noted that the trust's upcoming AGM could provide a forum to highlight aspects of current activities, including masterplan and business case preparations. A meeting with HIE the previous week was described as productive and it was hoped this would be followed up to build a closer relationship and improve information sharing.

Duncan Swarbrick stressed the need to ensure effective community consultation in the masterplanning process, including recognising the value of local knowledge and expertise.

- **Action - HIE:** AGCT asked to see the scope of work for the masterplanning consultants, and HIE agreed to provide this.

9. Update from Cairngorm Mountain Trust

There was no update at this meeting.

10. Update from Cairngorms Business Partnership

Keith Taylor reported that a community winter launch event would be held on Friday 20 December and suggested that a skidoo could provide a good photo opportunity. This event is separate from the CMSL winter season launch, due to take place on 7 December.

Keith noted that he would be stepping down as CBP Aviemore director in November, although he would remain a member of the business partnership. The Chair confirmed that Keith was welcome to continue as a representative of CBP on the response group, and paid tribute to his valuable input.

CBP stressed the importance of HIE ensuring that its preparations for a potential funicular repair programme continue at pace and do not lose momentum while business plan preparations and masterplanning go ahead. James Gibbs gave an assurance that these different workstreams were being progressed together. Susan Smith also highlighted several works that CMSL was planning to progress in advance of the masterplan being finalised.

11. Update from Glenmore Lodge

There was no update at this meeting.

12. Update from the Highland Council

Danny Gallagher reported that Digital Boost workshops were coming up in Aviemore, offering local businesses opportunities to learn more about digital and social media, including web analytics and targeting customers.

13. Update from CNPA

Grant Moir confirmed that the final report of the Cairngorms snow survey was due in mid-November. This would inform the park authority's climate change policy, scheduled to be considered by its board in December. Work on rural transport was getting under way, and would look at options including public transport improvements and the use of e-bikes.

It was expected that CMSL's current planning application would be considered on 13 December. Statutory objections had been received from SEPA and the Highland Council, which was not unusual, and it was expected that the issues raised would be resolved. In discussion, the importance of carrying out pre-planning consultation was underlined.

14. Any other business

There was no other business.

15. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the group is scheduled for Thursday 9 January 2020.

Chris Roberts
23 October 2019