

MEETING BETWEEN SCOTTISH ENVIRONMENT LINK AND THE CAIRNGORMS NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

APRIL 18 2005

The Convenor of the Cairngorms Campaign, and Dick Balharry a committee member of the Campaign, attended a meeting as part of a delegation from Scottish Environment Link with Board and Staff Members of the Cairngorms National Park Authority. Below is a short report of what was discussed.

Present:-

A Thin(AT), Fiona Newcombe (FN), Eric Baird, Fred Edwards(FE), DickBalharry(DB), D. Watson, Nick Hargreaves, and Jane Hope(JH).

A T was invited by FE to summarise the CNPA's Development Plan and where he saw the CNPA going in the next few years. AT did this, emphasizing that everyone needs to work within the National Park legislation as it stands.

He accepts that, although the CNPA's chief remit is for the management of natural resources, it has almost no powers over them under the NP legislation and that its function is one of being a catalyst to influence and integrate the spend of agencies who do have some such powers. (He cited the CNP's annual spend of £4.5m against the public spend of all agencies within the NP of £118m). Nonetheless, the overall National Park Plan could be powerful if these agencies cooperated. They wish both the Local Plans and the National Park Plan to be in place by September 2006.

In response to DB's questioning, AT stated that the CNPA was particularly devoid of powers to influence what happened in the core zone of the Cairngorms.

AT and park staff are obviously much exercised by the criticisms of lack of achievement by the CNPA as voiced by some members of the environmental lobby and feels their activities are damaging to the CNPA and the environmental lobby. He wants people of influence to stand up and defend the Park and CNPA. AT pointed out that, since the CNPA's role was largely a facilitating and enabling one, most of its most effective results were "soft" and hence not visible. This was accepted by the SEL reps present.

It was pointed out that the effective management of National Parks depended on cooperation between local communities and communities of interest. The CNPA had very effective mechanisms etc for liaising with local communities, however he agreed that this was not the case with communities of interest. A T invited SEL to suggest ways in which this could be achieved. FE said that one useful route would be to use SEL's relevant task forces. This invitation to suggest a better method of liaison with environmental and recreational groups still requires a formal response by SEL.

On the whole, the meeting was constructive and cooperative, with the door open for improved liaison.