

National Park Authority Board Meeting



Corporate Update

Paper for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides a summary updates progress on corporate outcomes, objectives and recent highlights/lowlights since the last report to the Board.

2. Highlights

- 2.1 There was an opportunity for early engagement with our new Minister, Dr Aileen McLeod, in February 2015 and a further meeting, for both the Convener and CEO is scheduled for 19th March 2015. A summer ministerial visit to tour the park is expected later in the year.
- 2.2 We are delighted to welcome our new Ministerial Board appointment with the formal announcement from Scottish Government being expected by mid-March 2015.

3. Lowlights

- 3.1 Due to weather conditions in January, our annual National Park Partnership Plan Review meeting with partners had to be cancelled. We plan to schedule an earlier meeting for this year which we hope will be chaired by our new Minister.

4. Chief Executive Office Update

- 4.1 Our relations with Scottish Government continue to be positive. In particular, as well as the recent meeting with our Minister, a meeting with Director, Bridget Campbell, who succeeds Bob McIntosh, took place. Bridget Campbell will assume her post of Director of Environment & Forestry on 10th March 2015, took place. A follow up visit to the park, accompanied by Graeme Dickson, Director General in April 2015 will give us a further excellent opportunity to showcase the work we do and our aspirations in support of the Scottish Government agenda.
- 4.2 The National Park Authority Board Code of Conduct has now been approved by Scottish Government. The approved document (appendix 1) is now available to view on the National Park website and Board microsite.
- 4.3 We have received confirmation from Scottish Ministers of the budget and associated grant in aid allocated for 2014-2015, which includes guidance on Ministerial priorities for the current year (appendix 2).

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- 4.4 National Park Limited / National Park Enterprises CLG was approved at an ANPA Executive meeting of all Chairs in December. Future updates will be provided throughout the year.
- 4.5 A number of ENFOR Chief Executive meetings have taken place over the past year. These have explored opportunities for stronger alignment and collaboration between ENFOR bodies.
- 4.6 The Cabinet Secretary has agreed that a 'Rural Affairs, Food and Environment Delivery Board' (RAFE) will be established to help drive operational and cultural alignment across the rural affairs, food and environment portfolio and, in doing so, to take forward the ENFOR Review and also ensure that relevant elements of Brian Pack's recommendations are taken forward. Mr Lochhead will chair the Board himself, with Jonathan Pryce, Director of Rural and Environment and Bridget Campbell to act as deputy chairs. Because of the focus on delivery, the Board Members will be the Chief Executives of the main delivery bodies in environment and agriculture, along with some non-executives. It is envisaged that meeting of Chairs will also take place as part of this process.
- 4.7 Our relations with key partners continue to be very constructive with productive engagements held over the winter period with Police Scotland, Scottish Enterprise and Argyll & Bute Council.
- 4.8 A joint meeting involving the National Park, Scottish Government Clinical Health, SNH and West Dunbartonshire Council took place to explore a potential physical health collaborative which could be introduced locally as a prototype project. Scottish Government Clinical Health and the Improvement Team are taking this action forward to develop opportunities in support of the Scottish Government national outcome that we should all live longer, healthier lives.
- 4.9 A joint management meeting with Cairngorms National Park Authority took place during early January. The meeting was very productive and it was agreed joint working between both parks be better promoted to showcase the already excellent examples of good practice in support of the Scottish Government Public Service Reform agenda.
- 4.10 2015 marks the 10th anniversary of Scottish Environment Week and the theme this year is Sharing Scotland. Both National Parks supported a recent Scottish Environment Link evening reception at the Scottish Parliament. Colin Prior was the guest speaker for the evening. The event was a success and well received by all involved.

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5. Corporate Progress (non-Statutory Compliance)

5.1 Marketing and Communications

Corporate Plan Outcome: Informed and engaged stakeholders; communities, visitors, strategic partners, staff and Scottish Government

5.1.1 Following the announcement that Gordon Watson was appointed to the position of Chief Executive in early January, some one-to-one media interviews that we had set up served the useful dual purpose of both outlining his plans, priorities and ambitions as well as addressing misconceptions about Your Park. Coverage appeared in Grough and Scotland Outdoors as well as the Stirling Observer and Lennox Herald.

5.1.2 The need for the National Park to develop a new website that will replace the current version of the site at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org has been brought to the fore since December 2014 by an increasing number of technical issues. The most significant factor in the issues we are experiencing is the age of the content management system that sits behind the website and is integral to its running. The team are working closely with our contracted external suppliers of digital services to mitigate any risk associated with these issues as best as possible, as well as re-prioritising the project to develop a completely new website as well as considering an interim solution. The timescales for delivery of any new site should be anticipated to be Quarter 3/Quarter 4 of 2015/16.

5.2 Staff Engagement

Corporate Plan Staff Engagement Outcome: Informed and engaged stakeholders; communities, visitors, strategic partners, staff and Scottish Government

5.2.1 All teams continue to work on their staff survey action plans for the areas they would like to improve on but the big news from Best Companies is that we are number 96 in the top 100 not-for-profit Best Companies to work for. Staff celebrations began in January at Fiona's farewell 10:02 and will continue on our very own 'Comic Relief Fun Day' in March 2015 with a number of events planned to mark this special occasion across the organisation. Throughout the year we will look to maximise this fantastic achievement within our recruitment campaigns and corporate communications.

5.3 Financial Report

Corporate Plan Financial Outcome: Exemplify good practice in the use of public funds, corporate governance, policies, systems and procedures.

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- 5.3.1 The financial position for the nine months ended 31st December 2014 is that we realised Net Income of £811k as compared with budgeted Net Income of £603k. Project expenditure continues to be lower than we had planned for this stage of the year however we still expect to achieve delivery of all projects. We are continuing to forecast an outturn over-spend for the year of £110k. We are still waiting on a formal response from our sponsor department in relation to our request for support for exceptional items, such as the Local Board Member elections. The management accounts, comparing the actual results to the Revised Budget are attached at appendix 3 to this report and the key variances are explained below.
- 5.3.2 Operating income is £30k ahead of the revised budget with actual income being £5,983k v budget of £5,953k. Planning fee income has increased and is now £20k ahead of the revised budget. The John Muir Conference was so successful we have been able to recognise income of £9k in relation to staff time.
- 5.3.3 Operating expenditure was £70k less than revised budget (actual £4,637k v revised budget of £4,708k). The YTD under-spends in Staff Costs (£25k), Property Costs (£5k), Transport costs (£16k) and ICT costs (£34k) are simply timing and these budgets are expected to be utilised in full by the end of the year. The under-spend on Supplies & Services (£5k) and Administration Costs (£6k) will assist in offsetting some of the over-spends on project costs explained below.
- 5.3.4 Project income is in line with the revised budget and project expenditure is £105k less than the revised budget YTD.
- 5.3.5 Overall net expenditure on projects is £107k behind schedule with the majority of this (£91k) being in the Visitor Management service area. The project managers are fully aware of the delivery expectations and at this stage we still expect our project expenditure to be on target for the full year.

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