

National Park Authority Board Meeting



Visitor Management Update

Paper for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This report provides a summary update on progress towards achieving Visitor Management objectives and recent highlights since the last report to the Board.

2. Highlights

- 2.1. The public consultation on the Your Park proposals ended on 12 January with 336 organisations and individuals responding to the byelaws proposals and 386 to the camping development questions.
- 2.2. Construction of the third scenic routes installation has started at Inveruglas; and phase 2 of the 5 Lochs visitor facilities improvements at Loch Venepar are well underway, with all works scheduled to complete by April.

3. National Park Partnership Plan outcome:

- 3.1. A high quality, authentic experience for visitors, with many opportunities to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural heritage, within an internationally renowned landscape that compares to the best on offer around the world.

4. Corporate Plan outcomes:

- 4.1. Improved quality of life for residents and enjoyment for visitors.
- 4.2. Increased engagement in the Park through education, volunteering and outreach opportunities
- 4.3. Responsible and managed access to the National Park.

5. Progress

Your Park

- 5.1. The public consultation for the Your Park proposals ended on 12 January, following a flurry of media activity and interest over the final weekend. The number of valid responses received from individuals and organisations totalled 336 on the byelaws

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proposals and 386 on camping development. The process of analysing the comments and preparing recommendations is underway.

5 Lochs Phase 2 Site Improvements

- 5.2. Work has started on the Loch Venepar parking and day visitor areas on the south shore, along with low key landscaping at the north shore car parks. Due to budget constraints improvements to the Bracklinn Falls car park will not progress this financial year. Haddens Construction Ltd is the appointed contractor and work is progressing well and on track for completion in time for the start of the season.

Scenic Routes

- 5.3. The construction and installation of the third scenic routes design is underway at Inveruglas on the west side of Loch Lomond. The contractor, Land Engineering, have completed the ground preparations and access path and work has started on building the timber stepped viewing platform. The site will be completed by April with an official opening planned for early summer.

Access & Recreation

- 5.4. Progress continues on delivering the actions from the Outdoor Recreation Plan with a focus on supporting local communities to improve or create local and strategic multi-use paths. Drymen Community Development Trust are progressing the upgrade and construction of the Drymen to Balmaha path link and have secured funding of £6k for a design study of the Croftamie to Drymen link. The St Fillans Development Trust have awarded the tender for design and landowner negotiations for the Loch Earn Railway Path and work began in January. Strathyre Community Development Trust have completed the feasibility study for an Immervoulin to Strathyre all abilities path link and are now looking at funding options for the construction.
- 5.5. Following the successful application to HLF last year, the Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust submitted the stage 2 application to the Heritage Lottery Fund for the joint National Parks The Mountains and the People project. The application will be considered in May and if approved the 5 year project will immediately start on tackling mountain path erosion in both Parks.
- 5.6. The last of three court sessions relating to the Land Reform Act section 14 access case at Drumlean estate was heard at Stirling Sheriff Court from 3rd Feb to 5th Feb. This was

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followed by a site visit by the Sheriff on 24th February. A judgement is anticipated in the next few months.

6. Visitor Management

- 6.1. The seasonal ranger recruitment programme for 2015 began on 18th February, with an internally operated assessment centre approach over four days. Contracts of varying lengths will be offered this year to support our visitor management activities between April and September.
- 6.2. The winter repair and maintenance programme is underway across our countryside sites, paths and infrastructure utilising both external contractors and our rangers to deal with both routine and reactive tasks. Adverse winter weather conditions have resulted in a range of repairs and remedial works, for example the collapse of a loch side section of the WHW south of Milarrochy, tree works and bridge repairs. Whilst routine tasks progress including inspections of hazard and navigation buoys on Loch Lomond.

7. Education and Inclusion

- 7.1 Our work with the ENFOR Outdoor Learning Partnership has resulted in the development of a proposal from Backbone, a national community organisation specialising in engagement with hard to reach groups. The project will help us to engage with hard to reach and disadvantaged groups through the provision of leader training and learning opportunities.
- 7.2 A draft Outdoor Learning and Outreach plan is being prepared which will detail our priorities and actions for the next 2 years, identifying key partnerships and focus in the delivery of our NPPP outcomes.
- 7.3 A contract has been awarded to digital media specialists to undertake the design and creation of the John Muir Award digital record book. The book (app) will be ready by end 2015. Bespoke copies of the John Muir Award booklet, which reflect contextual information about Scotland's National Parks and specific information around our key messages are also in production.

8. Volunteering

- 8.1. Over this period volunteers have contributed over 500 hours of their time to undertaking practical conservation projects, including work on moving and maintaining

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tawny and barn owl boxes and a reclamation project on Loch Earn reinstating a small section of once attractive loch shore to its natural state.

- 8.2. On Saturday 24th January an induction day was held for our new volunteer rangers. The day was planned with the help of our current VR's who also came along on the day to help out and share their experiences. The training and learning from the day will be complimented by area familiarisation days throughout Feb/March and then a full pre season meeting on the 14th March with all 80 of our volunteer rangers.
- 8.3. The first Volunteer Partnerships meeting is scheduled for March, including representatives from the Woodland Trust, RSPB, Forestry Commission, National Trust Scotland, Great Trossachs Forest, Fisheries Trusts, Countryside Trust and FOLLAT. The group aims to bring together best practice from partners who work with volunteers across the National Park area.

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