

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 5

Your Park Delivery Report Campsite and permit area pricing



Paper for decision

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Preparations for the introduction of four Camping Management Zones (covering less than 4% of the National Park) have progressed significantly since Scottish Ministers confirmed approval of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Camping Management Byelaws in January 2016, with an implementation date set for the 1st March 2017. At its meeting of 24th October 2016, the Board confirmed a significant step towards implementation by approving the Camping Development Strategy, which set out how more than 300 camping places will be provided for in 2017 and where priorities for facilities should be.
- 1.2 The purpose of this paper is to (i) provide an update for members on Your Park project activity, (ii) provide a recommended approach for permit and campsite pitch pricing, and (iii) set out the proposed approach to branding and signage for camping in the Camping Management Zones.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
 - a) **note** the contents of this report
 - b) **approve** the 2017 pricing for the Your Park campsites and the permit scheme as set out in Section 5 of the report
 - c) **endorse** the proposed approach to branding and signage

3. Background

- 3.1 The Your Park project activities are grouped broadly under three priority work areas:
 - **Camping Infrastructure and Management:** implement the development priorities within the Camping Development Strategy, including delivery of campsite provision and camping permit scheme; design and install information and advisory signage for visitors.
 - **Operational Management:** prepare administrative and support systems for managing camping activity and byelaw enforcement and monitoring; prepare operational arrangements such as staffing models, systems and training.

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- **Communications and Engagement:** develop a communications plan with agreed key messages, raise awareness of the byelaws and improved camping provision within the Camping Management Zones that will be in place for the 2017 season. This is in addition to continued education activities and provision of information to the public on responsible access and behaviour in the National Park.

4. Update against the agreed Annual Operational Plan 2016/17 activities and key milestones

4.1 **Camping Infrastructure and Management**

Key Milestones:

- Finalise the Camping Development Strategy and implement actions prioritised for 2016/17
The National Park Authority confirmed how it would provide at least 300 camping places within the Camping Management Zones by the time of the byelaws come into operation on 1st March 2017 by approving a Camping Management Strategy on 21st October 2016.
- 300 camping places available by 1st March 2017
Work is underway at Loch Chon in the Trossachs West Camping Management Zone to develop a 26-pitch campsite that will be operational for the commencement of the byelaws in March 2017. The permit areas across the Camping Management Zones have been defined. Design feasibility work is due to get underway to introduce toilet and parking facilities at locations in the Three Lochs Forest Drive and South Loch Earn permit areas in the Trossachs North Camping Management Zone.
- Design and install signage
The proposed approach to branding and design of signage is described elsewhere in this report. Both Transport Scotland and Stirling Council are supporting work to finalise signage design and specifications for compliant roadside signage. Work to roll out signage on the ground is due to start in the New Year.

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4.2 Operational Management

Key Milestones:

- Design, trial and implement systems to support operational delivery.
The systems needed for operational delivery are focussed on two main elements: an online booking system for campsites and permits and an improved system to manage intelligence information to inform deploy our staff in a more responsive manner. Officers are also working with the Scottish Futures Trust and the University of Strathclyde to find a solution to the poor broadband and mobile phone connectivity issues across some parts of the Camping Management Zones.
- Campsite and camping permit system functional by 1st Jan 2017.
A contractor has been appointed to complete the work on the booking system for campsites and permits. The scope has been determined and work is on track to have the system available for use by the public in mid-February.
- Operational system ready for the end Feb 2017.
We are working with Scottish Futures Trust to explore communications options for minimising the impact of the existing mobile and broadband blackspots across parts of the Camping Management Zones.
- Review of Ranger patrol deployment and Partnership working.
Recruitment for the seasonal staff complement for 2017 is underway and a full training plan covering engagement and enforcement is programmed for all Rangers and supporting staff for February 2017.
- Implement Fixed Penalty Notice litter and fly-tipping powers.
The required systems, processes and training were all delivered to allow the Ranger Service to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPN) for litter and fly-tipping offences. To date 1 FPN for fly-tipping has been issued and payment of the fine was received within the 14-day payment period (100% compliance to date). Opportunities for Park Authority staff to liaise with Enforcement Officers from the Local Authorities are being explored as a means of providing further training and mentoring on the use of FPNs.

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4.3 Communications and Engagement

Key Milestones:

- Implement communications plan.

The 'Respect Your Park' campaign was successfully delivered through the Ranger Service and our Volunteer Rangers over the 2016 summer season. Outreach sessions have also been delivered in 'Go Outdoors' stores in Glasgow, to raise further awareness of the key responsible behaviours messages.

The communications plan has also focussed on working with our key communities and stakeholders to ensure they are fully up to speed with the progress of the project. In early November the first Your Park Stakeholder Forum meetings took place. This forum aims to keep partners and stakeholders informed of progress on the planning and implementation of the new camping byelaws and camping provision. Additionally it provides an open line of communication between partners, stakeholders and the National Park Authority to ensure that a wide range of perspectives feed into the management and monitoring of the byelaws.

Joint communications planning sessions with SNH communications team have taken place to ensure a consistent approach to communicating both responsible behaviour messages and where and how to camp within the National Park.

5. Campsite and permit pricing

- 5.1. The areas that have been identified in the Camping Development Strategy as either permit areas or potential campsites are focussed on locations that are currently popular for camping in the Camping Management Zones.
- 5.2. Camping permits allow 'wild camping' to continue at sustainable levels in appropriate locations, while the campsites envisaged will provide opportunities for bookable pitches on sites with some basic facilities such as toilets, water and parking.

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- 5.3. There are a wide range of privately-run campsites in the Park, which vary in scale, level of facilities provided and price charged. As illustrated in Figure 1, campsites provided as part of the Your Project are aiming to provide more basic facilities than most privately-run sites and booking charges should therefore be lower cost in reflection of this.

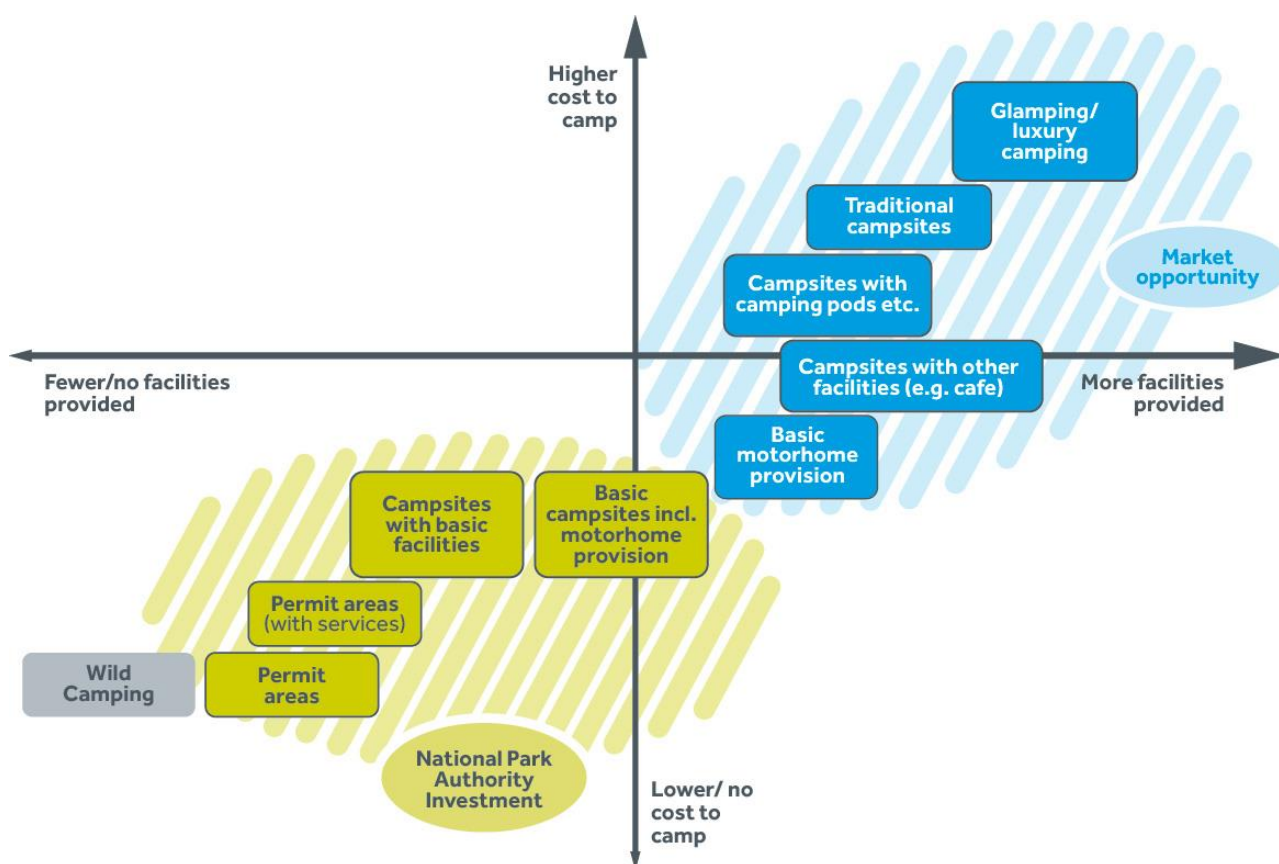


Figure 1: Camping provision – cost and facilities map

- 5.4. While charging for campsite pitches will enable some cost recovery for the costs of running sites (staffing, maintain facilities, online booking system) pricing needs to ensure that sites are accessible be used from people of all backgrounds and incomes.

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- 5.5. The main purpose of camping permits is to manage the amount of camping within a permit area, whilst also encouraging more responsible behaviours. The ability to book permits in advance online creates a transaction whereby a small charge per tent/motorhome can offset some of the costs for administering the system, as well as those costs associated with ensuring the areas are used responsibly, and that byelaws are complied with.
- 5.6. The introduction of charges therefore has to balance the need to ensure that camping is low-cost and accessible to all, while recognising the need to recover some of the costs of looking after these busy locations.
- 5.7. The 2017 season provides an opportunity to learn from the experience of running campsites and permit areas within the new Camping Management Zones. Plans set out in the Camping Development Strategy will form the basis of provision for this preliminary season. Insight gathered across the season will be used to build further understanding of how visitors want to use our campsites and permit areas. The permit system in particular is designed to be flexible and responsive. This will allow provision in 2018 and beyond to be adjusted accordingly.

Permits: Charging Considerations

- 5.8. The Park Authority is currently unique in the UK in its ability to issue camping permits within an area where camping byelaws apply. A permit issues a temporary exemption from the byelaws to allow wild camping or overnight stays for motorhomes, within associated terms and conditions.
- 5.9. An online booking system will manage the permit allocations within the Camping Management Zones. Visitors will receive an e-permit and booking reference. Each booking confirmation will include a reminder about responsible behaviour, as outlined in the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, with specific reference on how to camp responsibly.
- 5.10. The online booking system simplifies the process of obtaining a permit and reduces the need for National Park Authority staff to administer bookings and payments manually. It also allows accurate information on the use of permits across the Camping Management Zones to be gathered for monitoring purposes. There will continue to be a role for National Park Authority staff to support visitors to make bookings, clarify information or make the most of their visit via telephone, email or in person. Terms and conditions associated with each permit will also support the management of manage irresponsible behaviour.

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- 5.11. The permit charge must be affordable. It should also make a contribution towards the costs of managing the permit scheme. Costs include the service provided by the Park to keep locations in good condition. An online cloud-based booking system for both permits and campsites has been competitively procured. In some permit areas there will be toilet facilities available which require to be maintained in good order.
- 5.12. **In order to recover some of the costs of running the permit scheme (including the booking system, maintaining and patrolling to ensure these sites are used responsibly and that byelaws are complied with) officers recommend a permit charge of £3 (inc. VAT) per tent/motorhome per night.**
- 5.13. Campsites: charging considerations:
- 5.13.1. In addition to a range of privately-run campsites across the National Park, there is an existing campsite adjacent to The Cabin at Loch Lubnaig, which was developed by the National Park Authority, and is operated by a sub-tenant. Forest Enterprise Scotland operates the Salloch Bay campsite, which is located within the existing East Loch Lomond byelaw zone.
- 5.13.2. In 2017 the National Park Authority will open an additional campsite at Loch Chon, which will be managed by National Park Authority staff. Providing an on-site presence will allow for a high quality service provided for those that use the site. Staff will be available to welcome visitors and ensure the site is well maintained and used responsibly.
- 5.13.3. Developing National Park Authority operated campsites as part of the Your Park Project is not a commercially driven initiative. The income generated will make contribution towards ongoing operational costs and maintaining visitor infrastructure, but will not cover the full costs of managing these sites.
- 5.13.4. There is a need to strike an appropriate balance between affordability and the need to offset some of the operating costs of the sites. For this reason it is considered appropriate to set the nightly charge at the Loch Chon campsite at £7.00 per adult. To ensure that costs remain affordable for family groups it is proposed that there is no charge for children aged under 16. These charging levels remain significantly lower than larger privately-run campsites. The proposed pricing structure for Loch Chon will also apply at the campsite at Loch Lubnaig. Conversations are ongoing

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with Forest Enterprise Scotland regarding pricing at Salloch Bay campsite on East Loch Lomond.

5.13.5. **It is recommended that campsite fees of £7.00 per adult per night will apply from the 1st March 2017. It is recommend that children aged under 16 years old should go free.**

5.13.6. Campsite and Permit Area pricing will form part of the annual review that the National Park Authority will undertake in the autumn of 2017 and subsequent years. Any potential adjustments would be brought to the National Park Board for approval.

6. Branding and signage

6.1. At the heart of the Your Park project lies a desire to improve the camping experience within the National Park whilst helping people camp responsibly. Camping provides a great way to make the most of the outdoors, to enjoy the special qualities of the Park, whether it is alongside other forms of recreation, or simply the enjoyment of nature.

6.2. Signage plays a very important role within the project. It helps ensure there is a clear understanding of:

- The areas covered by the camping byelaws (the 'Camping Management Zones')
- Areas within a Camping Management Zone where camping is permitted (either in a campsite or within a permit area)
- What facilities can be expected either on a campsite, or within a permit area
- The penalties for not complying with the byelaws.

6.3. A brand identity system has been developed to aid communication. The 'Camping in Park' branding draws on the visual language (colours and typography) of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park brand. There are visual cues within the design that reference international National Parks and the sense of specialness and reverence that they bring.

6.4. Three key types of sign will be used to effectively communicate:

- When entering a Camping Management Zone (both roadside and path signage) and reminders further along the road or path.
- Interpretation signage to provide more information about an area, including where to camp within a Camping Management Zone

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- Areas where camping is permitted (either in a campsite or within a permit area)
- 6.5. The copy (wording) used on the signs recognises the important role camping can play in helping people enjoy the National Park, and promotes responsible camping. Examples of each type of sign can be found in **Appendix 1**.
- 6.6. Whilst it is important to ensure clear communication of the points above, any signage in the National Park needs to adhere to both any regulatory requirements/guidelines (e.g. signage on trunk roads) and be sympathetic to its surroundings. Signage plays an important role in the overall communications mix in raising awareness and providing information on the ground within the Camping Management Zones, but it is not the sole means by which the Park Authority will raise awareness of the new byelaws and camping provision.
- 6.7. The number and location of signs will be carefully managed to ensure effective communication and good levels of awareness, but avoid unnecessary signage clutter. There will be an initial deployment of signage for the 2017 season and its effectiveness will be kept under review on an annual basis to assess where any additional signage may be needed to guide the public.
- 6.8. **Members are asked to endorse the approach to the branding and signage associated with the Camping Management Zones as illustrated in Appendix 1 of this report.**

Appendix 1 – Camping in the Park Signage Examples

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