

Chairs and Executive Meeting

Agenda Item 7

Briefing Paper:

Scottish Government Operating Environment



Paper for information

1. Purpose

To provide an overview of significant issues and developments in the National Park operating environment.

2. Recommendation

Board Members are asked to note the contents of this report and the attached appendices.

3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan

The report discusses topics which cover a number of outcomes and priorities from across the National Park Partnership Plan 2018-23.

4. Introduction

This paper gives a brief overview of significant Scottish Government policy developments which will affect the operating environment of the National Park. Particularly significant recent developments have been the revised *National Performance Framework* and the development of an *Environment Strategy for Scotland*.

We have been considering how these and other significant Scottish Government policy development impact on the implementation of our new National Park Partnership and Corporate Plans, and how our priorities are placed within the most pertinent parts of the emerging policy landscape. Information is provided on the following:

1. The revised *National Performance Framework*
2. The development of an *Environment Strategy for Scotland* (discussion paper)
3. The new *Public Health Priorities for Scotland*
4. Other noteworthy policy developments, namely:
 - i. *Planning Policy*
 - ii. *Land Use*
 - iii. *Forestry Strategy*
 - iv. *Future of Agriculture and the Rural Economy*
 - v. *Climate Change*
 - vi. *Marine Environment*

The Scottish Government's approach to for the Environment Strategy is to look at longer-term policy goals and aspirations which will help both guide responses to the the immediate challenges of the UK's exit from the EU but more fundamentally to support future funding and policy decisions following exit. The National Park Authority while a party to Scottish Government positions on post-brexit settlements on devolved responsibilities and resources, will be monitoring the situation and be considering how to adapt to evolving events.

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5. Scotland's National Performance Framework

The *National Performance Framework (NPF)* was placed on a statutory footing with the *Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015* and consequently has been revised and was relaunched in June. The NPF is a unified vision for Scotland and it is made up of eleven outcomes, a Purpose and Values Statements, and 81 indicators. The overall package is designed to go beyond measuring GDP to help achieve goals that improve the wellbeing and quality of life of the people of Scotland. The purpose, values and outcomes are summarised in the diagram at Appendix A. Further details, including the indicators that sit under each outcome and the linkages to the sustainable development goals, are available on the new [NPF website](#).

What does it mean for the Park Authority?

There is a strong relationship with the previous Purpose Statement and set of National Outcomes. Overall the direction of travel appears to be very similar, with the important exception of the increased emphasis on human rights, wellbeing and equalities. As explained in our current 5-year Plan, through delivery of both it and the National Park Partnership Plan 2018-23 we will focus on these three Outcomes:

- We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe
- We are healthy and active
- We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

We will also contribute towards achievement of these six National Outcomes:

- We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy
- We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society
- We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone
- We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

6. Developing an Environment Strategy for Scotland, a discussion paper

As noted in the Board bulletin, the Strategy takes forward the commitment in the *2017/18 Programme for Government* to develop a strategic approach on environmental policy to protect and enhance our environment, safeguard natural capital and continue Scotland's leading role in addressing environmental challenges.

The purpose of the Strategy is to help coordinate action and guide future prioritisation across Scotland's existing environment policies; addressing biodiversity, land use, water, air, seas, climate change, the circular economy and people's connection with nature. It will provide an overarching vision and set of high level outcomes that the individual strategies in these areas work collectively to deliver.

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A [Discussion Paper](#) has been presented as part of the development of a Strategy and is currently out for public consultation. As an organisation we are part of its development through the Scottish Government Energy & Environment Leaders Group (EELG).

The discussion paper lays out the case and presents the draft vision and outcomes, including the overt ties to the [National Outcomes](#) and [Sustainable Development Goals](#), please see the diagram at **Appendix B**. The Paper also gives information on the process of the consultation itself and how the Strategy relates to the UK's exit from the EU.

What does it mean for the Park Authority?

Similarly to the NPF this will become an important frame of reference for us both in prioritising what we do and demonstrating what benefits we contribute to Scotland. This includes influencing how we collaborate with the other public bodies who manage the environment.

The paper does not yet identify the priorities for action and resources to achieve the vision and outcomes and this may be developed at the next stage. Drawing on our expertise in delivering policy on the ground, officers are currently considering the discussion paper and how we can demonstrate the ways the strategy can be delivered, particularly what sources of evidence we could contribute and the associated priorities. **Appendix C** shows early consideration of the draft Outcomes against the outcomes and priorities of the Partnership Plan. This indicates that we are well positioned within the emerging thinking. Nonetheless the draft Outcomes do have some limitations in that they do not reflect the full scope of our contribution, and arguably the strengths of the portfolio. This is particularly with regards to the role of the environment in economic growth, community-led regeneration, and health and wellbeing. We will continue to provide feedback directly to the Scottish Government through EELG as the Outcomes and Strategy are further developed.

7. Public Health Priorities for Scotland

The Scottish Government and COSLA, working with a range of partners and stakeholders, have developed a set of public health priorities for Scotland. The six priorities are:

- A Scotland where we live in vibrant, healthy and safe places and communities.
- A Scotland where we flourish in our early years.
- A Scotland where we have good mental wellbeing.
- A Scotland where we reduce the use of and harm from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.
- A Scotland where we have a sustainable, inclusive economy with equality of outcomes for all.
- A Scotland where we eat well, have a healthy weight and are physically active.

The agreed priorities reflect public health challenges that are important to focus on over the next decade to improve the public's health. The Public Health Priorities for Scotland document lays out the evidence and imperative for action that underpins all the priorities, and high-level information on what needs to be done and who will be involved.

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What does it mean for the Park Authority?

Similarly to the NPF, the aim is to elicit a system-wide response and provide an evidence-based framework for action to improve Public Health that is collaborative and necessarily 'upstream' of the NHS. We see it as significant that both National Park Authorities were seen as part of this work and were asked to publically endorse the Priorities.

The priorities emphasise the need for delivery against our already-identified health and wellbeing priorities as captured in the Partnership Plan. They also provide insight into where our work can go further, as well as forming a common ground across the public sector that could help us in forging new or enhanced delivery partnerships. Publication also presents an important opportunity to work with EELG partners in collectively demonstrating the role we can play, the strong links between the environment, health and the economy, and exploring the potential for cross-portfolio initiatives.

8. Other Noteworthy Policy Developments

Planning Policy

The 2017 Planning (Scotland) Bill recently completed its Stage 1 scrutiny. Stage 2 consideration, by the Local Government and Communities Committee, will commence on 12 September with current indication that the Bill may not be passed until December 2018 at the earliest. The purpose of the Bill is to identify where legislation can support more effective delivery of development by the planning system, particularly housing as well as generally improve public engagement and the efficiency of producing well considered and community led Local Development Plans.

The main implications for the Authority as a planning authority are twofold; uncertainty in terms of amendments and in turn key requirements such as changes to the appeals process (including a reintroduction of the debate over third party rights of appeal). Secondly, there are proposals which may change the current requirements for the preparation and review of Local Development Plans. The delay of the Bill's passage by approximately 6 months will have an impact on the timelines and approach to preparing our new Local Development Plan through transitional arrangements. There is a difficulty with getting preparatory work underway when there is uncertainty over what the new statutory requirements will be.

Land Use

There are a number of interconnected legislative and policy measures that, in short, support and frame our work to deliver sustainable land use on the ground. These include completing the devolution of Forestry and the Crown Estate, the continued implementation of the Land Reform and Community Empowerment Acts, and the ongoing delivery of the Land Use Strategy 2016-21. Of particular note is the establishment of the Scottish Land Commission, the role of emission reductions from land in the Climate Change Action Plan, and the emerging thinking on the Forestry Strategy (see 4c). Work is also underway to realise Land Use objectives through the ongoing reforms to the planning system (see 4a) and the future of agriculture policy (see 4d). A number of discussion papers have been published and it is anticipated that the Land Commission will soon be

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publishing its own advice to the Scottish Government on a range of matters of interest to the National Park, including how to overcome land ownership barriers to sustainable development.

Scottish Government Forestry Strategy

The Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Bill was introduced in the Scottish Parliament on 10 May 2017 and enacted in May 2018. Its main purpose is to devolve the powers and duties of UK Forestry Commissioners in Scotland to Scottish Ministers. One of the requirements of the Act is the need to publish a forestry strategy by April 2019, and the Park Authority has engaged in discussions regarding the drafting of this new strategy. To ensure that Forestry delivers a greater range of public benefit in the future, both in the Park and nationally, the strategy needs to be better integrated with other land use policy and management. To effectively deliver our National Park Partnership Plan outcomes we need the strategy to contain commitments such as expanding native woodland, delivering climate change targets, natural flood management measures, increasing recreational access, developing rural skills, (including tourism) and providing options for housing.

The Act has also specified governance and organisation change. Organisational arrangements to manage and administer Scottish Ministers' forestry responsibilities will be in place in April 2019. There will be two new agencies within Scottish Government:

- **Scottish Forestry** - regulatory, policy, support and grant-giving functions will transfer from FCS to become an agency of the Scottish Government.
- **Forestry and Land Scotland** - management of the Scottish Ministers' National Forest Estate for multiple outcomes will transfer from FES, an agency of the Forestry Commissioners, to, an agency of the Scottish Government.

On 5 February 2018 a statement, [Forestry in Scotland](#), was published which outlined how the Scottish Government intended to manage and administer its future forestry responsibilities. An updated statement with the final organisational arrangements will be published by 1 April 2019.

One benefit of this is expected to be allowing the new body to manage the National Forest estate for a wider range of public benefits including non-forestry purposes, which could include recreation, biodiversity interests, renewables or other development. However there is a risk that the change could also result in less emphasis on the Park, as the single forest district covering the Park will be subsumed into a new, larger Central Scotland region with potentially less locally focused resource. This is something we will liaise closely with forestry colleagues over in the coming months.

National Park Trees & Woodlands Strategy – Following on from this national level policy development we will also shortly begin drafting a Trees and Woodland Strategy for the National Park which will lay out how the related outcomes, priorities and targets within the National Park Partnership Plan will be delivered. Key drivers in this strategy include providing greater incentives to support new woodland creation and management in the Park, prioritising new native woodlands, restructuring of forests to reflect key landscape views and promoting Natural Flood Management and carbon sequestration.

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Future of Agriculture and the Rural Economy

The Scottish Government has laid out proposals for agriculture and rural support during a transition period of 5 years upon the UK's exit of the EU, through a consultation 'Stability and Simplicity – proposals for a rural funding transition period'. This is part of the development of long-term policy thinking on agriculture and the rural economy and includes detailed work being carried out by the Agriculture champs and National Council of Rural Advisers. Both National Parks are working together to feed in our views on this matter through our Sponsor Team. To effectively deliver National Park Partnership Plan outcomes we have a number of asks, including continuity of SRDP funding, a regionalised approach to agri-environment, forestry schemes based on local priorities, the use of NPs to develop and pilot new approaches to tailor schemes to deliver on the ground and more funding to decrease the farming of subsidies and improve delivery of sustainable land use gains on the ground.

Climate Change

Mitigating and adapting to Climate Change continues to be an area of significant focus, with the publication of the new Climate Change Plan and the new, more ambitious targets of the Climate Change (Emissions Reduction Targets) (Scotland) Bill. This further emphasises the need for delivery against the Park Authority's Climate Change Plan and the importance of our statutory annual report. Within our National Park Partnership Plan we have key priorities and targets focused on mitigating and adapting to climate change, including peatland restoration, woodland expansion, increased active travel and renewable energy developments. Our 5 Year Plan also prioritises an effort to become a low carbon organisation.

Marine Environment

This is an area of significant policy development for the Scottish Government, with plans for increased levels of marine protection. These include consideration of four new Marine Protected Areas (no areas directly relevant to the Park), the piloting of regional marine planning areas (including the Clyde Marine Planning Partnership of which we are a member), and the introduction of new powers to protect Priority Marine Features from potentially damaging fishing impacts where these are found outside Marine Protected areas. Two of these features are found in Loch Long; horse mussel beds and blue mussel beds.

Appendix A: Scotland's National Performance Framework

Appendix B: Developing an Environment Strategy, draft vision and outcomes

Appendix C: Initial outcomes mapping, Environment Strategy draft and Partnership Plan

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Appendix A: Scotland's National Performance Framework



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Appendix B: Developing an Environment Strategy, draft vision and outcomes



The National Outcomes will help to achieve
Our Purpose:
To focus on creating a more successful country with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish through increased wellbeing, and sustainable and inclusive economic growth.

The Environment Strategy will contribute to delivering the following **additional** National Outcomes and Sustainable Development Goals:

- We tackle poverty by sharing opportunities, wealth and power more equally
- We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential
- We are well-educated, skilled and able to contribute to society



- We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

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Outcome 6: Water Recreation Priority 6.1: Water Facilities Priority 6.2: Waterbus Network Priority 6.3: Water Recreation							Health & Sport
Outcome 7: Visitor Economy Priority 7.1: Growing Tourism Markets Priority 7.2: Connectivity							Finance, Economy & Fair Work; Culture, Tourism & External Affairs
Outcome 8: Visitor Management Priority 8.1: Visitor Management Priority 8.2: Public Transport							
Outcome 9: Health & Learning Priority 9.1: Health Improvement Priority 9.2: Engagement & Learning							Health & Sport
Outcome 10: Placemaking Priority 10.1: Improving Towns & Villages Priority 10.2: Built Heritage Priority 10.3: Improved Resilience							Communities & Local Government; Health and Sport
Outcome 11: Sustainable Growth Priority 11.1: Low Carbon Economy Priority 11.2: Rural Diversification Priority 11.3: Infrastructure for Business Growth Priority 11.4: Broadband & Mobile Coverage							Finance, Economy & Fair Work; Transport, Infrastructure and Connectivity
Outcome 12: Sustainable Population Priority 12.1: Skills & Training Priority 12.2: Affordable Housing Priority 12.3: Local Services							Communities & Local Government; Finance, Economy & Fair Work; Transport, Infrastructure & Connectivity
Outcome 13: Community Empowerment Priority 13.1: Supporting Capacity of Community Organisations Priority 13.2: Supporting Community-led Action Priority 13.3: Supporting Partnership Working							Communities & Local Government