

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10

The Outdoor Recreation Plan



1. Purpose

To update the Board on progress with the delivery of the Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) over the last three years.

2. Recommendations

Board members are asked to note this progress update.

3. Introduction

The National Park's ORP is a prioritised five year action plan, which identifies gaps and opportunities in the National Parks recreation provision. It contains the commitments and intentions of stakeholders and gives focus and direction for the many partners involved in the development and improvement of access and recreation opportunities across the National Park area.

4. Background

The process of preparing the ORP involved extensive stakeholder engagement followed by a 12 week public consultation in 2012. The process was guided by a Board member advisory group, the Local Access Forum and a project steering group. The final document was approved by the National Park Board in June 2013.

The ORP is a priority action (VE13) in the Visitor Experience section of the National Park Partnership Plan 2012 – 2017, which aims to maintain and enhance recreation provision. The Plan aligns with the Core Paths Plan and Tourism Strategy and informs the Annual Operational Plan and its associated work programmes.

The Plan also relies on partners and stakeholders to deliver and includes actions which have received a commitment to be delivered, whilst also recognising aspirations for development.

The plan aims to:

- Improve recreational provision and opportunities
- Increase and widen public participation in outdoor recreation

The focus of the plan is on:

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- Family friendly activities
- Accessible and diverse range of activities at entry level
- Recreational off road cycling
- Linking up the Park and creating journeys
- Water based recreation
- Letting people know what they can do and where

5. Delivering the Plan

The following examples provide an insight into some of the projects that have been delivered over the first three years. A table indicating progress against the original 69 priority actions is contained in annex 1.

6. Early achievements 2013-15

Fishing

- Angling information updated and improved with new leaflet and web info promoting easy to access fishing opportunities across the National Park area.

ORP aim: 'The National Park provides high quality experiences in a range of angling opportunities for a variety of participants.'

Local Community Paths

- Wee Wood path, 50 metres, 2 new gates and waymarkers linking Gartmore to the Loch Ard forest.
- Duncryne Hill, 100 metres of path improvement opening up access to wider use.

ORP aim: 'All visitors and residents enjoy a quality, well promoted walking network which provides functional links within settlements but also links into the wider recreational network.'

Long Journey Paths

- Tarken Bridge bridging the gap and connecting Lochearnhead to St Fillans as the first part of old railway project.
- West Highland Way; Ptarmigan alternative lochshores path complete upgrade and improvement including bridges, steps and new path.
- Old Military Road as part of the Great Trossachs Path linking Inversnaid, West Highland Way, Stronachlachar and Strathard.

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- John Muir Way creation of missing link on Gouk Hill west of Balloch and installation of signage through the National Park.
- National Cycle Network route 7 (NCN 7) improvements including upgrading the Strathyre bridge.
- Creation of 4 miles of shared use, off-road path link between Brig O' Turk and Kilmahog, as part of Great Trossachs Path and linking to NCN 7.
- Three Lochs Way path improvements to the route to the south of Arrochar.

ORP aim: 'Maximise the benefits available from multiple day walking by raising the profile of existing routes, creating new multi day route options (linear and circular) within the Park and wherever possible link to local, national and international path networks.'

Horse-riding

- Western Braeval loop created, Carrick bridge made accessible to horses.

ORP aim: 'Quality hubs throughout the Park which offer consistent riding surfaces, parking, signage, gate designs and are well promoted.'

Kayaks and Canoes

- Promoted access and egress point at Loch Eck.

ORP aim: 'Well promoted network of good quality opportunities for a wide range of abilities.'

7. And more recently 2015-16

Active Travel

- Lochearnhead to St Fillans old railway path project phase 2 completed and phase 3 now underway to ultimately complete a shared use off road path between the villages and forming part of the Pilgrims Way cross Scotland route.
- Drymen to Balmaha upgrade of core paths within Drymen to shared use standards and with signage east and west of Milton of Buchanan. 5km completed but a further 1.5 kilometres required in the final phase.
- Strathyre to Kingshouse 3.5 km of high spec shared use path creating an off-road alternative for NCN7.

ORP aim: 'Well promoted network of good quality opportunities for a wide range of abilities.'

Walking – Visitor Hubs and Feature Paths

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- Bracklinn Falls destination improvements with the historic loop path to the north reinstated and new signage and interpretation installed.
- Killin paths upgrade and new signage on the former railway line linked to NCN7.

ORP aim: 'Each hub offers a variety of quality walking options which cater for all abilities of walking. Each hub should also complement the provision existing in neighbouring hubs and settlements.'

Upland Paths

- Mountain & The People project underway, Ben Lomond, Ben A'an, Stob Binnien and part of the Cobbler upland pathworks completed.
- Braeleny Glen the installation of two large span bridges and the improvement of 3.2 km of estate track to reinstate strategic historic link between Callander and Comrie.

ORP aim: 'Key upland paths are subject to an improvement programme to improve sustainability of use through: a) enhanced resilience to climatic factors; b) reduction in active soil erosion; c) decreased path extension and widening.'

All-ability Access

- Parkmobility pilot scheme where mobility scooters are available for rent in Balloch. The project includes led group "scoots" and the production of a route card for Balloch Castle Country Park.

ORP aim: 'The Park is appreciated as an area which provides high quality all-ability access opportunities in settlements and semi-wilderness surroundings and that these opportunities are well promoted and shared.'

8. Current projects underway 2016-17

Callander Safe Cycling project

Summary: This project has evolved from the local charette and is a significant place-making project. This year will see further design works and some installation of shared use infrastructure around the schools.

Partners: Sustrans, Stirling Council, Callander Community Development Trust and Transport Scotland

Balloch to Gartocharn footway

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Summary: A feasibility study is currently underway to establish costs and constraints associated with the improvement of the path links between Balloch and Gartocharn and linking to RSPB Loch Lomond.

Partners: Kilmarnock Community Development Trust, RSPB, Sustrans

Drymen to Balmaha path link

Summary: Phase 2 which involves traffic calming in Milton of Buchanan and additional footway widening and resurfacing.

Partners: Drymen Community Development Trust, Buchanan Community Council, Montrose Estates, Sustrans

Balloch Active Travel/Cycle Hub Development

Summary: Following the Balloch charette this project has evolved into an ambitious place making scheme which reinvents Station Square as a welcoming and attractive active travel hub.

Partners: West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), Sustrans, Balloch & Haldane Community Council, Abellio, Scottish Enterprise, Visit Scotland

Tyndrum to Dalrigh shared use path (as part of the Pilgrims Way and Crianlarich link)

Summary: Creation of shared use link which has both local value in improving the path network and strategic value as part of the National Park's network of long journey paths linking Tyndrum to Killin and also as part of the national priority for a cross Scotland Pilgrim's Way.

Partners: Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust, SNH, Sustrans, St. Fillans Community Development Trust

Community Outdoor Sports Hubs (Loch Lomond Watersports Hub)

Summary: Ambitious project which includes the design and construction of a bespoke facility which creates a shared club house for existing sports clubs, which stimulates participation, increased memberships and community ownership. The project is currently in the design and planning permission phase, final construction costs are expected to be around £2M.

Partners: Loch Lomond Watersports Association, WDC, West Dunbartonshire Leisure, sportscotland, Scottish Enterprise

Aspirational actions

These are actions that didn't make it onto the ORP priority list as no commitment to funding or delivery existed at the time. However, three years on, opportunities have arisen and progress has been made with four projects completed and five underway:

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Completed:

- Great Trossachs Path for cyclists – completed by Great Trossachs Forest.
- Aberfoyle Bike Skills Park – completed by Bike Trossachs.
- St Fillans cycle link east to Perth – St Fillans community are driving this forward and the path length within the Park is now complete.
- Crianlarich path network improvements, including signage - completed.

Underway:

- Open Water Swimming safety advice leaflet for Loch Lomond completed and work underway on the development of activity promotion of swimming areas and facilities.
- Technical downhill biking offer within a suitable strategic area which integrates into the wider network – Community are in discussions with FCS regarding lease arrangements at Coilhallan Woods in Callander.
- Leny Falls destination aspirations around the road crossing, riverside walk and bridge are key elements within the Callander Landscape Partnership.
- Review and develop a fit for purpose management model for the WHW – recommendations report on future management modals at draft stage.
- Craigmore path upgrade underway – being progressed as a training site through the Mountains & The People Project.

Tourism strategy related actions

The tourism team have been leading on the Park Authority's Tourism Strategy actions that are directly linked and cross-referenced to the ORP. The areas of activity progressed to date have included the following:

- TS action 40: developing walking information for visitors through walking and cycling route cards and web-based information.
- TS action 46: encourage businesses and other interests to collaborate to develop packages and itineraries. This is being developed through the design and promotion of kayak routes and itineraries, with open water swimming routes also being scoped.
- TS action 51: promote calendar of events which includes the now established Great Scottish swim and the up-coming European Championships.

9. Are we on target?

The progress with actions to date is shown below and clearly indicates good progress with only two high priority actions not being progressed in time due to a landowners change in priorities (path link Gartmore to Lemahamish). A second action has been dropped due to an

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agreement between project partners that the Western Braeval Loop was no longer required following the completion of the adjacent Stonefields horse-riding loop (action 63) and separately Action 41 – the Arrochar western shore path – is likely to be delayed past 2018.

Action	Total	Complete	Underway	Ongoing	About to start (will complete by 2018)	Delayed	Dropped	Unlikely by 2018
High	25	15	8	-	-	1	1	2
Med	19	6	5	-	3	5	-	1
Low	25	4	5	3	3	10	-	-

Aspirations	88	4	5	-	-	n/a	n/a	n/a
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11. Future direction

The future direction for ORP is very much one of evolution, rather than any significant change in direction. With a new NPPP on the horizon and the core paths plan review due to start in 2017 there is an opportunity to ensure that the ORP is adapted to reflect these changes and to continue the significant progress already made and currently underway in improving and addressing gaps in the National Park's recreation provision and opportunities.

There is one area of activity which requires more focus as both government and National Park policies develop and that is health and well-being and the contribution that the Parks natural outdoor spaces can play in helping address population health issues. This area of activity is also connected to a number of other areas of development such as active travel, sport for change, place-making, and outdoor learning.

This provides an ideal opportunity to review the ORP priorities, update them if required and bring it into alignment with current areas of policy development both locally and nationally.

12. Conclusion

The Outdoor Recreation Plan has been successfully delivering its actions and aspirations over the last three years with a variety of partners, at least 72, involved in achieving 25 ORP actions and 4 aspirations. Over £4.8m of funding has been drawn in from a variety of

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funding sources including larger scale lottery and Sustrans bids to smaller grants from Trusts and donations. The Park Authority has contributed £870k in the form of direct spend, grants and contributions which has been used very effectively to lever in greater amounts, and significant support has been provided through the Access and Recreation Team.

The result has seen a range of improvements to the recreational infrastructure of the Park. All of which mean that more people can get active and enjoy the Park whether local resident or visitor as the opportunities improve and information about what to do and where reaches further.

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