

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 13

Rural Development Update



Paper for noting

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides an update on activity carried out by the National Park Authority (NPA) under the theme of 'Rural Development'.

2.1 Development Management

2.1.1 Performance

The team are now gathering evidence toward the submission of the 2013/14 Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report to Scottish Government, to a deadline of 30th Sept 2014.

Feedback on last year's report was very positive, confirming that the National Park Authority has demonstrated clear evidence of embracing the culture of performance and service quality envisaged through the PPF approach. It was observed that the Government would like to see some further time savings in application handling but it was noted that particular improvements had been demonstrated through work to drive efficiencies in the determination of applications subject to Section 75 legal agreements. Work to secure improvements in these and other areas is ongoing and will be set out in the Service Improvement Plan for the year ahead, which is part of the PPF report.

In terms of statistics on speed of decision making for planning applications, quarterly data continues to be submitted to the SG statisticians to prepare performance results for all Local Authorities and the two National Parks. The use of average determination times against a range of application types is now becoming well established as the key reporting indicator. Our performance against these indicators is separately reported to the Delivery Group. The table below illustrates this performance reporting - relative to the Scottish Average as a benchmark. The colour coding is designed to give a clear visual flag of when the Park's performance is above, below or close to the Scottish average.

Results for the Q4 period have just been confirmed by Scottish Government but not as yet published with the Scottish Average. Nevertheless, the figures let us compare trends with our own previous Quarter results. As predicted in the previous Board update, the Q4 results illustrate a downturn in the average determination times across the range of application types – with the exception of 'householder' applications which have evidenced a slight improvement. This is attributed to a number of applications being unavoidably delayed in their determination from Q3 into Q4. This has occurred as a direct consequence of the unprecedented pressure which the DM team came under to priority determine a number of run-of-river hydro power applications to a an OFGEM 'feed in tariff' deadline of 31st December - as explained in more detail in the previous update paper. Prioritisation of these often sensitive and complex applications had an impact on other application workload. It also put significant demands on the Conservation Team specialist advisors who required to input on matters of landscape and ecology. The intervening Christmas / New Year holiday

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period will have also had an impact on average determination times. Maternity leave and extended sick leave absence has also diminished the DM staff resource across the period.

The table illustrates that average determination time for 'applications subject to legal agreements' has taken a significant drop in Q4. Numbers of these applications are low and delays on a single case will therefore significantly impact the average. In this instance it was the application to redevelop the former Youth Hostel site in Killin (to provide 14 dwellings) which has resulted in the high average determination time (122 weeks). However, aside from the time taken to conclude, this particular case is to be regarded as a good news story. The legal agreement was necessary to secure a financial contribution toward affordable housing provision elsewhere in the Park. The delay, however, was due to the developer having difficulty securing funding to commence development. The Head of Planning, subsequent to the 'minded to grant' decision having been taken, took an active role in supporting the applicant secure an infrastructure grant direct from Scottish Government which was instrumental in enabling a commencement on site.

Performance on EIA applications, although less in number from the previous quarter, remains strong.

STATS	Q1 - 2012/2013			Q2 - 2012/2013			Q3 - 2012/2013			Q4 - 2012/2013		
Category of Application	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average
Major	0	0	59.7	1	34.9	66.7	0	0	36.2	0	0	37.2
Local Non-Householder	24	12.6	17.2	38	15.2	15.4	48	12.3	15.5	39	21.1	16.4
Local Householder	30	8.1	8	13	9.2	8	21	8.6	8.2	25	9.1	8
EIA	0	0	93.2	0	0	34.7	1	18	58	2	36.1	50.9
Other	17	13.8	9.7	28	14.3	9.4	18	9.2	9.8	16	20	10.8
Subject to a Legal Agreement	0	0	82.7	1	1.9	71.6	0	0	68.5	5	81.3	68.5
Total Number	71			81			88			87		

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Category of Application	Q1 - 2013/2014			Q2 - 2013/2014			Q3 - 2013/2014			Q4 - 2013/2014		
	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average	No. of Applications	Average No. of weeks taken	Scottish Average
Major	0	0	33.2	1	26.3	34	0	0	51.7	0	0	
Local Non-Householder	34	15	14.8	29	9.7	12.9	41	13.3	14.0	32	17.3	
Local Householder	13	7.3	7.6	25	7.7	7.9	16	9.5	7.4	12	8.8	
EIA	1	16.7	47.6	0	0	47.2	5	17.7	41.5	1	23.9	
Other	8	10.4	9	5	10.4	9.5	14	10.3	9.4	18	12.6	
Subject to a Legal Agreement	2	65.3	84.8	1	26.3	58	2	29.6	61.2	2	121.9	
Total Number	58			61			78			0		

Approval Rates	2012/2013 Q1	2012/2013 Q2	2012/2013 Q3	2012/2013 Q4
National Park	100%	100%	96.50%	97.50%
Scottish Average	92.70%	93.00%	92.90%	92.30%

Approval Rates	2013/2014 Q1	2013/2014 Q2	2013/2014 Q3	2013/2014 Q4
National Park	95%	96.8%	96.2%	96.7%
Scottish Average	94.30%	94.2%	92.9%	

The table above confirms that the National Park continues to consistently approve a higher proportion of applications than the Scottish average. This is attributed to our ongoing commitment to engagement in pre-application discussions which have the combined effect of (a) deflecting non-starter proposals at an early stage and, (b) improving the quality of applications and proposals by negotiation. This approach enables us to make the most of our limited staff resource by avoiding contesting time consuming appeals following a refusal of planning permission.

2.1.2 Notable Casework

Work on hydro development remains ongoing with 5 hydro applications under consideration at this time and 4 others at pre-application / EIA screening stage.

There is evidence of a number of applications having been submitted to renew permissions for developments (primarily housing and tourism proposals) which were previously

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consented but unable to progress through the economic downturn. There is also a clear trend toward development commencing on site as evidence of a returning confidence in the construction industry – examples being the mixed use development at the riverside in Balloch (residential and retail), the residential scheme at the former Youth Hostel in Killin – as already referred to above - and a 7 unit holiday accommodation development at the Bridge of Lochay Hotel, also in Killin. These are reminders that the Development Management service does not conclude on the issue of permission but has an important role through the implementation phase, considering the discharge of planning conditions and undertaking on-site monitoring.

2.1.3 Service Delivery

The PPF annual report submission, as highlighted earlier in this paper, is the key document for setting planning service improvement tasks for the year ahead. Officers in the DM team are currently working on updating and streamlining procedures around the consultation process with our internal specialist advisors (landscape, ecology, access etc). This is an important joint project between the DM and Conservation team, building upon the good practice which has been established through the recent pressured working on the run-of-river-hydro applications – and includes weekly priority setting meetings.

Our commitment to e-planning continues. There has been a steady increase in the number of applications submitted online over the preceding year, which has now levelled out around the 65 / 70% range for the past 2 Quarters. The Scottish average for applications submitted online for all local Authorities is currently around 49%, but this is anticipated to rise closer to the level which has become established at the National Park.

2.2 Forward Planning

2.2.1 Local Development Plan: Main Issues Report

The Main Issues Report was issued for consultation on target at the end of April, following the Board's Approval in March. Each Member was issued with a copy. Staff have already met with number of communities, businesses, landowners, young people and partner organisations throughout the Park with initial feedback broadly positive on how accessible the document and associated information has been provided.

LIVE Park, our campaign to encourage involvement in the consultation, is underpinned by a range of innovative techniques to help us engage with our communities, businesses, landowners, partner organisations and visitors.

Why LIVE Park? We wanted to find a simple way to explain what our Local Development Plan is about. We all want the National Park to be a vibrant, thriving area, and we know that Planning can improve Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park as a place to:

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Live Invest Visit & Experience

The consultation so far has included promotion through Twitter and Facebook, with a number of staff contributing to various means of communicating the themes, buzzwords or issues. Some of our short videos have been particularly successful in being viewed by a wide audience through the use of Facebook. The Callander summary video was viewed over 900 times for example. It is likely that this audience is likely to be at least in part a new audience for this type of consultation for the Park.

Our engagement with young people has got off to a great start with Visioning workshops in Callander and more taking place in Helensburgh in early June which will mean that almost all secondary schools that serve the Park's area will have had some pupils in attendance.

Typically in a process of this nature, it is not until towards the very end of the consultation that formal comments are received, and so with few received at the time of writing, it is not possible to gauge the level of response. A further, fuller, update will be provided at the next Board meeting.

Renewable Energy Supplementary Planning Guidance – Royal Town Planning Institute Awards for Planning Excellence 2014

This Guidance has been shortlisted for the Best Planning for Natural and Built Heritage Award in the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) Awards for Planning Excellence 2014. This is the UK wide awards, run by the RTPI.

The awards, which celebrate the very best in planning, will be hotly contested with 63 projects, consultancies and Local Authority teams competing across ten categories. Projects on the shortlist have been recognised for their national contribution to planning and demonstrate how significant schemes can be delivered speedily through the planning and other consents systems. The RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence comprises two parts, awards for projects and awards for people.

The winners will be announced at an Awards Ceremony held on Monday 23rd June 2014 in London.

2.2.3 Rural Housing Enabler

Currently negotiations are underway to secure new contracts with both Rural Stirling Housing Association and Link Housing Association to deliver new affordable housing opportunities across the National Park.

2.2.4 LEADER Update

As members will be aware, the next phase of LEADER is currently under development in line with the Scottish Government (SG) guidelines and timetable. Argyll & the Islands and Forth Valley & Lomond LAGs submitted first drafts of their Local Development Strategies on the 31st of March 2014 and await feedback from the Scottish Government. NPA Officers

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continue to work with both LAGs as they refine their LDS and develop the associated business plan. Updated dates from the Scottish Government:

31.3.14	Submit first draft LDS to Scottish Government
May 2014	Business Plan guidance issued by Scottish Government
July 2014	Submit draft Business Plan to Scottish Government
30.9.14	Submit final LDS and Business Plan to Scottish Government

Scottish Government Liaison

NPA Officers met with Alistair Prior in May 2014 to discuss the proposed LLTNP arrangements in the new programme in light of changes to the administration of cooperation projects, the emerging business planning guidance and a renewed emphasis on engagement with local business leaders and entrepreneurs.

LAG Liaison

NPA Officers continue to liaise formally and informally with the LAG Chairs and Officers of both LEADER Programmes. As well as provided ad hoc feedback on draft LDS prior to submission, a list of strategic priorities for the Park area (which reflected the NPPP, Community Action Plans and the priorities of key partners) was submitted to both LAGs. The LDS first drafts have reflected the context and opportunities of the National Park area and sought alignment within the wider strategies. Both have pursued this in different ways, as with their different approaches to wider strategy development; with the strongest representation in the Cooperation section of both draft LDS.

LDS Business Planning Stage

The LAGs are now moving into the Business Planning stage of programme preparation. This stage will look at the arrangements for management, delivery, monitoring and communication of the LDS. The key deliverable for LLTNPA during this stage is the remit and arrangements for the LLTNP sub LAG. Related deliverables include the refresh of LAG membership and the simplified processes for cooperation projects (the latter is now being addressed at a national level). The proposed LLTNP Animation / Development Officer may be addressed during the business planning stage or as part of the NP project submission at the beginning of the new programme.

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2.3 Community Development

2.3.1 St Fillans to Lochearnhead Cycle Path

The Glen Tarken bridge project was officially opened on 9th May 2014 by Cameron McNeish. The event was very well supported by local people, walkers and children from both Strathyre and Comrie primary schools. Both external funders, Sustrans and Rural Tayside Leader, were presented. The National Park was also well represented by Directors and Staff who have been integral in delivering this exciting community led project.



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The Communities team and Doug Stewart from the Access team worked very closely with the group providing advice, support and seeking funding on the groups behalf. Throughout the process knowledge and experience was shared which will enable the community to do more of the work themselves as the project moves forward. £130,000 was raised towards Phase 1 (The Bridge). Support to the community continues from both the Communities and Access teams. The momentum has been maintained and already Sustrans have awarded funding for the Phase 2(2014/15) and Phase 3+ (2015/16)of the project; they continue to be very supportive. Phase 2 sees us undertaking the detailed design and tender preparation for the upgrade of the route to a cycle way. The Sustrans awards of £33,500 in 2014/15 and £487,500 in 2015/16 cover 50% of the estimated costs, we continue to seek match funding and are confident of success. The route will deliver several benefits; A local link from St Fillans to Lochearnhead and to the east to Comrie and its school. In addition it will provide half of a very enjoyable circuit around loch Earn itself by linking to the south loch road. Also it provides a spectacular easy level walk with stunning views and many points of historic interest and it now acts as a link to other walks on the hills behind the railway. At a strategic level the route is still considered key to providing a viable east west national cycle route, much of it on disused railway lines. However it appears to have been dismissed by SNH as an option for the walking route. We await the government view with interest.

2.3.2 Argyll Mausoleum



Historic Kilmun's brand new Visitor Centre was officially opened on 27th January 2014 by Reverend David Mill of St Munn's Church, Kilmun. Historic Kilmun is the new brand for the Argyll Mausoleum initiative. The opening of the new Visitor Centre is a testament to several years' hard work by members of the local community, and marks a new chapter in the rich history of Kilmun. Many of the important artefacts are now restored and on display in the Visitor Centre. The mausoleum itself is still undergoing restoration and is due to open in September 2014.

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The extensive programme of community events continues. Recent highlights include:-

- An exhibition on Life on the Holy Loch between 1814 and 2014 which attracted between 100-150 people and was curated by pupils from Sandbank Primary.
- A seminar and demonstration by Dirk Campbell on 'The History of the World in 10 1/2 Bagpipes'.
- A Heritage Walk leaflet has been created and is on sale in the Visitor Centre.

2.3.3 Activity under Service Level Agreement with LLTNP Community Partnership

Community Action Plans

Round 1 - Community Action Plans (complete) – Gartmore, Lochgoil, Callander, Benmore & Kilmun, and Drymen.

Round 2 - Community Action Plans– Arrochar & Tarbet, Strathfillan, and Balquhider, Lochearnhead & Strathyre complete; Sandbank is at design.

Round 3 - Community Action Plans (in progress) – Balloch & Haldane is at design; Buchanan is in final stages of consultation; Kilmarnock's community consultation underway; Strachur has recruited its Community Agent.

A new CAP Toolkit was developed and is accessed on-line through a members' only area of the new Community Partnership website. The Toolkit has been designed to allow the CP to continue to provide a high level of support to communities but to enable the CP to be more flexible about how to deliver that support with very limited resources.

Skills Partnership

Progress has been made on developing an innovative shared apprenticeship pilot funded by the Scottish Government, in partnership with the Sector Skills Council for Tourism and Hospitality, People 1st. Five local employers have been identified and the process of candidate selection has been established. The aim is to have up to 6 shared apprentices in place by summer 2014.

BBC Scotland Out of Doors featured the Skills Partnership project in March 2014

2.4 Built Heritage

2.4.1 CARS

Priority Projects

31-33 Main Street (Former Desirables Building)

Repair of traditional awnings at the Crafted Merchant (former Desirables Shop) and the Shell Centre was completed by end of March 2014.

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Small Grants

All eligible applications received for 2012/2013, the final year of the scheme, were completed, delivering 15 successful projects.

Shopfront Improvement Grant Scheme

The refurbishment of James Pringle Weavers Shop (Edinburgh Woollen Mill) on Ancaster Square was completed by end of March and now awaits new signage to be provided by Edinburgh Woollen Mill.

BGS Stone and Slate Survey - continued

BGS completed a Building Stone and Slate Survey of the Callander Conservation Area in 2011. A similar survey for the buildings added to the conservation area as a result of the extensions in August & Oct 2011 was completed by end of March 2014.

Conclusion of Callander CARS

Callander CARS successfully concluded on the 31 March 2014. The grant of £450,000 delivered 65 projects with a total project value of £1,184,500.

The projects included 5 priority projects, 48 small grants (including 16 new slate roofs, 4 new chimney stacks and refurbishment of traditional windows on 11 properties), 2 surveys, a stonemason apprenticeship, publication of a heritage trail, restoration of Ancaster Bridge, shopfront improvements and organising a skills taster day for McLaren High School pupils.

2.4.2 Built Heritage Repair Grant (BHRG)

BHRG 2013/14

The National Park's BHRG, launched on 14 August 2013 as a pilot, successfully delivered nine completed projects across the Park within a very tight timescale and by the end of March 2014.



1. Kilmun Pier - re-pointing of listed former Post Office House

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2. Kilmun - replace unsympathetic windows with timber sash and case windows in one of the listed "Tea Caddies"



3. Callander - new signage for listed building in Bridgend

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4. Tarbet - chimney repairs to listed former gate house
5. Gartmore - window and chimney repairs in Main Street
6. Killin - repair of lade to listed mill
7. Balquhidder - repair to listed, former Old Library Tearoom
- 8 & 9 Glen Dochart - roof repairs to two traditional dwellings at Portnellan

BHRG 2014/15

The BHRG 2014/15 was launched on 30 April 2014 with an application deadline of 4 July. Over 40 enquiries had been received by 20 May and the early submission of 3 applications.

3. Recommendation

3.1 Members are invited to note the contents of this report.

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