

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 7



Chief Executive Officer's Report

Paper for Noting

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report reflects on the many activities and achievements within the National Park Authority ("NPA") during the fourth quarter for 2013/14.
- 1.2 It also provides an overview of the performance of the key business functions reported since the last Board Meeting in March 2014.

2. Consideration

2.1 Recent Highlights

- 2.1.1 Our relations with Scottish Government continues to be very positive, excellent feedback received from the Minister following his recent involvement with John Muir Conference, Minister very impressed with our work at integrating the social and conservation agendas here in Scotland.
- 2.1.2 We hosted a formal dinner in Edinburgh following the John Muir Conference with the Minister, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Cairngorms National Park CEO and Chairs and Dr William Tweed from US National Parks Service which provided an excellent opportunity for informal discussion. Dr Tweed was very complimentary about the conference and about how Scotland is approaching the National Park model where he felt learning's could be taken back to the US.
- 2.1.3 A number of executive joint meetings with other National Parks have taken place over the last quarter, progressing significant policy discussions and sharing best practice with the Lake District National Park, Cairngorms National Park and New Forest National Park.
- 2.1.4 Our annual Tourism Businesses Conference took place in March. This presented the opportunity for businesses to network with like minded people, sharing ideas and the audience left inspired by a wide range of speakers. The theme focussed on businesses taking advantage of being in the National Park and maximising the opportunity that this presents.
- 2.1.5 Community engagement has increased over last quarter with a specific focus on visitor management with some very productive discussions being held with Community Councils, businesses and landowners.

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- 2.1.6 Time has also been spent in a recent Employment Tribunal for the Authority and it is expected that a verdict will be reached by late June.
- 2.1.7 I have been leading the UK National Parks commercialisation project and the 5 workings groups presented their findings when the CEO's all met together in York at the recent Joint National Parks Officers Group meeting. Progress will be discussed at the ANPA AGM in June, which Owen McKee and Tony McInnes are attending on our behalf.
- 2.1.8 Operational Delivery – During the last quarter, there has been a wealth of project delivery happened across the Conservation, Visitor Experience/Management and Rural Development teams, which is outlined in detail in the update papers. I would particularly like to note the success of the 'LIVE Park' campaign, finalising of the annual accounts and the delivery of phase one of the Lomond Shores pontoon project.

2.2 Business Performance

- 2.2.1 The financial performance for the year ended 31 March 2014 is summarised in the attached table (Appendix 1), which presents a deficit of £16k at the end of the financial year which is £11k more than forecast. The target tolerance for a balanced out-turn is +/- 1% of the total budget for the National Park and this has therefore been successfully achieved.
- 2.2.2 The National Park was successful in receiving an addition £320k of Grant in Aid as compared with the Q2 forecast and this funding allowed greater investment in key infrastructure such as the construction and installation of a pontoon at Drumkinnon Bay, pilot projects as part of the Scottish Scenic Routes initiative, upland paths, the Loch Lubnaig camping and picnic sites, National Park village signage and new engines for the waterborne ranger patrol boat.
- 2.2.3 The annual operational plans are being summarised in order to present the top level strategic plan for the year to the Delivery Group in July 2014. This will include an outline of how progress will be monitored during the year. The budget for 2014/15 was approved by the Board in March 2014. Significant officer time has been spent allocating the total budget to individual teams to allow for greater accountability and transparency in monitoring actual spend v budget during the year. Teams are preparing budget monthly profiles at present. Additional work is required to develop the finance systems reporting



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to allow reporting at a team level as part of the monthly management accounts process.

2.3 Communication and Stakeholder Engagement

- 2.3.1 In 2013-14, we developed the communications performance indicators we report on. These new targets better reflected the focus of the communications and media functions in order to achieve our Corporate Plan Outcome of: *"Informed and engaged stakeholders: communities, visitors, strategic partners, staff and Scottish Government"*. In 2014-15 we will continue to evaluate the performance indicators we report on, ensuring they best reflect the marketing and communications outcome within the Corporate Plan and that reporting on these adds value.
- 2.3.2 The following is a summary of activity, engagement and coverage generated by our communications and media functions in Quarter 4, highlighting key performance across the year 2013-14.
- 2.3.3 The National Park continued to generate media coverage across the full range of local, national, specialist, online and broadcast media. In Q4 2013/14, the National Park was mentioned in a total of 194 media articles. The vast majority (97%) of these were positive/neutral. The few negative pieces included a letter to The Herald from a local angler complaining about the visitor pressure and resulting experience on loch shores where he liked to fish (Fiona Logan's letter in response in The Herald was printed the same week) and a minor letter of complaint to The Stirling Observer by a Stirling Council resident.
- 2.3.4 Notable news pieces across Q4 included the announcement of £750,000 worth of funding towards a new cycle path from Strathyre to Kingshouse by Transport Minister Keith Brown, with match funding from the National Park, was picked up by local, regional and online media.
- 2.3.5 Later in the month, local and regional papers covered the story about views of Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond from the A82 being opened up, following extensive tree and shrub removal by the National Park and the Friends of Loch Lomond. .
- 2.3.6 Work on Ancaster Square in Callander also started this month, following the community workshop held in 2012, with good coverage in the local media.
- 2.3.7 An additional £500,000 funding for Scotland's Scenic Routes project was announced by the Scottish Government in February, to support the further

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roll-out of pilot projects across the country, including the Cairngorms and on Scottish Canals' sites on the A82. There was extensive coverage in both national and broadcast media, which included the installations in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.

- 2.3.8 The volunteer clean-up of the loch shores at Arrochar attracted a lot of local media interest, as did the controversial Stonymollan roundabout, following the announcement that improvement work was to be carried out.
- 2.3.9 One of the key stories in March was on the visitor pressures in the National Park and the impact of the East Loch Lomond camping byelaw, after a paper was considered at the Board meeting. It was covered by local and national media and tied in well with the letter in The Herald from an angler expressing his concern about litter and antisocial behaviour in the National Park.
- 2.3.10 The outcome of the Leonard case was reported in the local and national papers. The family had taken the National Park to court after their son had fallen while they were out near Balmaha but their claim was rejected.
- 2.3.11 A new scheme to give unemployed young people rural skills opportunities in the National Park, run by the Community Partnership, got good local coverage. It was also picked up by BBC Radio Scotland's Out of Doors programme. The opening of the new VisitScotland information centre in Callander, shared with the National Park office, featured in the local media.

Media coverage that is positive /neutral /negative.	Target (Annual 2013-14)	Full Year (2013-14)
% of our media coverage that is positive/neutral	90%	97%

Level of media coverage we receive (national, local, specialist, broadcast or online coverage).	Target (Annual 2013-14)	Full Year (2013-14)
National press	140	115
Local press	550	701
Broadcast (*new KPI measure)	20*	12
Specialist	35	47
Online	250	319

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2.4 Freedom of Information (FOI)

30 Freedom of Information requests have been received to the end of March 2014.

Category of Requester (all requests)	2012/13	Full Year (2013-14)
Councillor/MSP	4	3
Journalist	2	5
Member of Public	20	14
Community Council/other community organisation	1	0
Other	12	8

2.5 Environmental Information (EIR) Requests

26 Environmental Information Requests have been received by the end of March 2014.

One environmental information request was referred to the Scottish Information Commissioner by the applicant. This related to the non-disclosure of legal advice received by the Authority. The Authority presented a robust defence of its position; however the applicant subsequently withdrew his application to the Commissioner and accordingly no decision notice was issued.

Category of Requester (all requests)	2012/13	Full Year (2013-14)
Councillor/MSP	1	0
Journalist	0	0
Member of Public	20	21
Community Council/other community organisation	0	0
Other	5	5

2.6 Complaints

35 Complaints have been received to the end of March 2014. 26 of these complaints related to the cull of goats on the East side of Loch Lomond by RSPB and SNH.

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Category of Complainant (all requests)	2012/13	Full Year (2013-14)
Councillor/MSP	0	0
Journalist	0	0
Member of Public	31	34
Community Council/other community organisation	1	1
Other	3	0

2.6 People

- 2.6.1 Turnover in the fourth quarter was down on quarter 3 with only 2 unplanned leavers. The final turnover figure for 2013/14 was 7.89% which was a total of 11 unplanned leavers and well within our 10% target.
- 2.6.2 Sickness absences levels increased in the final quarter compared to the third quarter giving an overall average of 7.17 days per person for 2013/14. This continues to be largely down to long term sickness and managers continue to focus on early intervention in order to support staff returning to work. A few staff returned from long term sickness so hopefully we will see figures decreasing over the coming months.
- 2.6.3 Following the staff engagement survey in September 2013 all teams have now reviewed their own results and formulated an action plan which targets progress in the areas that they wish to see improvements. This includes the Leadership team (Executive and Heads of Service) who have formulated an action plan to make improvements in the areas of "Leadership" and "Fair Deal" and Managers have done the same for the category of "My Manager". Progress reports will be provided bi-monthly and will be available on Park Central for all staff to view.
- 2.6.4 A number of staff from all teams volunteered to develop a set of organisational behaviours that brings our values to life. This was a great example of employee engagement in action with very positive employee led workshops rolled out across the organisation to introduce our organisational behaviours. These behaviours will form part of the revised performance management system known as 'My Performance Review.'

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2.7 Local Board Elections

Following the close of nominations at 4pm on 28 May, each of the five Wards for Locally Elected Board membership will be contested and taken forward to a postal vote.

Ward 1 – Cowal and North Loch Lomond

David Joseph McKenzie

Fiona Margaret Millar

Ward 2 – Breadalbane and the Trossachs

Charles Grant

John D MacGregor

Owen McKee

Billy Ronald

Ward 3 - Callander

Brian Luti

David John Warnock

Sheila Winstone

Ward 4 - East Loch Lomond and Port of Menteith

Scott Brown

Katie Goldie

Willie Nisbet

Ward 5 – West Loch Lomond and Balloch

David McCowan

Margaret Ward

In 2010 there were two contested wards (3 and 5) and a total of 8 candidates. We are hopeful that there will also be an increased level of interest in voting.

Ballot papers will be issued on 12 June, with the count taking place at Carrochan HQ on the evening of 3 July.

2.8 Efficiency Target

2.8.1 As part of the drive to reduce costs and deliver a lean and efficient public service, the Scottish Government imposes an annual operational efficiency savings target. It has been confirmed by Scottish Government that the target for 2013/14 is 3%.

2.8.2 The original board approved budget for 2013/14 included annual efficiency savings estimated at £179.5k, or 2.8% of Grant in Aid income and this target has been achieved with the full year result being £182k (2.8% of Grant in Aid income). These savings were realised through effective

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management of our legal contract services and effective vacant post management resulting in a reduction in those costs.

We have traditionally monitored and reported our efficiency savings through identifying specific financial savings. It becomes more challenging to continue to generate year on year operational efficiency savings whilst maintaining/improving service delivery, especially as we already operate within a lean organisational structure. Teams have identified additional efficiency measures as part of the annual operational planning process to ensure that we deliver on the SG target for 2014/15.

2.9 Payment Performance

2.9.1 The percentage of agreed invoices paid within the government's target of 10 days from date of receipt was 99% in the period April to March 2014.

3. Recommendation

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

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