

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10



Corporate Update

Paper for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides a summary updates progress on corporate outcomes, objectives and recent highlights/lowlights since the last report to the Board.
- 1.2 Following a discussion at the Delivery and Strategy groups it is proposed that the “statutory compliance” responsibilities that are reported to and monitored by the Delivery Group or Audit Committee are not repeated in this corporate update to the Board. The “statutory compliance” reporting refers to policies development and consultations, Freedom of Information, Environmental Information, complaints, internal audit, annual accounts, financial memorandum, Best Value, efficiencies, equalities, Public Records, carbon management, procurement, employment and health and safety management, administration and reporting. In the event of there being something that is of particular concern or risk this will be brought to the attention of the Board. This progress update therefore includes progress on initiatives, developments, projects and stakeholder activities that are **not statutory** in nature.

2. Highlights

- 2.1 Following the roll out of the new organisational behaviours developed by a group of volunteers from across the organisation, the new performance appraisal process ‘My Performance Review’ incorporating our values and behaviours was implemented in June 2014. Staff engagement in the process has been a huge success and the first formal mid-year reviews will be held in October. This will be followed by an evaluation of the process to date and will involve volunteers from all teams across the organisation. A great example of staff engagement in action.
- 2.2 Our relations with Scottish Government continue to be very positive. Ministerial engagement for Wild Park 2020 launch in August was a huge success, with our Minister being very impressed with the innovative event hosted in Queen Street Station. A short engagement at Royal Highland Show during June allowed for Minister to learn of the creativity demonstrated through our LIVE Park consultation, depicting how this is demystifying planning and being delivered through social media (and lego!), thus making it more engaging and reaching a wider audience.
- 2.3 Involvement on UK National Parks commercialisation project continues, an update on which will be provided at the December Board meeting.
- 2.4 Significant effort is being devoted to listen to our communities, businesses, landowners and Community Councils as part of the Your Park project.

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- 2.5 Our relations with key partners continue to be very constructive with productive engagements held over the summer period with Argyll & Bute Council, Scottish Enterprise, SNH, West Dunbartonshire Council and SEPA.
- 2.6 A joint strategic planning session with Cairngorms National Park Authority and Forestry Commission Scotland allowed for a diverse range of experiences to be shared.
- 2.7 The process for the recent local election for Directly Elected Members and reappointment of Ministerial Members had a great outcome which saw everyone returned with a vote of confidence from local people and government which gives great credibility to the work of the National Park Board and the results have been well earned.
- 2.8 Operational Delivery – During the last quarter, there has been a wealth of project delivery happened across the Conservation, Visitor Experience/Visitor Management and Rural Developments teams, which is outlined in detail in the update papers. I would particularly like to note the success of the Wild Park 2020 launch, new cycle track route between Kingshouse to Strathyre, the installation at Glasgow Airport and the media attention we've attracted.

3. Lowlights

- 3.1 As a National Park Authority we are very proud of the creative and “can do” approach that we adopt to deliver our Scottish Government agenda. There is a significant volume and diversity of work and projects being delivered. Staff determination to deliver exemplary services and projects, such as John Muir Conference, LIVE Park, Your Park and Wild Park drives expectations. There are also regular instances where there are unforeseen challenges or opportunities that we engage in, such as Local Review Bodies, launch of the Glasgow Airport corridor welcome, launch of Strathyre to Kingshouse cycle route, development of the Pontoon and fabulous media coverage for the successes in East Loch Lomond. With the volume of particularly high profile projects coupled with staff changes there is even more increased pressure on the same key staff and teams to deliver. We continue to prioritise our workloads and, as a result, some of the timelines for projects have been pushed out. We appreciate the support, encouragement and patience of our Board members to manage expectations at the same time reassuring staff that their efforts and contributions are appreciated.

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4. Progress

4.1 Marketing and Communications

Corporate Plan Outcome: Informed and engaged stakeholders; communities, visitors, strategic partners, staff and Scottish Government

4.1.1 The Marketing & Communications team have delivered (in conjunction with colleagues in Forward Planning) a high profile, multimedia campaign for the Main Issues Report phase of LIVE Park, the next Local Development Plan. The objective of the LIVE Park campaign was to encourage as many people as possible to get involved in the Main Issues Report consultation phase, whether they submitted a formal consultation response or not. We committed to testing out new ways of approaching public consultations to help us learn from the experience. In addition to the face to face meetings and printed documentation that are regularly used during planning consultations, the campaign had a digital focus that allowed interested parties to keep up to date with progress via regularly updated blogs and specific social media feeds. Our Lego activity helped reach children of primary school age to help capture their aspirations for their communities and our work with Planning Aid Scotland gave high school pupils an opportunity to understand the planning process better and for us to explain why their input will help improve our next Local Development Plan. An evaluation of the campaign and the impact is underway. The project has already provoked significant interest from the Planning community as a model of good practice for engaging the public in the planning process. The recent Gateway Review also commended these efforts and recommended this approach was maintained for the next phases of the Local Development Plan process.

4.1.2 The ministerial launch of Wild Park, the campaign to support our latest Biodiversity Action Plan (Wild Park 2020) took place on Monday 11 August in Glasgow's Queen Street Station. The objective of the campaign is to break down the barriers that can make 'biodiversity' a daunting subject. Through the Wild Park campaign we aimed to promote the National Park as a place for nature conservation, to help the wider public to find out more about the conservation work that is already taking place in the Park and to understand why that work matters. Ultimately, we want nature conservation to be a reason to come and visit Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park. The media interest including TV and radio coverage of the Wild Park launch helped us to promote our work in nature conservation to a wider audience. The bespoke book we commissioned (called 'Tales from our Wild Park') provided a non-intimidating way for the wider public to understand more about Wild Park 2020, and specifically our five Wild Challenges. The Wild Park campaign will continue into 2015-16 and beyond.

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- 4.1.3 In June, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park showcased the first in a series of Scottish Scenic Routes architectural installations. This pilot phase of the Scottish Government-funded initiative saw innovative pieces of architecture, designed by young architects, installed in some of the National Park's most scenic locations close to our trunk roads. The Scottish Scenic Routes initiative aims to encourage people to see our roads as more than a means to an end – encouraging people to stop and take in the breathtaking scenery from these bespoke viewing points. The project gathered significant media interest from local, national and even international specialist publications both around the time of the launch and since.
- 4.1.4 A stretch of Glasgow Airport's international arrivals corridor has been transformed into a woodland scene from Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park. A floor-to-ceiling woodland image featuring the Park's most iconic species (red squirrels and black grouse), combined with sounds and scents from the National Park welcomes visitors arriving at the airport, remind them that Scotland's first National Park is just 30 minutes' drive away.
- 4.2 Best Companies
Corporate Plan Staff Engagement Outcome: Informed and engaged stakeholders; communities, visitors, strategic partners, staff and Scottish Government
- 4.2.1 Action from the 'Best Companies' survey continues with examples from the individual teams' staff engagement action plans and organisation-wide action plans for Leadership, My Manager and Fair Deal published across the organisation to demonstrate the significant progress made in response to the various action plans from the 2013 Best Companies survey.
- 4.2.2 The 2014 Best Companies survey was launched on the 1st September with a 60% response rate in the first 2 weeks taking us toward our ambitious 90% target. The independent survey will remain open until the end of September, with the results being available late November/December.
- 4.3 Financial Report
Corporate Plan Financial Outcome: Exemplify good practice in the use of public funds, corporate governance, policies, systems and procedures
- 4.3.1 The 2014 Best Companies survey was launched on the 1st September with a 60% response rate in the first 2 weeks taking us toward our ambitious 90% target. The independent survey will remain open until the end of September, with the results being available late November/December.

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- 4.3.2 The financial position for the quarter ended 30 June 2014 is that we realised Net Income of £343k as compared with budgeted Net Income of £6k. Expenditure, especially project expenditure, is lower than we had planned for this stage of the year however we still expect to achieve a balanced budget for the full year. The management accounts are attached at Appendix 1 to this report and the key variances are explained below.
- 4.3.3 Operating income was on budget with actual income being £1,874k v budget of £1,876k. Planning fee income is £20k lower than expected and this is likely to continue for the full year. The compensating positive income variances are mainly timing issues.
- 4.3.4 Operating expenditure was £99k less than budget (actual £1,494k v budget of £1,592k). Staff costs were £51k lower as a result of the pay award being approved by UNISON slightly later than anticipated and a delay in filling vacant posts. The staff costs budget is expected to be fully utilised during the year. ICT costs were £27k less than budget which is simply the timing of the actual spend compared with the budget profile. There are also a number of smaller variances which simply relate to the timing of spend.
- 4.3.5 Project income is £114k higher than budgeted for the quarter because £68k of income has been received in relation to the Pontoon at Drumkinnon Bay (expected to be received later in the year) and similarly £50k of income has been received in relation to the John Muir conference that was expected to be realised later in the year.
- 4.3.6 Project expenditure is £127k less than budgeted for the quarter mainly because of the timing of the actual costs versus the budget profiles.
- 4.3.7 Overall net expenditure on projects is £241k behind schedule but we expect this to be on target for the full year.
- 4.3.8 Update since Quarter 1: the latest management accounts (August 2014) are similar to the results presented in this report for Quarter 1 i.e. we are behind budget in relation to expenditure but still expect to achieve our full year spend. Planning fee income has continued to be lower than expected so the Q2 Budget Revision will take this into account and we will adjust the budget as necessary so the budget is balanced for the full year. The impact of the Gateway Centre changes will also be taken into account in the Q2 Budget Revision.
- 4.3.9 We are delighted that the annual report and accounts have now been laid before Parliament.

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