

Gateway Review

PROGRAMME:

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority
Project Management of Development Plans

Gateway Review 0
(Strategic Assessment)

Report Status:	FINAL VERSION
Date/s of Review:	17/06/14 to 19/06/14
Draft Report Issued to SRO:	23/06/14
Final Report Issued to SRO:	23/06/14
Overall Report Status:	GREEN
Head of Planning / Senior Responsible Owner:	Iain Nicolson

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1. **Background**

1.1 **The Commitment**

The timely preparation of a Local Development Plan is the result of the controlled management of the project's scope, activities, resources, stakeholder engagement and milestones. However, it can be difficult for a manager or organisation to self-determine whether the project is progressing adequately or is in fact at risk.

The Planning & Architecture Division of the Scottish Government wants to help authorities to improve the preparation of their Development Plans. In the Planning Reform report: Next Steps (2012), it was noted that:

“We are also attracted to the idea of more support being made available to authorities to assist and advise on managing the process of preparing new plans. This could take the form of an informal Gateway Review process whereby a small group of practitioners would advise on how timescales for plan preparation can best be met.....Overall, more effective management of the process is required.”

The Scottish Government's Development Plan Examination Consultation (2012) also flagged up the need for better project management of Development Plans.

The Gateway Review process is seen as a means of helping to deliver streamlined and modernised Development Plans. Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority ('the NPA') has agreed to participate in this 'pilot' exercise. The focus is on project management of the process and not the quality of the Main Issues Report content.

2. **Purpose and Conduct of the Review**

2.1 **Purpose of the Review**

The Gateway Review process is designed to be applied to any delivery programme and involves the targeted application of structured reviews, with an appropriate level of independence, at critical decision points in the project delivery cycle.

The aim of a review is to assist in achieving successful projects delivered in a timely, efficient and appropriate way and to offer the opportunity for lessons learned to be disseminated and incorporated into subsequent planning processes.

The Gateway Review process is independent from the project approval process and:

- Utilises short, focused, independent reviews;
- Uses teams of experienced and independent practitioners;
- Includes representative mix of all key stakeholders;
- Is undertaken in consultation with the project team;
- Provides a report of findings, potential risks and recommendations.

This report is an evidence-based snapshot of the Project's status at the time of the review. It reflects the views of the independent Review Team, based on evidence gathered over a three day period, and is delivered to the Senior Responsible Owner (SRO) immediately at the conclusion of the review.

2.2 Conduct of the Review

The 'Gateway Review 0' was carried out on 17/06/14 to 19/06/14 at the NPA HQ, Balloch and the NPA office, Callander.

The Review Team members and the people interviewed are listed in **Appendix A**.

The Review Team thanks Stuart Mearns and all interviewees for their support and openness, which contributed to the Review Team's understanding of the Project and the outcome of this review. We also wish to record our thanks to Kirsty Callaghan and Carolyn O'Connor for the great help and support provided during the organisation and setting up of this review, and to Allyson Blue for managing the conduct of the lessons learnt workshop.

3. Gateway Review Conclusion

The Review Team finds that:

What has worked well

- The Project planning and management approach to the preparation of the MIR has been well received. There has been strong cross-team organisational commitment to the process. It has enabled the Project Team to effectively engage with colleagues within the NPA and also external agency Partners and key stakeholders. This approach has helped the broader NPA team to understand the end goals and their contribution towards them and for all parties to deliver to the timescales set in the revised Development Plan Scheme published at the start of the work.
- The Review Team heard a number of community organisations express high levels of trust in the NPA, the Project Team and the plan process. It has been very clear to the Review Team from the feedback received from community stakeholders communities greatly appreciate, have benefitted from and in some cases been highly energised by, the engagement undertaken, especially where charrette events have been held. Communities appear to have bought into the process and ultimately this will foster greater ownership of the Development Plan. This is to be highly commended.
- The funding provided by the Scottish Government has made very significant positive impacts on the quality of work and stakeholder participation with the Development Planning process. In particular, all parties reported the substantial benefits of running the Charrettes and the ability to draw in and engage high quality (independent) consultancy services to support these activities alongside the Project Team, Agency Partners and community representatives. The Review Team received very consistent feedback that the

consultants' independence, expertise and dynamism was most welcome and essential to the overall success of the process. Without this resource, there will be challenges for future planning cycles.

What worked less well?

- The absence of a formal Project Board has in the Review Team's view reduced the overall effectiveness of the project approach. This is particularly in relation to Risk Management and the mainstreaming of Equalities issues.
- The Review Team heard consistent feedback that increased levels of detailed project planning in terms of engagement with key partners and internal colleagues would strengthen the process further. This would help all key stakeholders to ensure they could arrange for their resources to be available at the appropriate time and work more effectively with the Project Team.
- The Review Team found that there have been notable efforts to engage key Partner Agencies during the Main Issues Report preparation stage. This is a challenging activity for the Project and it is recognised that there would be benefits in investing more efforts with key partners. The Review Team received consistent feedback from interviewed stakeholders that closer joint working with Partner Agencies would be very beneficial to ensure that they have the opportunity to flag up their issues and that they are contributing to potential solutions. This approach could also build more certainty into the deliverability of plans.
- The Review Team noted that for those areas where charrettes were not conducted, the NPA made less progress in widening engagement with local communities. This is always going to be challenging.
- The Monitoring Statement could have been better utilised to explain how pre-MIR engagement had informed the subsequent content of the MIR.

The overall Report Status is **GREEN**.

Green	Successful preparation of the Development Plan to time, cost and quality appears highly likely and there are no major outstanding issues that at this stage appear to threaten delivery significantly
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4. Summary of Report Recommendations

The report recommendations are categorised as:

Level 1 Critical (Do Now) - To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome it is of the greatest importance that action is taken immediately.

Level 2 Essential (Do By) - To increase the likelihood of a successful outcome the action should be taken in the near future.

Level 3 Recommended - The project should benefit from the uptake of this recommendation.

Summary of the Report Recommendations

Ref No.	Recommendation	Status
1.	<p><u>Governance – Project Organisation</u> We recommend the NPA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes a formal Project Board with appropriate senior officers and key partner stakeholders. 	Essential
2.	<p><u>Project Planning, Finance and Resourcing</u> We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures an appropriately detailed Project Plan is created to ensure that all key stakeholders understand the level of effort and timings that will be required well in advance. 	Recommended
3.	<p><u>Stakeholder Communications and Engagement</u> We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensures that the existing highly effective level of communications and engagement with communities is maintained. Carries out a formal evaluation of participation from an Equalities perspective to ensure that the NPA can demonstrate that it is achieving its published Equalities outcomes. (We expect this to be addressed through the EHRIA). Considers and provides feedback to stakeholders on how the issues raised during pre-MIR engagement are reflected in the MIR (or not as the case may be). <p>[This could be clearly reported in the Monitoring Statement and, for particularly contentious issues, further local community engagement undertaken prior to finalising the Proposed Plan. This approach would provide clear explanation on how and why decisions have been made and has the potential to reduce the level of objections to the Proposed Plan.]</p>	Critical Essential Essential
4.	<p><u>Effective Partner Engagement</u></p> <p>We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establishes an improved and regular engagement with partner agencies across their full range of relevant functions, so that there can be more effective participation throughout the Development Plan preparation and their commitments to timely engagement can be agreed. 	Critical

	<p>The Project Team should specifically aim to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partners are fully aware and understand how they are being involved in the plan preparation process and why; ○ Partners are clear on what outcomes that the plan is aiming to achieve to help deliver the National Park Partnership Plan; ○ Initial thoughts on policies and development proposals are being appropriately informed by Partner views / standpoints at an early stage; ○ Emerging policies, proposals and development options have been critically considered in terms of viability / deliverability within the plan timescales; and ○ The points of contact between emerging issues and the service delivery and development and investment plans of partners are clearly understood to enable more strategic planning and cost-effective delivery by all partners. 	
5.	<p><u>Benefits Management – How will success be demonstrated?</u> We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers how success will be demonstrated (including in relation to wider NPA objectives and obligations) and documents the key performance indicators or measures that will be used, alongside the existing Scottish Government quantitative measures. These measures to be established immediately. • Assess the explicit benefits to the Development Plan gained through the charrettes and other pre-MIR engagement communicates back to the Scottish Government. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Essential</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Recommended</p>
6.	<p><u>Risk Management</u> We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a more comprehensive risk management process with appropriate mitigation measures. 	Essential
7.	<p><u>Lessons Learnt</u> We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers the tools and techniques that can be used by future Project Teams, sharing findings and best practices within the NPA and with other planning authorities, possibly through the Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) Development Plan sub-Group. 	Recommended

5. **Findings and Recommendations**

5.1 **Development Planning Context**

The LDP must be updated regularly (every 5 years) so that it is kept up to date and is responsive to change. The current Local Plan covers the period from 2010 to 2015. The LDP will replace the current Local Plan and will cover the period from 2016 to 2021. It will have a different format from the current Local Plan (due to changes in legislation), however the purpose and use of the LDP remains the same. While it has a lifespan of 5 years it will focus on the main development proposals for the next 10 years and also give an indication of where we think future development, and the likely scale of this, should be located as far as 20 years ahead.

Scotland's National Parks share four aims set out by Parliament:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- To promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
- To promote sustainable economic and social development of the area's communities.

The Review Team acknowledge that the NPA does not carry the range of functions that a local authority planning authority does. As a consequence, the process of ensuring that the LDP is consistent with other statutory plans, such as those of Roads and Housing Authorities, is challenging.

5.2 **Governance – Project Organisation**

The Review Team noted that there is not an established formal Project Board in operation and much of the engagement of senior management within the NPA is handled through short meetings with individuals. The absence of a formal Project Board has, in the Review Team's view, reduced the overall effectiveness of the project approach. This is particularly in relation to Risk Management and the mainstreaming of Equalities issues.

A well organised Project Board (with suitable engagement up to the Park Board Members) should be established and does not have to be administratively burdensome. It can help provide effective and timely support to the team and resolve problems and issues as they arise. The Review Team believe that some increase in formality would assist. The membership would normally include appropriate representation from key Partners. This might be achieved through using alternative governance structures (e.g. the governance arrangements for the Park Partnership Plan).

Recommendation 1

<p>We recommend the NPA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establishes a formal Project Board with appropriate senior officers and key partner stakeholders.	<p>Essential</p>
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5.3 Project Planning, Finance and Resourcing

The Review Team heard consistent feedback that increased levels of detailed project planning in terms of engagement with key partners and internal colleagues would strengthen the process further. This would help all key stakeholders to ensure they could arrange for their resources to be available at the appropriate time and work more effectively with the Project Team.

The Project Team has had to work very hard throughout and has been well supported by colleagues across the NPA. Some stakeholders expressed the view that while this has worked well, it has been fortunate for the Project that there was not strong calls for resources from other projects within the NPA at the same time. This would have introduced further capacity constraints to the work. The overall capacity of the NPA will need to be carefully monitored as this Project continues and for future Development Planning cycles.

In terms of Project Resourcing, whilst more dedicated administrative resource to support stakeholder communications and engagement efforts would be useful, the Project Team has been able to make good progress with the resources made available.

The funding provided by the Scottish Government has made very significant positive impacts on the quality of work and stakeholder participation with the Development Planning process. In particular, all parties reported the substantial benefits of running the charrettes and the ability to draw in and engage high quality (independent) consultancy services to support these activities alongside the Project Team, Agency Partners and community representatives.

The Review Team explored with many of the interviewed stakeholders the merits of using external consultants to facilitate / support these events and received very consistent feedback that their independence, expertise and dynamism was most welcome and essential to the overall success of the process. If the events had been led purely by NPA officials, the views expressed were that the quality of engagement and buy-in would have suffered. The Project Team need to give careful consideration to how future consultations could be run without dedicated independent consultants i.e. tools and techniques that NPA staff could use within existing resources.

Although external funding was available for this Project from the Scottish Government, the NPA will need to consider how suitable funding will be made available to support future Development Planning activities in further cycles. This is a critical success factor for NPA to keep in mind and will need to be effectively addressed.

Recommendation 2

<p>We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures an appropriately detailed Project Plan is created to ensure that all key stakeholders understand the level of effort and timings that will be required well in advance. 	<p>Recommended</p>
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5.4 Stakeholder Communications and Engagement

There has been strong cross-team organisational commitment to the process. It has enabled the Project Team to effectively engage with colleagues within the NPA and also external agency Partners and key stakeholders. This approach has helped the broader NPA team to understand the end goals and their contribution towards them and for all parties to deliver to the timescales set in the Development Plan Scheme published at the start of the work.

The Review Team heard a number of community organisations express high levels of trust in the NPA, the Project Team and the plan process. It has been very clear to the Review Team from the feedback received from community stakeholders interviewed that communities greatly appreciate, have benefitted from and, in some cases, been highly energised by, the engagement undertaken, especially where Charrette events have been held. Communities appear to have bought into the process and ultimately this will foster greater ownership of the Development Plan. This is to be highly commended and communication efforts should be maintained at these highly effective levels.

The Project Team has made a conscious attempt to exploit communication opportunities through social media tools and techniques in order to reach a wider audience not typically engaging in such processes, including young people and those in employment. There have been some successes in building followings on twitter and facebook. Analytical tools are being used to monitor their use and this will help to inform future strategies to reach the target audiences. All parties recognise that this is in an early stage of development and needs to continue and develop further.

In addition we received some positive feedback about specific efforts to engage young people through schools and youth projects. However, further work is required to continue to reach out to this audience and to evidence how their inputs have informed the MIR.

The Review Team noted that for those areas where charrettes were not conducted, the NPA made less progress in widening engagement with local communities. This is always going to be challenging.

It was not clear to the Review Team that the Project Team had carried out an analysis of participation in the consultation process sufficient to demonstrate that the NPA have met its published equalities outcomes. Overall the Review Team considered that greater visibility for equalities issues throughout the process would assist the NPA in demonstrating that it has effectively mainstreamed equalities in its approach.

Recommendation 3

<p>We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensures that the existing highly effective level of communications and engagement with communities is maintained. • Carries out a formal evaluation of participation from an Equalities perspective to ensure that the NPA can demonstrate that it is achieving its published Equalities outcomes. (We expect this to be addressed through the EHRIA). • Considers and provides feedback to stakeholders on how the issues raised during pre-MIR engagement are reflected in the MIR (or not as the case may be). <p>[This could be clearly reported in the Monitoring Statement and, for particularly contentious issues, further local community engagement undertaken prior to finalising the Proposed Plan. This approach would provide clear explanation on how and why decisions have been made and has the potential to reduce the level of objections to the Proposed Plan.]</p>	<p>Critical</p> <p>Essential</p> <p>Essential</p>
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5.5 Effective Partner Engagement

The Review Team found that there have been notable efforts to engage key Partner Agencies during the Main Issues consultation stage. This is a challenging activity for the Project and it is recognised that there would be benefits to invest more efforts with key partners.

The Review Team received consistent feedback from interviewed stakeholders that closer joint working with key Partner Agencies would be very beneficial to ensure the not only: all key issues are being flagged up; but also to assist in ensuring increased Partners buy-in and to developing evolving potential solutions. This approach could also build more certainty into the deliverability of plans.

In order to ensure that a high quality integrated development plan is created, it is critical that there is more detailed cross-authority engagement. In order to support this improvement, as noted in other areas of this report, the project planning of the communications activities down to this level of engagement would help.

The Review Team noted that several of the interviewed stakeholders indicated a real willingness to increase the levels of engagement (subject to the normal capacity constraints) and to improve the channels of communications within individual authorities. For example, we understand that at least one significant partner agency is intending to establish an ‘account management’ engagement model to ease and improve communications.

Recommendation 4

<p>We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <p>Establishes an improved and regular engagement with partner agencies across their full range of relevant functions, so that there can be more effective participation throughout the Development Plan preparation and their commitments to timely engagement can be agreed.</p> <p>The Project Team should specifically aim to ensure that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Partners are fully aware and understand how they are being involved in the plan preparation process and why; ○ Partners are clear on what outcomes that the plan is aiming to achieve to help deliver the National Park Partnership Plan; ○ Initial thoughts on policies and development proposals are being appropriately informed by Partners’ views / standpoints at an early stage; ○ Emerging policies, proposals and development options have been critically considered in terms of viability / deliverability within the plan timescales; and ○ The points of contact between emerging issues and the service delivery and development and investment plans of partners are clearly understood to enable more strategic planning and cost-effective delivery by all partners. 	<p>Critical</p>
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5.6 Benefits Management – How will success be demonstrated?

It has been very clear to the Review Team from the feedback received from community stakeholders interviewed that communities greatly appreciate and have benefitted from the engagement undertaken, especially where Charrettes events have been held. These communities appear to have bought into the process and ultimately this will foster greater ownership of the development plan. This is to be highly commended.

What is less clear, is the extent to which the benefits gained by greater community buy-in can be ‘captured’ as the Project progresses. Elsewhere in this report, we highlight the role of the Monitoring Statement in recording what has happened up to publication of the MIR and how issues have been considered.

During the Lessons Learnt exercise, the Review Team heard from some attendees possible measures of success for the Development Planning process. It is not yet clear to us how success will be measured and how it could be monitored, in particular in relation to the NPA’s wider outcomes.

It is clear to the Review Team that the benefits of adopting the project planning approach and the overall approach to communications and engagement are attracting significant benefits to the Development Planning process and these should be captured, documented in a Benefits Plan and communicated within the NPA and to the Scottish Government in the Planning Performance Framework as work progresses. The benefits are clearly more than delivering the key products within the Development Planning process! We would expect these benefits to be identified in the Participation Statement at future stages.

Recommendation 5

<p>We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers how success will be demonstrated (including in relation to wider NPA objectives and obligations) and documents the key performance indicators or measures that will be used, alongside the existing Scottish Government quantitative measures. These measures to be established immediately. • Assess the explicit benefits to the Development Plan gained through the charrettes and other pre-MIR engagement communicates back to the Scottish Government. 	<p style="text-align: center;">Essential</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Recommended</p>
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5.7 Risk Management

The Project’s risks and issues management process is not mature. The Project Team are aware that risks do need to be effectively handled but limited time and capacity appears to be available. For example, the Project Initiation Document (PID) has only one entry on risks at present.

The Project Team are dealing with risks as the project develops, however a more structured approach would allow the team to take earlier views on areas of potential risk and developing suitable mitigation steps, including the overall approach to mainstreaming Equalities.

For example:

- Ensuring appropriate levels of key partner agency engagement throughout the plan preparation process;
- Handling of levels of community and other key stakeholder representation at each plan stage;
- Pre-empting legal challenges; and,
- Handling any feedback and direction from The Reporter.

Recommendation 6

<p>We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishes a more comprehensive risk management process with appropriate mitigation measures. 	<p>Essential</p>
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5.8 Lessons Learnt

The Project Team is ensuring that short Lessons Learnt reviews are being regularly conducted during each stage of work of the Project. This is in line with best practice and should continue. It is clear that this is being carried out internally, and possibly more work could be done with external stakeholders to ensure that appropriate feedback loops are in place.

In some cases, the lessons learnt should be used across the NPA and, where appropriate, communicated to other planning authorities as examples to learn from and good practice.

Recommendation 7

<p>We recommend that the Project Team:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Considers the tools and techniques that can be used by future Project Teams, sharing findings and best practices within the NPA and with other planning authorities, possibly through the Heads of Planning Scotland (HOPS) Development Plan sub-Group. 	<p>Recommended</p>
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6. Next Gateway Review

The next Gateway Review is expected to be conducted before the issue of the Proposed Plan (PP) in around 6 months time.

7. **Distribution of the Gateway Review Report**

This report is sent to the Head of Planning for acceptance. It is anticipated that the Head of Planning, in conjunction with the Planning Manager, agree a set of actions against each of the recommendations. For example appropriate actions may include changes to the project plan, additional resources, further stakeholder engagement or improved or new project documentation.

The Head of Planning would usually report on its review findings and response to the Development Plan Management Board (if one exists) and the Planning Committee. The actions would then be sent to the Review Team for final approval.

The contents of this report are confidential to the National Park Authority and their representative/s. It is for the Head of Planning to consider when and to whom they wish to make the report (or part thereof) available, and whether they would wish to be consulted before recipients of the report share its contents (or part thereof) with others.

The Review Team members will not retain copies of the report. A copy of the report will be shared with the Scottish Government for information and inclusion in any overall lessons learnt activities.

Appendix A - Review Team and List of Interviewees

Review Team

Review Team Leader:	John Harkin
Review Team Members:	Scott Dalgarno
	Tony Cain
	Scott Nisbet

List of Interviewees:

Name	Organisation/Role
Stuart Mearns	Forward Planning Manager, the NPAA
Iain Nicolson	Head of Rural Development & Planning, the NPAA
Willie Roxburgh	Kilmarnock Community Council
Allan Brandie	Argyll & Bute Council (Housing)
Robert Grant	Forestry Commission
Fiona Butcher	Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust
Jonathan Padmore	Stirling Council (Transport)
Nathan Ward	Geddes Consulting
Agnes Harvey	Blairmore Village Trust
Philip Neaves	Felsham Planning and Development Agent for Callander landowner
Ivan Clark	Planning Team Manager, SNH
Dick Johnson	Callander Community Council
Jim McQueen	Balloch Community Council
Ken Aitken and David Torrance	Transport Scotland
Frixos Kyriacou	Mrtpi And planning consultant for Arrochar Hotel
Lessons Learnt Workshop Attendees	
Allyson Blue (Chairing)	Stuart Mearns
Susan Brooks	Thomas Ledingham
Hugh Killen	Carolyn O'Conner
Anna MacLean	Paul Symington (tbc)
Charlotte Craig	Craig Jardine
Sara Melville	
Iain McLeod and Review Team Members (Observing)	