

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 7



Visitor Experience Update

Paper for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides a summary update on progress towards achieving Visitor Experience objectives and recent highlights (and lowlights, if any) since the last report to the Board.

2. Highlights

- 2.1 Promotion of the National Park at Glasgow Airport. In what is a first in the UK, the NP in partnership with National Park Destination Group and Glasgow Airport has transformed the international arrivals walkway into an interactive loch-side woodland experience of Scotland's first National Park.

Passengers flying into Glasgow Airport now step from their international flight straight into a National Park experience and can even rest for a moment on wooden benches to take in the views of the loch, islands and mountains between the trees.

Not only will it create a real sense of place, it will hopefully inspire people to visit Loch Lomond & The Trossachs during their visit to Scotland. The new 3D sensory experience is expected to welcome millions of visitors arriving into Glasgow and encourage them to explore the National Park highlight that it is within easy reach of Glasgow.

- 2.2 The Great Scottish Swim took place on 23rd August. It is proving hugely popular and sold out prior to the event. 2,500 swimmers participated and this year saw a 25% increase on last year, exceeding the target of 15% increase. Loch Lomond Shores organised evening entertainment to hold people in the area, and this will be further developed for 2015. The event outcome report is due by the end of October at which point we will review with the organisers and Event Scotland our plans for 2015.

3. Lowlights

- 3.1 Progress has been slow on the 3 threshold signs and other signage that remains outstanding to complete due to difficulties with suitable locations and staff resource but we now have a plan for completion this year. We are also reviewing the siting and designs of village welcome signs in light of issues with compatibility with other village statutory signs.

4. National Park Partnership Plan outcome: A high quality, authentic experience for visitors, with many opportunities to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural heritage, within an internationally renowned landscape that compares to the best on offer around the world.

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 7

Visitor Experience Update

5. Corporate Plan outcome: Encourage and support improvement in the consistency and quality of service offerings to visitors to the Park.
6. Progress
 - 6.1 For all our Visitor Centres we are exploring buying into the mystery shopping system used by HS, FCS and NTS, to provide consistent monitoring of visitor experience and a consistent system to use to measure and benchmark against.
 - 6.2 From the 1st October the Gateway Centre will be closed to the public, with the current operator moving to other premises within the Lomond Shores site. The closure is to facilitate the essential refurbishment of the building to create a new offer there that is more in keeping with the Lomond Shores site. A project team has been established to identify the best possible use of the building to deliver a high quality authentic experience for visitors to the National Park. It may be that significant infrastructure works will be required to the building to facilitate the right operation. A detailed paper on this project was discussed by the recent Strategy Group.
 - 6.3 A business steering group has been established to lead the development of 2015 Year of Food and Drink celebrations and NPA has been invited to join the National Steering Group.
 - 6.4 Funding is being sought for the full production of “whistle” to celebrate John Muir day in 2015.
 - 6.5 The Pontoon at Drumkinnon Bay has now been successfully installed. Dredging has been completed, steel poles found at the edge of the channel which resulted in additional dredging required running on into July. Testing of boat trip operations is taking place with Sweeny’s cruises during September. Tenders for the waterbus operation are planned to be completed this autumn. An official launch of the pontoon will now be scheduled in 2015.
 - 6.6 A process for the review of the West Highland Way management and development of future management plan is underway.
 - 6.7 A cycling study and action plan has been completed and shared with businesses. Actions for 2015 have been agreed and implementation is underway. A Food and Drink three year plan has been agreed with businesses with a Food and Drink Business to Business Event scheduled to take place on 11th November.
 - 6.8 Good progress has been made with two permanent viewpoints (at the Falls of Falloch, designed by John Kennedy and at Loch Lubnaig, designed by Ruairidh Moir) and one

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 7

Visitor Experience Update

temporary view point (in Balquhiddel Glen, designed by Daniel Tyler and Angus Ritchie) which were in place and launched in June. These are now being promoted via social media, web and print. Members will recall that the cost of third permanent viewpoint at Inveruglas came in over the allocated budget in 2013/14. Design issues for Inveruglas viewpoint are being addressed through a reworking of the design and this is now targeted for completion by March 2015.

Author: Mairi Bell, Head of Visitor Experience

Executive Sponsor: Gordon Watson, Director of Operations