

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8



Visitor Management Update

Paper for information

1. Purpose

1.1 This report provides a summary update on progress towards achieving Visitor Management objectives and recent highlights since the last report to the Board.

2. Highlights

2.1 Heritage Lottery Funding has been secured for the National Park's joint mountain path project aimed at tackling path erosion, impacts on our mountain environment and involving people in the process. The project value is £6M with Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust leading the project in partnership with LLTNPA, CNPA, SNH and FCS.

2.2 Strathyre to Kingshouse shared use cycle path was completed following 4 years of development work by the NPA and Sustrans.

2.3 A busy summer period with high temperatures was matched with responsive patrolling by the Ranger Service and police through Operation Ironworks and site management contractors mobilised to deal with increases in litter, bin emptying and toilet cleaning requirements.

3. Lowlights

3.1. There is a significant amount of pressure on key members of staff to drive forward Your Park. We are prioritising workloads to meet Your Park deadlines. Whilst every opportunity is being taken to structure the consultation to support efficient collation and consideration of responses and to encourage consultation responses before the end of the deadline it is anticipated that the volume of work will be intensive during the January/February period.

4. National Park Partnership Plan outcome:

4.1 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.

5. Corporate Plan outcomes:

5.1 Improved quality of life for residents and enjoyment for visitors.

5.2 Increased engagement in the Park through education, volunteering and outreach opportunities.

5.3 Responsible and managed access to the National Park.

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8

Visitor Management Update

6. Progress

- 6.1 Project Your Park has made significant progress and a full set of papers has been prepared for consideration as part of the wider agenda.

5 Lochs Site Improvements

- 6.2 The NPA car parks at north and south Loch Venachar have been identified as the next phase of improvement works to be taken forward from the 5 Lochs Visitor Management Plan, bringing the facilities up to a standard for visitors looking to enjoy these popular lochshores. The improvements will consist of landscaping, planting and new infrastructure such as picnic benches, BBQ stands, signage and improved parking layouts. Bracklinn Falls car park has also been identified for improvements. The appointment of architectural and engineering services will be in place by end September. We have also progressed the site designs to the required level of detail for planning applications with an intended submission date of mid October.

West Highland Way

- 6.3 A review of WHW maintenance works has taken place and updated to reflect the recently completed path works at Conic Hill and on the FCS forest estate. This revised works table will form the basis of condition survey work over the coming winter months.

Scenic Route's

- 6.4 The third structure under the Scottish Government's National Scenic Route's initiative at our Inveruglas site has commenced with a programme of design reviews, building warrant application, contractor appointment and a targeted construction completion date of March 2015. The revised design has been agreed with the architects BTE and discussed with Building Control with favourable comments. We are now proceeding to the detailed design stage for both the new structure and improved access via new all abilities paths.

Operation Ironworks and National Park Police Officer

- 6.5 Operation Ironworks activity started on 18th April 2014 and to the end of August twenty weekends of patrols have been undertaken. Officers from all three divisions have been involved and issues dealt with have included public consumption of alcohol, possession of controlled drugs, vandalism, assault, possession of offensive weapons, drink driving and other road traffic offences.
- 6.6 The National Park Police Officer has continued to support the delivery of our frontline services over the summer season, in conjunction with the ranger service and across the three police divisions. The main focus of activity being Operation Ironworks through

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8

Visitor Management Update

direct deployment on patrol in the Park area and coordination of the Ironworks deployment plans during the Commonwealth Games.

Ranger Service

- 6.7 The Ranger Service has been boosted over the summer months with an additional 32 seasonal staff working on a variety of contracted hours or as bank staff to ensure a visitor welcome and highly visible presence at our facilities and across the Parks busiest areas.
- 6.8 Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway, National Park Centre Balmaha and Milarrochy Bay have been opening daily throughout the season. Visitor numbers to Balmaha Centre between April and August reached 57,200. Rangers have undertaken over 3,906 hours of patrols to the end of August, including Loch Lomond and the islands. The Ranger Service delivered and supported 52 public events between April & August.
- 6.9 An end of season report will be prepared for the next Board meeting to present the full detail of activity.

Access & Recreation

- 6.10 Work continues on delivery of projects in Phase 1 of the Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP). The National Cycle Network Route 7 Strathyre to Kingshouse shared use path was completed and an official opening took place in mid-July. Work continues to provide support on a number of shared use path projects including Immervoulin to Strathyre, Drymen to Balmaha and St Fillan's to Lochearnhead.
- 6.11 A pre-proof hearing date for the access enforcement case relating to locked gates at Drumlean has been set for October and an evidential hearing date set for November.
- 6.12 The new format Access Forum undertook a training day in June. Members accompanied officers on site visits around Luss looking at all abilities access, training has also been delivered on the role and remit of the Forum. The first formal meeting will take place on 29th September.

Visitor Management

- 6.13 Work is on-going with the delivery of the visitor management plan actions for 5 Lochs and East Loch Lomond in conjunction with local communities. Reviews of both plans have been completed.
- 6.14 Litter management requirements are being scoped out resulting from the launch of the National Litter Strategy and new fixed penalty notice powers. Initial consideration is being given to embedding the new national litter campaign messages for next season

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8

Visitor Management Update

using a variety of mechanisms such as on site, vehicles, via the Ranger Service, Volunteer Rangers, education and outreach work and our wider public communications.

Education and Inclusion

- 6.15 A significant amount of outdoor learning activity, linked to the Curriculum for Excellence, has taken place over the year with direct engagement with almost 1,000 participants.
- 6.16 We have focused on supporting Career Long Professional Learning (CLPL) opportunities with Education Scotland and local authority partners, to further embed self led activities. Specific work has been undertaken to developing a programme for schools across West Dunbartonshire, in partnership with SNH and their Teaching in Nature programme.
- 6.17 Our partnership with the John Muir Trust has raising the profile of the NPA at the John Muir event, member's conference and with local schools. The joint funded post has also run training for providers and increased the number of awards completed within the NP.

Volunteering

- 6.18 Volunteer Rangers have provided a fantastic presence at a range of events over the summer, including the great Scottish swim, the NPA mobile visitor centre, which was received very positively by all visitors as well as being involved in supporting delivery of Callander Meadows Discovery day and Clanscape Arrochar.
- 6.19 A further round of Volunteer Ranger recruitment is planned for October alongside developing opportunities for volunteers through partners such as the Woodland Trust, Forestry Commission, The Great Trossachs Forest and Lomond Fisheries Trust.

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