

National Park Authority Board Meeting



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. The public consultation for the Your Park proposals started on 13 October and is going very well with a broad range of interest being generated and high levels of public awareness being created through news and social media coverage.

3. National Park Partnership Plan outcome:

3.1. 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.

4. Corporate Plan outcomes:

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

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

4.3. Responsible and managed access to the National Park.

5. Progress

Your Park

5.1. The public consultation for the Your Park proposals started on 13 October with the publication and distribution of the consultation document and launch of a dedicated website and facebook page. Social media has been well utilised as well as news media resulting in newspaper, radio and television coverage. This has contributed to a high level of public awareness and a broad range of interest being generated. The consultation is due to conclude on 12 January 2015.

5 Lochs Phase 2 Site Improvements

5.2. The Loch Venachar and Bracklinn Falls site designs have been completed and we have formally appointed the project design and implementation team; Austin Smith

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Lord LLP - Landscape Architects, Harley Haddow Ltd – Consulting Engineers and Robinson Low Francis – Quantity Surveying and Construction Design and Management. An initial briefing meeting has also taken place with our call-off construction contractor Haddens Construction Ltd to clarify the scope of project works and timescales.

- 5.3. Planning applications for all work programme sites have been submitted to Planning for consideration at the December Planning Committee. Mobilisation to site is planned for early January subject to planning approvals, with a construction programme of 8 weeks and completion by late March 2015.

Scenic Routes

- 5.4. Interpretive signage has been installed on the completed phase one sites at Falls of Falloch and at Lubnaig Beag. The Falls of Falloch installation, 'Woven Sound' recently received an award from the Glasgow Institute of Architects in the 'Small Works' category. The student project 'Look Out' in Balquhider Glen also received a commendation.
- 5.5. Work is ongoing to complete the third pilot project at Inveruglas. The project is about to go to tender and works will commence during early January with completion by late March 2015.

Access & Recreation

- 5.6. Progress continues on the delivery of Outdoor Recreation Plan priorities with the promotion of the Parkmobility scooter project in Balloch, with scooter stations and banners outside the bus stance and at Carrochan. The Drymen to Balmaha multiuser path route alignment has been agreed and SNH have provided initial funding to review the Tyndrum to Crianlarich cycle path proposal as part of the cross Scotland Pilgrim's Way.
- 5.7. Stirling Council have delivered accessibility improvement works in Aberfoyle and Argyll and Bute Council have confirmed core path signage improvements will take place on the West Loch Lomond Cycle path section along Old Luss Road.
- 5.8. The access enforcement case relating to locked gates at Drumlean has begun. The first two days of evidence were heard on the 17th and 18th November. The case will continue on December 15th and 16th.

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6. Visitor Management

- 6.1. A 5 Lochs visitor management steering group meeting is scheduled for early December to update on Your Park and the Loch Venachar car park improvement works and to discuss priorities for next year. We have been able to provide ongoing support to the St Fillans and Lochearnhead communities with regards to issues with lay-by and long stay caravan occupation.
- 6.2. 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 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.

7. Education and Inclusion

- 7.1. Outdoor learning activity was further supported with the National Parks Residential, hosted at Lagganlia. 64 senior pupils from 7 Local Authorities spent the week in the Cairngorms learning about National Parks and working towards their John Muir Award.
- 7.2. The John Muir Trust Annual Gathering was supported and preparations are underway to celebrate the John Muir Award and National Park partnership one year on and the achievement of 100,000 awards in Scotland. A celebration event is planned for November. Additional work is underway with the John Muir Trust to develop a digital solution for John Muir Award participants to record their experiences and thoughts electronically when undertaking the award.
- 7.3. Rangers and Volunteer Rangers worked in partnership to deliver the 2 week Experiential Learning Safety for Kidz event, for nearly 1,000 pupils in West Dunbartonshire, and the RHET food and farming 2 day event at Luss.
- 7.4. The 2014 High School Debate was hosted here at the NP HQ. Angus Allan helped with chairing and judging, alongside Gordon Watson and Rob Bushby from the John Muir Trust. The debating topic was the relevance of John Muir in the 21st Century and the winning debating team was from Vale of Leven Academy.

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7.5. The NPA representatives attended the *Backbone Outdoor Festival for All* in Blair Atholl for BME groups (hosted by SNH and CNP) supported by NP Volunteer Rangers and the mobile visitor centre.

8. Volunteering

8.1. Volunteer rangers supported delivery of the Royal Highland Education Trust's food and farming event, which involved 300 school children learning about agriculture and wildlife. The Volunteers guided the groups around the site and had the opportunity to get involved in some of the activities.

8.2. Partnership requests were received from; the RSPB for assistance in developing their Loch Lomond reserve, Kilmun Community for support to maintain the Glenfinnart gardens, and Butterfly Conservation requested support in developing the Blairbeich Bog nature reserve near Gartocharn. Friends of Loch Lomond and the National Park worked in partnership to deliver two 'Make a Difference Days' in the Trossachs and Arrochar area respectively, both were attended by members of local businesses, community members and support by the ranger service and volunteers.

8.3. Volunteer Ranger recruitment is progressing well, with 30 people attending our open evening and 24 volunteers attended a Your Park briefing session.

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