

# National Park Authority Board Meeting



## Visitor Experience Update

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*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. In the lead up to 2015 Year of Food and Drink our first industry tourism food and drink event, in partnership with Love Loch Lomond, took place at Ardoch on the 11<sup>th</sup> of November. The event was attended by seventy businesses and included best practice speakers, local producers and opportunities to share plans for food and drink themes and activities in 2015.
- 2.2. Delegates enjoyed a locally sourced breakfast and lunch prepared by Tom Lewis and his team from Mhor. In a packed day keynote speaker Matthew Thompson of Jamie Oliver's Fifteen in Cornwall gave a presentation about the inspirational work of Fifteen to train and change the lives of hundreds of youngsters in Cornwall and our own Skills Partnership also took part and presented on the exciting pilot kitchen garden project youngsters have worked on with the Oak Tree Inn.
- 2.3. Businesses had the chance to meet producers and find out more about local sourcing and suppliers. A National Park programme of Food and Drink events will be promoted in 2015.
- 2.4. Pilot cruise services took place successfully from the new pontoon at Lomond Shores for the month of September. Plans are now underway for full operation of boat trips from the pontoon for season 2015.
- 2.5. The opportunity to offer new water bus services from the pontoon is currently out to tender. Cruises will operate from one side and waterbuses and one off trips will operate from the other side. An official launch of the pontoon and services is scheduled for the beginning of the season.

### 3. Lowlights

- 3.1 The project to introduce new village threshold signs has been deferred in the light of competing priorities. This will be reviewed as part of 2015 / 2016 operational planning.

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### 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 outcome

- 5.1. Encourage and support improvement in the consistency and quality of service offerings to visitors to the Park.

### 6. Progress

- 6.1. Lubnaig has proved a success as new fantastic new addition to our visitor facilities. We have undertaken a survey over weekends using Volunteer Rangers to obtain visitor feedback about the new facilities there in the first season. Visitor feedback consistently rated the cafe, parking and toilets as excellent. Visitors were a broadly even split from wider area, rest of UK and overseas It is very positive that visitors are extremely satisfied with the new visitor facilities, including paid parking, and would return and recommend others to stop at the site.
- 6.2. The Gateway Centre at Lomond Shores is now being managed for temporary uses while the plans for the redevelopment and relaunch take place. A craft market was held in the building as part of the Christmas lights switch on with record numbers attending. The building has a large flexible space that can be used for a range of events.
- 6.3. The Great Scottish Swim has been launched for 2015 and will take place on 29<sup>th</sup> August. Distances are again 1/2mile, 1 mile and 2 miles. Interest has been shown in adding a 5km swim for future years.
- 6.4. We are working with the communities in Arrochar and Luss to support installation of new interpretation panels in both places.
- 6.5. We have led on cycling study and action plan for the National Park. This has stimulated Love Loch Lomond to support an initiative to fund cycle racks for businesses in the Park. We are producing for the first time a set of route maps for easy to challenging cycle rides in the Park. Our twice yearly meeting of cycling interest businesses will take place in December.

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- 6.6. There is progress on the 3 National Park threshold signs that remain outstanding to complete. These were the ones with most challenges to identify suitable roadside locations. They are on target now for completion this year. All approvals for one of the three in place and approvals for final two are being progressed.
  
- 6.7. The build contract for the scenic viewpoint at Inveruglas is now out to tender and on target for completion in March 2015. This will coincide with improvements to signage and interpretation on our tenanted visitor cafe/public toilets building there to improve the appeal to visitors.

**Author:** Mairi Bell, Head of Visitor Experience

**Executive Sponsor:** Gordon Watson, Director of Operations