

# National Park Authority Board Meeting



## Rural Development Update

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### *Paper for information*

#### 1. Purpose

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

#### 2. Highlights

- 2.1 The third Annual Planning Performance Framework Report 2013/14 was issued to the Scottish Government outlining key performance indicators and planned service improvement.
- 2.2 The time taken to determine planning applications has remained consistent across the first two quarters of 2014/15, having recovered from a downturn in quarter 4 of 2013/14.
- 2.3 The time taken to determine more complex Environmental Impact Assessment and Electricity Generation applications remains excellent – well above the Scottish average across 2013/2014 period - this re-affirms the prioritisation of work in that period.
- 2.4 Community Grants Scheme launched.
- 2.5 Three Built Heritage Repair Grant Scheme supported projects are on site with one completed.
- 2.6 Callander Community Hydro Scheme launched.

#### 3. Lowlights:

- 3.1 Delay in launching Community Grants Scheme
- 3.2 The speed of determining planning applications has not increased, on account of the continued number of more complex applications being processed.

#### 4. National Park Partnership Plan outcome:

- 4.1 In the National Park businesses and communities thrive and people live and work sustainably in a high quality environment.

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### 5. Corporate Plan outcome:

- 5.1 A sustainable pattern of new developments meeting economic and community needs.
- 5.2 Active and empowered communities.

### 6. Development Management Progress:

#### Planning Performance

- 6.1 The 2013/14 Planning Performance Framework (PPF) report to Scottish Government was completed and submitted in September. This key document focuses on continuous improvement of our service – efficient processing of planning applications, the provision of advice and a proactive Development Planning service - and is a requirement of all planning authorities and key agencies in Scotland. Scottish Ministers see this as key in order to ensure planning supports the Government's economic development strategy. It sets out progress with service improvements planned and the priorities looking forward until June 2015. The Government will review and provide feedback – last years' feedback was overall very positive. It is intended to present more detail to the December meeting of the Planning and Access Committee.
- 6.2 In terms of the speed of determination of applications, the performance trend across Quarters 1 and 2 of 2014/15 is fairly stable and consistent, exhibiting a welcome recovery and 'levelling out' from the challenging figures we had in Q4 of 2013/14 - when the team was recovering from the knock-on effect of our end of year run-of-river hydro application pressure.
- 6.3 It is notable that there has been a national trend toward gradual improvement in the Scottish Average across the time taken to determine all application types since this measurement was introduced in 2012. Whilst the National Park has followed the trend toward an improving situation, it is slightly behind in some categories. The outstanding exception remains Environmental Impact Assessment applications where our average decision is issued in half the time of the Scottish Average.
- 6.4 This situation above evidences the continued excellent work that has been undertaken jointly with the specialist advisors in our Conservation Team to secure a co-ordinated 'one team' approach to work on these complex applications.
- 6.5 Lastly, members may wish to note that the approval rate for all applications has fallen slightly to 95.6% as of Quarter 2 2014/15 (compared with 96.6% in 2013/14). However the National Park continues to consistently approve a higher proportion of applications than the Scottish average of 94.1%.

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### Notable Casework

- 6.6 Work on hydro development remains a significant area of work, with 4 live hydro applications under consideration at this time, one section 36 consultation (application for larger capacity schemes processed by the Scottish Government) and 2 newly submitted proposals currently awaiting validation. Decisions on 4 hydro applications were issued from July to September 2014 inclusive. Further, and perhaps most importantly, 4 schemes are currently under construction and 1 has been completed and operational in this reporting period. The later is the Callander Community scheme – the launch of which is outlined later in this report.
- 6.7 Discussions have also been ongoing toward the submission of an application to amend a condition of the Cononish Goldmine planning permission – a context report on this proposal is submitted separately to this meeting
- 6.8 Since the last update the following notable planning consents have been issued (in addition to the hydro power work detailed above)
- 23 affordable flats on the site of the former telephone exchange in Callander
  - Callander Supermarket (Permission in Principle)
  - '3G' surfaced all weather sports pitch in Gartocharn

The number of 'starts on site' across the Park continues to reflect a trend toward a return of confidence within the construction industry.

## 7. Forward Planning Progress

- 7.1 Following the Board's approval of a further consultation on additional development sites submitted during the LIVE Park consultation, this consultation was launched on 7<sup>th</sup> November with comments invited until the 19<sup>th</sup> December. Work is continuing to progress the content of the Proposed Local Development Plan.
- 7.2 Work has started on some limited engagement with communities and partner organisations, with workshops held in Callander for community representatives, with Stirling Council, Transport Scotland and also the Buchanan Community in November. A further workshop is planned with key landowners, community representatives, government agencies and Stirling Council to prepare a draft Masterplan for future growth in the Callander South area.
- 7.3 The National Park's Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG) for Renewable Energy was commended in the Development Plans category at the Scottish Awards for Quality

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in Planning held on the 5<sup>th</sup> December, which is one of the Scottish Government's most prestigious events and celebrate achievements in planning, from strategic visions to development on the ground. The photo below is Gordon Watson and Stuart Mearns with the Minister for Local Government and Planning – Derek McKay.



### Community Development

- 7.4 Callander Community Hydro – The pioneering community-led renewable energy project at Stank Glen is now operational and Fiona Logan was invited to officially open it on the 5<sup>th</sup> of November. A launch event was held for the leading bodies involved in the project and was very well attended and received, despite the rain! Officers supported the community in planning the event and provided PR management and media engagement.
- 7.5 The project is the first community hydro electric project built on Forestry Commission Scotland land under a 40 year lease agreement. It is the result of the dedicated work of a small group of volunteers, supported by the Callander Community Development Trust. A LEADER grant helped to fund the development stage and the delivery has been financed by the community using commercial borrowing from a consortium of social investors. Profits from the project will be returned to the Development Trust and will fund local projects.

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- 7.6 Community Partnership Gathering – The annual Gathering was held on the 1<sup>st</sup> of November at the 3 Villages Hall in Arrochar. The event was a great success, with over 80 community representatives from across the Park. The theme for this year was ‘Our communities – past, present and future’ and participants got involved in a wide range of activities, from workshops on the future of the Community Partnership to Volunteer Awards to a joint exhibition of sixteen National Park heritage groups commemorating WW1.



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- 7.7 Community Partnership Communications Intern – Funding has been secured for an Internship focused on developing a communications strategy and series of communications Campaigns. This post will last for 6 months, starting in January 2015.
- 7.8 Community Grant Scheme 2014/15 – The Scheme was launched on the 16<sup>th</sup> of October, with community organisations from across the Park being invited to return applications for Project and Admin grants by the 28<sup>th</sup> of November.
- 7.9 Broadband – As members will be aware, the Digital Scotland Superfast Broadband programme is well underway and aims to provide fibre broadband infrastructure to areas not covered by commercial deployment. Work has started in the National Park, focusing in Callander initially, and officers are arranging a LLTNPA-specific briefing with representatives of the programme, further details will be posted on the microsite.

### Built Heritage Repair Grant (BHRG)

- 7.10 BHRG 2014/15 is progressing well. By 10 November 2014, all 9 formal grant offers had been issued and 8 signed acceptances returned. 1 grant offer remains outstanding.
- 7.11 Of those grant offers accepted;

#### 1 project is complete

- Drymen - Refurbishment of traditional timber sash and case windows, including the replacement of “blown” double glazing with single glazed toughened glass.



Before

After

#### 4 projects are underway

- Gartmore -Lime pointing
- Milton - re-slating roof

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- Gartmore - manufacture of traditional sash and case windows and traditional door for installation
- Gartmore – replacement of concrete tiled roof with slate

### 8. LEADER Update

- 8.1 Members will recall approving a paper regarding issues surrounding the new LEADER programme as it affects the Park area at the June 2013 Board meeting. The 21 Local Development Strategies which will guide the new programme across Scotland are currently being assessed by an independent panel. The agreed National Park 'Joint Sub LAG' will be assessed as part of the governance arrangements of the Argyll & the Islands and Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER programmes.
- 8.2 The assessment panel includes representatives from HIE, the Carnegie Trust, the Crown Estate, Newcastle University, Seafood Scotland and lead officials from the relevant ESI funds (EMFF, ESF/ERDF & EAFRD). The Panel will also be supported by the SG Rural Communities Team, Internal Audit, the CADISPA Trust and the Rural Development Company.
- 8.3 LAGs will be notified in December 2014 as to whether their Strategy has been approved, approved with conditions or rejected. LAGs will then work to meet any conditions of the assessment between January and March 2015, with the programmes planning to be operational between January and April 2015 (depending on the level of modification required).
- 8.4 Officers continue to work closely with the LEADER programmes and play an active role in both LAGs as they prepare for the assessment outcome and the implementation of the new programme. Officers have also begun preliminary work on the National Park 'Project' submission as per the June Board paper.

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