



Organisational Update

Paper for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides a summary overview of the Chief Executive's activities, progress on corporate matters and operational highlights since the beginning of the 2015/16 financial year.

2. Context

- 2.1 The Annual Report at Agenda Item 7.1 provides a summary of the highlights of the 2014/15 financial year. Rather than duplicating the content of the Annual Report, this update covers notable activities and highlights from across the organisation since the beginning of the 2015/16 financial year.
- 2.2 The Delivery Group reports, published on the Board microsite, provide greater detail on specific progress and achievements against the 2014-15 Annual Operational Plan objectives.

3. Chief Executive Office Update

3.1 Highlights

- 3.1.1 We continue to have significant positive engagement with the Scottish Government. The CEO and Convener had a second meeting with our Minister for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform, Dr Aileen McLeod took place during March. This explored a number of Park initiatives which contribute to current Scottish Government priorities. The Minister is keen to visit the Park during her summer tour. Bridget Campbell, Director of Environment & Forestry visited the Park during April which allowed an excellent opportunity to showcase the work we do and our aspirations in support of the Scottish Government agenda.
- 3.1.2 The 'Rural Affairs, Food & Environment Delivery Board' (RAFE), chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead, met for the first time in April. The new Board is broader in scope than the previous ENFOR Review work as it includes the Rural Payments and Inspections Division responsibilities. The ENFOR organisations are represented by their CEOs on the Board and there will also be a planned mechanism for Chairs to participate in the work. The focus is to develop a shared vision for the rural environment and to identify

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opportunities for better alignment between organisation outcomes and activities and potential joint delivery of national projects such as 2020 biodiversity actions. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs CEO has been nominated to lead work delivery of better digital services. The Board is also exploring how Brian Pack's recommendations for improving services to land managers are being taken forward. Nominations for non-executives, in addition to Mr Pack, to join the Board are being sought.

- 3.1.3 The Ministerial launch by Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead MSP of 'An Ceann Mòr', the fourth and final of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs first pilot phase Scenic Routes viewpoint projects took place at Inveruglas. The event received widespread media coverage (including coverage on TV), promoting the Scottish Government-funded initiative that encourages more visitors to stop and take in the breathtaking views so easily accessible from our arterial routes through the Park. A short film of the day exploring the purpose of Scenic Routes was created. This has been shared widely on social media, prompting views from around the world.

3.2 Updates

- 3.2.1 There have been a significant number of CEO level meetings with strategic partners over the past quarter with Police Scotland, Sportscotland, RSPB, SNH, Stirling Council, Keep Scotland Beautiful and Zero Waste Scotland.
- 3.2.2 The Chief Executive has had a few speaking engagements over the past quarter involving Community Groups, Tourism Conferences, a fishery opening event and several media interviews in relation to the Your Park proposals and the work of the Park generally.

4. Conservation & Land Use Update

4.1 Highlights

- 4.1.1 The A82 at Pulpit Rock has re-opened to two-way traffic and the high quality landscape finish sought over several years by the NPA has been achieved, a testament to effective relationship building and partnership working with Transport Scotland and their contractors.

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4.2 Updates

- 4.2.1 Work is continuing to address the ongoing questions about gold-panning in the Crom Allt around Tyndrum which has continued over the winter and spring of 2015. This activity requires consideration by various statutory bodies whose remits and regulatory powers relate to aspects of panning. We are promoting a co-ordinated approach to facilitate good customer-focussed communication.
- 4.2.2 Although due to late snows the period of work on the ground was much longer than anticipated, the bulk of restoration works at Luss Estates and SRUC Kirkton & Auchteryre under our Peatland Project has now been completed. We have achieved good media coverage about this project to a wide public audience. As we enter the demonstration phase later this year, also funded by SNH, we will more specifically target our audience of land managers, agents and policy-makers to raise awareness of the benefits of peatland restoration and the options for delivery under the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Going forward, the 'Peatland Project' is to be re-branded as the 'Mountain Bogs Project', to align with our Wild Park 2020 Wild Challenge.
- 4.2.3 The Park Authority has submitted, on behalf of 'Callander's Pass Landscape Partnership' Board (comprising of key stakeholders including Callander community groups, the Park Authority, FCS and Stirling Council) a Stage 1 (Development Phase) bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. The outcome of the bid will be known in late autumn 2015. If successful, a Development Officer will be employed for 18 months over 2016 and 2017 to work up the detail required of a Stage 2 (Delivery Phase) bid.
- 4.2.4 The National Park hosted one of the Scottish Government's national SRDP Roadshow events in Balloch. The event was well-attended by rural businesses and agents from in and around the Park and gave us the opportunity to emphasise Park priorities and the importance of SRDP in their delivery.

5. Visitor Experience Update

5.1 Highlights

- 5.1.1 The ticket booths for the pontoon are now in place and the daily schedule includes five cruises from Loch Lomond Shores.
- 5.1.2 Treezone, the ropes course attraction we have leased the orientation area to, launched over Easter weekend. Eight new staff have been employed and

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business has been going well. Delays in receiving their building warrant has impacted on the reception build, however the build is now underway and will be completed in June.

- 5.1.3 The first event to celebrate the Year of Food & Drink, Spring Fest at Loch Lomond Shores was hugely successful with 30,000 people attending over the two days. The Gateway building housed a pop-up Willow Tearoom and Loch Lomond Brewery – the tearoom in particular was a great success. The National Park was profiled at Mhor Fest on the 23rd and 24th of May and the Gateway Building will again be used during the Loch Lomond Food & Drink Festival in September 2015. We have now succeeded in obtaining funding from Event Scotland for a Food & Drink event in Balmaha in October 2015 and are working with businesses in the Trossachs on a World Soup Championship in Callander in November 2015. The enthusiasm of businesses to become involved is an indication the growing momentum of businesses ambitions to raise the profile of Food & Drink in the National Park.

5.2 Updates

- 5.2.1 The Gateway redevelopment is on track and progressing well. To date there have been 13 Expressions of Interest and many more viewings for the building accommodated. The official tender stage to appoint an operator is now underway with a 26th June deadline for tender returns, preferred provider and all bidders informed by 14th July and contract awarded 28th July. A technical study is complete to ascertain costs to upgrade the building to facilitate a food and drink operation for 220 covers. The study information will allow us to assess the investment requirements of uses presented in tenders and will be completely concluded once tenders are received including proposed use of space in the building.
- 5.2.2 Following a successful pop-up tea-room over Easter, a temporary pop-up Willow Tearoom has been negotiated from the end of May to October. This has the benefit of animating the building over this summer, offering a much needed catering offer at Lomond Shores and off-setting some of the building overheads.
- 5.2.3 A year-long visitor survey began in April 2015, with over 250 cards being returned by the end of April. To date over 60% have given their email details and of these 30% have completed the online survey. These numbers are all on target for our projections to achieve over 3000 cards and 900 online surveys over the length of the project.

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5.2.4 The number of routes for waterbus services has increased again this year with a service between Ardlui and Ardleish which provides an opportunity for those walking the WHW to cross the loch for accommodation. There has been interest expressed from the Ross Priory to become a waterbus stopping point and this could tie in with plans for the development of Wards Reserve for future services. While there were no tenders submitted to operate waterbus services from the new pontoon on Lomond Shores for the beginning of the 2015 season, there has been interest from operators. Any operator is likely to require lead time to source boats and create capacity adapt current timetables. The opportunity has been kept open to operators to submit proposals for a pilot operation for any part of 2015 season and to work up proposals for full season in 2016. A survey for the waterbus service has been designed and will begin from June 2015 when all the services are underway

6. Visitor Management Update

6.1 Highlights

- 6.1.1 The Park Authority has been successful in securing £162,500 from the Sustrans Community Links Fund in 2015/16. This will fund the next stages of three key path projects within the Park – Drymen to Croftamie, the final sections of Drymen to Balmaha and the Tyndrum to Killin Cycle Links.
- 6.1.2 The start of the season has brought more visitors to the National Park and the National Park Volunteer Rangers have been delivering record numbers of hours to supporting their visitor experience. In May over 900 hours of Volunteer Ranger time was dedicated to promoting the National Park, the highest the Park Authority has ever recorded in one month.
- 6.1.3 The Park Authority has also designed and planned in the delivery of our pilot Junior Ranger Programme for mid-June, together with McLaren High School. This is based on the agreed EUROPARC Junior Ranger framework. The 5 day non-residential project, aims to develop a network of young people who act as advocates for the National Park; support the development of young people with skills relevant to the National Park; and raise awareness for the participants of the natural and cultural heritage of the Park. As part of the programme the young people will also be able to complete their John Muir Award.
- 6.1.4 Your Park achieved its largest milestone yet, with the submission of the Park Authority proposals to Scottish Government, in mid-May. The public can make

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comments on the proposals direct to Scottish Government until the 21st June. Work continues across the board to scope out the operational requirements and resourcing, continued work on developing site options and developing the systems to support the implementation of Your Park proposals, should we get approval from the Minister.

6.2 Updates

- 6.2.1 Keep Scotland Beautiful will commence work on a litter audit across the four visitor management zones proposed under Your Park. This will update the 2012 audit undertaken by them in the Five Lochs area and provide current data about littering across the Park. The audit will take place during June, July and August.
- 6.2.2 Ranger Service patrols targeting key visitor management hotspots are underway across the Park. 428 patrols on land and water were completed between the start of the season and the end of May. Byelaw contraventions on the loch for speeding and not having sufficient life jackets total 34 for the same period and there have been three camping byelaw contraventions on East Loch Lomond. The Park Authority managed sites and facilities are staffed and open daily. 23 Seasonal Rangers have been recruited and are supporting the patrolling programme and the staffing of sites and facilities.
- 6.2.3 The Park Authority Volunteer Rangers have also helped at events such as Mhorfest and the Ministerial launch of the Inveruglas Scenic Route. The conservation volunteers helped to undertake wildlife survey and maintenance work at the Aberfoyle wildlife site, carried out a litter survey and clearance at Arrochar beach with the community and businesses and built a footbridge with the Woodland Trust to improve access within the Great Trossachs Forest.
- 6.2.4 Within May the Park Authority supported 10 schools groups and over 330 young people to engage with the National Park through the Curriculum for Excellence. The Park Authority continues to deliver a range of continued professional learning opportunities with partners, such as the delivery of Education Scotland's primary social science CLPL on Inchcailloch.

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7. Rural Development Update

7.1 Highlights

7.1.1 Launch of Built Heritage Repair Grant Scheme – Now in its third year, it has been broadened out to include all listed buildings and traditional buildings in the Park's eight conservation areas, as well as buildings that are visible from National Cycling and Walking Routes (including the West Highland Way and NCR 7), and main routes through towns and villages.

7.1.2 LIVE Park consultation - following the Board's approval of the Proposed Local Development Plan and Draft Guidance at the April Special meeting, the consultation started on the 18th May. We have seen the consultation getting picked up across local media and by local residents, community councils and landowners. A small number of events are planned including with stakeholders, secondary schools and community drop in event.

7.2 Updates

7.2.1 The level of new development activity remains positive. This is evidenced through the increase in planning applications so far this year, along with the increase in the number of developments being constructed and the number of enquiries from landowners and developers concerning the marketing or submission of planning applications.

7.2.2 The Park Authority continues to engage with this programme to administer the LEADER funding programme across the Park's area with delay in the programme. The following points are of note:

- New Local Action Groups have been recruited and indicative allocations received from Scottish Government
- Potential applicants can contact LEADER programmes for early discussion but the formal opening of the programmes has been delayed.

8. Commercial Development Update

8.1 Updates

8.1.1 National Park Partnerships Ltd has been formed and is now seeking nominations for Directors. The first Board meeting will take place at the next ANPA AGM, scheduled for June in the New Forest National Park.

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- 8.1.2 The Park Authority is leading the review of the National Parks UK 'Britain's Breathing Spaces' brand and its viability as a robust brand with wide commercial appeal.
- 8.1.3 The electrical vehicle charging point at Balmaha Visitor Centre car park-grant aided through the Energy Saving Trust has been installed.
- 8.1.4 Ticketing facilities have now been installed at Drumkinnon Bay for the Cruise and Waterbus services to comply with contractual conditions on the lease of the Pontoon.
- 8.1.5 Arrangements for the operation of Luss Pier shop and toilets are being finalised.

9. Corporate Update

9.1 Marketing and Communications

Highlights

- 9.1.1 The production of high-quality, accessible materials and updated web pages were created to support the submission of the final Your Park proposals to Scottish Government for consideration.
- 9.1.2 A high quality final consultation document for the Local Development Plan. Following on from the approach taken at the Main Issues Report stage, emphasis has been placed on making all documents easy to read and well laid out to encourage the wider public to engage with the Plan and accompanying documents before it is formally adopted.

9.2 HR Update

9.2.1 Highlights

- The revised Organisational Structure was communicated to staff and Board members in May 2015. A comprehensive communication plan, including early engagement with UNISON, face to face meetings, questions and answers, team meetings and an all staff email providing context around the changes ensured all staff fully understood the reasons for the change. As a result of the change we have the following vacant posts:-

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- Director of Conservation & Visitor Operations
 - Director of Estates & Commercial Development
 - Capital Projects Manager
 - Estates Manager
 - Policy & Strategy Adviser
- As well as the above vacancies a number of other key posts are also vacant for a variety of reasons such as maternity leave, promotion, secondment and resignations.

These include the following posts:

- Forward Planning Manager
 - Land Use Manager
 - Governance Manager
 - Facilities Manager
 - Campaigns Manager
 - Project Management Adviser
 - Legal Adviser
- Although recruitment is underway for all of the above posts at varying stages and measures are in place to manage continuity of service until posts are filled.
 - As part of our Seasonal Ranger recruitment campaign we held an Assessment Centre for our potential recruits. This HR/Ranger Service initiative was a huge success and has provided us with a high calibre of Seasonal Rangers. Not only did our staff enjoy the day, we also received a number of positive 'tweets' from candidates reassuring us that this was the way forward.

9.2.2 Updates

- Funding has been secured for an upgrade to our HR system, Snowdrop. This will allow us to use Snowdrop as a business tool rather than a data capture point as we currently do. The upgrade will enhance our self service capability giving staff more ownership of their personal details such as training records and we will also have the facility for an online recruitment service which will allow us to stream line the recruitment process. Development is at an early stage and will continue throughout 2015/16.

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9.3 Financial Performance

9.3.1 Highlights

- The result for the year ended 31st March 2015 was a net over-spend of £126k. Our original budget had an over-programming element of £100k. When preparing the Quarter 2 Budget Revision we identified that we were likely to have an overspend of £110k arising from the cost of the Board Elections, higher than expected legal costs and some unexpected staff costs. This budget pressure was identified to our Scottish Government Sponsor Team in Quarter 3 and we subsequently received approval to overspend up to a maximum of £155k. The management accounts for the year are attached at Appendix 1 to this report and key points are explained below.
- Operating income is £216k ahead of the revised budget with actual income being £8.5m v budget of £8.3m. This is mainly because we received £164k additional year end funding from Scottish Government and planning fees were £15k higher than budget.
- Total operating expenditure for the year was £6.56m which is £46k higher than the revised budget of £6.52m. There are a number of variances within each category of operating expenditure and some of these relate to the additional year end funding provided. The main areas to highlight are overspends on grounds maintenance of £47k and on staff salaries of £35k. The grounds maintenance costs were higher than expected mainly because of increased gritting costs for our car parks and the staff salaries were higher because of strain on the fund pension costs and additional costs in relation to staff sickness cover and maternity pay.
- Total net project expenditure was £2.0m and £1.5m of this was in relation to capital projects such as Five Lochs, Scenic Routes, Your Park, Gateway Centre, and the RSPB access road.
- Net expenditure on projects was £187k higher than budget and the majority of this was funded by the year end Grant in Aid award. There were a number of over/under-spends across various project lines but we have managed to achieve overall delivery of the total budget for projects.

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9.3.2 Updates

- The Management Accounts for April 2016 have been issued to the Executive Team for review and the results do not highlight any significant risk in relation to the 2015/16 budget.

9.4 Health and Safety Update

9.4.1 A separate Health & Safety report is included at Agenda Item 8.

9.5 Governance Update

9.5.1 Highlights

- We hosted a very successful visit from 11 Board Members and 2 officers from Cairngorm National Park Authority, which involved briefings on Scenic Routes and managing a ranger service.

9.5.2 Updates

- On Board guidance for Board Members of Scottish Public Authorities has been published. Governance Programme in process of being developed for review by next Strategy Group, including On Board training for Members, dates for Board Member appraisals and review of standing orders / terms of reference.
- Training has been provided to Planning & Access Committee members on SEPA's role in relation to flood advice.

9.6 Legal Update

9.6.1 Highlights

- We signed a Licence to Occupy with Willow Tea Rooms for use of Gateway Centre until October.
- Signed Collaboration Agreement for Callander Landscape Partnership, for use of Heritage Lottery Funding for various identified projects.
- Trade Mark for Water Bus word and logo registered.

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9.6.2 Updates

- *Reynana Stahl Anstalt v The Park Authority* – appeal against access enforcement access enforcement notice at Drumlean Estate, Aberfoyle. It is likely that the court hearing will take place in June, and Counsel anticipates that a decision will be issued by the end of the summer.
- *Michael Leonard v The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority*. The decision is anticipated early June and will be communicated to Board members.
- Two cases of illegal tree felling are being progressed.

9.7 Infrastructure Update

9.7.1 Highlights

- A new Unified Communications System has been implemented and rolled out throughout the organisation. This new system will support enhancements to collaborative and remote working and cost reductions.

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Executive Sponsor: Gordon Watson, CEO