



Organisational Update

Paper for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This report provides a summary overview of the activities, progress on corporate matters and operational highlights between September and November.

2. Context

- 2.1 The Delivery Group reports, published on the Board microsite, provide greater detail on specific progress in Quarter 2 (July to September) and achievements against the 2015-16 Annual Operational Plan objectives.

3. Chief Executive Office Update

- 3.1 The 'Rural Affairs, Food & Environment Delivery Board' (RAFE), chaired by the Cabinet Secretary, Richard Lochhead, continues to meet. The Park Authority CEO is continuing to take a lead on developing a RAFE digital strategy. The outcomes of the work will influence our strategic and operational planning, particularly the Annual Operating Plan and the development of the new National Park Partnership Plan.
- 3.2 The Chief Executive submitted the Park Authority 'Spending Review' to Scottish Government. Budget announcements are likely to be heard around mid-December once settlements from Westminster have been confirmed and aligned by the First Minister.
- 3.3 The Chief Executive was invited to sit on the Digital Public Services Sponsor Board, the first meeting took place in October and fits well with the Digital Strategy lead he has on the RAFE Delivery Board.
- 3.4 The Park Authority CEO has been investing significant time along with the Executive and Heads of Service in starting preparations for the new National Park Partnership Plan. An outline of the proposed Plan preparation process will be presented to Board at this meeting.
- 3.5 A positive meeting with between the Park Authority CEO and LEADER Chairs took place in November to discuss the proposal to create a National Park Joint sub-LAG for the Park Authority area for the 2014-20 LEADER Programme.

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- 3.6 The management structure is now complete, we successfully recruited a Director of Estates and Commercial Development and the post commenced on 16 November.
- 3.7 The Chief Executive has held a number of positive meetings with key partners and stakeholders such as Police Scotland, Transport Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland and Luss Estates Company.
- 3.8 A productive joint management meeting with Cairngorms National Park Authority was held in early November. Discussions focussed around National Park Partnership Plan, health agenda, The Mountains and The People project, shared services, National Parks UK Ltd and Governance/Board matters.
- 3.9 The Chief Executive was invited to be part of the National Judging Group for one of the categories for the Scottish Thistle Awards. Judging has taken place and the outcome of all categories will be announced over the coming months.

4. Conservation & Land Use Update

- 4.1 Further to the announcement of an additional £3 million worth of funding from the Scottish Government, we have submitted applications to Peatland Action for potential peatland restoration works over the coming six months across a further four sites within the National Park working in collaboration with private landowners to deliver on the multiple public benefits which can be derived from bringing bare peat and hags back in to active management. Our applications to the Peatland Action Fund have been successful, totalling £249k, and we have begun developing detailed contract specifications in order to tender for the works with the aim of getting contractors started on-site in January for completion by the end of March 2016.
- 4.2 The Land Use team have been working closely with the Scottish Government advising on the National Park's integrated approach to Whole Farm and Estate Plans, which provide advice to land based businesses by considering the various enterprises and asset classes on holdings. The Scottish Government's previous approach to Whole Farm Plans focused predominantly on the agricultural enterprise. As a result funding has been secured by the National Park to deliver three pilot Integrated Land Management Plans working with land managers over a two day period.
- 4.3 We have devoted significant efforts to influencing the eligibility criteria and targeting maps for the new SRDP scheme, in order to ensure that priority work for conservation of black grouse, and control of rhododendron and other Invasive non-native species can be funded in the National Park. We have also begun exploring the new

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Environmental Collaboration Action Fund (ECAAF) within SRDP as we are eligible to apply for funding under it to support the development of some projects.

- 4.4 Our Work on Wild Park 2020 in this period has focussed on further development of the five Wild Challenges as headline projects, to maximise participation and delivery by all the key partners. We have also begun work with partners on a progress report and setting up a Forum event for a wider range of stakeholders and other interested parties, with the objective of fostering continued engagement. The latter is planned for March 2016.
- 4.5 The “Callander's Pass - Mind The Gap” Landscape Partnership application to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) was successful at Stage 1 in October. The community led project is the result of collaboration between local community organisations, the National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and Stirling Council. The project plans to establish Callander as the ‘Outdoor Capital of the National Park’, including the creation of visitor interpretation, a cycling and walking network, and training opportunities. £119,600 was awarded to the National Park Authority on behalf of the Callander Landscape Partnership for the development phase which is planned to commence in January 2016 and will include the appointment of a project officer early in the new year. The development phase (18 months - 2016-2018) will deliver key pieces of research and inform detailed planning and development of the individual delivery projects for inclusion in the final stage 2 submission to the HLF. Funding of £1.55 million has been earmarked by HLF for the project if the stage 2 submission is approved.
- 4.6 We have continued to support the SEPA-led Strathard Ecosystems Services Project with Forest Enterprise, Stirling Council and the Community Partnership. This is exploring natural flood risk management options in the catchment above Aberfoyle, with a strong element of community engagement in accordance with the principles of the Ecosystems Services Approach. An extremely informative study visit was run in October to see work on the ground that came about thorough a similar exercise undertaken at Pickering on the edge of the North York Moors National Park.
- 4.7 Hydro scheme cases have continued to dominate the bulk of the Conservation & Land Use team’s support for our planning function. Discharging conditions for construction method statements and monitoring of construction on site have featured heavily in our work on schemes at Ballimore, Donich Water, Ardentinny, Beinn Glas, Burn of mar, Glen Finnart and Allt Essan. We have also provided key landscape advice for a high profile planning case at Gartocharn.

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5. Visitor Experience Update

- 5.1 In partnership with NVA we launched the stunning Island Drift exhibition at Street Level Gallery in Glasgow City Centre. The exhibition showcases fine art photographic work created by NVA in partnership with the Park Authority. Over eight months, photographer Alan McAteer, designer James Johnson and NVA's creative director Angus Farquhar worked with rangers and volunteers to manipulate moving and static light sources on land and water to achieve a powerful series of digital images articulating the Highland boundary fault line. We have possibilities for 2016 host Island Drift in the Park and to tour it further afield perhaps even internationally.
- 5.2 This year we supported four events to maximise the opportunity of the Year of Food and Drink and to raise the profile of Food and Drink in the National Park. These attracted 65,000 attendees, we secured £15,000 from Event Scotland the businesses invested £100,000.
- 5.3 A National Park food and drink magazine is now available featuring local producers to highlight the breadth and quality of local food and drink.
- 5.4 The study work for the West Highland Way review has now been commissioned and the review is underway with a project management team from all relevant interests. Some of the field research will now take place at the beginning next season with the review final completion in early summer 2016.
- 5.5 It has been a challenging summer season with variable weather, however Loch Lomond Shores has recorded year on year increase in visitor numbers to date. The latest figures show a 20% increase on last year in October. Visitor numbers to Loch Lomond Shores are a strong indicator for the wider destination, and the increase in activity provision from National Park tenants is helping to grow the site from a shopping mall experience to a family and adventure excursion destination.
- 5.6 Re-surfacing work to the Loch Lomond Shores complex is well underway and should be completed by February. Our Capital Projects Team will inspect the quality of this work once complete and will assist with any snagging advice as necessary.
- 5.7 Our visitor survey is still on-going, to date 2,500+ visitor survey cards and 500+ online visitor surveys have been completed. The survey will continue during winter at weekends at key Park locations. An interim report is expected in December. A waterbus-specific research was completed this season and will feed into WB developments for 2016.

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- 5.8 An end of season meeting has taken place with waterbus operators. All operators have seen a varied season, very much weather dependent. All have seen an increase in visitors wishing to combine cycling with waterbus. This has led Sweeney's to introduce bike hire for 2016. There will be only minor changes to the waterbus timetables for 2016. It was reported that ticket sales at Luss dipped due to the closure of the Luss Pier Shop.
- 5.9 The Cycle Interest Group met this month and together with NPA staff having identified plans for 2016 activity. New downloadable cycle routes and Park-wide cycle map were well received.
- 5.10 End of season meetings with the tenants of our own sites are underway, with the handover of all lease management aspects to the new Estates Team taking place.

6. Visitor Management Update

- 6.1 Following on from the Backbone Community Leadership Programme recruitment selection event at Carrochan, a launch event was held in the Cairngorms on the 12th October at which participants learnt about the opportunities that exist within both National Parks, and discussed plans for how to support their specific community groups to come and engage with the outdoors. Over 50% of participants come from within the central belt and are able to access our Travel Grant scheme and our specialist support to enhance any visits to the National Park.
- 6.2 We supported Education Scotland's' Health & Wellbeing International Conference study tour visit on East Loch Lomond, highlighting the positive impact outdoor learning in the National Park can have on the health and wellbeing of children and young people. This is part of our preparation for incorporating the health and wellbeing agenda into our education and Inclusion delivery.
- 6.3 Through the Teaching in Nature programme, we have promoted opportunities to schools in West Dunbartonshire, Argyll and Bute and Stirling – over 30 applications were received. The first Collaborative Planning event was held in November and was extremely well attended, with participants engaged in learning about how to involve their pupils more fully with outdoor learning in the context of our National Park.
- 6.4 Lucy Sparks has been recruited into the role of the John Muir Award, Scotland Project Manager; a role the National Park Authority contributes funds to and is a fantastic example of joint working to achieve shared aims.

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- 6.5 Volunteer Ranger duties continue to be popular, with good sign-up especially on the East Loch Lomond route, with 4,224 hours contributed to date. This has included supporting St Kessogs Primary school and with West Dunbartonshire ranger service at their Balloch Active Event. We had 14 volunteer rangers helping out with the RHET event where food production is interpreted for young people. They helped to facilitate Biodiversity and Farming workshops to 150 P6 children from various Inverclyde primary schools. The mobile Visitor Centre was used at the Callander Railway Festival, Arrochar Beach Clean and the Great Scottish Swim.
- 6.6 A workshop led by Keep Scotland Beautiful has taken place to look at the policies and processes required by the National Park Authority to administer and deliver the newly acquired litter powers including Fixed Penalty Notice Powers for littering.
- 6.7 The National Park website pages promoting cycling opportunities have been refreshed and include 12 new cycling route cards. A large scale map illustrating the routes has been produced in-house and supplied to cycling based businesses in the National Park.
- 6.8 The Your Park camping management byelaws continue to be considered by Scottish Ministers. In the meantime work has focussed on creating a monitoring and research programme for visitor management information; improving the systems we use to capture and analyse information and further developing ideas for camping provision.
- 6.9 The Mountains and The People project, an Outdoor Recreation Plan priority, is progressing well. The Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust's project team has been recruited and the search for premises in the Balloch area has identified two possibilities. Mountain path works in the National Park are underway on Ben A'an and programmed to start on Ben Lomond and The Cobbler shortly. Recruitment for training officers is underway and with recruitment of trainees to follow early next year.
- 6.10 Practical conservation volunteering activity has included working with FCS volunteers to clean-up the war memorial at Rowardennan and tidying the site and assisting with Glenfinnart Garden, via Ardentinny Community Trust. Volunteers have given over 3000hrs of time to projects. We also held a wildlife seminar attended by 40 volunteers, themed around Wild Park, with presentations on Red Squirrels, Lynx, Mountain Bogs, Woodlands, Reptiles, Water Voles, and Black Grouse. Speakers came from RSPB, FCS and Cairngorms National Park.

7. Rural Development Update

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- 7.1 Two key areas of our Planning work were recognised at the 2015 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning. LIVE Park received the overall award, from a strong field of 42 entries across Scotland, and was submitted for the innovative approach to community engagement during our 2014 consultation. This is the first time that community engagement has received this recognition. In the Development Management category our approach to handling Run of River Hydro Schemes received an award. This is great reflection of the work across the organisation on these two projects.
- 7.2 Community Grant Scheme launched – we are piloting some changes to this annual scheme which introduces some flexibility for communities to focus on more ambitious projects within new community action plans. The deadline for submissions is on the 5th January with the Panel of Board Members due to meet to review the applications in mid-February.
- 7.3 Development activity remains positive through both development on the ground and the number of planning applications we are receiving. Notable planning decisions by the Planning & Access Committee during this period include -
- Approval of an application for a mix of uses that support the development of a rural business in Carrick Estate, which is adjacent to Carrick Castle
 - Refused of an application for three houses and a cancer therapy centre on land to the rear of Gartocharn Church.
- 7.4 Following approval of the submission of the representations to the Proposed Local Development to the Scottish Ministers for Examination, this is now nearing completion and is on track to be submitted during December.
- 7.5 The Community Partnership's Annual Gathering took place on the 7th November in Gartmore on a theme of food and drink. It was well attended and included the introduction of Anne Sobey, the Partnership's new Development Manager.
- 7.6 Engagement with LEADER continues and there was a meeting with both Local Action Group Chairs and staff to gain an update on programme launch and continuation collaboration on a future National Park Sub-LAG. Progress is anticipated early in the New Year on the launch of the LEADER programmes with a co-ordinated approach.

8. Commercial Development Update

- 8.1 National Park Partnerships Ltd has confirmed the proposed Board of Directors. LLTNPA had nominated the Head of Commercial Development who has now

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resigned. Cairngorms CEO, Grant Moir has agreed to take over the position temporarily, pending the appointment of the LLTNPA Director of Estates and Commercial Development. The company structure is still being finalised and an update will be provided once a preferred model has been recommended.

9. Corporate Update

9.1 Marketing and Communications

9.1.1 The Park Authority's community engagement work for the Main Issues Report stage of LIVEPark, the next Local Development Plan for the National Park was the Overall Winner at the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning. This prestigious award recognises the innovative approach that the Park Authority took to engaging harder-to-reach audiences for Planning consultations, namely working age families and young people.

9.1.2 The four-part Channel 5 documentary, 'Loch Lomond: A Year in the Wild' has attracted much media and social media attention. The documentary which was shot in the Park over the period of a year details the changing seasons, and the wildlife the Park is home to and the stunning landscapes these creatures call home. In its first week alone, the show attracted some 1.7m viewers nationally, equalling ITV's audience in the same slot, and almost doubling Channel 5's usual audience for that slot in their schedule.

The series was supported by social media programme, which showcased clips and images from the show, highlighted engaging wildlife facts, first hand experiences from our Rangers and engaged with viewers during and following the show.

The activity was hugely successful, receiving great engagement from people near and far. Over the first 3 weeks of the show, our Year in the Wild activity reached a total of 82,178 people on Facebook and 67,988 people on Twitter (an average uplift in weekly reach of 56%). We also received a total of 4,876 engagements on Facebook (anyone who clicked, commented or shared a post) and 1,552 on Twitter, with viewers expressing excitement, interest in the fascinating wildlife and a sense of pride in the National Park.

9.1.3 The Park Authority has been approached by BBC Radio Scotland to take part in a number of features including a 10-minute live piece on the Island Drift exhibition currently on display at Streetlevel Photoworks gallery in Glasgow, and a pre-recorded piece for Out for the Weekend due to be broadcast on Boxing Day.

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9.1.4 Following the creation of the Rural Affairs, Food & the Environment (RAFE) Delivery Board, a Communications workstream has been set up to facilitate better co-ordinated strategic communications across the RAFE portfolio.

9.1.5 The Communications team from both Scottish National Parks recently met up to share good practice and learning across projects. In addition to the RAFE Communications workstream, the session provided a useful platform to ensure that our communications across both National Parks are co-ordinated.

9.2 HR Update

9.2.1 It's official we are a One Star company. After our third year of participating in the Best Companies employee engagement survey we have been awarded a One Star. This means we are accredited as a "very good" organisation to work for. 82% of staff participated in the survey and we are particularly proud of this accreditation in a year where staff have successfully delivered on important, high profile and challenging projects within an environment where there have been a number of changes to the management team. We will continue to take the opportunity to use this accreditation to attract the best talent and celebrate the successes of our staff.

9.2.2 November was our first Health & Safety Awareness month and proved to be a big hit with staff. Events and activities were wide ranging from on your feet week to winter safety week as well as spotting the hazards, brainwave suggestion schemes finished off with our very own 'Who Wants to be a Safety Millionaire' quiz. Along with our focus on Wellbeing this supports our journey to work with staff to support our Scottish Government national outcome of living longer, healthier lives.

9.2.3 Following a number of successful recruitment campaigns over the past few months we now have all our staff in place and our revised organisational structure is up and running. This is an exciting time and we look forward to the positive impact that the structural changes will make in the future.

9.3 Health and Safety Update

9.3.1 There is no separate Health & Safety report for this meeting.

9.4 Governance Update

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- 9.4.1 The Park Authority continues to meet the statutory deadlines for responding to FOIs.
- 9.4.2 Annual Board Member appraisals continue.
- 9.4.3 The Governance Programme is underway. Revised Board Standing Orders were agreed at the October Board and the review of further Standing Orders / Terms of Reference is making progress and will be shared with the relevant committee / group as the programme continues.

9.5 Legal Update

- 9.5.1 Agreement of an Information Sharing Protocol with Police Scotland which covers procedures, information management and data protection requirements when sharing information.
- 9.5.2 Affordable Housing Commuted Sum Protocol agreed with Argyll and Bute Council, this follows recent agreement with Stirling Council.
- 9.5.3 We have worked with Scottish Enterprise and the Drumchapel and Clydebank Kayak Club to facilitate the location of storage for the club at Loch Lomond Shores in the vicinity of the Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway.
- 9.5.4 In response to a request from the community we have approved a provisional Tree Preservation Order (TPO) for the Bicycle Tree, Dorothy's Field, Brig O' Turk and steps are now being taken to put the provisional TPO in place.
- 9.5.5 *Renyana Stahl Anstalt v The Park Authority* – appeal against access enforcement notice at Drumlean Estate, Aberfoyle. Day Eight of the Proof, a hearing on the Submissions, was held at Stirling Sheriff Court on 16th September 2015. A result is not expected to be known for some time.
- 9.5.6 *Michael Leonard v The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority* – personal injury claim. Harpers have now been instructed to pursue a claim against the Scottish Legal Aid Board for the expenses of the appeal.
- 9.5.7 *Willow's Edge, Balmaha Road, Drymen* – unauthorised tree felling. Alexander Macdonald, the landowner, pled Not Guilty when the case called in Stirling Sheriff Court for an Intermediate Diet on 4th August 2015. A further Intermediate Diet planned for 24th November did not proceed following a motion from the Defence and has now been postponed until 8th December

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2015. The trial date is still showing as 14th December 2015 however it is highly likely that this will be also be postponed.

- 9.5.8 *Buchanan Home Farm, Buchanan Castle Estate, Drymen* – unauthorised tree felling. A report has been submitted to the Procurator Fiscal. The Crown Office and Procurator Fiscal Service (“COPFS”) advise that this case has not been “marked” yet and therefore no decision has been made as to whether or not to prosecute Mr Brown. COPFS cannot give any indication as to when the case will be marked.

9.6 Infrastructure Update

- 9.6.1 Following a recent meeting that was attended by parties from both parks each park has signed up for participation in the Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN) initiative that has recently become available to Government departments via the Scottish Government Shared Services initiative. The Scottish Wide Area Network (SWAN) Programme is designed to deliver a single public services network available for the use of any, and potentially all, public service organisations within Scotland. Capita have now been given the authority to investigate our current WAN (Wide Area Network) links and advise if an alternative solution is available which can offer both cost and performance advantages for both parks.
- 9.6.2 Currently assessing options for field data collection by staff. RAFE partners were approached to contribute knowledge and experience to this exercise and provided valuable information on their own appraisals as well as providing details of their own cost/benefits work and business cases. RAFE partner assistance has reduced the amount of research time required and provided valuable contacts for continued peer support.

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