

Annual Report

2015 – 2016





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Fàilte

Gaelic foreword to be added.

Welcome

It has been an extremely busy year, working with a wide range of partners, to deliver a variety of projects and initiatives which help to achieve our Conservation, Visitor Experience and Rural Development outcomes. The highlights of our achievements are presented throughout this Annual Report.

We continue our efforts to enhance the Visitor Experience of the National Park by investing in visitor sites and recreation facilities as well as measures to protect the precious environment.

Our Your Park initiative to enhance the camping experience on our most heavily used lochshores took significant steps forward, with the approval of camping management byelaws by Dr Aileen McLeod MSP, Minister for Environment, Climate Change & Land Reform, in January 2016. The decision has allowed us to focus work on improving and developing a range of good quality camping opportunities throughout the area in time for the byelaws coming into force in March 2017.

The Mountains & The People project got underway which will see £6.1 million being invested over five years in our most popular mountain paths, restoring our paths and protecting our uplands. This pioneering project involves providing training and volunteering opportunities and initiatives to engage people in enjoying and looking after the outdoors within Scotland's National Parks.

Implementation of Wild Park 2020 continued throughout the year and work to conserve our precious peatlands as important carbon sinks and habitats, remains a focus for us. Working with landowners we helped deliver peatland habitat restoration at two sites in the National Park, restoring more than 35 km of eroded peatland.

Our busy planning service continues to gain significant national recognition for its innovative work winning the overall Scottish Award for Quality in Planning (SAQP) for community engagement in preparing the LIVE Park Local Development Plan. The success of this work was demonstrated by the low levels of objection to the Plan following consultation. The Authority's work in promoting micro hydro was also recognised with a national SAQP award. Building on the success of LIVE Park, strong engagement continued in early 2016 with a highly successful Balloch charrette that was delivered in partnership with West Dunbartonshire Council and Scottish Enterprise.

We remain focused on supporting our vibrant communities and helped Callander secure a significant stage 1 Heritage Lottery Fund approval for a £1.5 million Landscape Partnership project to restore the landscape surrounding the town.



Work has commenced on our next National Park Partnership Plan 2017–2022 and over the coming months we will continue to engage a wide range of partners in new projects and initiatives to look after this very special place.

Through all of these projects we ensure that we are contributing to Scottish Government priorities and are collaborating with our partners to ensure best use of public resources.

Linda McKay

Convener

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs
National Park Authority

Gordon Watson

Chief Executive Officer

“

**Our mission...
is to be the
vital force in
protecting
and enhancing
this iconic
National Park**

”

Our vision

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority is an effective organisation of passionate people who inspire our communities, visitors and partners to work with us to enhance and promote this iconic National Park.

Our aims

The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 sets our four aims:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area
- To promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public
- To promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area.

Within the National Park Authority we encapsulate these aims into our three priority outcomes:

Conservation



Visitor Experience



Rural Development





Conservation

An internationally renowned landscape where the natural beauty, ecology and the cultural heritage are positively managed and enhanced for future generations.



Visitor Experience

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.



Rural Development

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



Corporate Services

Ensuring effective, efficient and innovative use of our resources to deliver the National Park Authority's services to the highest standard.

Commercial Development

Support the funding of our Conservation, Visitor Experience and Rural Development objectives through the identification and implementation of sustainable commercial development opportunities.



Our values

Our values are our moral compass; they help guide how we make decisions. The ideals and ethics that we hold dear as an organisation are:

Passion
we love what we do

Leadership
we show the way

Inspiring
we spark ideas for action

Caring
we respect the past and shape the future

Accessible
we are approachable, open and friendly

Green
we do the right thing for the Park and the planet

Our priorities

Delivering new Scottish Government priorities

All of our plans are aligned to the priorities of the Scottish Government. The Government's Programme for Scotland 2015-16 emphasises:

- A Stronger and Fairer Scotland
- A Strong, Sustainable Economy
- Protecting and Reforming Our Public Services
- Strengthening Our Communities



In particular we will support:

- Our young people, educationalists and health specialists to use the National Park as part of the Curriculum for Excellence and the Natural Health Service, offer Junior Ranger and Volunteer Ranger opportunities and encourage innovation in rural employment and skills development.
- Living longer, healthier lives by encouraging increased participation in the Park through the delivery of our Outdoor Recreation Plan, John Muir Awards, Your Park, outdoor learning partnership working and outreach projects.
- A strong, fair and inclusive society through awarding contracts to companies paying the living wage and showcasing our equal opportunities policy to continue to deliver gender equality throughout our workforce.
- Strong, resilient and supportive communities by supporting them to take advantage of the new measures proposed in the Community Empowerment Bill and the Land Reform Bill when enacted.

Scotland Performs National Outcomes

The Scottish Government's Purpose is:

"to focus Government and public services on creating a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth".

The Scottish Government has set out sixteen National Outcomes which describe what it wants to achieve over the next ten years. These outcomes help to sharpen the focus of government, enable its priorities to be clearly understood and provide a clear structure for delivery.

By achieving these outcomes together, we will make Scotland a better place to live and a more prosperous and successful country.



Throughout this document you will find the Scottish Government outcomes we directly contribute to, highlighted by these icons at the start of each section. They are:

| | | | | | |
|---|--|---|--|---|---|
|  | We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people. |  | We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others. |  | We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity . |
|  | Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. |  | We live longer, healthier lives . |  | We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need. |
|  | We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations. |  | Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and respond to local people's needs. |  | We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society. |
|  | We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production. |  | We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger. | | |

We will continue to measure our performance against the 11 (out of 16) Scotland Performs National Outcomes where the National Park Authority can and does make a significant contribution.

Our partners

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority is dedicated to delivering for the people of Scotland. We strive to make a difference and we firmly believe we're better able to do that by working together.

We take a partnership approach to making things happen and we're proud of the results we deliver, together, for this very special part of Scotland. The work we do would not be possible without the cooperation and participation of a wide and varied range of key partners, from other Government agencies and our four Local Authority partners, to business and landowners, and community organisations and voluntary groups.

Key public sector partners:



Scottish Natural Heritage
All of nature for all of Scotland

Scottish Natural Heritage's work is about caring for the natural heritage, enabling people to enjoy it, helping people to understand and appreciate it, and supporting those who manage it.



SEPA
Scottish Environment
Protection Agency

Scottish Environment Protection Agency is Scotland's environmental regulator. Its main role is to protect and improve the environment.



Forestry Commission Scotland
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

The mission of **Forestry Commission Scotland** is to protect and expand Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their value to society and the environment.



**POLICE
SCOTLAND**

Police Scotland deliver an effective service to the communities of Scotland, ensuring that they live their lives free from crime, disorder and danger.



The National Park is covered by four local authorities: **Argyll & Bute, Perth & Kinross, Stirling and West Dunbartonshire Councils**. Each provides a range of services to their residents including education, environmental services, housing, leisure facilities.

sportscotland is the lead agency for the development of sport in Scotland, investing expertise, time and public money in developing a world-class sporting system at all levels.



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

ÀRAINNEACHD
EACHDRAIDHEIL
ALBA

Historic Environment Scotland is an executive agency of the Scottish Government and is charged with safeguarding the nation's historic environment and promoting its understanding and enjoyment on behalf of Scottish Ministers.



TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND
CÒMHDHAIL ALBA

Transport Scotland is the national transport agency for Scotland and is responsible for rail and trunk road networks and major public transport projects.



Scottish Enterprise

Scottish Enterprise's job is identifying and exploiting the opportunities for economic growth by supporting Scottish companies to compete, helping to build globally competitive sectors, attracting new investment and creating a world-class business environment.



VisitScotland works closely with private businesses, public agencies and local authorities, to ensure that visitors experience the very best of Scotland and that the country makes the most of its outstanding tourism assets.

Other key partners:

Community



Community Partnership

- National Park Community Partnership
- Community Councils
- Community Development Trusts

Representative bodies and third sector

Environment Link and specifically land-owning non-government organisations in the Park.

- RSPB Scotland
- National Trust for Scotland
- Woodland Trust Scotland
- Scottish Land & Estates
- National Farmers Union of Scotland
- UNISON

Private Sector

- National Park Destination Group
- Land managers
- Local destination and trade groups, and businesses

To each and every partner who helped us protect and enhance Loch Lomond & The Trossachs in 2015–16, **we thank you** and look forward to continuing working together to deliver for the National Park in 2016–17 and beyond.



Conservation

Our work in Conservation is focused on protecting and enhancing the National Park's iconic landscapes and wildlife that form such a key part of Scotland's strong national identity, helping ensure that opportunities are there for people to truly engage with and experience nature.

Delivering against Scottish Government Outcomes





Our Wild Challenges



Scotland's peat bogs are an incredible natural resource, storing huge volumes of carbon and water, which help us by combating climate change and slowing down water flow from our uplands. Protecting this precious resource is important and restoring eroded peatlands remains a priority for us.

By continuing to work with Scottish Natural Heritage Peatland Action and Scottish Government's Green Stimulus Fund we delivered peatland habitat restoration at Comer Estate in Strathard and Scotland's Rural University College estate at Crianlarich. These two sites saw the restoration of more than 35km of eroded peatland.



We continued to support the conservation of our threatened native red squirrels through the local 'Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels' Project Officer who is based at our headquarters in Balloch.



We also focused efforts on black grouse conservation by working with land managers and partners on the Callander Black Grouse Project.



We continued to explore opportunities to manage and create woodland where it will improve habitat connectivity and resilience to a changing climate.



With our partners in the Fisheries Trusts we continue to manage the control of invasive non-native species such as Japanese knotweed, Himalayan balsam, giant hogweed and skunk cabbage (pictured above) in several river systems.

Through our own volunteer-led initiative in the Upper Tay catchment, work was carried out across 87 sites with the number of sites showing no signs of re-growth increasing by 22% since last year, indicating that we are achieving success in these areas.



Connecting people to nature

Through our Natural Heritage Grant Scheme we have supported conservation volunteering projects such as Argyll Fisheries Trust, planting 1,000 native trees along the River Gail as part of a habitat restoration project.

We also supported Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust and a team of incredibly hard working National Park volunteers, in undertaking some impressive work to remove invasive rhododendron from native woodlands at Loch Lomond Golf Club and at Stronachlachar.

LOCH LOMOND
& THE TROSSACHS
COUNTRYSIDE
TRUST





Protecting special landscapes

The National Park's stunning and varied landscapes hold a special place for those who live, work and visit here. Our specialist advisory work with partners helps to ensure that key landscapes are protected and enhanced. Throughout the year we worked with Transport Scotland to ensure that the major road improvements on the A82 at Pulpit

Rock and Crianlarich bypass were completed to the highest standards, safeguarding the landscape whilst providing significant improvements for road traffic.

We also worked with Scottish Power and Scottish & Southern Energy to support the preparation of exciting bids for landscape management

to help improve the appearance of major national grid pylon lines that run through the National Park. If these bids are successful they will win significant funding for landscape improvements in areas adversely affected by the power lines.



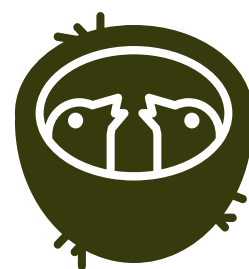
**TRANSPORT
SCOTLAND**
CÒMHDAIL ALBA

Supporting our land managers

We continued to work with land managers to facilitate integrated land management planning, helping promote and deliver both the aims of individual businesses, as well as the delivery of the wider public benefits derived from more sustainable land use.

This has included supporting two local businesses with applications to Scottish Government's new Agri-Environment Climate Scheme to deliver measures which build on the success of the existing Glen Dochart Waders project. The new applications will build on the positive outcomes of the previous works which have resulted in an 86% increase in breeding farmland waders across a 350 hectare project area. It will also contribute to flood risk management in the catchment and a reduction in diffuse pollution from agricultural practices.

86%
INCREASE
BREEDING
FARMLAND WADERS



CASE STUDY

Ecosystem Services – Strathard Project



'Ecosystem Services' are environmental processes that create natural resources used by us all, such as clean air, water, food and materials. This exciting partnership project aims to identify land management solutions in Strathard that will reduce flood risk downstream in and around Aberfoyle. It will also deliver other improvements to the local environment and wildlife, helping to manage natural resources sustainably in a changing climate.

Working with Forest Enterprise, Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Stirling Council and the Community Partnership we supported the launch of the project and this year it delivered:

- Land management and Natural Flood Management opportunity maps.
- Baseline data gathered of current land management practices and identification of stakeholders and community groups who use the area.
- Improved engagement with the Strathard community.

Next year will see the delivery of an integrated land and water management action plan in order to deliver Natural Flood Management within Strathard.





Visitor Experience

Our focus in Visitor Experience is to provide a high quality, authentic experience for our visitors, ensuring there are many opportunities to appreciate and enjoy the rich natural and cultural heritage of the area.

Delivering against Scottish Government Outcomes





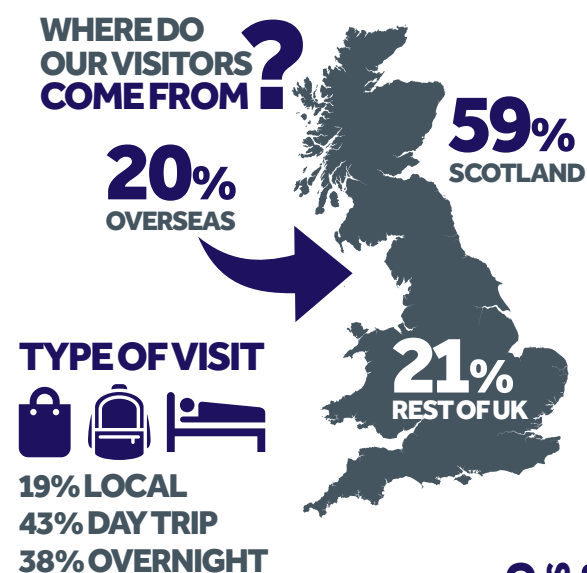
Visitor surveys

Every four years we undertake a significant survey of visitors to the National Park to better understand who they are, what they do and why. This in turn gives us important data to help make informed decisions.

Our 2015 survey ran a full 12 months and 1,560 surveys were completed in total. The results will allow us to track trends between now and 2011, identify opportunities and challenges, and compare Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park to national findings from the 2015 VisitScotland visitor survey.

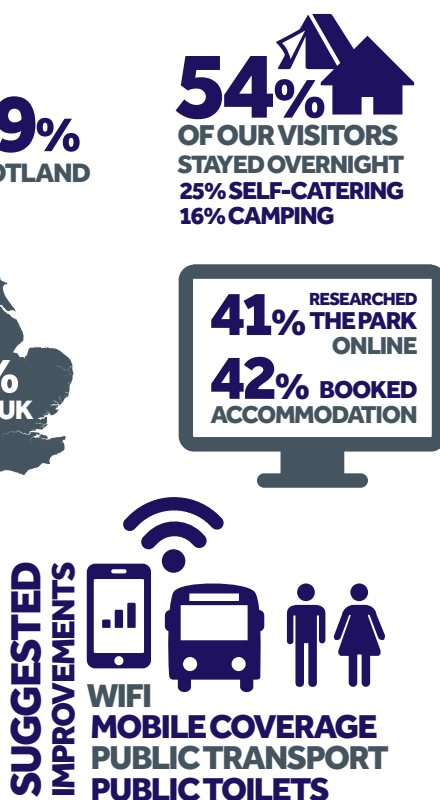


Key findings and comparisons to 2011 were:



AVERAGE VISITOR SPEND

2015 £180 PER PERSON



52% USE WEB-BASED INFORMATION IN THE PARK



Business engagement

Throughout the year we continued to support local tourism businesses through a regular e-newsletter covering a wide range of informative tourism-related topics.

We also held our annual Tourism conference which saw more than 80 local businesses come together to listen to 'great practice' speakers covering contemporary culture, landscape visitor attractions and wildlife tourism.

Better information for visitors

We continued to work hard to provide relevant and easily accessible information to our visitors and business.

We devised 12 cycle route cards for people to download from our website. The routes covered the breadth of the Park, and reflected the destination's fantastic variety of cycling, from traffic-free family-friendly paths to off-road mountain biking.



We worked with SNH to produce a brand new leaflet celebrating the National Park's heritage. Packed with suggestions of the best natural and cultural things to see and do. The leaflet also includes four full-day itineraries, across all four corners of the Park, making exploration by visitors easier.





Tourism product

An Ceann Mòr at Inveruglas was officially unveiled by Richard Lochhead MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Food and the Environment in May 2015 and is our fourth Scottish Scenic Routes viewpoint. Designed by young architectural practice, BTE, An Ceann Mòr has been designed to the highest standards of sustainability and offers spectacular views of the Arrochar Alps in the west, and across Loch Lomond to Ben Lomond in the east.

BTE
ARCHITECTURE

A new section of the West Highland Way opened in 2015. The route alongside Loch Lomond from Ptarmigan to Rowchoish has been completed and now gives walkers the choice of either a lochside or hillside route to Inversnaid.

A new section of the John Muir Way has been created and now leaves the West Highland Way at Carbeth, joining the NCN7 on Gartness road.

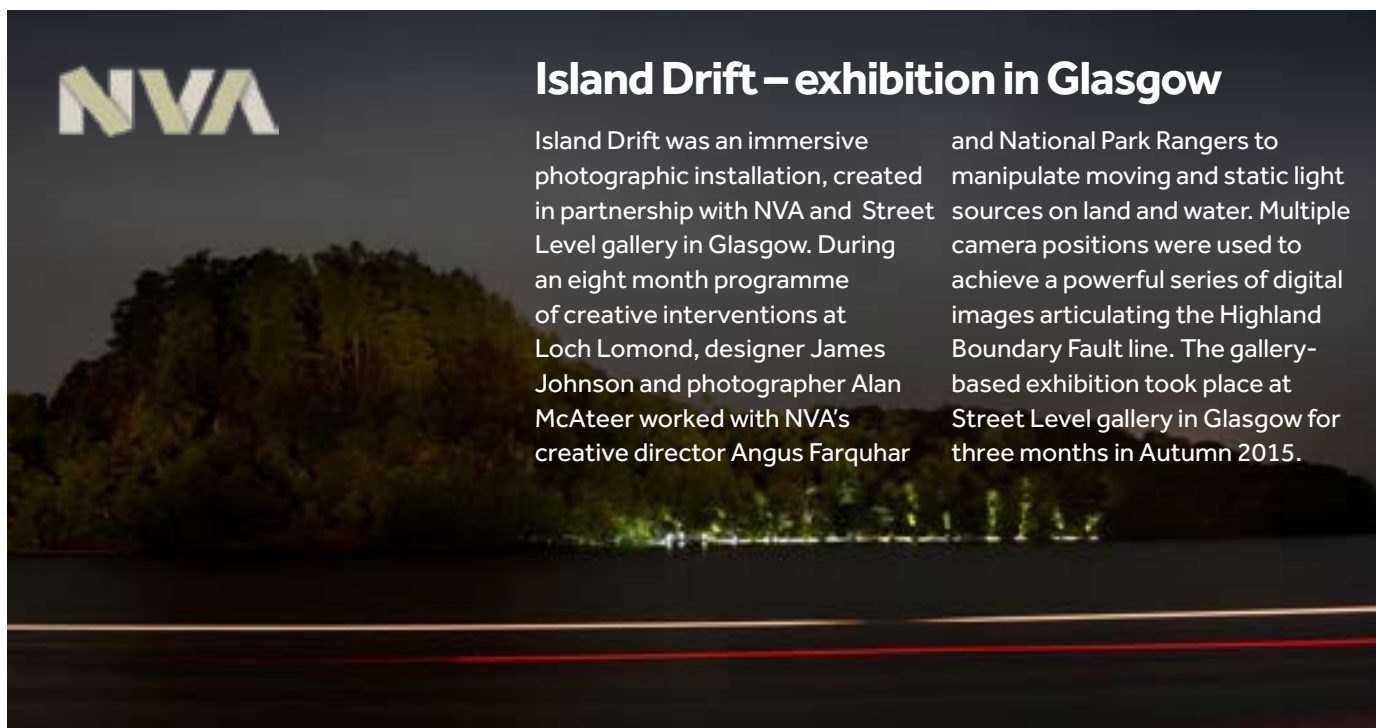


NVA

Island Drift – exhibition in Glasgow

Island Drift was an immersive photographic installation, created in partnership with NVA and Street Level gallery in Glasgow. During an eight month programme of creative interventions at Loch Lomond, designer James Johnson and photographer Alan McAteer worked with NVA's creative director Angus Farquhar

and National Park Rangers to manipulate moving and static light sources on land and water. Multiple camera positions were used to achieve a powerful series of digital images articulating the Highland Boundary Fault line. The gallery-based exhibition took place at Street Level gallery in Glasgow for three months in Autumn 2015.



CASE STUDY

2015 Year of Food & Drink

In 2015 we celebrated VisitScotland's Year of Food & Drink. Our 2011 visitor survey results expressed low levels of awareness of the Park's culinary offer, with only 11% of visitors planning to partake in food and drink related activities.

The Year of Food & Drink provided a great opportunity for us to strengthen the message that there are excellent food and drink offerings in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.



Throughout the year we:

- Directly supported local food events to obtain more than £18,000 of funding from Event Scotland. Springfest at Lomond Shores was a huge success, Mhor Festival grew in size and Balmaha saw its first ever 'Braw Weekend' in the autumn. Throughout the year more than 60,000 attendees participated in food and drink events in the National Park.
- Arranged for Glasgow's popular Willow Tearooms to use our premises at Loch Lomond Shores as a pop-up restaurant during the summer months.
- Hosted a series of unique pop-up fine-dining events with the Mhor Group.
- Developed a programme of familiarisation trips for food and drink journalist resulting in national and international media coverage.
- Continued to work with local Destination Marketing Organisation, Love Loch Lomond, to build the National Park's food and drink reputation, developing a portfolio of food and drink content which included images, videos and words. This new content also provided the foundation of Taste, a dedicated food and drink magazine, with 50 pages focusing on producers and products from within and around the National Park.

The Year of Food & Drink has resulted in an outstanding difference on uptake of food and drink related visits to the National Park with an increase from 11% in 2011 to 44% in 2015.





Visitor Management

Our work in Visitor Management continues to focus on ensuring we have the necessary infrastructure and facilities that help provide a world-class welcome to our growing visitor numbers, ensuring the National Park is an enjoyable and safe place to visit.

Delivering against Scottish Government Outcomes





We submitted our plans for Camping Management Byelaws to Scottish Ministers in May 2015. In January 2016 Dr Aileen McLeod, Minister for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform wrote to us to confirm approval of the byelaws with an implementation date of 1 March 2017.

[illegible]



Supporting accessible recreation

The Outdoor Recreation Plan was approved by the National Park Board in June 2013 and outlines commitments and intentions held by all stakeholders to enhance outdoor recreation and access opportunities across Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park over the next five years.



In 2015, working with our partners Cairngorms Outdoor Access Trust, Cairngorms

National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage and Forestry Commission Scotland, we successfully secured Heritage Lottery Funding and launched The Mountains & The People project.

The Mountains and The People is a five-year project that aims to engage people in protecting and maintaining cherished Scottish mountains, as well as create training opportunities for 48 young people.

The project will deliver against all four of our aims and comprises six different elements:

- Upland Path restoration
- Training
- Conservation Volunteering
- The Adopt a Path
- The Education Programme
- Visitor Information

Since the project launched in June 2015 we have achieved the creation of a new path on Ben A'an and the recruitment of the project team and first batch of footpath construction trainees.

Throughout this year we also:

Completed the shared-use 'Active Travel Link' surfaced path between Drymen and Milton of Buchanan.

Made an important contribution towards the delivery of the coast- to-coast Pilgrims Way by completing a missing link on the route between St Fillans, eastward to Tynreoch.

Provided grant funding to The Three Lochs Way/ Tighness path project to deliver a new, high quality connection between the popular Great Trail and visitor facilities in Arrochar.

Worked with partners such as Sustrans, Forestry Commission Scotland and Lochgoilhead Community Development Trust, funding was secured for two feasibility studies looking at creating active travel links between Balloch and Gartocharn, and also the Lochgoilhead to the Drumsyniebeg / Pole Farm areas.





Supporting outdoor learning

The landscapes of the National Park provide a fantastic opportunity to deliver the Curriculum for Excellence through outdoor learning.

Our work continued to concentrate on supporting children, young people and outreach groups to have opportunities to engage with and learn about nature. In 2015/16 we supported 11 sessions for schools and outreach groups from within the National Park and 74 sessions for those travelling here from other areas.

We focussed our work through a range of themes, including Your Park – providing children and young people with an opportunity to learn about the natural and cultural heritage of their National Park – this will lead to an increase in the value they place on it.

Supporting Your Park made up nearly half of all our education and outreach engagement delivery. We hope that this long term investment in supporting outdoor learning and wider engagement will lead to an increased awareness of the pressures on the National Park and will encourage responsible behaviour by visitors, reducing the impact to the Park in the future.

Our continued strong partnership with the John Muir Trust enables us to have a key role in facilitating John Muir Awards in the National Park.



FOR
wild LAND &
wild PLACES



ENGAGING

2,332
CHILDREN AND
YOUNG PEOPLE

SUPPORTED
73 SCHOOLS
THROUGHOUT
SCOTLAND




AWARDED £4,000
 **IN TRAVEL**
GRANTS

Supported
12 
outreach groups




9,000
RANGER PATROL HOURS
2015-16

Our people on the ground

National Park Rangers, including full time, seasonal and volunteers, continued to provide a professional service to visitors and all those who live and work in the Park. Their patrols, totalling over 9,000 hours on land and water across the Park, provided information and assistance, ensured visitors remained safe and behaved responsibly. Additionally our Ranger Service provided over 600 hours of support for educational events and activities, including 24 Ranger led activities and support for 15 partner led events.



Working in partnership with Police Scotland we continued Operation Ironworks for a ninth year, in order to tackle issues associated with antisocial behaviour. This saw almost 500 hours of additional policing being funded in the Park.



**POLICE
SCOTLAND**
Keeping people safe

We also continued to support a seconded police officer and two special constables through the Employer Supported Policing Scheme. Our two special police constables provided 200 hours of cover between April and September on Operation Ironworks and visitor management duties, as well as duties relating to wildlife crime.



**OUR 2 SPECIAL
CONSTABLES
PROVIDED
200 HRS
OF POLICING IN 2015**

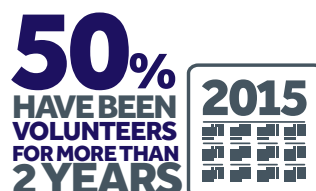


Our dedicated volunteers

We continue to be overwhelmed by the number of enthusiastic, dedicated and passionate people who volunteer with us at the National Park. Throughout this year our volunteers gave more than 14,200 hours of their time. This was spent helping with practical tasks, project support, events, education and visitor inspiration duties, all with a focus on achieving our National Park Partnership Plan outcomes. This is an increase of almost 25% up from last year and a whopping 100% from 2012.

We have partnership agreements with more than 15 partners who, in 2015/16, provided over 100 opportunities for volunteers to get involved. This allows us to achieve so much more, with benefits not only for the National Park and the volunteers, but also for a range of partner organisations.

Our 65 Volunteer Rangers delivered an incredible 6,500hrs to supporting members of the public, local communities and businesses to enjoy the National Park.



CASE STUDY

National Park Junior Ranger Programme

Twelve young people from McLaren High School in Callander spent a week (15 – 19 June) learning about the broad range of work undertaken by Rangers in the National Park in our first ever Junior Ranger Programme.



Linda Hall from McLaren High School said, "McLaren High School is delighted to be working in partnership with Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park.

"It is a very exciting and innovative opportunity for our pupils. They have engaged fully in the project and their knowledge and awareness of the work that the Rangers carry out has been greatly enhanced."



The National Park Authority provides a wealth of information and materials to schools to help connect young people to the outdoors and give them an appreciation and respect for wild places. The Junior Ranger Programme builds on this by providing a level of detail and hands-on experience that will leave a lasting impression on those participating.

The Junior Ranger Programme saw pupils participate in a scrub clearance at Kilmahog; a biodiversity day with support from the Forestry Commission Scotland at The Lodge in Aberfoyle; a Recreation & Access day taking them out on the Glenoglehead to Callander cycle path; managing visitor pressures and dealing with land use conflicts in the National Park; with the week culminating in a day of reflections/presentations and graduations at McLaren High School. They also completed their John Muir Award, gaining invaluable knowledge, skills and experience of connecting with nature.

The project links in with EUROPARC Federation, a pan-European association of protected landscape areas. Its aims for young people are to:

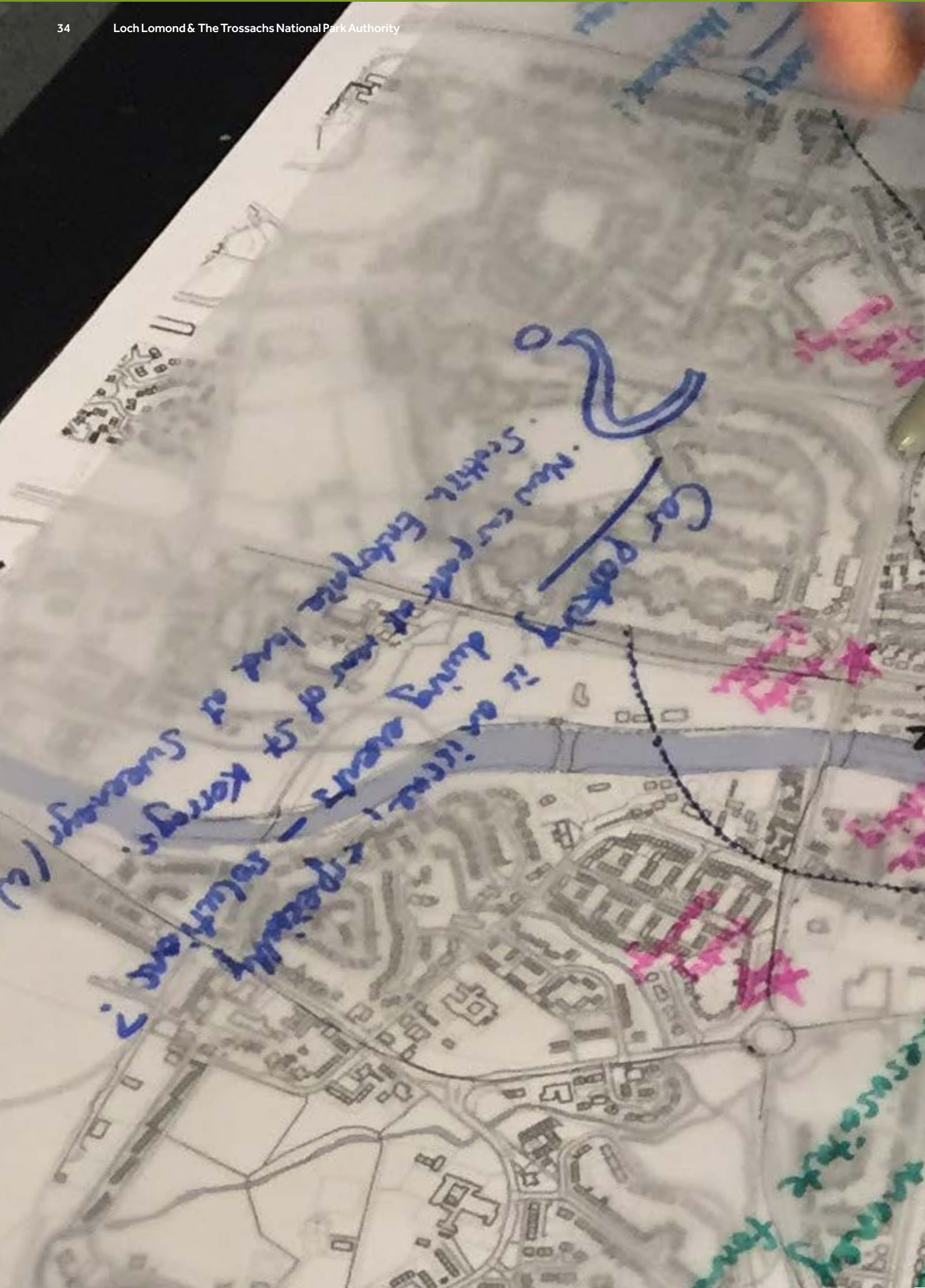
- Create a network of young people who participate in nature protection by acting as advocates for their protected area.
- Improve young people's knowledge and understanding of the Ranger profession.
- Raise awareness about the natural, cultural, social and economic values of protected areas.



**JOHN
MUIR
AWARD**

wild places:
DISCOVER
EXPLORE
CONSERVE
SHARE





Rural Development

Our work in Rural Development covers our role as a Planning Authority and has a strong focus on supporting our vibrant communities, as well as promoting and safeguarding our unique built heritage.

Delivering against Scottish Government Outcomes





Supporting our vibrant communities

Over the last year we continued to support community organisations in the National Park and through enabling our communities to deliver their own projects, helped them achieve many successful projects on the ground. We facilitated this through our support to community organisations, including Development Trusts and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Community Partnership.

Our core funding towards the Community Partnership helped four communities to update their action plans, alongside support to deliver a community engagement campaign in Strathard, involving local people in the exploration of land use and flood management options and the decision making process used to address these issues.

Community Grant Scheme

Our Community Grant Scheme provided financial support to community groups across the Park. Throughout the year £14,000 was awarded to support 14 community development trusts in their important core work, which involved assessing community needs, recruiting volunteers, publicising activities, applying for funding and supporting project development.



In addition, four individual projects were supported to further develop:

Access to a local War Memorial

A children's play area with sensory play equipment

A heritage Walled Garden

A Friendship Garden

All of these will contribute to, community engagement, economic development, cultural heritage, and the quality of life and well-being of residents and visitors.

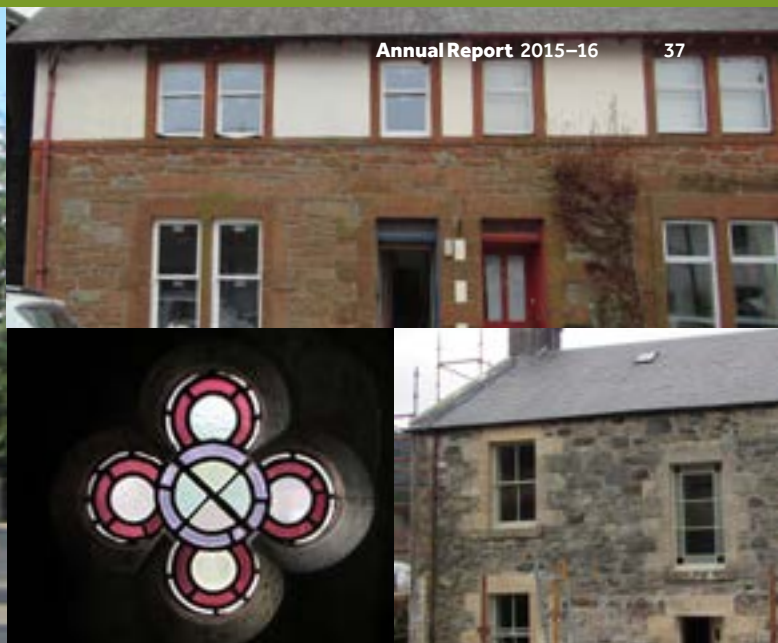


Protecting our historic environment

The historic built heritage is an important part of the National Park's special character and contributes significantly to its special qualities. We work hard to protect and enhance it through:

- Effective planning policy by drafting the new Proposed Local Development Plan.
- The use of our Built Heritage Repair Grant.





Supporting our built heritage

2015-16 was the third successful year of running our Built Heritage Repair Grant which aims to support the sympathetic repair of traditional buildings and restoration of local built heritage. We are starting to see the cumulative benefit in some of our towns and villages with a number of properties having been visibly improved. Throughout the year 11 projects were completed with grants awarded to help repair traditional buildings in Stronachlachar, Gartmore, Strathyre, Milton of Buchanan, Luss, Callander, Aberfoyle and Drymen.

Projects

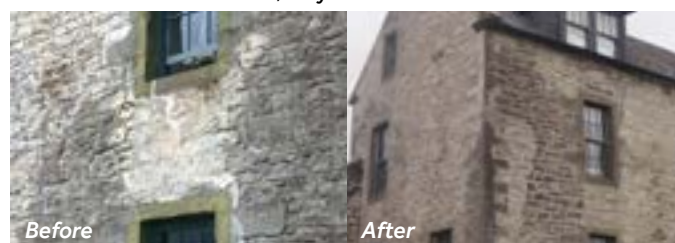
Repair and repointing of walls to the Old School Room, located on Freuchan Lane off Main Street in Gartmore. The walls of this small, attractive listed building, dating from the early 1700s, were crumbling and in need of extensive re-pointing and rebuilding in places.

This work was carried out by skilled masons using a traditional lime mix which matched the original mortar. The work also revealed that the building was originally longer than it is now extending out into an area now occupied by the lane.



Repair of damaged metal estate railings at the pier carpark, stronachlachar ▼

Repointing of the south façade of Coldrach Farmhouse, Drymen ▼



Repair and redecoration of the imposing pair of timber lych gates at Luss Church ▼

Rebuilding of boundary walls at Smithy House, Gartmore ▼





LIVE Park update

In November 2015 we were also the Overall Winners at the Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning. This annual award, the first for a community engagement project, recognised our innovative and people-centered campaign approach to our consultation for LIVE Park – our Local Development Plan Main Issues Report - which sets out future development strategy for the National Park.

The award recognised the success of the LIVE Park campaign, which was designed to be interactive and engaging, using digital media to reach a broader audience, particularly young and working age people, in order to understand their views on future development needed within the Park.

The Judges were impressed with, not only the level of ambition showed by the team, but how they applied a range of new and innovative techniques tailored to the Park's circumstances and local development issues'.

"It is felt that the project had, without a doubt, set a new pioneering benchmark which others could follow."

Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning
Judges statement November 2015



During 2015 we prepared and published the next phase of LIVE Park - our proposed Local Development Plan. Our aspiration was for this to be a visionary, design-led and outcomes focused plan accessible to a wide range of audiences. This resulted in an innovative style which minimises text and uses powerful imagery, illustrations, aerial mapping and annotated maps.

The benefits of the investment made in engaging with a broad range of stakeholders are now being realised, with fewer consultation responses (hence fewer objections) and more consensus on the majority of the proposed sites and policies.





Balloch charrette



During February and March 2016, we worked with West Dunbartonshire Council and Scottish Enterprise to run a successful charrette (design-led workshop) for Balloch. The purpose of the charrette process was to flesh out ideas and delivery

mechanisms for key sites identified in the Local Development Plan, as well as public realm improvements and better connectivity between Loch Lomond Shores, Balloch Castle Country Park and the village centre. Building on the success of LIVE Park, social media was used in an effort to reach out to working age people and families who may not otherwise have attended the charrette events. In addition to this we undertook extensive pre-charrette engagement work and in the lead up to the events visited schools, youth groups and other community groups.

We also held a 'business breakfast' for local business owners and managers. All of these methods helped to ensure that the comments and ideas came from a much wider spectrum of people and fed into the workshop discussions and the overall design process.



Pro-active planning service

In our role as a Planning Authority we continue to deliver the National Park's outcomes through our work to maintain an up-to-date Local Development Plan, determining planning applications and promoting

the development opportunities that are available. There has been a notable jump in the number of planning applications of almost 20% during this year. We have seen an overall increase in development activity as well as interest in some key development sites, that are set against on-going run-of-river hydro schemes delivery. This is really positive for our communities and businesses.

The quality of our decisions and the time it takes in determining planning applications is continually monitored throughout the year, by both our Board and Scottish Government. We have received encouraging

feedback on our performance this year, scoring a 'green' rating on 10 out of 13 of the Scottish Government Performance Markers, which have been developed to recognise a 'high performing planning authority'.

One particular application determined in the latter part of 2015 attracted an unprecedented level of public interest with 1,500 representations received in both support and objection. The application required significant staff and time resource and careful project management to determine. An open and transparent decision was made through a Special Hearing of the Planning and Access Committee.

20%
INCREASE IN
PLANNING
APPLICATIONS



Development on the ground

The rich and diverse landscapes of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park present great potential for run-of-river hydro schemes. Last year's annual report described our dedicated work in the consideration of a significant number of planning applications for this type of renewable energy development across the Park and also reported on subsequent developments on the ground.

The determination of these on-going applications has been guided by the Park's highly commended Supplementary Planning Guidance.

2015 -16 has seen a significant number of planning permissions implemented on site and currently we have 20 operational run-of-river hydro schemes in the National Park and a further 13 currently under construction.


The National Park was a category award winner in the 2015 Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning, acknowledging our work to support the delivery of run-of-river hydro schemes. The award recognised in particular our work to streamline the planning process, from initial pre-application discussion, through consenting and in influencing the implementation of the development on the ground, often in sensitive rural locations.



On completion of those schemes currently under construction, the total hydro electricity generation from within the Park will be sufficient to power the equivalent of 25,000 homes - four times the number of homes in the National Park.

Two of the schemes under construction have community links, which means the income generated will go directly towards funding community projects in those areas of the Park.

44 
SCHEMES APPROVED

20 
SCHEMES
OPERATIONAL

13 
SCHEMES UNDER
CONSTRUCTION

**HYDRO
SCHEMES** 
IN THE NATIONAL
PARK OUTPUT **33.5MW**

=

**ELECTRICITY
TO POWER
25,000
HOMES**



CASE STUDY

Callander Pass

The 2011 charrette in Callander was a reminder of just how much potential Callander has as a great place to live and visit. The vision is for it to become the 'Outdoor Capital of the National Park' and momentum is building on delivering on this vision.



In 2015, Callander Landscape Partnership secured £1.5 million of Heritage Lottery Funding for the 'Callander Pass' scheme which is focused on the Leny Pass. These schemes put heritage conservation at the heart of rural regeneration. Local, regional and national organisations work together to make a real difference to landscapes and communities for the long term. They do this by conserving habitats at landscape-scale, promoting joined-up management, reviving long-lost skills and much more.

Heritage Lottery Funded projects make a major contribution to work in the UK on implementing the European Landscape Convention.

The 'Callander Pass' scheme represents a significant opportunity to deliver a range of community aspirations including the development of cultural and natural heritage, rural skills and voluntary engagement in the Callander area, taking a co-ordinated and landscape-scale approach.

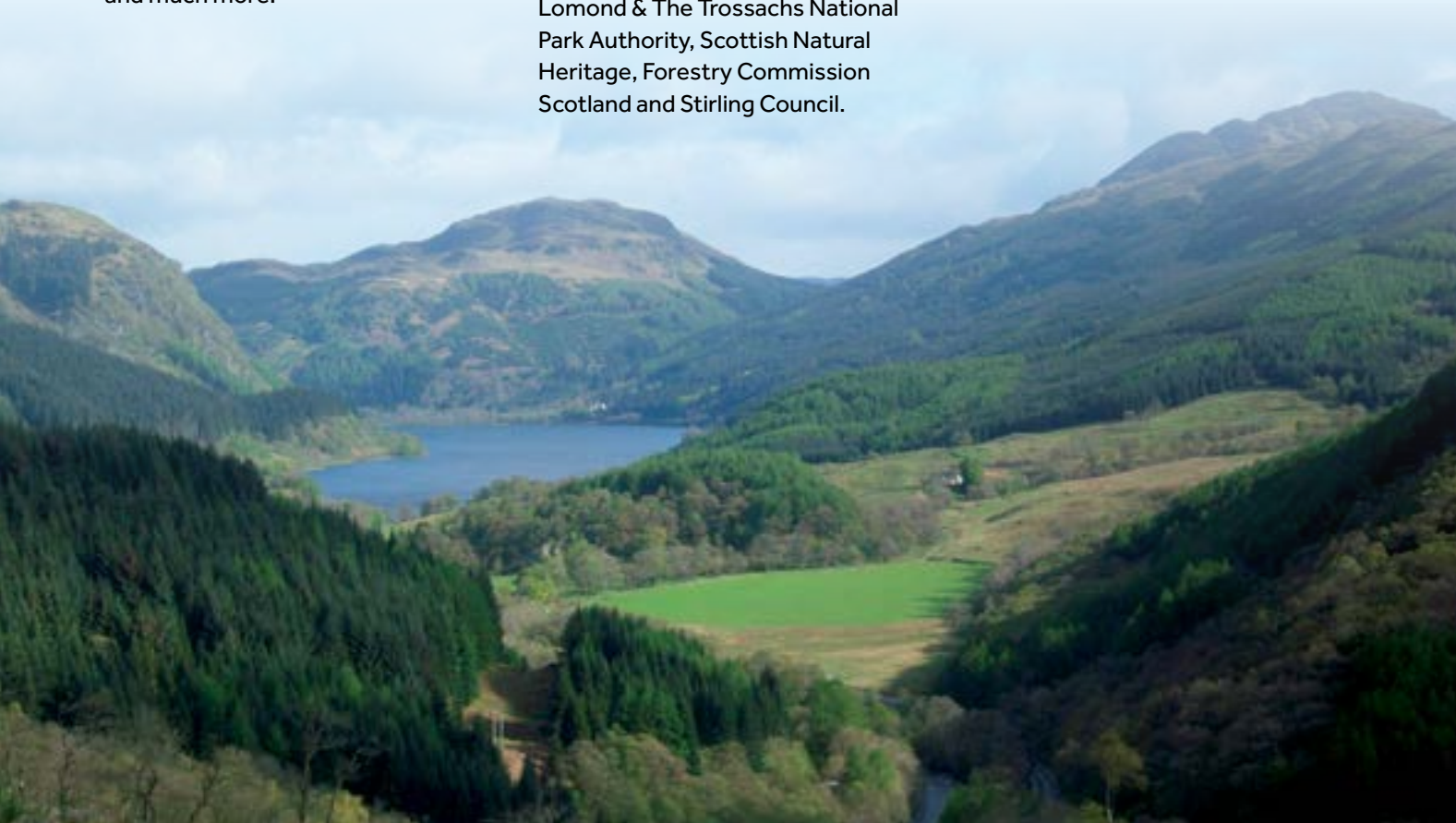
Callander is the largest town in the National Park and due to its location in the gap (or "pass") between the Lowlands and Highlands at the eastern most corner of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park, it is uniquely placed to service the needs of visitors and promote outdoor recreation in the Highlands beyond.

The community-led project is the result of collaboration between local community organisations, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority, Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland and Stirling Council.

The next year will see community aspirations envisioned and worked up into fully developed project plans for submission to Stage 2 Heritage Lottery Funding. If successful this will release funding for delivery of the project.

The Callander Landscape Partnership comprises:

- **Callander's Countryside**
- **Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority**
- **Callander Community Council**
- **Callander Community Development Trust**
- **McLaren Leisure Centre**
- **Callander Heritage Society**
- **Callander Ramblers**
- **Scottish Natural Heritage**
- **Scottish Wildlife Trust (Callander)**
- **Forestry Commission Scotland**
- **Stirling Council**
- **Drumardoch Estate**



LOCH LOMOND & THE TROSSACHS NATIONAL PARK



Being an excellent organisation

We strive to provide a secure and welcoming workplace where we engage effectively with our staff and Board. Taking an innovative approach, we continue to deliver the National Park Authority's services to the highest standard .

Delivering against Scottish Government Outcomes





Team National Park

Working at the National Park we believe that we walk-the-walk and talk-the-talk. A happy workforce is a productive and engaged work force. A range of initiatives have been successfully developed through the year.

Employee satisfaction

Using the Best Companies survey as our measure, satisfaction has grown year on year and we are now a one ★ company (the staff engagement equivalent of a Michelin star restaurant) and a Top 100 not-for-profit company to work for in the UK.

Values and behaviours

We have fully embedded our employee-developed values and behaviours into monthly one-to-ones between managers and team members and within the annual 'My Performance Review' process (how we do it).

**Engaged,
high performing,
empowered
staff**

Understanding and ownership

All teams actively contribute to the development of team plans and objectives that are clearly aligned and articulated to our Corporate Plan, National Park Partnership Plan and Scottish Government outcomes. This has resulted in successful delivery of our Annual Operational Plan objectives (what we do).

Health, wellbeing and safety

Engagement throughout the organisation has resulted in a new suite of risk assessments being developed and significantly increased understanding of the importance of Health & Safety.

Our union representatives (UNISON) have worked alongside managers and team members to develop and implement a range of these successful initiatives.

"UNISON representatives and our members are pleased to be key project team members, advocates and active participants in progressing the range of initiatives and projects that have been developed over the last year. UNISON is particularly satisfied that we are now a Living Wage Employer, delighted that staff raised such a magnificent sum for Alzheimer's Scotland and that there was an increased focus on the health, Safety and Wellbeing of staff. UNISON fully endorses the aspirations and objectives of the Park Authority and looks forward to working alongside management in pursuit of achieving an atmosphere where work is balanced alongside a culture of welfare and leisure."





To support our aim for 'engaged, high performing, empowered staff' we have developed a series of 'themed' months including:

- **Wellbeing Awareness month** which highlighted the importance of healthy working lives through a number of activities such as:
 - Cycling
 - Swimming in beautiful Loch Lomond
 - Fruit baskets for staff
 - Health screening
- **Health & Safety month** which set out to raise our awareness of how health and safety affects all our lives through a number of activities such as:
 - On your feet week
 - Winter safety
 - Personal safety
 - Safe driving



We are also delighted to be a Living Wage Employer. This year we are continuing to build on this success and are currently working with the NHS to become a Healthy Working Lives Silver award employer.

"Having relocated from London, the difference in my quality of life is amazing. I was lucky enough to sample open water swimming during the wellbeing month last year and have been hooked ever since. I mean, where else in the world can you go for a swim in the loch at lunchtime all year round!"

Eilidh McKerry, Management Accountant

"I thoroughly enjoy working for an organisation that is always aiming for the best outcomes for public benefit. Our aims are underpinned and supported by national objectives and this helps to really provide a sense of doing a job that makes a difference. This gives me a huge amount of satisfaction. The fact that I can balance the demands of my home life (farming and the busy periods) as well as having a career is a real plus for me."

Harriet Smith, Land Use Manager



**Alzheimer
Scotland**
Action on Dementia

© Cairngorms National Park Authority

Giving Something Back

Our Staff Involvement Group (STIG) have been instrumental in not only engaging staff in social activities, but have led the organisation to generate the biggest charitable donation raised by staff to date, to the West Dunbartonshire arm of Alzheimer's Scotland.

Over the year an incredible £7,356 was raised through an all year round tuck-shop, raffles and cake bakes, entering teams into the Great Scottish Swim, the Great Scottish Run, holding a charity football match, and two members of staff were sponsored to cut off their long hair. These and many other activities helped staff raise a record amount of funds for charity.

As well as raising funds, staff throughout the Park Authority, have contributed to support events and activities for Alzheimer Scotland, giving up their own time to support such a worthwhile cause.



"This donation is invaluable to us. It's the largest local corporate donation we've ever received in the West Dunbartonshire area. The monies donated are enough to fund two community activities each week for a full year. We are currently looking at new activities to be held in West Dunbartonshire at weekends. We are holding a discussion cafe with our service users and volunteers who will help choose the types of activities that they want to see happening locally."

Bronwyn O'Riordan, Community Fundraiser for Alzheimer Scotland



Support

We continued to encourage and promote a positive work life balance and for the first time we have a female member of staff who has successfully 'passed out' as an Army Reservist.

Social Commitment

We are delighted to commit to the Social Impact Pledge through:

- Developing opportunities for young people to engage in volunteering throughout the National Park
- Delivering our first ever "Invest in Youth Plan" we will recruit our first ever Modern Apprentices studying towards Level 3 in Business Administration
- Delivery of the Callander Landscape Partnership highlighted on page 41.

Embracing & Adopting Emerging Technologies

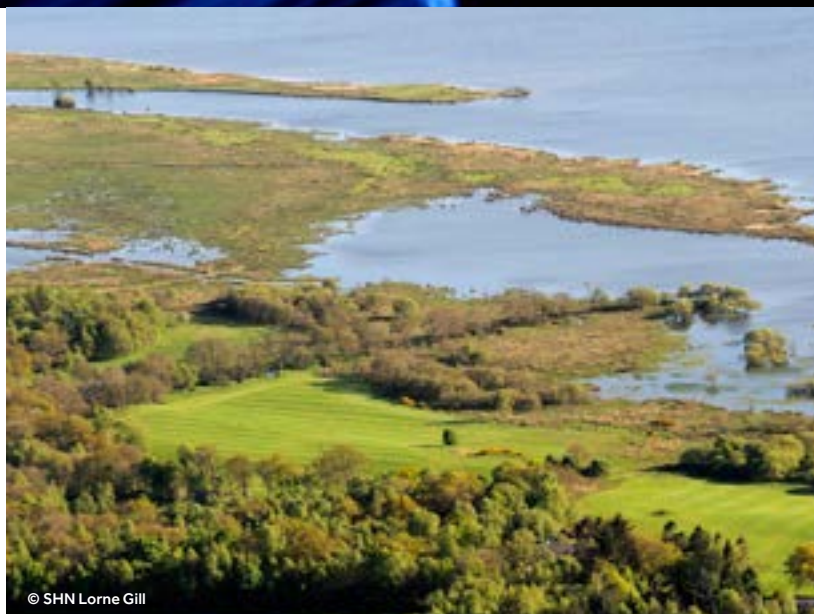
We implemented various technologies within our ICT infrastructure which will result in significant cost reduction benefits to the organisation.

- Implementation of newer telephony technologies has the potential to reduce annual telephony costs by up to 40% compared to current costs.
- Implementation of recently available fibre broadband technologies has resulted in a 90% reduction in data line costs to current satellite offices.
- We are trialling field data collection methods, with initial testing indicating significant savings in staff time.

As part of our digital transformation we are working with Scottish Government colleagues in the Digital Transformation service to support the development of our Digital Strategy as well as implement the "Scottish Approach to Service Design".



DIGITAL
TRANSFORMATION
SERVICE



© SHN Lorne Gill

Climate Change Reporting

As a 'major player' of the Climate Change (Scotland) Act 2009, the Park Authority assisted in a trial of a new approach to reporting on Climate Change duties. We produced a 'pilot report' and fed back our experiences of the reporting to help preparations for the first year of mandatory reporting.

Our report covered our progress on Climate Change mitigation and adaptation in four key areas: governance, management and strategy; corporate emissions, targets and project data; adaptation; and procurement.

We worked with colleagues at Cairngorms National Park Authority and found that both National Park Authorities have a significant number of strategic objectives and projects aimed at tackling climate change and have taken a similar approach to our reporting and governance. Completion of the report was a very valuable process, especially in helping us to think about how we develop our monitoring to best capture the full impact of our work.



Working together

A particular focus throughout the was to extend our already excellent partnership/ shared services relationship with Cairngorms National Park Authority. The recent adoption of equivalent Unified Communication Systems via a joint tender enhanced collaboration between both organisations. Sharing of other services such as our ICT infrastructure; e-planning systems, helpdesk, backup & disaster recovery solutions and joint support and licensing agreements continue to be further developed and enhanced. We also have shared staffing posts for procurement and health and safety.

We are proud to be an enthusiastic and active player in developing the Rural Affairs, Food and Environment (RAFE) shared services/partnership agenda in areas such as communications, digital transformation, corporate planning, climate change, Scotland's natural health service and equalities and diversity.

We also progressed with a range of opportunities to share with our Local Authorities and West Dunbartonshire Council were appointed as our Internal Auditors.

Looking to the future we envisage adopting creative approaches, alongside our range of partners to deliver high quality, joined up public services.

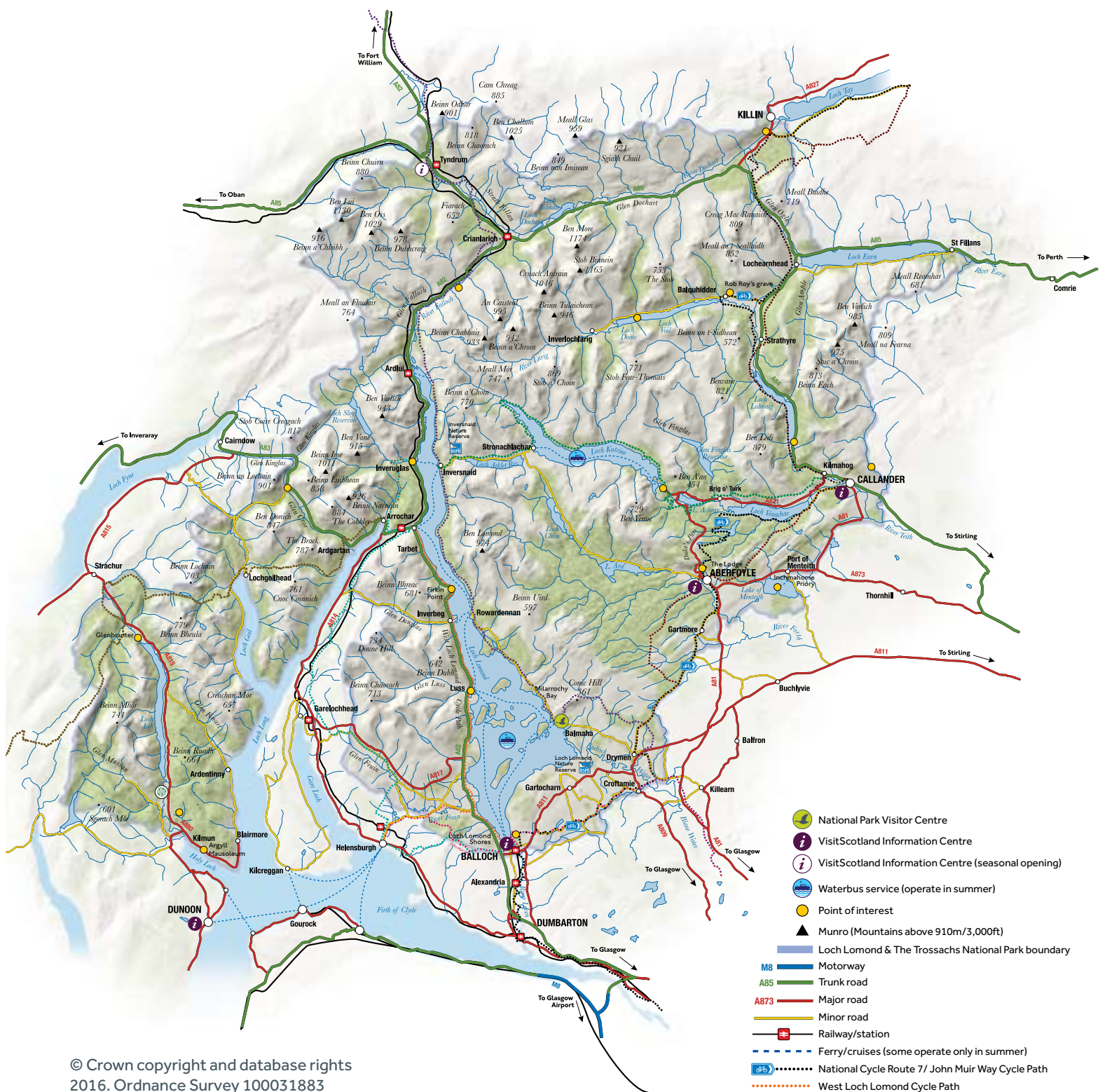


Engaged Board

In 2015, our Board welcomed both the Cairngorms National Park Authority Board and the Northumberland National Park Authority Board to the National Park. These visits allowed members to share their experiences and gain an understanding of key projects being delivered in other National Parks. Our Board also held a Board meeting in Clydebank where Joyce White, Chief Executive West Dunbartonshire Council and educationalists discussed engaging young people with the National Park and embedding outdoor learning as part of the Curriculum for Excellence, John Muir Awards and Teaching in Nature.



Billy Ronald joined the Board in October 2015 as a locally elected member for Ward 2, Breadalbane and The Trossachs. Billy's key interests lie with agriculture, land use and tourism.



PÀIRC NÀISEANTA
LOCH
LAOMAINN
IS NAN TRÒISICHEAN



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