









Welcome

It has been another busy year of significant delivery for the National Park Authority. We have worked alongside many partners and stakeholders to continue to enhance Loch Lomond and The Trossachs as an outstanding landscape and a beautiful place to live, work and visit.

It has also been a period to think about our future plans as our current National Park Partnership Plan 2012-17 reached its final year of implementation.

Our planning service continues to win national awards, this year picking up a Scottish Quality in Planning Award for LIVE Park, our Local Development Plan, which was formally adopted during the year. Work to improve our towns and villages continued with detailed consultations and partner funding commitments to help deliver improvements in Balloch, while the development aspirations for Callander were included in Stirling Council's City Deal bid.

The VisitScotland Year of Architecture, Design and Innovation gave an opportunity to showcase our very popular Scenic Routes viewpoints across the National Park. An Ceann Mòr, at Inveruglas, received an award from the Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland and featured in numerous VisitScotland campaign materials. The popularity of the Great Scottish Swim continued to grow and has led to securing Loch Lomond as the venue for the open water swimming event at the inaugural European Championships 2018.

Our conservation work continued to have a strong climate change theme with more work to deliver peatland restoration and an exciting new project in Strathard to reduce flood risk in and around Aberfoyle and to manage natural resources sustainably.

Your Park reached a significant milestone with new camping byelaws coming into effect on 1st March 2017. The byelaws create four Camping Management Zones to manage camping pressures on popular lochshores covering less than 4% of the National Park. Extensive preparations took place during the year to ensure a wide range of camping opportunities are available in these areas with a commitment to provide at least 300 places. The first new campsite was developed in partnership with Forest Enterprise Scotland at Loch Chon. Signage was also installed to promote a wide range of camping permit areas all bookable via a new online system.

The close of the year saw the Board approve our new draft National Park Partnership Plan 2018-23 for consultation following a hugely positive workshop with a wide range of stakeholders to discuss important issues and potential priorities. This presented an opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the current plan both in the National Park and in contributing to important Scottish Government outcomes.



The new Plan seeks to build on this success and the investment to date by finding ways to broaden the benefits of the National Park to a wider range of people across the country. We look forward to hearing views on the Plan in the coming months prior to submitting it to Scottish Ministers for approval.

Last but not least, we also saw the National Park say farewell to long-serving Convener Linda McKay who handed over the reins, at the end of February, to James Stuart, following his election in December 2016.

This Annual Report outlines these achievements and highlights from 2016/17.

James Stuart
Convener

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs
National Park Authority

Control Water

Gordon WatsonChief Executive Officer

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



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

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.



Delivering Scottish Government priorities

All of our plans are aligned to the priorities of the Scottish Government.

A Plan for Scotland, The Government's Programme for Scotland 2016-17 states:

"The Scotland we want to see has a resilient and growing economy...
...public services that are efficient, fair, flexible and valued, and a vibrant,
open and inclusive cultural life."

Scotland's National Parks make a significant contribution to many of the Scottish Government's stated priorities including:

- ☐ Growing a productive, sustainable economy with more jobs and fair work.
- Transforming public services working for a healthier Scotland, and making Scotland safer.
- Putting people in charge and creating opportunities.

Scotland Performs National Outcomes

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.



Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.



We value and enjoy our built and natural **environment** and protect it and enhance it for future generations.



We reduce the local and global **environmental impact** of our consumption and production.



We have strong, resilient and supportive **communities** where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.



We live longer, healthier lives.



Our **public services** are high quality, continually improving, efficient and respond to local people's needs.



We live our lives **safe** from crime, disorder and danger.



We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive **national identity**.



We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.



We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.

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.





This year saw us enter the final year of delivery of our current National Park Partnership Plan 2012-2017 and work began on a new Plan.



To this end, a comprehensive discussion paper was developed and a day-long event was held for partners that have a role to play in the delivery of the new Plan. The purpose of this informal engagement was to:

- Help us develop our thinking
- Get consensus on the main issues and opportunities faced
- Work towards agreeing priorities for delivery partners' action

The partner event was very successful and attended by nearly 40 organisations. On the day of the event, there was a mix of presentations, plenary sessions and workshops. This enabled positive input on the significant achievements of the current plan, the challenges and opportunities that remain, and the potential high priorities for the new Plan. In the smaller workshop sessions, delegates focused on the contents of the discussion papers to share ideas and help build consensus on the key challenges, opportunities and priorities for the Park from 2018-23.

Main outcome

Overall, the main outcome from the day was a mandate from the partners to draft the new Plan for consultation - based on a strong foundation of the discussion papers and event, and a continued commitment to partnershipworking from a wide range of organisations.

Delegate feedback

An online survey was circulated after the event and 100% of respondents agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

"I feel better informed about the National Park and the Partnership Plan having attended today's event"

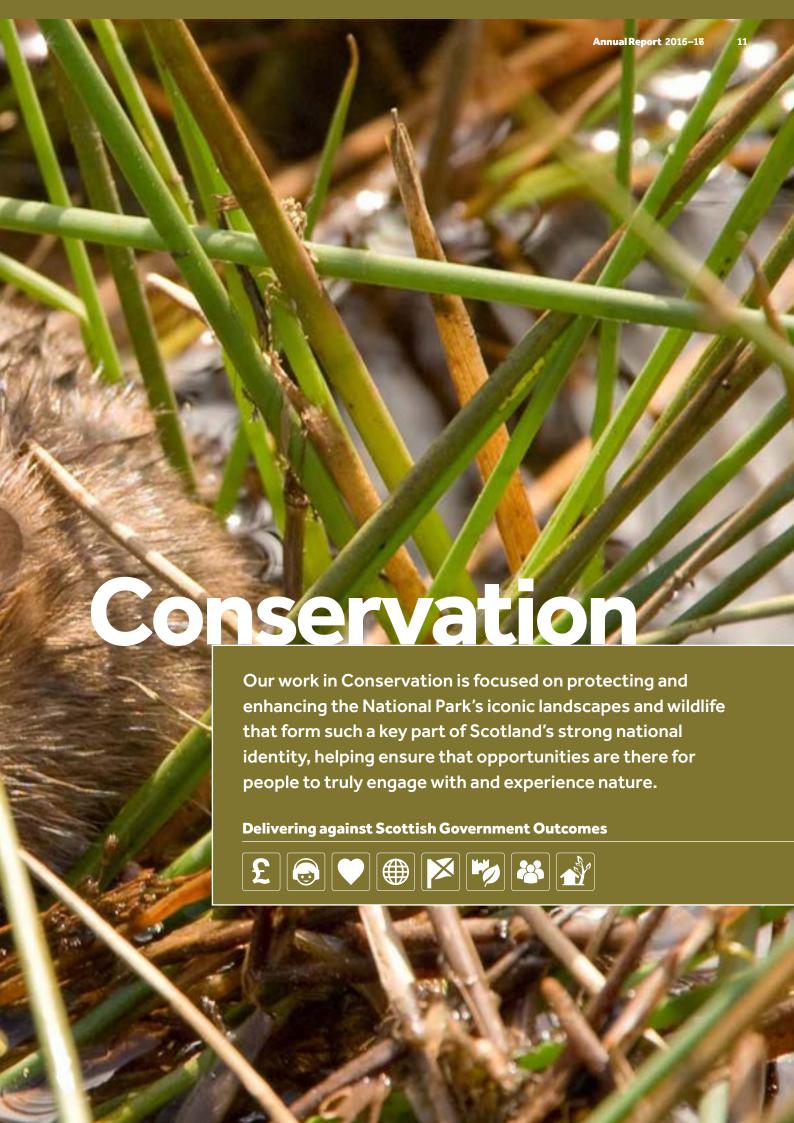
"I am clear about how my organisation can play a role in the next Partnership Plan having attended today's event"

A question on the 'best thing' about the event highlighted the diversity of delegates ("not the usual suspects"), the networking and opportunities for joint working, and the enthusiasm and interactivity. Half of respondents answered a question on anything that could have been changed about the event, with comments mainly focusing on logistical issues or seeking more time to discuss further.



A draft National Park Partnership Plan 2018-23 was presented to the Board in March 2017 and was approved for consultation between April and July 2017. A finalised Plan will be submitted to Ministers for approval in Autumn 2017.







Wild Park 2020, our Biodiversity Action plan for the National Park, turned two years old in 2016. The contribution made by volunteers has remained vital in delivering many Wild Park projects including:

- surveys for wetland birds, water voles and red squirrels,
- controlling invasive non-native species,
- tree planting
- beach litter cleaning and
- engaging with schools and other groups.

Wild Challenge update

We held a well-attended and lively Wild Park Forum event for all the partners and stakeholders to discuss and celebrate what has been achieved to date and to start discussing future opportunities and challenges.

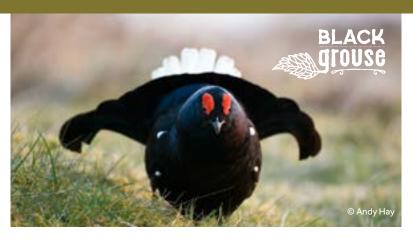
We have further strengthened Wild Park 2020 by producing detailed action plans for our five Wild Challenges:

1. Mountain bogs

We continue to work on restoring Scotland's peat bogs which are an incredible natural resource.

Our mountain bogs store huge volumes of carbon and water, which help us by combating climate change and slowing down water flow from our uplands. Restoring and protecting this upland habitat will also support the rare and fragile biodiversity found in these areas.

This year we have worked with Auchlyne and Suie Estate in Glen Dochart in the north of the National Park, restoring over 100 hectares of degraded peatland by protecting eroding peat hags and blocking ditches to lock in water and carbon.



2. Black grouse

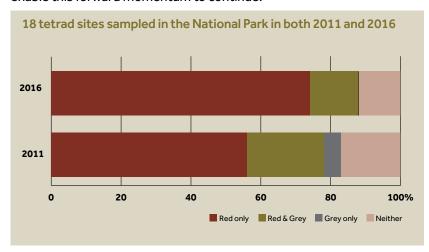
We have successfully supported two local businesses with applications to the Scottish Government's Agri-Environment Climate Scheme to deliver land management measures, such as the control of livestock to promote suitable black grouse habitat.

These holdings are part of a historic landscape scale black grouse project. However, despite continued efforts by ourselves and partners, the number of black grouse across the National Park as a whole has seen a steady and substantial decline over the last five year period, indicating the need for wider, landscape scale ecological restoration to aid this and other key species. The Black Grouse Wild Challenge action plan, signed off this year, will be a driver for promoting upland habitat restoration vital for the future of these iconic birds.



3. Red squirrels

Through our continued support for the Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels project, we have seen further encouraging gains for the red squirrel population and a reduction in grey squirrels in the National Park since 2011. Continued control work is required to remove grey squirrels completely from the Callander and Arrochar areas, which are of key strategic importance. We are delighted that the project has secured a further five years of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund which will enable this forward momentum to continue.







4. Woodland habitat

We have continued to explore opportunities to manage and create native woodland where it will improve habitat connectivity and resilience to a changing climate. In the Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve, in conjunction with Highland Birchwoods, the National Nature Reserve Project Manager led volunteers, including Park Authority staff, to plant over 8,000 mountain tree species on the high ground between Loch Katrine and Glen Finglas.

A focus of our Natural Heritage Grant Scheme funding this year was a pilot project supporting land managers in the delivery of small scale tree planting. We received a lot of interest and supported a number of applications, including a project at Kirkton Farm in Strathfillan which has helped connect native tree areas and also integrate farming and forestry management by providing natural, woodland shelter for hill sheep.



5. Invasive non-native species

Our work to control riparian invasive plants has made further good progress in the Upper Tay catchment in the National Park through the hard work of our specially trained volunteers. Rhododendron control has made real strides too at Stronachlachar, where in conjunction with staff and volunteers from the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Countryside Trust, all the land managed by Scottish Water has been cleared. Alongside work carried out by Forest Enterprise Scotland in this area, we have worked with our own volunteers on smaller areas of adjacent private land, demonstrating how a small amount of additional effort can protect the extensive effort made by landowners of the Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve. This is a real example of how collaboration can deliver sustainable landscape scale management of invasive species.

"In line with the strategic plan, the National Park Authority has worked closely with Forest Enterprise Scotland to identify priorities and opportunities for invasive rhododendron control programmes on a landscape scale. The work undertaken at Letter, Loch Katrine, through officer and volunteer time has helped fulfil this aspiration and is leading to the eradication of rhododendron in this catchment."

Forest Enterprise Scotland

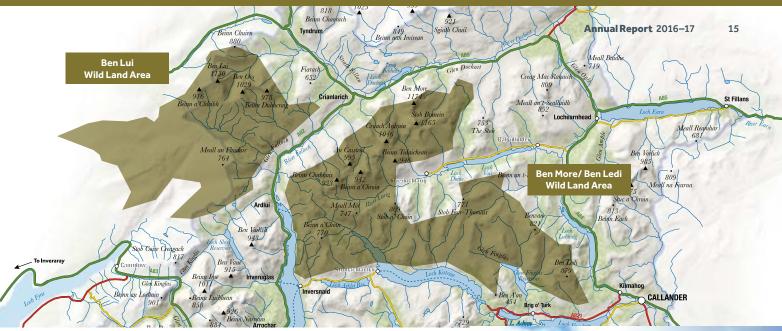
Connecting people to nature

Through our Natural Heritage Grant Scheme, we have supported a number of community based projects. For example, we worked with Loch Goil Community Council to enable the community to begin a programme of treating water side invasive nonnative plant species, primarily Japanese knotweed, within the catchment of the River Goil. Also in the Cowal Peninsula, the Cormonachan Woodland Association received funding for specialist training and equipment to allow the continued management of the special oak woodlands there by removing invasive non-native species, namely rhododendron.

"It is important that those who offer this funding know that these projects could not go ahead without funding support and so we would like to show our appreciation to you that the Cormonachan Woodlands Association is extremely grateful for this very valuable financial support."



Douglas Locke, volunteer secretary for the Cormonachan Woodland Association



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.

We have collaborated with Scottish Natural Heritage and the Cairngorms National Park Authority to complete the suite of baseline descriptions of Scotland's Wild Land Areas. These documents provide a sound foundation for evaluating any future changes in these areas that could affect their highly valued qualities of wildness and remoteness.

We have also continued our close liaison with Transport Scotland and their contractors over works to manage landslips and to design road upgrades that improve the trunk road network in the National Park in ways that respect and protect our outstanding scenery.



Supporting our land managers

We continued to work with land managers around the National Park to facilitate integrated land management planning, helping to 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.

Efforts have been made this year to work closely with established Deer Management Groups to support the implementation of sustainable management of deer populations in the uplands. We have been working closely with these groups and land managers to facilitate and support them in surveying the upland

habitats over which deer and other species graze, to allow for better management decisions to be taken for the continuing improvement of these important upland habitats. We have supported three estates with applications to Scottish Government's Agri-Environment Climate Scheme for funding to carry out this monitoring over a five year period.



CASE STUDY

Re-introduction of water voles in the Trossachs

A very notable success is the continued expansion of re-introduced water voles in the Trossachs. Historically the water vole population here had been exterminated by non-native American mink.

Origins of the project

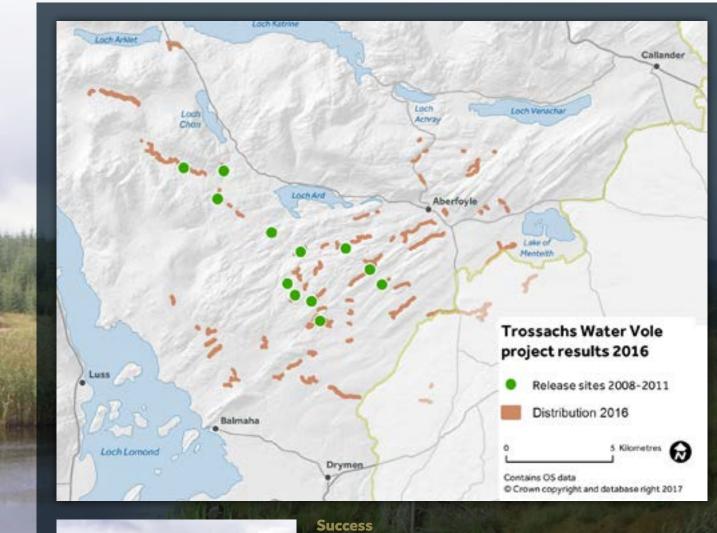
- Surveys showed water voles had been lost from most of the National Park due to mink predation.
- Forest Enterprise Scotland had created ideal wetland habitats for water voles as part of a forest habitat network improvement programme in the Loch Ard Forest.
- The nearest surviving water vole colonies in the National Park were too far away from the Trossachs for natural recolonisation to occur.
- A population of captive water voles removed from a large development site in North Lanarkshire needed to be restored to the wild.

Effective partnership working

This is a partnership project led by Forest Enterprise Scotland with the Forth Fisheries Trust, the National Park Authority, the Royal Zoological Society, Scottish Natural Heritage and the Derek Gow Consultancy.

The National Park Authority contributed significantly to the survey effort, assisted with the water vole releases, coordinated volunteers and assisted with the mink monitoring. We also contributed to the steering group and helped to fund the Project Officer.







1,000 water voles from the captive population were released between 2008 and 2011 and successfully colonised 12 sites in the Loch Ard Forest. Since then, diligent control work has kept the area free of mink, allowing the water vole population to gradually increase and spread naturally. This has been monitored by surveys by a dedicated group of volunteers coordinated and led by a Project Officer and other staff from the project partners.

The 2016 survey showed that 40 new sites have been colonised since the original release and that water voles are now found as far as 10km away from the nearest release site. Around 120 volunteers have taken part in surveys covering more than 200km of waterway. In total, more than 25 land managers are now involved in the project.







Events

Events play a key role in inspiring new visitors to come to the area and extending the length of stays by existing visitors. We continue to promote events around the Park and work with local businesses, communities and partner organisations to attract new events to the area.



In partnership with EventScotland, we successfully secured continued funding for Balmaha's Braw Weekend, a food and music event which drew in 5,000 visitors over a traditionally quiet weekend in October, providing a major off-season boost to the local area.

In partnership with West
Dunbartonshire Council and
EventScotland, we also hosted
the Great Scottish Swim at Loch
Lomond for the fourth year. Over
3,000 swimmers took part, with more
than 50% having travelled from out
with Scotland, generating significant
economic impact for the local area.

On top of this, we also attracted another major sporting event to the National Park by securing Loch



Lomond as the venue for the open water swimming competition as part of the inaugural European Championships 2018.

Our mobile visitor centre attended 13 events this year, where our Volunteer Rangers spoke to more than 2,000 visitors, encouraging them to explore more of the National Park.



Meeting visitors' needs

Following the Balloch charrette, where it became clear that more signage was needed in the village, we installed new orientation signs at key entry points to the village, updated existing signs at Loch Lomond Shores and committed funds to upgrading signage in Balloch Castle Country Park in the next phase of signage improvements.

In Callander, new street furniture was installed in Ancaster Square to support the development of the town centre as a destination for visitors and to encourage people to stay longer and, in turn, spend more with local businesses.



Loch Lomond Shores development

We undertook a number of projects to help consolidate Loch Lomond Shores as a destination which reflects the experience of the National Park and to attract new markets to the local area.



In addition to the loch cruise services already on offer, the waterbus service began operating from the new pontoon at Loch Lomond Shores, providing a great alternative way for visitors to travel between different areas of the National Park.

We also undertook a project to market and secure a new business operator for the National Park Gateway building. This will now be redeveloped as a new visitor offer, bringing a brand new restaurant, wedding, events and spa venue to Loch Lomond in 2017.

These projects have stimulated significant private sector development, generating business investment and revenue creation. They also helped spark a growth in the number of visitors experiencing and bringing expenditure to the area with Loch Lomond Shores achieving over 1.3 million visitors for the first time in 2016.

Food and drink

The Year of Food & Drink in 2015 provided a great opportunity for us to raise the profile of the excellent food and drink on offer across the National Park. We have continued to do this in 2016 developing a dedicated section of our new website to inspiring ideas for places to eat and drink, recipes, family-friendly foraging and highlighting local producers. We actively promote local food festivals and farmers' markets taking place across the area.

Latest visitor figures show that food and drink is now worth £60million to the National Park's visitor economy. There are also now 1,000 jobs within the National Park in the food and drink sector.





Destination development funding

In 2016 we teamed up with Love Loch Lomond and Friends of Loch Lomond & the Trossachs to successfully bid for £300,000 of destination development funding from Scottish Enterprise. This funding will be used to develop new tourism products, grow the eco-tourism offering and to carry out tourism industry research in the National Park.

Research projects include: a non-visitor study, a quarterly economic monitor and user specific research to better understand particular interest groups. The results of this research will be used to encourage and inform private sector investment in the area.

Key numbers:

£300,000 secured for destination development 2016 -2019

400 businesses engaged through workshops, conferences and digital communication

11 Waterbus routes across Loch Lomond & Loch Katrine

24 events attended by our staff and volunteers

Over **5,000** full time tourism jobs across the National Park (up 3% on 2014)

100,000 visitors to the National Park Visitor Centre at Balmaha

Tourism worth **£340m** in the National Park in 2016 (+ 2.4% on 2014)





Viewpoint wins prestigious prize



The largest of our four Scottish Scenic Routes viewpoints received national recognition during 2016. At it's Centenary and Awards ceremony, representing the very best of current Scottish architecture, The Royal Incorporation of Architects in Scotland (RIAS) announced *An Ceann Mòr* as one of 11 winners for the 2016 Award.

An Ceann Mòr, sited at our Inveruglas visitor site was created by architects Daniel Bär, Stéphane Toussaint and Sean Edwards of BTE Architecture following a design competition organised in partnership with the Scottish Government and a range of other partners. The installation was visited by over 100,000 people last year.

CASE STUDY

Better information for visitors

In response to visitor surveys which have shown the rapid shift to digital research both in advance of people coming to the National Park and when they are here, we have created a wealth of new online content to inform and inspire our visitors.





Given the huge shift towards online research by visitors, it is essential that the most inspiring, engaging and useful content is readily available across all devices.

The most visited pages of the old website were unsurprisingly the visitor friendly pages. With that in mind, for our new website we shifted the focus of the homepage and up front content to appeal to visitors rather than focusing on National Park Authority business. This has seen a 40% increase in website users and a 15% increase in the time users spent on our site in the past year.

Close attention was also paid to how visitors were accessing this information, with the new website maximised for mobile and tablet devices. The new website is quicker and easier to keep updated and refreshed, ensuring that content is relevant and correct at any time of the year.















Camping in the National Park

Through our Your Park project, we continue to strive towards improving the camping experience in the National Park and to encourage people to come and make the most of the outdoors.

Since the approval of the Camping Management Byelaws by Scottish Ministers in January 2016, our focus has been on their preparation and implementation. As part of the preparation phase, we developed our Camping Development Strategy, outlining to stakeholders and the public, how we are working towards facilitating overnight stays within the National Park, both inside and out of the Camping Management Zones. This includes setting out the provision of 300 camping spaces within the

Management Zones. The strategy was formally approved by the National Park Board in October 2016.

Ahead of the byelaws coming into effect on 1st March 2017, a key focus was on making sure that those people who want to come and camp within the National Park understand how and where they can do this.

We worked across a range of different activities, all with the main purpose of engagement and interpretation both in advance of and during visits. As a result, we have developed a suite of communication tools, including leaflets, maps, signage, detailed website content and a new online camping booking system. Our staff and volunteers also received training to make sure that the public receive clear messages about how to come and enjoy the National Park responsibly.

We also continued to liaise with local communities within the Camping Management Zones and provide detailed updates about the byelaws.

On the ground, the new National Park campsite at Loch Chon was developed, providing another great informal camping option in a popular location and work was carried out to prepare and install signage at each of the new permit areas.







Supporting accessible recreation

The aim of the National Park's Outdoor Recreation Plan is to transform access across the Park and get more people active in the outdoors. Two big access projects continued to deliver multiple benefits for people and the environment this year.



Walk in the Park

The award winning 'Walk in the Park' healthy walks programmes for people who are, or have become inactive are delivered by Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Countryside Trust and utilise the beautiful and nurturing surroundings of the National Park.

Free group walks are aimed at people recovering from illness or long term inactivity and are offered weekly via self-referrals, GP and pharmacists support. This is one of the best examples of a successful health walk programme in Scotland. Starting from just seven walkers in Callander, the project supports over 100 walkers - doubling the number of led walks offered during the last year alone.



Paths in partnership

Construction of a new stretch of the Pilgrims Way path started between Tyndrum and Dalrigh on land owned by Strathfillan Community Development Trust. The project was managed by Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust, with funding from Sustrans, Tactran, Garfield Weston Foundation, Forth Valley & Lomond LEADER, The Brown Forbes Memorial Fund and The National Park Authority. This is a great example of partnership working to deliver part of the National Walking and Cycling Network.

Also this year:

- The Cowal Way and John Muir Way both received Scotland's Great Trails status, and join 47 other nationally recognised routes.
- We produced the first Open Water Swimming advice for swimmers and boaters on Loch Lomond, a partnership project with the Loch Lomond Association, including a leaflet and website information for this rapidly growing recreational activity.





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.

We continued to focus on our organisational priorities, including Your Park, Wild Park 2020 and Health and Wellbeing. Through facilitating these visits, we were able to provide 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.

Balmaha continues to be our most popular destination for schools and groups coming to engage with outdoor learning, accounting for over 42% of all educational visits.

This year, we noticed an increased interest in and enthusiasm for using the outdoors to support health and wellbeing, and welcomed the ongoing enthusiasm for our Your Park work, helping children and young people to understand what responsible behaviour looks like in the outdoors.

Our continued partnership with the John Muir Trust has enabled us to support a further 18 groups with completing their John Muir Award within the National Park.



Also this year:

Four other educational focussed events supported over 2,000 children and young people with Junior Rangers, water safety and biodiversity themes.

We supported six Backbone groups with Ranger-led activities for 125 community group members to enjoy and explore sites including Balmaha and Inchcailloch.

In 2016/17 we...





2 SPECIAL EDUCATION NEEDS GROUPS
14 GROUPS
EXPERIENCING DISADVANTAGE

18 John Muir Award Groups supported:



290 Young people 14 Adults Additional Support Needs groups

3Outreach groups



Our people on the ground

National Park Rangers, including 28 full time, 34 seasonal and 65 volunteer rangers continued to provide a professional service to visitors and all those who live and work in the Park.

During 2016/17, they dedicated a total of 4,792 days to running our visitor centre and public slipways, along with patrols on land and water across the National Park. They provided information and assistance, ensuring visitors remained safe and behaved responsibly.

Additionally, our Ranger Service provided over 630 hours of support for educational events and activities, including 20 Ranger-led activities and support for six partner led public events.

OUR RANGER TEAM









Working in partnership with Police Scotland, we continued Operation Ironworks for a ninth year, in order to tackle issues associated with antisocial behaviour across the area. This saw 432 hours of additional policing being funded Keeping people safe in the National Park.

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 cover between April and September on Operation Ironworks and visitor management duties, as well as duties relating to the policing of wildlife crime.



Our dedicated volunteers

We are again hugely thankful for the level of commitment and time that we see our volunteers dedicate to improving the National Park.

This year our volunteers gave more than 12,000 hours of their time for conservation tasks and Volunteer Ranger duties. 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.

We have partnership agreements with more than 20 partners who, in 2016/17, provided over 100 opportunities for volunteers to get involved. This allows us to achieve a range of 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 6,500 hours to supporting members of the public, local communities and businesses to enjoy the National Park.







This year our volunteers







CASE STUDY

The Mountains and the People

Launched in 2015, this project brings together training, volunteering, education and contract work in both of Scotland's National Parks and has three main aims:

- Respecting the fragile mountain landscapes of our National Parks by delivering 1,200 days of practical conservation volunteering opportunities.
- Reskilling the conservation workforce of the future by providing 36 individuals with the opportunity to gain skills and qualifications for work in the conservation sector.
- Repairing more than 125 km of paths across some of our Park's most iconic mountains.



Partnership working

Led by the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland, the project received over £3 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund alongside funding and support from project partners at Forestry Commission Scotland, Scottish Natural Heritage and both the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs and Cairngorms National Park Authorities.

Trainees

The first group of conservation trainees completed an intensive six month course giving them valuable skills in working towards an SVQ qualification to work in the conservation sector. The group, selected from over 120 applicants, tackled the impacts of recreational access on some of Scotland's most iconic and fragile mountain paths. Tasks included mending pathways, draining ditches and restoring habitats. A celebration event was held in October 2016 to mark the end of this first course and a further 14 trainees have recently been recruited across both National Parks for 2017.

"The enthusiasm and dedication of the trainees has been outstanding. The positive can-do attitude the team has brought to the tasks has been inspirational. We are so proud of what they have achieved and believe they will go on to make a real difference in the conservation sector."

> Dougie Baird, Chief Executive, Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland





Volunteers

During the year, the project delivered over 300 days of volunteering activity, totalling more than 1,500 hours of volunteer time.

Most of these volunteers were new to volunteering in either National Park and have gone on to become regular volunteers or apply for a place on one of the project's training courses. This highlights the excellent quality of experience the project offers to volunteers.

Paths

Significant progress has been made on restoring and repairing paths on some of the National Park's best loved mountains including Ben Lomond, The Cobbler, Ben Ledi and Ben Venue.

June 2016 also saw the launch of the 'Adopt a Path' campaign, asking hillwalkers to adopt their favourite hill route in the National Park.

The aim is to create an army of volunteer path inspectors who will help spot damage on paths in the National Parks early, so that maintenance work can be targeted and effective. A new web portal www.adoptapath.org.uk has been developed and launched in Spring 2017.

A full project mid-term review will be completed in Spring 2017 with the findings feeding in to the development of years three, four and five.







Empowering our communities

Over the last year we continued to maintain close working relationships with our communities, supported by the Community Partnership. Together we provided direct support to communities enabling them to organise their own community groups and deliver projects that contribute to their overall sustainability.

Strathard

This included:

- supporting Callander and Strathard communities to prepare new Community Action Plans.
- providing direct support, advice and training to Community Development Trusts.
- facilitating networking between communities
 (and agencies where appropriate) through Area
 Network meetings, newsletters, and the very well attended annual
 Community Gathering in November. This event included organisations
 such as Development Trust Association Scotland, Scottish Land Fund,
 BIG lottery and Social Enterprise Academy, who all delivered popular
 workshops.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill was enacted in 2015 with different parts of the Act coming into force during 2016 and early 2017. The National Park Authority has made internal arrangements and provided information for communities on our website to ensure our requirements are met. This has focused on how we handle Asset Transfers, Participation Requests and engage with our Community Planning Partnerships.

Community Grant Scheme

Our annual Community Grant Scheme provides financial support to local communities . This funding helps them run effective community groups and to develop projects that progress their Community Action Plan priorities, as well as support the strategic outcomes of the National Park. During 2016/17, £16,600 was awarded to 12 Community Development Trusts to support their organisations.

In addition, four grants were awarded to community trusts for the following projects:

- Strathfillan Community Development Trust towards a feasibility study for running a bike hire/outdoor recreation social enterprise utilising the range of outdoor recreation opportunities and path improvements in the area.
- Benmore & Kilmun Community Development Trust towards an options appraisal for creating two Cultural Heritage Trails, one walking trail, and a longer trail for cars or bikes, to link local historical figures and their achievements with places associated to them, local amenities and attractions.
- Killin and Ardeonaig Community Trust towards the community-led design for a play park, part of a threephased initiative to improve and enhance Breadalbane Park as the key green space and event hub for the community.
- Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui Community Council towards an otter survey and designs to support the feasibility of installing a floating pontoon in Arrochar that aims to create marine access to Loch Long for local residents and visitors.





Protecting our historic environment

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

- Planning policies to guide new development as it relates to or impacts on our built heritage.
- Bespoke guidance in our new Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas Planning Guidance.
- Built Heritage Repair Grants.

Protecting our trees

In 2016 we started to review all the Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs) within the National Park, as part of our work to ensure these Orders are up to date. There are 34 TPOs in place, including individual trees, groups of trees and woodland across the Park's area.

Callander Landscape Partnership

Over the last year significant progress has been made with the Callander Landscape Partnership. This community-led partnership, of which the National Park Authority is the lead public body, plays an important role in:

- Improving Callander as a visitor destination.
- Improving the accessibility of the area's heritage and recreational resources.
- Conservation work preserving dark skies, restoring river banks, wildflower meadows, native woodland and parkland features.
- Improving the information base about the area.
- Developing local knowledge and skills to ensure that the legacy of the project is secured.



It will also help deliver on the 2011 Charrette aspiration to make Callander the outdoor capital of the National Park and complements many other National Park or partner projects: including the Stirling City Deal, Active Travel Improvements and Community Action Planning.



The Heritage Lottery Fund has committed over £1.4 million of funding in principle to this five year project, with over £600,000 required in match funding. The partnership with the Park Authority as lead public body, will submit their bid for Stage Two funding in August 2017 with a decision expected in December.

Good early progress has been made to secure match funding, with the Community Hydro Scheme confirming £50,000 and other various potential sources of funding identified.



LIVE Park

Over the last year our Local Development Plan, LIVE Park, has successfully been through examination by an independent report appointed by Scottish Ministers and was adopted by the National Park Authority in December 2016. It also received an award in the 'Plans' category at the annual Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning.

"The document had a strong sustainable approach towards shaping the 'place'. There had been a lot of attention paid to getting the right balance of text and images — with an emphasis on the latter... Overall, the judges felt that the Plan pushed the agenda in terms of setting a precedent for Plan-making."

Scottish Awards for Quality in Planning Judges statement December 2016



investment and development across the National Park. In the three strategic growth areas of Callander, Balloch and Arrochar stronger partnership working over the last year has progressed active travel projects, public realm and streetscape improvements and development activity such as affordable housing.

Its new approach towards rural development has also helped bring forward a package of development including commercial, tourism and affordable housing within Luss (see case study on page 39).





Balloch village street design proposals

An ambitious and exciting project to improve public spaces in Balloch has made significant progress this year.



The project was identified during the 'LIVE in Balloch Charrette' which was held early in 2016. The Charrette involved a series of workshops, supported by targeted engagement with local schools, local businesses, community groups and an active discussion on our Facebook page. These gave the people who Live, Work, Invest and Experience Balloch the opportunity to put forward ideas and suggestions on how to make the village an even better place.

This partnership project has been led by Sustrans Scotland, the National Park Authority and West Dunbartonshire Council and seeks to remodel and improve the appearance of three public spaces in Balloch:

- the village centre
- the train station
- Balloch Road west

Building on the extensive engagement undertaken through the charrette, communities, businesses and other stakeholders have all been involved in helping to shape the project's aspirations and proposals.

Feedback from those who took part included a wish to see a high quality, distinctive and welcoming space between the train station and the tourist information centre, as well as a people friendly village centre with slower traffic speeds and more places for people to sit and enjoy Balloch.



These aspirations have strongly influenced the design options that have been put forward for the final stage of engagement taking place in Spring 2017. Feedback gathered from the public on these options will influence the final choice of design, with the aim of a phased construction beginning during 2018.



The village centre



The train station



Balloch Road west



Development on the ground

Recent years have seen a significant increase in both planning applications and development activity on the ground. In dealing with applications, our recurring focus is on achieving sustainable development.

From a landscape and conservation perspective this means working to protect and enhance special landscape qualities and characteristics like wildness, dark skies and tranquillity.

Planning gains for conservation over the past year have included the removal of invasive rhododendron and Japanese knotweed and the protection of bats, otters, bluebells and other native species at development sites.

Run of river hydro schemes

Eight of the 13 schemes reported as under construction in last years Annual Report have been completed and we continue to monitor the five schemes still under construction. This is crucial to ensuring that agreed working methods are used to protect species and habitats and the quality and timely restoration of the National Park's landscapes.



Examples include: the re-use of turf and soils for the restoration of existing moorland habitats over buried pipelines and along construction working corridors and track edges; the design of turbine power houses to fit in with their rural farm settings; ensuring that water intakes and tail races protect local fish populations.

Once completed, the total hydro electricity generation from within the National Park will be sufficient to power the equivalent of 25,000 homes – approximately four times the number of homes in the National Park. Two of the completed schemes have community links, which means the income generated goes directly towards funding community projects in those areas.



Cononish Goldmine

Activity at the Cononish Goldmine started in 2016 with temporary planning permission being granted for a 'Bulk Processing Trial'. This allowed a processing trial (processing around 2,400 tonnes/ 1,200m³) of a portion of the existing stockpile of ore at the mine platform area, which had been created as a by-product of exploratory work in the 1980s to produce small quantities of gold and silver.

Acharn Forest combined heat and power plant

Other renewable projects include a wood fired combined heat and power (CHP) plant at Acharn Forest, Killin. Construction started in summer 2016 and will include the creation of a level compound with log stack areas, a main gasifier building fed by woodchip fuel bunkers, a wood chip preparation area, sub station, containerised CHP units and a heat exchanger. The operation will generate electricity for the equivalent of 10,000 homes and create 10 employment opportunities.

CASE STUDY

Supporting development on the ground in Luss

A 'thriving economically active rural economy' is key to the vision of LIVE Park, our Local Development Plan.

In order to provide more pro-active planning guidance, we piloted two **Rural Development Frameworks** to help coordinate and deliver sustainable development within pressured countryside areas of the National Park. The aim being to help stimulate and strengthen the local economy and sustain the local population.

Luss, an attractive planned estate village on the banks of Loch Lomond, is a great example of our Rural Development Framework for West Loch Lomondside facilitating development on the ground.



Development opportunities

We have worked closely with local landowners, Luss Estates, on two main development opportunities within the village: the opening of a new filling station and the construction of new affordable housing north of the hotel. There is also planning permission in place for six new retail/workshop style units and an application for further housing to the south of the village.

The five affordable homes due to be complete in May 2017, will provide four three-bedroom family homes



The development of these homes represents a milestone for Luss Estates in progressing their aspirations for the area. The land has been provided by the Estate to LINK Housing Association and the development funded by LINK, the Scottish Government, Argyll & Bute Council and Luss Estates. The









Team National Park

Focusing on our Youth Investment
Plan and our commitment to the
Scottish Government's Developing
the Young Workforce Strategy,
we have made great progress
in lowering our age profile through
the recruitment of school age
modern apprentices, Ranger modern
apprentices and graduate interns.

This has been done with support from West Dunbartonshire Council and Young Scot and has contributed towards a more diverse workforce. It has been fully embraced by all staff who are determined to show the younger members of our team that the National Park Authority is truly an employer of choice.

We were also delighted to celebrate the birthday of our oldest employee, Alex, who celebrated his 21st birthday for the 49th time!



Engaged, high performing, empowered staff

Family friendly

This year we were shortlisted for a national award recognising employers who support working families. We were named as a finalist in Family Friendly Working Scotland's 2017 Scottish Top Employers for Working Families Awards in the Best Public Sector category. This recognises that we are a progressive employer that has successfully embedded family friendly and flexible working practices, in particular recognising best practice, innovation and sustainability.

Encouraging positive work life balance

We continue to encourage and support a positive work life balance for all of our employees.

Ownership

In addition to delivering on our annual operational plan objectives, aligned to our organisational plans and Scottish Government outcomes, this year Team National Park delivered one of the most significant projects in the Park Authority's history, Your Park (see page 26). This was only possible through continued engagement and discussions with all staff through the various workstreams every step of the way, teamwork at its best!







CASE STUDY

Supporting work life balance

A progressive organisation which supports family friendly and flexible working practices

I became a new parent 14
months ago, to a wee boy named
Glen. I am absolutely delighted
with how the National Park
Authority has supported me with
the transition to parenthood.
The Executive, Board and my
colleagues have been incredibly
supportive throughout my
pregnancy, maternity leave
and return to work.

As a busy solicitor and manager within the organisation, I was delighted when my request for part-time work was accommodated creatively as a job share. I was consulted in the development of the job share arrangements, to ensure that it would be workable in practice.

I now work Wednesday to Friday, which gives me the perfect balance of continuing to do a job that I love, and spending time with Glen.

My job share partner and I are responsible for all aspects of the role of Governance and Legal Manager – but we have allocated responsibilities based on our skills, specialisms and strengths. This means that we both have jobs we enjoy and the organisation gains from a far wider skill set.

The organisation's flexible working policies mean that I am able to change my working hours from week to week, as there are no core hours. This is great for dealing with the unexpected, such as grandparents running late or last minute nappy changes on the way out the door!

The flexible approach means that I can change my working days with ease, or work from home – which makes it a lot easier to fit work around my other commitments – whether it be taking Glen to the GP or tackling the laundry!

I can also fit in a run or an outdoor swim in Loch Lomond around my meetings. Even during the working day, I have the opportunity to exercise and get some fresh air as we often hold meetings whilst walking in the park or even up hills.

The Park Authority is a great place to work and the supportive, trusting and flexible approach to staff and work/life balance far exceeds anywhere else I have worked.





Health, wellbeing and safety

Engagement throughout the organisation in Health and Wellbeing has led to a Wellbeing Action Plan being developed for our workforce. As a result we were awarded the Healthy Working Lives Bronze award. We continue to raise awareness of health and safety through our e-learning programme which included Stress Awareness and Driving Safely for the first time.



Values and behaviours

We have extended the embedding of our values and behaviours into our recruitment and selection process so that we can effectively recruit staff who fit with our organisation's culture. 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

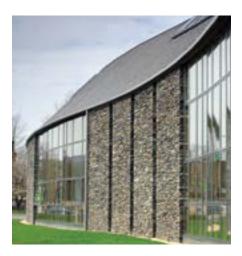
we respect the past and shape the future

Accessible

we are approachable, open and friendly

Green

we do the right thing for the Park and the planet



We have delivered a number of initiatives which support our aim for 'engaged, high performing, empowered staff' including:

- The new look HR System 'My Park Life' was launched providing staff with a more user friendly self-service experience and increased functionality.
- Our Equalities and Diversity staff survey feedback shaped our new Equality Outcomes for the next four years.
- We are now working towards our Healthy Working Lives Silver award and Health and Wellbeing remains a high priority.
- Our annual pay negotiations have been focused on family friendly benefits to support the caring responsibilities of our staff.
- The development of an e-learning portal with the other UK National Parks that will provide a comprehensive suite of mandatory and personal development learning opportunities.



Social commitment

We were pleased to commit to the Social Impact Pledge and delighted to make great strides towards achieving these promises:

- Developing opportunities for young people to engage in volunteering throughout the National Park.
- Delivering our first ever 'Invest in Youth Plan'.
- Progressing the delivery of the Callander Landscape Partnership highlighted on page 35.



Giving something back

Our Staff Involvement Group (STIG) has been instrumental in raising £4,786 for three local Mountain Rescue Teams: Loch Lomond, Arrochar and Killin. Throughout the year, staff enthusiastically undertook a series of events and activities including running a marathon, holding a quiz, participating in the Great Scottish Swim, making and selling cakes, soup, tea and toast and operating a very popular tuck shop. Staff also volunteered to help with a training exercise, which included being rescued from the mountains late at night.



"It was very clear that a considerable amount of time and effort went in to raising such large sum of money, and it is greatly appreciated.

The money is being used to equip the members with lightweight harnesses and belay devices which are necessary to recover people safely from the difficult locations we often find them in, especially in winter, and often in the dark."

Killin Mountain Rescue Team











Enhancing ICT & mobile technology

We have recently implemented various technologies within our ICT infrastructure which will enhance services for both the public and members of staff:

- New field data capture technology is now in use across the organisation resulting in savings in staff time and more accurate and timely data recording.
- Existing operational systems have been further developed and expanded into other areas of work achieving savings by making the most of existing resources.
- Mobile technologies such as tablet and hand held data devices have been adopted and integrated into the Park Authority's ICT and GIS systems.
- Further enhancement of virtual technologies has resulted in enhancement to systems resiliency whilst reducing the organisation's carbon footprint.

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 Hosting Strategy. This will focus on the proposed consolidation of the Park Authority's data into Scottish Government data centres.



Climate change reporting

As well as the work that we support on the development of peatland bogs, woodland creation and hydro schemes, our aspiration for a green vehicle fleet took an environmentally friendly leap forward with the purchase of two fully electric vehicles.

Within our Carrochan premises we have invested in LED lighting to replace older, less energy efficient lighting.

We were delighted to be provided with support from our key partner, SEPA, to support us in the development of our draft Climate Change Action Plan which will help us identify our achievements to date as well as future aspirations, tasks and opportunities.

Working with students from Strathclyde University in association with The Carbon Trust, carbon audits were undertaken on three of our buildings.



Working together

We continue to enhance our already excellent partnership/shared services relationship with Cairngorms
National Park Authority. Shared ICT infrastructure, e-planning systems, helpdesk, backup & disaster recovery solutions and further joint support and licensing agreements have been agreed and enhanced over the year.
We also have shared staffing posts for procurement.

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, and with the NDPB forum for equalities and diversity.

We continue to proactively identify opportunities with our Local Authority partners to deliver against the Public Service Reform agenda.



Engaged Board

Our Board have been actively involved in the development of the 2018-23 National Park Partnership Plan, guiding the key themes and outcomes which will set the strategy for the National Park for the next five years.

The Your Park Stakeholder Forum has also been led by the Board. The forum provides a platform for the exchange of information between local and national stakeholders and the Park Authority in accord with our Camping Development Strategy.

Ahead of the adoption of LIVE Park, our Local Development Plan, Board members attended a number of charrettes and community meetings to hear and address local concerns and ideas on what communities in the National Park should look like in the future.

All our Board Members received refresher training on the Code of Conduct this year.

During the year we said farewell to our long serving Convener Linda McKay and welcomed our new Convener James Stuart to the post on 1st March 2017. 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 co-operation and participation of a wide and varied range of key partners, from other Government agencies and our four Local Authority partners, to business, landowners, community organisations and voluntary groups.

Key public sector partners:



Scottish Natural Heritage Dualchas Nàdair na h-Alba

All of nature for all of Scotland Nàdar air fad airson Alba air fad

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.



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



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 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.



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



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.



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.



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.

sportscotland

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.

Other key partners:

Community



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 2016-17, we thank you and look forward to continuing working together to deliver for the National Park in 2017-18 and beyond.

Map of the National Park

