

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 11 – Appendix 1

Your Park Project Update



Appendix 1

Paper for Information

Your Park Project Update

- We have now completed the first season of the new Camping Management Byelaws.
- Work is nearly complete on reviewing the operation of the first season. This will provide an opportunity to refine operational management of the new systems and procedures that have been put in place to help deliver the byelaws, with a view to improving these for the coming 2018 season.
- The review also provides background information to the first update report on the implementation of the byelaws to Scottish Ministers, which is found at item 6.
- Work also continues on future site development with progress on proposals for the new campsite, by Loch Achray on the Three Lochs Forest Drive in the Trossachs.

The key elements of progress in this period are as follows:

Loch Chon campsite

Loch Chon campsite has now closed for the winter, following its first season of operation. The site proved popular with campers with a total of 1,242 nights being booked up until the end of September with an average stay of 1.5 days. These bookings were representative of 2,052 people; including 518 children.

Ground conditions at the site and constructive feedback from campers has led to improvement works on some tent pitches beginning, with more work to be carried out ahead of the 2018 season. This will see the installation of matting to improve drainage and surfacing and make these popular pitches more robust in the future. The issues with drinking water supply that were experienced will be rectified over the closed season, with adjustments being made to the design of the water supply. Despite these teething issues, the response rate that we have had from campers to our follow up surveys has been good, with 92% of respondents stating that they were 'quite likely' (18%) or 'very likely' (74%) to recommend Loch Chon campsite.

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Permit Areas

The permit booking system continued to work well through the first season, with improvements being made to permit areas and online booking information as a result of constructive user feedback. Permit areas were frequently patrolled by the National Park Authority Land Operations Team and Ranger Service and additional resources were given to the management of litter and human waste, which continues to be an ongoing challenge at some sites.

Up until the end of September there were 6,129 bookings across all the Permit Areas, representing 8,158 nights. These bookings are representative of 14,863 people; including 2,325 children.

The final element of the initial signage installation will be completed ahead of the 2018 season, with the erection of 'hot spot' and 'repeater' signage, designed to help remind visitors that they are in a Camping Management Zone. The location of this signage has been selected using feedback gathered from local communities and the Ranger service.

Update on Camping Development Strategy

The proposals for the provision of camping opportunities and related facilities have been previously outlined to the Board in the Camping Development Strategy, October 2016. The focus for the 2018 season is the investment in an upgraded campsite near Loch Achray, working with our partners in Forest Enterprise Scotland. When the campsite is completed this will give the National Park an additional seventeen camping pitches, two of which will be all ability access. Plans for the new campsite have now been submitted to Planning and Rural Development for consideration and pending a final decision, construction will commence in early 2018. We also remain committed to reducing the environmental impacts of high levels of camping at South Loch Earn, but following discussions with a key landowner, we have been unable to progress the provision of additional toilet facilities during the current financial year.

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Other work on proposals laid out in the Camping Development Strategy includes:

- West Loch Lomond: following further investigation and discussion, the site at Inveruglas was not thought to provide best value for additional investment at this particular point in time and therefore capital resource for the current financial year has been diverted to making improvements at Tarbet car park which should see benefits for motorhome and campervan stop overs. Moving forward we continue to explore additional sustainable camping provision in the zone and are currently reviewing provision at Firkin Point on Loch Lomond and in the Arrochar area.
- East Loch Lomond: along with existing camping provision at Salloch, at Rowardennan Youth Hostel and at Lochan Maol Dhuinne, we are investigating the potential for additional permits along the West Highland Way.
- Trossachs West: along with making improvements at Loch Chon campsite, we are investigating the potential for another permit area in the zone.
- Trossachs North: should proposals be authorised, the new Loch Achray campsite is due to open in late spring 2018. We will continue to invest efforts in securing new toilet facilities in the popular Loch Earn area and are also investigating the potential for additional permits in the wider zone.

Communications and engagement

The Your Park Stakeholder Forum met at Brig o' Turk on the evening of 13th November. Although relatively poorly attended by local community representatives from other parts of the National Park, the workshop session in the meeting provided a useful mechanism to collect feedback on the first season from a range of stakeholders and partners present.

Results from the feedback survey responses from people who have camped in a Camping Management Zone has been positive on the whole, in relation to the booking system, Loch Chon campsite, permit areas and National Park Rangers. Suggested areas of improvement include reinforcing public messages and signage about the new byelaws, adverse weather impacts on camping provision, and as previously noted, management of litter and human waste.

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Byelaws and Fixed Penalty Notices

The season saw three byelaw cases reported to the Procurator Fiscal by National Park Authority staff and seven reported by Police Scotland. During the season four fixed penalty notices were issued for fly tipping.

Next Steps

As outlined above work is now well underway preparing for the second season, due to begin 1 March 2018. In summary this will:

- Identify areas in which to improve visitor experience;
- Seek to improve permit area function and provision, and progress investment plans in the Camping Development Strategy for 2018 and beyond;
- Recruit seasonal Rangers and refine operational procedures and training for field staff;
- Design the stakeholder engagement and communications plan for the 2018 season.

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