

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 11: Attachment

CEO Report: Attachment Operation Ironworks Police Scotland Partnership



Paper for noting

1. Introduction

Operation Ironworks is a successful partnership initiative with Police Scotland which has now been operating for more than 10 years. It was originally conceived and instigated in 2007 with the former Central Scotland Police (CSP) force in response to an increase in visitor management related offences and concerns in the National Park. Since then it has become a Park-wide operation which has successfully reduced instances of serious crime and anti-social behaviour. This report summarises how the partnership operates and some of the issues that it has tackled and attaches the report of the 2017 operation.

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to note the contents of this Report and the appended Police Scotland Operation Ironworks Report for 2017.

3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan

Outcome 8: Visitor Management – The most popular parts of the National Park which experience visitor pressures are managed to ensure that the quality of the environment, visitor experience and community life are protected and enhanced.

4. Background

- 4.1 The main purpose of Operation Ironworks is to provide additional Police resources and joint patrols with National Park and Forest Enterprise Scotland Ranger staff targeted at the peak visitor weekends where the instances of anti-social behaviour such as vandalism, theft, littering, assault and other forms of disruptive and irresponsible behaviour are concentrated. It uses intelligence led, high visibility, proactive mobile and foot patrols targeting identified problem areas.
- 4.2 Originally covering the former Central Scotland Police Force area, Operation Ironworks has subsequently developed into a multi-divisional partnership covering the entire National Park led by the Stirling Division of Police Scotland working closely with the National Park Ranger service as well as Forest Enterprise Scotland.
- 4.3 The National Park Authority has contributed approximately £60k p.a. to support the delivery of a number of resources;
 - The secondment of a full time Police Constable to the National Park, based at the National Park HQ in Balloch whose remit includes;

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- developing a problem solving partnership to combat rural crime and anti-social behaviour across the National Park,
- assisting in the co-ordination and delivery of ongoing multi-police divisional operations,
- assisting the partnership to realise education opportunities and to assist the National Park to develop management solutions.
- supporting the reduction of wildlife crime and liaising with full time Police Scotland Wildlife Crime Officers.

- A co-branded Police Scotland/National Park liveried vehicle for use by the National Park Police Officer.
- An Employer Supported Policing Programme was established with the National Park Authority donating a number of days for staff volunteers to operate as Employer Supported Special Constables (ESSCs). This helped to supplement additional Police patrols by enabling joint patrolling. Previously there have been up to 4 Special constables and at present there is 1 Park employee actively involved. Future trawls for new volunteers are planned.
- A financial contribution towards overtime that Police Scotland can direct to areas that are suffering from visitor management issues, allowing additional resources to tackle these pressures over and above the normal the level of policing activity that would be traditionally allocated.

5. How does Operation Ironworks work?

- 5.1 The operation is coordinated by a lead Sergeant who is supported by the National Park Police Officer to ensure a joined up approach to reducing impacts that anti-social and criminal behaviour is having on the experience of visitors, the environment and on the people who live and work within the National Park.
- 5.2 Resources are targeted to those weekends anticipated to be the busiest in the Park, either due to the occurrence of a public holiday weekend or warm weather predicted in long range weather forecasts. On an Operation Ironworks weekend overtime shifts are offered to Police officers from across the three divisions covering the National Park.
- 5.3 The planning for the operation of the partnership includes;
 - Prior to the beginning of the operational season a meeting is held with key partners from the Park, FES and Police Scotland. This allows the prioritisation of key geographical areas of the Park that will need a focussed Police Scotland presence on key dates using intelligence gathered from the previous year's season. It also gives an opportunity for partners to agree operational

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procedures and discuss key communications messages for the upcoming season.

- The Visitor Operations Manager has line management of the National Park Police Constable and works closely with both the Constable and the lead Police Sergeant throughout the season to ensure that resources are allocated appropriately and that any ongoing efficiencies in communication and resourcing can be made as part of a continuous improvement process.
- The National Park Police Constable liaises directly with the National Park Ranger Service and during the Summer months works a shift pattern to best support the Rangers out in the field. The Constable can provide advice to the Ranger Team Leaders and attend incidents where appropriate and link in to the wider Police Scotland team when required.
- Lessons learned sessions are usually held to review the preceding season whilst it is fresh in officers' minds. This helps ensure that any planning for the next season can start from an informed position as soon as possible.

6. Education and Communication

- 6.1 A key ingredient in improving visitor behaviour has always been clear educational messages encouraging responsible enjoyment. Operation Ironworks has helped facilitate consistent messages through the ongoing '*Respect the Park*' campaign ensuring all frontline staff are providing consistent messages and advice to visitors.
- 6.2 Operation Ironworks has generated a considerable amount of media interest over the years. Every season a press release launches that season's operation and is consistently picked up in the media. This is of great assistance in reassuring communities and visitors as well as deterring unwanted behaviour.

7. What has it achieved?

- 7.1 Operation Ironworks has continued to produce positive results in tackling anti-social behaviour and reduce crime and for the benefit of the communities within the National Park and for visitors. The Police patrols and joint working have helped to provide reassurance for visitors to the park and ensure that it is a place they feel safe that they will return to. They also provide reassurance to local communities who have in the past been subject to the negative impacts of anti-social behaviour.
- 7.2 The cumulative effect of the 10 years of Operation Ironworks is that serious incidents of this nature are now a rare occurrence. Along with other visitor

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management measures such as investment in visitor facilities and infrastructure, camping bylaws in camping hotspots and navigation byelaws in Loch Lomond, these actions have transformed the visitor experience and community life in these areas.

7.3 The Ironworks Report for the 2017 season is attached. This report, produced by Police Scotland demonstrates the relatively low level of crime and anti-social behaviour that required to be dealt with by Police Officers. This, and recent annual reports, are in contrast to the early years of the initiative. In 2010 the following were examples of the serious incidents reported at popular visitor sites;

- Attempted Murder - Sallochay Car Park, Rowardennan, Hit and run. individual charged with Attempted Murder
- Aggravated Assault & Racial Incident - Balquhidder
- Domestic Breach of Bail – Sallochay
- Prohibited Weapons - Automatic Air Pistol, Sheath Knife (13cm blade) and a lock knife (4"blade) - charged with Firearms Act and Criminal Law Consolidation Act offences
- Firearms Incident - Loch Venachar, drunken individual in a boat charged in possession of a firearm threatening a bailiff
- Possession of a knife - Loch Lubnaig, Individual arrested following threatening other campers with a knife

7.4 A prime example of reduction in criminal activity has been seen at east Loch Earn with a downward trend in activity from 29 recorded crimes in 2014, 15 in 2015, 10 in 2016 to 7 crimes in 2017 and no public space violent crime since then.

7.5 The Ironworks partnership has continued to adapt to the introduction of new management measures such as the Camping Byelaws 2017. During the first season of operation in 2017 there was excellent collaboration to ensure compliance and undertake enforcement where required.

8. Looking to the future

8.1 Operation Ironworks has become 'business as usual' and an integral part of the suite of visitor management tools that are used within the National Park. It is important that this effective partnership is not taken for granted and that we continue to build on the successes that have been achieved during the past decade that it has been operating. Dramatic improvements to the quality of the visitor experience in areas such as the east side of Loch Lomond have been achieved, but the

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National Park is experiencing high visitor numbers at popular locations and as such there is very much a role for this Partnership going forward.

8.2 For 2018 some key areas of work will be;

- An increased focus on water safety ensuring that loch users are aware of the associated risks, and to assist the Ranger Service to address antisocial behaviour issues that can often be linked to other crimes;
- A focus on traffic management and road safety in areas of high pressure such as the B837 on the east side of Loch Lomond;
- There will be a drive to try to recruit some additional Employer Supported Special Constables both from within the National Park and partner organisations.

8.3 In a period of reducing resources, the collaboration will continue to ensure that resources are targeted at times and locations where they are most needed and that the partnership continues to deter rural crime and anti-social behaviour.

9. Conclusion

Members are asked to note the value of Operation Ironworks towards achieving National Park Partnership Plan outcomes, the contents of the attached 2017 report and the work to continuously improve partnership working with Police Scotland.

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