

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10

Our Estate: A Starter Paper



Paper for information

1. Introduction
To provide an overview of our estate, our aspirations and the proposed next stages.
2. Recommendation
Board Members are asked to note the contents of this report.
3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5-year Plan

Our 5-Year Plan references our estate:

Priority 2: Visitor Infrastructure

We will invest strategically and create a multiple year capital investment plan for our visitor sites and facilities to improve the quality of the visitor experience, create economic and public benefits, and ensure efficiencies in the costs of operating and maintaining our assets.

Our Enablers

Estate - We will maintain and develop a high quality estate; efficiently, cost effectively and innovatively to enhance user benefit and demonstrate good practice to minimise our impact on the environment.

Our **National Park Partnership Plan**¹ references visitor infrastructure within:

Outcome 5: Recreation Opportunities

The National Park has a wide variety of well promoted and managed outdoor recreation opportunities providing for a range of abilities and interests.

Outcome 6: Water Recreation

There are more opportunities to enjoy water-based recreation and sporting activities across the Park's lochs, rivers and coasts while maximising safety for all users and protecting the quality of water environments.

Outcome 8: Visitor Management

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

¹ The National Park Partnership Plan guides the work of not just the National Park Authority but of all the organisations and other partners involved in managing the area and making the overarching vision a reality.

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10

Our Estate: A Starter Paper

Outcome 10: Placemaking

The National Park's towns, villages and countryside are enhanced with investment in the built and historic environment, public spaces and infrastructure.

4. Background

4.1 The National Park Authority owns very little land or buildings in the National Park.

4.2 As part of the designation of National Parks and the establishment of the National Park Authority in 2002, part of the process involved decisions about what of the four Local Authorities assets should transfer to the new Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority. In very general terms the many of the assets that transferred included those previously built under the auspices of Loch Lomond Regional Park which predated the establishment of the National Park. Additionally some other visitor sites transferred from Stirling Council, comprising mainly rural car parks and picnic sites.

4.3 Our assets (owned, tenanted out or leased) are shown as Appendix 1.

4.4 As you will see from this list there are two main types of assets; those we own and those that we lease. Within those categories there are those that we have primarily for the purposes of:

- operating the National Park Authority as an organisation to enable us to fulfil our statutory obligations i.e. Carrochan operates as our main office, Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway enables us to operate the Loch Lomond Byelaws, and
- providing visitor infrastructure i.e. Bracklinn Falls, Milarrochy Bay.

4.5 As we start to develop our strategic thinking in relation to our estate our assessment will focus on what is required to ensure we operate our estate effectively, as a public body, as well as exploring the most effective uses for our visitor infrastructure to deliver against 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.

4.6 The exercise that any organisation would traditionally go through when considering their estate would be to understand:

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10

Our Estate: A Starter Paper

Where are we now?

- 4.7 A status of the property and land/water ownership; property/land schedule and value, occupancy costs, physical condition, functional suitability, utilisation, quality, compliance with statutory regulations, environmental management, user perception surveys and development priorities is required.
- 4.8 Work has been underway for a while to audit the current status of our estate to ensure that we have a full understanding of the legal position on our assets and in particular any title or lease burdens or restrictions that may affect decisions on future use. A small team are developing our estates database to enable us to answer some of these fundamental questions.
- 4.9 For the purposes of this context setting, the GIS team with support from a Legal Adviser have produced a visual representation of a number of our key sites:
- Balmaha
 - Bracklin Falls
 - Falls of Falloch
 - Firkin Point
 - Inchailloch
 - Inveruglas
 - Lomond Shores
 - Luss
 - Milarrochy
 - Rowardennan
 - Tarbet
- 4.10 These are attached (in alphabetic order).

Where do we want to be?

- 4.11 Although not the purpose of this report, there are some fundamental and challenging questions that we will need to ask ourselves and agree upon as a Board. Some, intentionally provocative, examples might be:
- Do we want to continue to deliver visitor services? (toilets, paths, car parks, campsites, visitor centres, waterbuses, cafes...)
 - What operations and services do we want to contract out?
 - Do we want to sell any part of our estate?
 - Do we want to buy assets?
 - Where do we want to create commercial opportunities and what is our risk appetite?

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10

Our Estate: A Starter Paper

- 4.12 Within our National Park Partnership Plan outcome 13: Community Empowerment also has an explicit aim to “communities are supported to influence and deliver actions that improve quality of... life and place”
- 4.13 We also know that public sector funding will continue to reduce and, as a National Park, we are not a protected service. In coming to decisions about the use of our assets, the fact that there is an opportunity to generate income/reduce costs from our assets will be an important deciding factor on what we are and aspire to become as a National Park Authority. As identified at 2. Above, in 2018 Board members and Ministers confirmed support for Our 5-Year Plan strategic proprieties and objectives.

How do we get there?

- 4.14 Once we know the direction of travel we will need to opt for preferred options for any estate changes, work with our key stakeholders, aim to secure support for a capital investment programme, decide on disposal and asset acquisition aspirations, priorities, risks and opportunity management.

Timing

- 4.15 In an ideal world the above three phases would be a linear process however there are live challenges that we cannot defer until we have made all the strategic decisions. Drivers include uncertainty of retaining Grant In Aid capital funding, opportunities to access external funding such as the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (successful bid for West Loch Lomond sites) and the need to make early decisions about the future of currently unoccupied buildings that incur costs (e.g. Luss Visitor Centre, Inveruglas and Tarbet).

5. Our Resources

- 5.1 Following a period of investing in and expanding our asset base we are now prioritising the development of a fit for purpose estates management system that will support a more planned approach to maintaining our asset base to the required standard.
- 5.2 Recognising the opportunities that existed from maximising our assets a very small Estates Team and Capital Projects Team was recently established. The two teams consist of an Estates Manager (Emma Yendell) and:

Facilities Team: a Facilities Manager with 8 members of permanent staff (mostly working a shift pattern, most part time) operating our buildings, stores and public

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10

Our Estate: A Starter Paper

toilets, including cleaning services at HQ, and up to 9 members of seasonal staff (working a shift pattern, most part time) operating our campsites

Land Operations Team: a Land Operations Manager with 7 members of permanent staff (some part time) and 4 staff on short-term contracts, all based out of our maintenance units in Alexandria undertaking ground maintenance across all of our sites, including litter and waste management

Tenant Management: an Estates Surveyor managing our leases and tenancies, as well as other third party use of our estate assets including our piers and pontoons

Estates Database: a fixed term Database Officer dedicated to managing the development and delivery of the estates management system through the Estates Database Project.

Capital Projects: an Architect providing project support on capital project developments, including our campsites

- 5.3 In addition to our in-house staff, we use a number of contractors to provide specialist services. This currently includes outsourcing the cleaning of our 8 public toilets.

Budgets:

- 5.4 In basic terms the Estates Team manage a budget of £1m to operate our buildings; energy, furniture, fixtures & fittings, grounds maintenance, property cleaning, property insurance, property repairs & developments, property security, rates & water charges, refuse & waste disposal, rent, tools & equipment.

- 5.5 Over and above this each year the Park Authority Board make decisions on the priorities for c£1m of capital expenditure. In recent years the priority has included the delivery of the Camping Development Strategy, Gateway Centre, piers and pontoons, Mountains and The People project, Community Grant Schemes, electric vehicles.

- 5.6 Income of c£500k is generated from asset related activities. This includes camping income, boat launch fees, toilet charging, car park charging, meeting room hire, rental income and sale of goods.

Partnerships:

- 5.7 As exemplified in our National Park Partnership Plan, partnerships are crucial to the success of the National Park. In terms of our estates developments partnerships

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 10

Our Estate: A Starter Paper

with local businesses, landowners, local authorities, the Forestry Commission Scotland and communities has the potential to offer significant opportunities.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 Although the National Park Authority has a limited portfolio of assets there is an opportunity to maximise the value our assets bring to support the delivery of our National Parks aims, the National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5-year Plan.
- 6.2 Alongside the opportunities that fundraising and accessing other forms of grants brings, our assets continue to offer opportunities to generate income and through tenanting have delivered significant cost savings.
- 6.3 Although some of our estate is not in an ideal condition, we have some key visitor sites such as Tarbet, Inveruglas, Luss, Balmaha, Rowardennan and Milarrochy that undoubtedly offer opportunities.

7. Next Steps

- Continue to maximise opportunities offered by alternative funding streams such as the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) to improve the quality of our busiest visitor sites.
- Commission and/or take advantage of key partners master planning expertise to develop options for a range of our key sites for consideration by the Board.
- Secure budget (capital and resource) to progress the estates strategy and capital developments.
- Continue to work with stakeholders to maximise mutual benefits from assets.
- Provide updates to the Board on the estates strategy and decision papers on significant assets such as Luss Visitor centre.

Appendix 1 – Asset List

Appendix 2 - Maps of key sites (in alphabetic order)

Executive Sponsor: Jaki Carnegie, Director of Corporate Services