

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8

Chief Executive Officer Report



Paper for information

1. Purpose
To provide an overview of significant issues and developments in the National Park operating environment.
2. Recommendation
Board Members are asked to note the contents of this report.
3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan
The report discusses topics which cover a number of outcomes and priorities from across the National Park Partnership Plan 2018-23.
4. Scottish Government
 - 4.1. **Ministerial Visit:** As a result of changes to the Scottish Government Minister responsibilities, Mairi Gougeon MSP was appointed Minister for Rural Affairs and Natural Environment, with responsibility for National Parks in June 2018. Mairi was elected as the MSP for Angus North and Mearns in May 2016. The Minister visited the National Park on 1st October and met with the Convener and other senior staff. The visit provided an opportunity to familiarise the Minister with current National Park Authority priorities and included visits to Balloch and Balmaha.
 - 4.2. **Environment and Economy Leaders Group (EELG):** This group (formerly RAFE) brings together all of the CEOs of those organisations that sit within the Environment portfolio of Scottish Government and is chaired by the Director of Environment and Forestry, Bridget Campbell. Some meetings are chaired by the Cabinet Secretary and attended by organisational Chairs. These meetings are extremely useful forum to share emerging issues and Scottish Government policy and solicit advice from organisations involved in implementation.
 - 4.3. Recent meetings have very much focussed on emerging policy to address the post-Brexit environment and the implications for land use and environmental priorities. In addition to the readiness of organisations and regulatory frameworks for Brexit and the development of an overarching Environment Strategy for the Scottish Government.
 - 4.4. **Scotland's Forestry Strategy:** The new Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018 requires the Scottish Government to publish a forestry strategy by April 2019, and National Park Authority officers have engaged in workshops to inform the drafting of this new strategy. The Act has also specified governance and organisation change as part of the process to fully devolve the functions of the UK Forestry Commission to Scotland. Organisational arrangements to manage and administer

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Scottish Ministers' forestry responsibilities will be in place by April 2019. There will be two new agencies within Scottish Government:

- **Scottish Forestry** - regulatory, policy, support and grant-giving functions will transfer from FCS to become an agency of the Scottish Government.
- **Forestry and Land Scotland** - management of the Scottish Ministers' National Forest Estate for multiple outcomes will transfer from FES, an agency of the Forestry Commissioners, to being an agency of the Scottish Government. The National Park area will be part of a new, larger Central Scotland region which covers the central belt of Scotland.

"Scotland's Forestry Strategy" is currently undergoing public consultation and is due to be published in February 2019, and includes national planting targets of 10,000 to 15,000 ha per annum.

- 4.5 Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Trees & Woodlands Strategy – Following on from this national level policy development we are drafting a Trees and Woodland Strategy for the National Park which will lay out how the related outcomes, priorities and targets within the National Park Partnership Plan will be delivered. Key drivers in this strategy include providing greater incentives to support new woodland creation and management in the Park, prioritising new native woodlands, restructuring of forests to reflect key landscape views and promoting Natural Flood Management and carbon sequestration. A project team led by our Woodland Adviser has involved close working with staff from Forestry Commission Scotland. The strategy will guide land owners and managers, forestry advisers, community groups, the Forestry Commission and the National Park Authority to guide the development and approval of forest and woodland creation and management proposals in the National Park. It will facilitate the delivery of our outcomes in the National Park Partnership Plan, including the target to create 2,000 ha of new woodland in the Park by 2023. A consultation draft is currently being produced with further input from stakeholders and will be brought to the Board in March 2019 with a public consultation programme will follow in April and May 2019.
- 4.6 **The Scottish Government Planning Bill** was introduced by the Cabinet Secretary for Communities, Social Security and Equalities, Angela Constance MSP, on 4 December 2017. The Bill completed Stage 2 on 14 November 2018. The main changes proposed by the Scottish Government affect the preparation of Local Development Plans and improving the mechanisms for community engagement and delivery of development. Stage 2 has seen a large number of amendments proposed and debated including the merits of third party rights of appeal and the regulation of hill tracks (both rejected).
- 4.7 The next stage is full parliament consideration, debate and potential for further amendments and then decide whether to pass it in its final form or not. It is hoped that the Bill will conclude the parliamentary process by summer 2019. The changes that

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were made to the Bill at stage 2 are reflected in the version that will be debated by the full Parliament.

5. Partnership Working

- 5.1. **Glasgow 2018 European Championships:** The European Open Water Swimming Championships were held at Loch Lomond Shores in Balloch on 5th to 12th August. The success of the event was as a result of excellent collaborative working with the Glasgow 2018 team. The event was broadcast to 44 free-to-air broadcasters and partners across Europe and worldwide. Viewers in the ten key markets tuning in for a total of over 567 million hours which is the equivalent of every citizen in Europe viewing for 1.5 hours, this included BBC - 20m (peak of 6.4m), Germany - 43 million viewers and France - 23 million viewers.
- 5.2. The event provided the opportunity to position Loch Lomond as a world class venue and a major player and able to deliver while promoting the area to new international markets for future visitation. The careful attention to managing the set up and dismantling of the venue meant that the closure of the Duncan Mills Slipway was limited to 5 days. Funding was levered from the Glasgow 2018 Cultural Festival budgets to deliver a cultural festival in Balloch. This was delivered with an events steering group made up of local businesses and residents. The event was very well received locally and has developed cultural event model for Balloch that engaged residents and businesses and could be repeated in future years.
- 5.3. The Convener and CEO hosted the Minister for Public Health and Sport, Joe Fitzpatrick MSP to view the event and present medals. This provided an opportunity to discuss the National Park's wider aspirations for recreation, sport and health. The success of the event has also strengthened partnership working with Glasgow Life with a view to attracting more events to the area.
- 5.4. **Transport Scotland** - The detailed design for the upgrade of the A82 between Tarbet and Inverarnan on West Loch Lomond is at an advanced stage. The scheme is 16.5.km long. It will address a longstanding bottleneck on a lifeline route through the National park to the North West Highlands. Over many years the National Park Authority had engaged with Transport Scotland seeking a more strategic approach to the upgrade of the route rather than individual localised projects. This would allow more informed decisions to be made about the overall impact of the upgrade and inform more appropriate and strategic mitigation of impacts. The quality of the road design should also reflect the status of the A82 as one of Scotland's most iconic scenic tourist routes. National Park staff had significant involvement in the design of the recent successful Pulpit Rock upgrade.
- 5.5. The preferred upgraded road line will require significant off road line land take and, to achieve the necessary road standards, will involve impacts on the landscape and

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ecology of north Loch Lomond, including significant rock cuts and impacts on the loch shore and native woodland. Transport Scotland and the contractors doing the design works are working on completing the detailed design, EIA and Roads orders by the end of March 2019. Detailed mitigation and compensation for environmental impacts will be identified through the EIA process and incorporated into the scheme requirements. National Park Authority Landscape and Ecology advisors continue to work closely on the scheme. It is proposed to bring a future report to the Board once a finalised design is being consulted upon.

- 5.6 Members will be aware that a further landslip event recently closed the A83 at the Rest and Be Thankful for a number of days. National Park Authority officers attend A83 Task Force meetings and have been advising on the various engineering works that are seeking to reduce the impact of landslip events on the road. The main current activity is to enlarge catch pits at the bottom of watercourses adjacent to the road. Negotiations are at an advanced stage to purchase the hillside from the landowner to enable tree and shrub planting measures to help stabilise the soils and hold water. Park Authority staff will be involved in advising and commenting on these proposals.

6. UK National Parks Collaborative Work

- 6.1. **National Park Partnerships LLP (NPPLL):** The CEO is the lead Executive on behalf of all 15 UK National Parks on the Management Board of NPPLL which comprises National Park representatives and non-executive members from the commercial sector. This Partnership was set up as a way for the UK National Parks to fundraise at a national level to supplement existing budgets. Each National Park has contributed £10k for the first three years of operation to fund two staff to work at national level.
- 6.2. The first 5 year commercial partnership with Columbia Sportswear is now well established with the first distribution of free branded uniforms now almost fully rolled out to staff. Uniform requirements will be met over the coming years through a 6 monthly ordering process. Our Junior Ranger programme was able to be extended to include Vale of Leven Academy pupils as a result of a £5k contribution from Forest Holidays towards education work specifically targeted at young people. A number of new commercial partnerships are expected to be secured to commence in 2019.
- 6.3. To support the work of NPPLL the UK National Parks have also decided to establish a national charity following NPUK meetings attended by the Convener and Vice-Convener. This would facilitate charitable giving and allow more opportunity for NPPLL to raise funds from CSR initiatives in the commercial sector at national level. As members, each National Park could nominate a trustee to the charity. At this point 8 out of the 15 UK National Parks have agreed to progress the work to establish the charity. As a charity member Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park will be able to nominate a trustee. It is not envisaged to involve any additional costs and the

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administration would be absorbed by the existing NPPLLP staff. At this point the intention would be to distribute funds raised towards projects in all 15 National Parks regardless of whether they are trustee members or not. This development has been supported by the CEO and Convener at various UK meetings and **the Board are asked to note and endorse Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park becoming a Member of this charity** to support the fundraising work of NPPLLP. This would not involve any additional financial commitment for the Park Authority or impact on the activities of charities operating locally in individual National Parks.

7. Events

- 7.1 The Chief Executive recently spoke at Chartered Institute of Waste Management Seminar on Litter and Fly Tipping.

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