

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8

Chief Executive Officer Report



Paper for information

1. Purpose

- 1.1. To provide an overview of significant issues and developments in the National Park Authority's operating environment.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Board Members are asked to note the contents of this report.

3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan

- 3.1. The report discusses topics which cover a number of outcomes and priorities from across the National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5 Year Plan 2018-23.

4. Scottish Government

- 4.1. **Environment and Economy Leaders Group (EELG):** This group brings together all of the CEOs of those organisations that sit within the Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform portfolio of Scottish Government. These meetings are extremely useful forum to share emerging issues and Scottish Government policy.
- 4.2. The Convener and CEO attended a meeting in October chaired by Roseanna Cunningham MSP, Cabinet Secretary for Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform (supported by Mairi Gougeon MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs and Natural Environment) with the Chairs and CEOs of all EELG organisations. The focus was to discuss how all EELG organisations can help deliver the priorities set out in the Programme for Government, and in particular, the revised emissions targets set out in the Climate Change Act.
- 4.3. Discussions emphasised the need for every organisation to integrate climate change thinking into all decisions, actions and activities and to report on the impact on climate and biodiversity. Also highlighted was the need to engage with different business sectors to support change. EELG organisations are well placed to encourage the appropriate land use changes need to achieve climate and biodiversity targets, particularly through proposed Regional Land Use Plans. Every organisation will be expected to commit to publishing a net zero plan by a set date as well as consider how it can use its resources to lever change amongst stakeholders.
- 4.4. Since the meeting the Cabinet Secretary has written to the National Park Authority and other public bodies to ask for a summary of our current climate change policies

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and planned key policies and actions. Also requested is confirmation of the date by which we intend to achieve zero direct emissions on our estate and operations. Publication of each organisation's zero target date is expected to follow quickly after the update to the Scottish Government's Climate Change Plan, expected in summer 2020.

- 4.5. A paper elsewhere on this agenda sets out the actions and policies already being pursued as well as an outline of our road map to achieve net zero emissions. This is expected to form much of our initial response to the Cabinet Secretary. The target of zero direct emissions will be extremely challenging and will require further consideration.
- 4.6. **Visit by Mairi Gougeon MSP, Minister for Rural Affairs and Natural Environment:** The Minister visited the National Park on 14th November to support the planned launch of the National Park Trees and Woodlands Strategy. The Strategy will be publicly launched following the 12th December General Election. The visit allowed the Convener and CEO to discuss a range of National Park priorities with the Minister.
- 4.7. **Programme for Government:** The Scottish Government's Programme for Government 2019-20 was notable for the prominence given to the aim of ending Scotland's contribution to climate change and promoting a successful, fair and green economy. It sets out the proposed next steps on Scotland's journey to net zero emissions with a first package of additional measures in response to the climate emergency, in a way that creates economic opportunity and protects the environment.
- 4.8. There were several announcements which present significant opportunities to realise priorities and outcomes set out in our National Park Partnership Plan. Amongst these include;
- The creation of Regional Land Use Plans and Regional Land Use Partnerships to identify land use change to achieve the greatest climate impact
 - Continued investment in peatland restoration
 - Publication of a Scottish Environment Strategy Vision and Outcomes
 - Biodiversity Challenge Fund £2M
 - 2020 International Biodiversity Conference
 - Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund £3M
 - 2023 World Cycling Championships
 - West Highland Line Services review
 - Mobility As A Service Fund £2M

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- 4.9. **Spending Review:** The holding of a General Election on 12th December means that the announcement of a draft Scottish Government budget is expected to be significantly delayed. Until a new UK Government is formed and a date set to announce a UK Budget, it is not possible to estimate a date for a Scottish announcement at this point. However, given the festive holiday period it is unlikely that an announcement can be made until at least the end of January. This delay will have knock-on effects for setting a National Park Authority budget, but the aim will still be to present this to the March 2020 Board meeting. As in previous years it is expected to be a very challenging budget round.
- 4.10. **2020 UN Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC COP 26):** This major international summit event will be held in Glasgow in November next year and will be the UN's 26th climate change conference. It is expected to bring together over 30,000 delegates from around the world, including climate experts, business leaders and citizens to agree ambitious action to tackle climate change. Planning at UK level still at a preliminary stage and the nature of the relationship with and role of the Scottish Government and public bodies is still being discussed. The Glasgow COP set to be the biggest since Paris as it will be a global stocktake of progress since the Paris Agreement. It is expected that there will be opportunities to showcase the work happening in Scotland to tackle climate change, including nature-based solutions and that the National Park will present significant opportunities to provide this.

5. Partnership Working

- 5.1. **National Park Partnership Plan 2018-23 Stakeholder Event, 'Delivering for Scotland in a Climate Emergency: Partnership Working for a Sustainable Future.':** The event was held on 12th November and was attended by more than 80 delegates representing a wide range of stakeholders and partners with a role in the delivery of the Partnership Plan, including landowners, communities and locally based organisations. It provided an opportunity to share what progress has been made in the first year of delivering the Plan and where more action needs to be taken to achieve our targets. The Scottish Government declaration of a Climate Emergency and the need to take more urgent action was a central theme running through the day. Progress to date has also been shared on a series of Our Year in Review [webpages](#) and also promoted through a [short film](#).
- 5.2. Highlights from the day included:
- A keynote speech by Scottish Government Deputy Director of Climate Change Clare Hamilton, which set the scene for the day by outlining the actions we can all take to help Scotland fight against climate change.
 - An overview of the Plan's delivery in year one, demonstrating the multiple benefits that partners are delivering for the local area and for Scotland.

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- A celebration of the work by to increase the number of volunteers and engage more young people. In this session we heard from the John Muir Trust and from young people engaged in our Youth Committee and young volunteer programme about their experiences over the last year.
 - A thought provoking session on the work by various partnerships that are putting national policy into practice at a local level in Strathard.
 - A health walk facilitated by Countryside Trust 'Walk in the Park' volunteers.
 - Workshops to discuss the barriers and next steps to tackling four areas outlined in our review as calls to action.
- 5.3. The event was successful in providing a focus for future partnership working and the workshop discussions provided many useful pointers towards next steps. A follow up from the event will be shared with partners, as well as a feedback survey on the event itself. It is envisaged that this will be an annual event as we progress with Plan delivery.
- 5.4. **Year of Coasts and Waters:** In 2020, Scotland celebrates its coasts and waters with a year-long programme of events and activities, which was launched in November. The aim is to sustain and build on the momentum of the previous themed years. The campaign gives the National Park area the opportunity to showcase its offer in relation to the theme: the beauty and variety of its landscape including its 22 larger lochs, numerous smaller lochs and lochans, and 50 or so rivers. It also provides the opportunity to pull together park-wide events programme – linking in with events or activities planned by Partners as well as the open water swimming event on Loch Lomond in August. More broadly, it also provides an opportunity to promote other themes that are interrelated; climate change, water safety; and managing litter – especially marine litter. Further details will be set out in our Annual Operating Plan for 2020/21.

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