

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Agenda Item 8

Litter Prevention Strategy



Paper for decision

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This paper provides a briefing on the updated Litter Prevention Strategy (see Appendix 1) and an overview of the intended implementation of it within the wider Visitor Management and Mission Zero work of the National Park Authority.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The Board are asked to approve the Litter Prevention Strategy and note the ongoing focus on litter and flytipping as an integrated Visitor Management issue.

3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) and Our 5-year Plan

- 3.1 The Litter Prevention Strategy structures all project delivery pertinent to Priority 1: Litter in Our 5-Year Plan.
- 3.2 The particular outcomes that this strategy will help to deliver from the National Park Partnership Plan are:
 - **Outcome 1:** The Park's natural resources are enhanced for future generations: important habitats are protected, restored and better connected on a landscape scale.
 - **Outcome 2:** The Park's special landscape qualities and sense of place are conserved and enhanced with more opportunities to enjoy and experience them.
 - **Outcome 8:** The most popular parts of the National Park which experience pressures are managed to ensure that the quality of the environment, visitor experience and community life are protected and enhanced.

4. Introduction

- 4.1 Litter and flytipping are longstanding environmental challenges for Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park and the National Park Authority and its partners have a wealth of experience in tackling these issues.
- 4.2 Whilst the Litter and Waste Prevention Strategy was drafted and due to be considered by the Board in March 2020, due to the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, the Board's consideration of this was postponed.
- 4.3 Since the easing of lockdown, the National Park, and other rural and/or scenic areas across the country, have seen a substantial surge in pressure due to the increased volume of people visiting these areas. Coupled with this unprecedented surge in visitor numbers, sadly some of these areas, including within the National Park, have also been faced with increased irresponsible behaviour.
- 4.4 Littering and flytipping are one of the most visible and prevalent issues we have faced, with our Rangers and Land Operations staff regularly clearing volumes of litter and flytipping from sites that would only have been experienced on peak, sunny weekends in the past.

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- 4.5 Notable examples this season include: Falls of Falloch alone accumulating over 130 bags of litter in the period before travel restrictions we lifted; the equivalent to an additional 260 (80 litre) bags of litter in July compared to July 2019 recorded as part of our Ranger patrols, and in two days at the start of August with the assistance of 4 volunteers, Rangers and Land Operations collecting 81 additional bags of waste on top of routine litter picking services.
- 4.6 In light of these increased pressures and the multi-agency 'Safe Recovery Action Group' response to them, alongside predictions for 2021 to be just as busy with domestic tourism, officers have taken the opportunity to review the proposed Litter Prevention Strategy.
- 4.7 The key amendment from the original draft proposed in March 2020 is that the actions on waste reduction will now be captured through our Mission Zero work. This will allow work arising from the Litter Prevention Strategy to more pointedly target the immediate environmental and behavioural challenges that we have had to respond to, and anticipate being a national priority over the coming visitor seasons.
- 4.8 Focusing on litter specifically in this way dovetails with the visitor management partnership arrangements further enhanced over this season, of which, the proposed specific group focused on litter in the Litter Prevention Strategy is a natural extension.
- 4.9 Through the continued development of our Mission Zero Route Map (Agenda Item 9 today) we have incorporated and are beginning to better understand our waste footprint as an organisation. Reporting the waste reduction work within the Mission Zero Route Map ensures that the impact of this larger effort to tackle the climate emergency is captured within a single place.

5. The increase of litter during the COVID-19 pandemic and the NPA's response

- 5.1 Since the easing of lockdown, multiple accounts point to littering and flytipping across the UK having increased dramatically. National Parks and other rural/popular tourist areas have continuously reported and struggled to cope with "unprecedented" volumes of litter and flytipping being left behind.
- 5.2 The increase in littering and flytipping as the country eased out of lockdown created a perfect storm. Firstly, normal infrastructure and services that deal with it were significantly reduced both from the National Park Authority, Local Authority partners and other land managers due to shut-downs, furlough, redeployment to other essential services, sickness/shielding and operational challenges of managing new health and safety restrictions. In addition, other informal litter picking activities carried out by local communities and the National Park Authority's dedicated volunteers were not able to go ahead due to concerns around the potential for COVID-19 to spread through group events and shared equipment, and logistical issues of collecting the waste at the end of any litter picking event.
- 5.3 Secondly, lockdown has radically changed the way people recreate and socialise. On the plus side, more people are keen to get into the outdoors. The 'lid off the

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pressure cooker' response of people rushing to the outdoors, seeking the physical and mental benefits that being in nature provides is an understandable reaction to being isolated at home for many weeks. This pull to the outdoors was further fuelled by continued, but necessary restrictions pushing people away from where they would normally socialise or spend leisure time. Without the usual options to meet in people's houses, pubs or restaurants, shopping malls, all team sports stopped and gyms closed, and cancellation of festivals, events and holidays, even more people opted to spend more time in the outdoors and greenspaces, including the National Park, than ever before. The CEO update paper presented to Board (in Agenda Item 5) today provides an overview of the wider experience of the 2020 season to date.

- 5.4 Thirdly, limitations on options for sit-in food and drink, more pop-up takeaway options, and a move away from reusables due to contamination concerns, there has been an increase in the amount of single use items that people are using and therefore have the potential to discard.
- 5.5 With the increase in the number of people, it's extremely likely that we're seeing new and inexperienced visitors coming to the National Park. It's possible that some of the irresponsible behaviours the National Park has experienced are a result of people being caught short when rural infrastructure is different to what they're used to in urban environments (e.g. significantly fewer bins and toilets), or that they don't have the experience or the knowledge of how to act appropriately in the outdoors. None of this is to excuse littering behaviour; rather to provide some context into why it may well have increased.
- 5.6 The type of littering that we're seeing on the ground isn't new to the National Park but is in greater volumes than we have experienced on a prolonged basis, and arguably, due to the amount left behind, much of it is on a scale that would be better classed as flytipping, rather than traditional littering (anything equivalent to a bin bag in volume is classified as flytipping).
- 5.7 This season has seen an increase in flytipping of tents, chairs, BBQs and associated materials, which is being experienced alongside other forms of irresponsible behaviour: firelighting, environmental damage and irresponsible toileting. This littering/flytipping behaviour is inextricably linked with wider visitor management pressures that the National Park has experienced even more than would normally be the case in peak visitor season.
- 5.8 We are also seeing increased volumes of littering and side waste/'polite littering' at our honeypot sites, particularly surrounding the large [node-style high volume bins](#) at Luss and Firkin Point, and bins at Duck Bay on West Loch Lomond despite the bins being routinely less than half full. This could be due to visitors being reluctant to touch the lid of the bin in case of viral contamination, and despite there are signs prompting them to be lifted, it is possible that new touch-free or pedal operated bins may need to be procured if this behaviour continues.
- 5.9 Specifically, on managing littering and flytipping in the past three months:

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- Our Ranger Service has almost trebled the amount of time dedicated to 'site recovery' work including litter picking, clearing fire sites and disposing of abandoned equipment following the weekend;
- The Volunteering team have recently reactivated volunteering opportunities, which has involved creating new processes and ways of working to ensure they could be deployed safely to litter pick sites which aren't on regular Ranger patrol routes;
- The Land Operations team have worked together with our Rangers and Volunteers by coordinating the picking then collection of bagged litter across the National Park, as well as maintaining litter picking services at popular visitor sites managed by the National Park Authority around Loch Lomond;
- Been part of focused discussions at a local and national level of the support available to private landowners / managers to deal with flytipping on their land;
- We have developed and delivered our COVID-19 littering response 'Love It Like A Local', encouraging any visitors to the National Park to take some responsibility over their actions and demonstrate their love of the area by binning their litter or taking it home.

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 The National Park has seen considerable and prolonged pressure this season, and littering and flytipping have been two of the pressing challenges that we have responded to. Work has been ongoing throughout the season to tackle it effectively, with enhanced operational visitor management partnerships being a key mechanism to deliver these.
- 6.2 The Litter Prevention Strategy being presented to the Board for approval today should be seen as a framework supporting the ongoing response to these issues. It will assist on focussing discussion and review of this season and subsequent work; maintaining the emphasis on effective engagement, appropriate infrastructure and proportionate enforcement. Bringing together a specific focus group from the wider visitor management partnership group will be the priority to plan action for the coming year. It is anticipated that the work on littering and flytipping will be incorporated closely with our wider work on responsible access, promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and appropriate camping behaviours.

Appendix 1 – Litter Prevention Strategy

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