

Annual Operational Plan 2020/21: Progress to February 2021

Appendix 1

National Park Authority Board Meeting

15th March 2021

Paper for information

Complete	On Track	Behind Schedule	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19	Cancelled due to COVID-19
----------	----------	-----------------	--------------------------------------	---------------------------

Bold items = COVID-19 recovery priority

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
1. Taking and inspiring action to address the global climate emergency and nature crisis			
1.1 We will maximise our role and action in the climate and nature emergencies.	Create a Mission Zero Route Map for our own activity and that within the National Park	Mission Zero Route Map approved at December Board meeting.	Complete
	Develop a system to prioritise and record activity based on climate impact	RAG rating tool was put in place for internal budgeting process. Further discussion required between officers and Exec to affect use of this information for prioritisation work.	On track

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
	Seek opportunities to actively participate in the UN's COP26 in Glasgow and use the event to showcase our work	Some initial mapping of opportunities and potential project team set up underway in Q4.	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19
1.2 We will support our communities, land managers and businesses in the transition to zero carbon.	Deliver the National Park Grant schemes to assist our communities and land managers to deliver local actions that help address the global climate emergency and nature crisis	9 tree planting grants offered and budget fully committed.	Complete
	Support community organisations to increase momentum in community led partnerships or programmes, including seeking access to wider regional funding or capacity opportunities.	New agreement in place with the Countryside Trust which will now have a stronger remit to support communities to lead on taking climate action.	On track
1.3 To support habitat management and improvement, we will work with partners to better manage land for climate and nature within the National Park.	Provide advice and support to landowners, partners and communities to establish new woodlands, and tackle invasive non-native species	Delivery has continued on a range of Wild Park projects.	On track
	Deliver peatland restoration projects. Develop a programme approach to increase the scale of project delivery in line with Scottish Government ambitions	Peatland restoration completed at Glen Falloch. Sitka removal at Braeval and the programmed rhododendron clearance at Blairbeich Bog SSSI are progressing.	On track
	Complete the Strathard Framework project which will pilot an approach to local development planning that also integrates land use planning	A first draft of the framework has been produced and circulated to the External Steering Group.	On track

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
2. Enhancing our visitor experience, volunteering, and active living opportunities			
2.1 We will continue to promote ways to get active in the outdoors.	Finalise our 'Active Park, Healthy People' plan	In light of ongoing COVID-19 impacts, proposal to defer plan until March 2022 submission	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19
	Progress key aspects of our Active Park, Healthy People plan such as developing new health projects.	No capacity across partners due to COVID-19 to fully consider and develop new projects at this time	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19
	Support the delivery of Go Swim Loch Lomond in summer 2020, increasing participation from last year.	Event cancelled for 2020 in conjunction with delivery partner and sponsors.	Cancelled due to COVID-19
	Explore new opportunities to promote outdoor swimming and water safety throughout the National Park	Majority of Infrastructure has now been installed at National Park sites around Loch Lomond, this includes upgraded Public Rescue Equipment and water safety signage where appropriate. Suite of visitor and site risk assessments behind schedule, staff continue to work towards a revised timeline where possible. The project will continue into 2021/22 to finalise our water safety policy and ensure RoSPA recommendations are completed.	Behind schedule
2.2 We will celebrate and leverage national themes and campaigns such as Scotland's Year of Coasts and Waters, and the West Highland Way's 40th Anniversary.	Create and deliver a programme of events and campaigns for the Year of Coasts and Waters	Minimal programme in place 21/22, honouring prior commitments only. We are on the national working group for Year of Coasts and Waters 2021 which will evolve into Year of Scotland's Stories 2022.	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19.
	Work with partners on bringing investment for the future sustainability of the West Highland Way	Final report drafted for LEADER; pilot retail scheme in place Feb 2021 to 2022; commercial sub group exploring licencing in addition to merchandise. Staffing extended due to new funding secured from NatureScot and VisitScotland.	On track

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
<p>2.3 We will continue to develop and deliver volunteer, education and outreach opportunities, to ensure people from a wide range of backgrounds are enjoying, valuing and helping to manage the National Park.</p>	<p>Embed climate change and nature crisis education in all of our outdoor learning activities</p>	<p>Online resources continue to be updated and we have delivered online sessions to schools and universities. This remote support for learning will continue until the pandemic alters the situation with Education. In addition we are working with the John Muir Trust to develop a climate specific case study for the NPA.</p>	<p>On track</p>
	<p>Continue to support our Junior Ranger, Youth Committee, educational travel grant and volunteer programmes</p>	<p>We have continued to work with the Youth Committee remotely, getting their input into Mission Zero work and looking forward to working with the Futures Group as and when appropriate. Volunteers continue to help where possible, and plans have been made for a broader range of ways that they can support the NPA work into 2021/22. Other contact with young volunteers, Junior Rangers and the delivery of the educational travel grant have been put on hold until circumstances within the pandemic change.</p>	<p>Behind schedule</p>
	<p>Partnership delivery of over 1800 John Muir Awards</p>	<p>Continued lower take up of the award due to pandemic restrictions. Working in partnership to develop a climate specific case study. Planning ongoing to deliver training sessions and events (all online) for organisations within the NPA.</p>	<p>Behind schedule</p>

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
2.4 We will support the delivery of the Callander's Landscape Partnership to improve the natural and cultural heritage of the area	Progress and complete projects under each of the four themes: Restore, Explore, Heritage, and Engage	<p>NLHF has agreed a 12 month extension up to 30/06/2022 for all core staff and a further extension to 31/10/22 to allow for completion of some seasonally dependent projects.</p> <p>Increased focus over the last quarter on legacy planning including digital content, eco museum and signage strategy. Another Modern Apprentice vacancy has been filled, with the young person starting their role in March.</p> <p>Bocastle Car Park extension is complete. A Visitor Management Strategy is currently being undertaken by independent consultants to inform the Partnership's decision making for Falls of Leny revised project approach.</p>	On track
3. Addressing the changing challenges posed by substantial visitor numbers			
3.1 We will complete a Visitor Survey to identify visitor types, behaviour, and tourism market trends	Complete a Visitor Survey that informs our efforts to work with partners to provide services that enable visitors to enjoy the National Park in a responsible and sustainable way	Visitor Survey 2019-20 signed off December 2020 and data in use and being shared with external colleagues. Update included in CEO update paper. Comparison report with CNPA delivered; and model of location-specific report created (Arrochar & Tarbet).	Complete
3.2 We will continue to develop effective approaches to the sustainable management of visitor pressures in the National Park with a focus on traffic management	Work with partners and communities in the East Loch Lomond Visitor Management Group to sustainably reduce visitor pressures along the route from Drymen to Rowardennan, with a view to public transport provision and litter reduction	<p>A meeting was planned for January but postponed due to lack of uptake. A meeting of the Visitor Management Group is due to take place in March 2021.</p> <p>This will also be replicated in other areas of the National Park that have experienced heightened visitor pressures during the COVID-19 pandemic. A group has already been formed covering Loch Earn and Balquhiddar Glen.</p>	Complete

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
3.3 We will continue to deliver commitments within the Camping Development Framework	Assess the barriers to camping for people with disabilities	Cancelled due to the importance of user testing and the reprioritisation of the programme to focus on the reduction of future visitor management pressures for the expected continuation of 'staycations' in the 2021 season. Will review forward planning for action again later in 2021.	Cancelled due to COVID-19
	Work with partners to increase low cost camping and motorhome facility provision at gateways to the National Park including West Loch Lomond and Callander	Six sites have been identified with FLS to introduce the 'Stay the Night' motorhome scheme for the 2021 season. The sites have been selected at less busy car parks to help disperse these users away from day visitor locations.	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19
	Ensure that campsites and permit areas are reopened safely in time for Phase 3 of the SG Routemap. Consider implications of likely staycation focussed recovery on demand for camping and camper van provision and facilitate others where possible.	Our campsites opening was extended into October to provide additional capacity. 2021 capacities will be considered during autumn and winter.	Complete
3.4 We will work with partners on litter and waste prevention to minimise the environmental impact of litter and waste and improve the	Establish a National Park wide litter prevention steering group	First meeting of the group held with subsequent one-to-one engagement on specific topics. Pre-season meeting scheduled for March to share plans and priorities for the year to come.	Complete

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
experience of those visiting, working in, and living in the National Park	Work with partners to develop and test litter prevention initiatives	<p>In response to the 2020 season, work planned for the 2021 season will largely focus on enhancing services, to increase resilience and capacity to effectively manage litter, camping related flytipping and toileting related waste in what is likely to be another busy season.</p> <p>Our focus on prevention will be captured through the overall visitor management campaign, which includes a year round push on litter prevention messages, which will be shared by partners. This brings in learnings from the 'Love It Like A Local' project review.</p>	On track
	Ensure the resumption of co-ordinated litter management with local authority partners and develop a litter prevention focussed strand to unlocking visitor campaigns and tie in with national campaigns.	<p>COVID-19 limitations still impact litter and flytipping services across the National Park but these have all resumed, albeit in some cases at a lesser capacity (eg still single crewed vehicles which slows services down).</p> <p>Proactive work for the coming season reported above.</p>	Complete
4. Continual improvement in delivering our core functions, including how we plan and use our resources, and meet our statutory requirements and duties			
4.1 We will support place making at regional and local community level	Undertake preparatory work (monitoring, evidence gathering, early engagement / training) to support the next Local Development Plan.	2020 Monitoring Report under preparation.	On track
	Explore opportunities from the Government's focus on regional approaches to strategy, policy and delivery.	Feedback on the Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy received from Scottish Government and currently being considered, with targeted engagement with key partners planned during March and April.	On track

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
	Support communities in developing Community Place Plans	Ongoing support to three communities. Strathfillan has made good progress and three stakeholder workshops were held in February (young people, businesses and community). Draft storymap prepared to support engagement for Killin.	On track
4.2 We will implement changes introduced by the Planning Scotland (Act) 2019	Review our internal processes to ensure they are compliant with the new legislation and identify any new opportunities the new legislation presents.	While the Government's programme to implement the Act continues into next year, no further specific changes were required during this period. Engagement with Government continues on the emerging NPF4.	Complete
4.3 We will identify ways to supplement our core funding to help sustain and improve the services we deliver	Implement car park charging at some additional sites	Project has now restarted following pause for COVID-19. Current aim is to have charging in place at Tarbet and Inveruglas for July 2021.	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19
	Review our existing charges for services to determine whether they remain appropriate	We are in the process of reviewing our camping and car park charges. Other charges will not be reviewed this year due to COVID-19 related resource constraints.	On track
	Continue to explore opportunities to lever in external funding to help deliver our priorities	There has been some success in levering in funding this year, including by working in partnership through Callander's Landscape and the Countryside Trust. We were recently approved as a pilot for Regional Land Use Partnerships and await further discussions with Scottish Government on next steps.	On track
4.4 We will continue to address Health and Safety risks to our staff and the public	Improve our internal processes and policies	We have put in place significant COVID-safe measures this year. A number of health and safety policies have also undergone review.	On track

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
4.5 We will look at further improvements to the effectiveness of our corporate services.	Develop a strategy for cloud-based IT services	Initial research has been completed and found the move to cloud based services for our infrastructure to be cost prohibitive. Best approach is to maintain the 'Cloud First' approach for new services and product renewals.	Cancelled
	Review our procurement processes to improve sustainability and ensure they remain efficient and robust overall	Resource currently reallocated and item deprioritised in light of COVID-19. This will also link into our Mission Zero work in future.	Postponed to 2021/22 due to COVID-19
5. Delivering and Facilitating a Safe Recovery and Reopening of the National Park			
5.1 We will develop a phased reopening of National Park Authority visitor sites and facilities which ensures the health of communities, visitors and staff is protected.	Create and implement a phased reopening plan for National Park Authority facilities which aligns with the Scottish Government COVID19 Route Map and implementation of its relaxations.	Facilities are now operating at winter capacity and preparation is being undertaken for the 2021 visitor season.	Complete
	Create a safe deployment plan for the Ranger Service and Land Operations Team	Deployment plan implemented gradually through June and July onwards	Complete
	Assess and implement any necessary safety measures and associated infrastructure are required before facilities can be opened, including toilets, camp sites and the Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway.	All required safety measures were completed before reopening and reassessed for winter opening where appropriate. These measures will be reassessed prior to the 2021 visitor season.	Complete

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
5.2 We will work with and co-ordinate other public bodies, NGOs, communities, businesses and landowners and work with national bodies to work towards a saferecovery.	We will establish a National Park Safe Recovery Action Group with our partners to co-ordinate facilities reopening, traffic management, visitor management (including enforcement) and communications to visitors and communities	The group continued to meet on a weekly basis until the end of October focussing on operation issues. It continued to meet throughout the autumn and winter focussing on preparations for the 2021 visitor season, and will remain active through 2021.	Complete
	Ensure regular communications with National Park community organisations both directly and working collaboratively with the Community Partnership.	Regular e-bulletins have continued to be issued to communities from the Partnership. Area based virtual forums were led by Park Authority staff in January.	Complete
5.3 We will work with business, agencies, local authorities, communities and other partners towards the recovery of our visitor economy.	Facilitate regular meetings of the National Park Destination Group to ensure awareness of issues facing tourism businesses, communicate these to Scottish Government and identify future actions.	NPDG meets monthly on issues; funding opportunities; VM operations and business recovery issues; and to highlight topics for ministerial consultation. A NPDG sub-group for Arrochar & Tarbet was set up February 2021 to explore area redevelopment, business recovery and plans with local community.	On track
5.4 We will ensure the continuity of our planning service to determine applications and provide advice to assist applicants as they seek to adapt to new operating guidance that supports safe re-opening in line with the Government's Route Map.	Availability of responsive planning advice and the delivery of timeous planning decisions to support applicants who are adapting to and investing in recovery.	Despite continuing limitations as a result of remote working, a number of locally contentious cases, appeals and enforcement cases, staff continue to respond to proactively to prioritised cases.	Behind schedule

AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	YTD Progress (Feb 2021)	Rating
5.5 We will engage with and advise a range of national organisations and groups to help develop policies, guidance and support as Scotland moves through the four phases of the National Route Map and develop a green recovery.	National guidance and support measures respond to the needs of the National Park area	CEO sits on the national Visitor Management Strategy Steering Group.	On track