



# Executive Summary of Biodiversity Duty Report 2018-20

## Agenda Item 6

### National Park Authority Board Meeting

15th March 2021

Paper for information

---

#### Contents

1. Tackling threats to Biodiversity in the National Park .....	1
2. Species Monitoring .....	2
3. Grant Schemes.....	2
4. Partnership Delivery .....	2
5. Multi Team Input.....	3

#### 1. Tackling threats to Biodiversity in the National Park

Within our Wild Park Biodiversity Programme, we have Four Key Environmental Threats which if we tackle them will have the most impact on the habitats and species within the National Park. These are:

##### 1.1. Invasive Non-Native Species

- We currently control Riparian INNS at 255 sites;
- We are controlling invasive rhododendron at 12 locations.
- Mammals such as American grey squirrels and American mink are controlled on the frontiers of the red squirrel and water vole ranges, respectively.

##### 1.2. Unsustainable Herbivore Impacts

We have worked with land managers through Deer Management Groups and the East Loch Lomond Land Management forum that cover over 90% of the National Park to:

- Support the development and delivery of effective deer management plans
- Improve consistent understanding of the impacts herbivores are having on our habitats and provide them with the skills to make informed land management decisions; to this end we run these training days annually.

- Facilitate discussions between stakeholders to ensure herbivore management occurs in the areas where it is needed most, such as the woodlands in Edinchip SSSI and Pollochro Woods SSSI.

### 1.3. Poor Quality of Lochs and Rivers

We have worked with SEPA and Fisheries Trusts to prioritise work on waterbodies by:

- Planting trees in the riparian zone which will increase the shade (and therefore reduce water temperatures for spawning fish), help reduce diffuse pollution and increase habitat connectivity.
- Carrying out green bank revetment work on eroding river banks which will stabilise them and mean there is less sediment falling into rivers, thus preventing harm to species such as salmon and brown trout.
- Organising training days for staff to increase our knowledge about diffuse pollution sources and how we can reduce these in our day to day work with business, visitors and land managers within the National Park.

### 1.4. Climate Change

- We have carried out peatland restoration projects on five land holdings in the National Park and have facilitated putting on the road to recovery 334 ha of eroding and drained peatlands. This included 31 km of drainage ditches blocked and 37 km of hags re-profiled.
- Our Trees & Woodland Strategy was launched in 2018 and sets out where woodland creation will have the greatest impact and provide multiple benefits. We have a SEFARI research fellowship looking into the barriers and opportunities for woodland creation within the National Park, to guide the best placement of resources to get as many trees planted in the right place.
- We are dedicated to making our protected areas healthier so they can adapt to climate change more easily. We prioritise our work on Designated Sites in partnership with NatureScot and are working in 9 of the 16 sites that have designated features that are in unfavourable condition.

## 2. Species Monitoring

- 2.1. We carry out Species Monitoring Programmes to understand whether the practical management is helping populations of important species, such as Black Grouse, Waders, Water voles, and Red Squirrels, to thrive.

## 3. Grant Schemes

- 3.1. The National Park Grant Scheme has funded rhododendron control, designed landscape improvements, construction of a bird hide, and support for community woodland groups and Fisheries Trusts.
- 3.2. The Tree Planting Grant Scheme has funded projects which planted protected trees in grazed fields, on field boundaries, in montane areas, in designed landscapes, and increased riparian tree cover. It also funded a school orchard.

## 4. Partnership Delivery

- 4.1. The Strathard Initiative and Strathard Framework projects look to combine land use and the benefits that the landscape can provide with rural development.

They aim to combine the community's aspirations for the landscape along with the land managers plans and policy objectives for conservation, recreation, tourism and development in the area. This will also lead into the Regional Land Use Plans and Partnerships which will hopefully be piloted in the National Park.

- 4.2. We work in partnership with many stakeholders, such as NatureScot, Forestry & Land Scotland, RSPB, and ScotGold, to carry out conservation and habitat enhancement at a landscape scale in The Great Trossachs Forest, RSPB Loch Lomond Reserve and in the Greater Cononish Glen.
- 4.3. Much of the work we carry out in the National Park cannot happen without the involvement of our Land Managers and so engaging them in positive conversations is paramount to delivery on the ground. We run a programme of activities: a digital newsletter "Land Management Network"; Training days and Demonstration Events; Integrated Land Management Plans; Forums with membership organisations such as Scottish Land & Estates.

## **5. Multi Team Input**

- 5.1. The other teams in the National Park Authority also support and drive forward nature conservation in their own areas.
- 5.2. Conservation projects often require a large number of man-hours and we have worked with our Ranger Team to coordinate winter projects that they can do out with the visitor management season, such as rhododendron control and peat depth surveys.
- 5.3. Our Planning & Development Team ensure that there are biodiversity gains in the planning system and that species and habitat protection and enhancement are taken into consideration with projects such as: Transport Scotland upgrading the A82 & A83; Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy; LIVE Park – Local Development Plan (2017-2021); Natural Heritage Planning Service and biodiversity planning gain; and View and VISTA Projects.
- 5.4. The Access, Health and Recreation Team promote the responsible use of the outdoors with their current Outdoor Recreation Plan.
- 5.5. Our Volunteering and Education Team have a programme of outdoor learning and education which helps to promote the responsible use of our countryside and the understanding of the mental and physical benefits that can be achieved from being around nature. They provide Learning Resources for children, a programme of training for teachers, and the Ranger Service and Engagement Team go into schools to bring nature alive and inspire the next generation of nature conservationists. The Volunteering Programme engages people as Volunteer Rangers, Practical Conservation Volunteers, or Young Volunteers. They provide valuable extra resources to work with the public, schools and groups to raise awareness of natural heritage and to carry out countryside maintenance, conservation work and wildlife surveys such as surveys for Water voles, Red squirrels, Black grouse and INNS. The National Park Volunteer

Programme currently has 243 registered volunteers, delivering around 16,500hrs of volunteering each year.

- 5.6. The Visitor Management Team along with the Rangers and seconded Police Staff help to enforce the Camping Management Byelaws which reduce the human impact on some of the National Park's most fragile habitats; combined with the Litter and Waste Prevention Strategy will educate visitors to the impact that humans have on the species and habitats in the area.
- 5.7. The Visitor Experience Team have supported businesses with a "Nature and Wildlife Guide" to help them value the species and habitats and use them as a selling point to engage visitors.
- 5.8. The Callander Landscape Partnership is a HLF funded programme engaging the locals and visitors in the landscape, rivers, woodlands, mountains, heritage and history in the area, with a greater understanding and appreciation of an area comes a greater respect for it.

**Author:** Nicola Colquhoun, Land Management Adviser

**Executive Sponsor:** Simon Jones, Director of Conservation and Visitor Management