



Litter Prevention review and legacy

Agenda Item 9

National Park Authority Board Meeting

13th June 2022

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1. Purpose

1.1. This paper reviews the work delivered during the three-year term of the Litter Prevention Manager role, updates on progress on the Litter Prevention Strategy and makes recommendations for the future integration of litter across the National Park Authority's work programmes.

2. Recommendation(s)

2.1. The Board are asked to note:

2.1.1. the achievements and learnings from the three years of the Litter Prevention Manager role;

2.1.2. the challenges that remain;

2.1.3. how the National Park Authority will embed litter prevention within our wider visitor management, estates management and place-based approach in future.

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

3.1. Litter Prevention is one of the priorities outlined within Our 5-Year Plan.

3.2. The most relevant outcome from the National Park Partnership Plan is:

3.2.1. 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. Background

4.1. Litter and flytipping have sadly been longstanding environmental challenges in the National Park and across Scotland.

4.2. Interventions to tackle them must take into account engrained behavioural and societal patterns, infrastructure limitations and complex enforcement procedures, and require action from a broad range of stakeholders.

4.3. Across the National Park there are a number of stakeholders integral to litter and waste management, as responsibility for cleaning it up is that of the land manager - including the four Local Authorities and other public and private landowners.

4.4. While the National Park Authority is not a 'duty body' under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 89, nevertheless, in 2018, the National Park Authority decided to invest in a dedicated resource to bring partners together to work on this issue for the National Park.

4.5. The three-year, fixed term, Litter Prevention Manager role was filled in February 2019. The intention of the role was to provide leadership within the National Park on this longstanding issue, with the primary aim of bringing together a joined-up litter strategy for the area.

4.6. Given the pervasive nature of litter, flytipping and other irresponsible waste behaviours across Scotland, we were clear that investing in this role would not be able to resolve all the issues faced. Rather, we sought to accelerate thinking and action on it, to bring together a coalition of people and organisations to tackle it and better understand the effect of these interventions. The aim was to positively impact the National Park's environment and shed a light on the work that still needed to be done.

- 4.7. Within the first year, progress was made both operationally and strategically, as well as internal and external consultation to draft the required strategy (a more detailed list of key achievements against the Litter Prevention Strategy is provided in Appendix 1). However, at the start of the second year of the role, the Covid-19 pandemic hit, dramatically shifting our operating field and priorities. We had to focus on safely reopening the National Park and subsequently dealing with unprecedented pressures whilst being significantly operationally limited, adjusting our litter prevention work to meet these arising needs. Litter work continued through the second year of the pandemic with an enhanced emphasis on our own infrastructure and services, with wider visitor management work building a strong coalition to continue to address these challenges in partnership.
- 4.8. The end of the 2021/22 financial year marked the end of the three-year litter prevention focused period. The remainder of this paper lays out key successes and learnings from the role, and the ways in which the National Park Authority can maintain momentum and maintain our litter prevention and waste management work in legacy.

5. Key achievements and learnings from the role

5.1. Accelerating work on a longstanding issue

- 5.1.1. The Litter Prevention Manager role provided us with dedicated resource to focus on the longstanding issues of litter and flytipping across the National Park. Within months of the role starting, we had held an all-staff litter pick and problem-solving day, supported Spring Clean volunteering activities and delivered an A82 clean up in partnership with Argyll and Bute Council.
- 5.1.2. Within the first two quarters of the role, the first iteration of our '[what to do when you need to poo](#)' project was brought together for delivery that season, as well as developing a social psychology messaging project with Keep Scotland Beautiful, plus procurement and roll-out of our new smart bins, which had already been funded via the Rural Tourism Infrastructure fund.
- 5.1.3. Following this, strategic engagement started in earnest and we were able to proactively engage many audiences including internal specialist teams, local stakeholders and national experts, reflecting on operational knowledge, the National Park's needs as well as relevant national trends. Notably, with the Community Partnership, in early March 2020, we hosted an in-person event with over 50 community representatives, giving them the opportunity to engage more deeply with litter prevention

across the National Park. Little did we know that it would be some two years before any in-person meetings would be possible again.

5.1.4. All of this first year's learning was synthesised into our draft Litter Prevention Strategy, which was produced in early 2020. This was initially planned to go to the March 2020 Board for approval, but this was postponed to later in 2020 given how much focus Covid had in March 2020.

5.1.5. Undoubtedly, the achievements within 2019/20 are a result of the focused and consistent effort realised via the Litter Prevention Manager's role, something we would not have achieved with such speed or depth otherwise. Plans for 2020/21 were to harness and accelerate the momentum from the first year, with project work grounded in the strategy planned. Of course, this was significantly disrupted due to the Covid-19 pandemic, which is explored further in section 6.

5.2. Identifying and trialing improvements to our infrastructure and services

5.2.1. Effective infrastructure and services are vital for litter management and though often seen as reactive, ensuring sites remain clean does have a knock-on preventative effect for further littering behaviours. Through the Litter Prevention Manager role, we were able to take a cross-organisation review of the services delivered both on and off our estate, assessing where challenges and opportunities lie. Thereafter, we were able to trial changes to our services with the enhanced Environment Officer role delivered successfully over the 2021 season, (summarised in section 7.1). We have also been able to review infrastructure needs and identify suitable replacements for end-of-life bins at our most popular Loch Lomondside sites.

5.2.2. This work should leave a legacy of better litter management at the National Park Authority's own sites whilst also laying the foundation for continued engagement with partners to fully realise our ambition to have coordinated services, aiming to improve outcomes on a wider place-based approach.

5.3. Embedding behaviour change into litter messaging and wider visitor management communications

5.3.1. Preventing and managing litter has always been one of our core visitor messages, woven into our responsible behaviour campaigns. With the focused effort of the Litter Prevention Manager role, we have been able to trial and expand messaging approaches that draw in social psychology principles, aiming to activate social norming and modelling theories. This began with a small-scale test in partnership with Keep Scotland Beautiful

and the Behavioural Sciences unit at Stirling University, from which we took learnings and scaled them up to our broader visitor management campaign in 2021.

5.3.2. At the same time as evolving our own communications approach we have been able to share our learning through the national visitor management communications group headed by VisitScotland. We led on the irresponsible toileting messaging, sharing our collateral, messaging and approach inspiring this to be replicated across Scotland, as well as influencing the national littering campaign, 'Scotland Is Stunning'. These learnings will continue to be utilised in future communications.

6. The impacts of Covid-19 on our litter prevention plans Detail next steps.

6.1. Managing pressure and shifting focus

6.1.1. The impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on the National Park have been well documented, but it is worth reflecting on them here in relation to litter prevention. The work involved in reopening the National Park after lockdown and restructuring of our services to deal with increased litter and waste issues, in light of social distancing and associated safety measures during the pandemic cannot be underestimated. These pressures were not just faced by the Park Authority but all bodies with a responsibility for the National Park, with local authorities particularly juggling the rippling impact across all aspects of their delivery.

6.1.2. The approval of our strategy and our more ambitious or developmental litter plans were placed on hold, allowing us to focus on our priority of ensuring that the National Park was safe and accessible, delivering multiple health and wellbeing benefits throughout the pandemic. Within this time, we increased the number of staff on the ground, the areas covered and the tasks delivered to manage litter and waste across the Park, and also, when Covid restrictions allowed, we restarted litter volunteering too.

6.1.3. Once the [Litter Prevention Strategy](#) was approved by the Board in September 2020, we pulled together specific litter stakeholders for two meetings to reflect on the year and to look forward to waste priorities across the National Park. Whilst we had originally intended to chair this group throughout the year, we instead worked with these stakeholders on projects that were directly relevant to them operationally, allowing us to collaborate on the immediate issues faced.

6.2. Visitor management: a renewed focus

6.2.1. When we look more broadly at visitor management, we can see a number of substantial and positive outcomes that have resulted as silver linings to the past two years. Locally, we established and have maintained the National Park Safe Recovery Action Group which draws together stakeholders from across the region to collaboratively approach issues. Underneath this overarching group we have evolving place-based groups, allowing for focused local discussion and problem-solving action to be taken across multifaceted visitor management issues, of which litter is one.

6.2.2. In addition, with Police Scotland we have a newly formed [Partnership Against Rural Crime for the National Park](#), which draws together enforcement and regulation experts across a number of topics including flytipping. This group is a positive development which has the potential to function as strategic oversight and a delivery mechanism for enforcement action, including the priority areas that were originally laid out in the Litter Prevention Strategy.

6.2.3. Clearly, the wider context and our partnership working has evolved since the writing of the Litter Prevention Strategy and we have found an increased interest and breadth of stakeholders now taking action. Through the ongoing creation of our Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development plans and associated working groups we will be able to further embed action on litter into our place-based and partnership approach.

7. **Taking forward our learnings for our estate and services**

7.1. A number of improvements were identified and trialled in the 2021 season, delivered through an increased Environment Officer resource of three x 21-hour posts. These are:

7.1.1. Enhanced cover at the most popular National Park Authority-managed sites around Loch Lomond,

7.1.2. Data collection and management for National Park Authority-managed sites,

7.1.3. Irresponsible toileting clearance and human waste project intervention management,

7.1.4. Cross-National Park deployment, dedicating two days per week to either deep or high-volume permit area cleans alongside the Ranger Service, or supporting a programme of fortnightly volunteering events.

7.2. The Environment Officer role, including all Estates and cross-National Park duties (excluding human waste bins) continues for the 2022 season to embed these benefits. As this has already been developed and trialled, it is proposed that this is handed over to be integrated into the Land Operations and Ranger Service delivery for the 2022 season and beyond.

8. Visitor Management partnership working

- 8.1. As we have developed our holistic approach to Visitor Management during the pandemic, addressing this through a place-based format with a three-pillar structure (communications and engagement, infrastructure and services, and enforcement and regulation), isolating litter as a single issue is not as effective as approaching it in an embedded way moving forward. However, due to the compatibility of the Litter Prevention Strategy which shares the same structure, litter and flytipping can easily be embedded into emerging visitor management place-based plans.
- 8.2. We are also heartened to see the increased efforts from stakeholders across the National Park in addition to our own. Some examples include the Real Food Café carrying out numerous, regular volunteer litter picks, NatureScot funded community Rangers/wardens carrying out enhanced litter picking, the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs A82's roadside litter project and partners including Luss Estates collaboratively funding a village warden, as well as communities continuing to carry out volunteering in their areas. We will continue to support this collaborative, place-based approach to tackling litter.
- 8.3. Within the current Visitor Operations team, there are experts focusing on two of the pillars: communications and enforcement. Litter already is embedded into these two workloads; notably projects that would have sat under the enforcement section of the Litter Prevention Strategy can be subsumed by the new National Park Partnership Against Rural Crime which already has flytipping as one of its themes, which the Litter Prevention Manager advised on the development of.
- 8.4. A significant piece of work moving forward within the new Visitor Management framework is the development of localised Visitor Management plans, which will feed into our wider Place programme for holistic capital infrastructure investment. Visitor Operations within Visitor Services is the obvious place where this strategic and partnership litter work can develop as part of wider infrastructure and services systems and initiatives.

9. Challenges that remain

9.1. Resource limitations mean that the Visitor Services and Place teams are not able to deliver the added value of the Litter Prevention Manager post delivered beyond the strategic planning business highlighted above.

Those teams will focus on core strategic litter considerations as part of the ongoing infrastructure and services work. As a result, work which will not be continued at this time includes:

- 9.1.1. leadership of proactive litter or flytipping projects;
 - 9.1.2. extensive investigations arising through issues or complaints;
 - 9.1.3. proactive irresponsible toileting projects;
 - 9.1.4. interaction and influence of national litter or toileting policies;
 - 9.1.5. support for any arising Motorhome disposal work;
 - 9.1.6. dedicated management of litter data / reviewing litter data for improvements;
 - 9.1.7. proactive and deep engagement with national partners specifically on litter (e.g. Zero Waste Scotland/Scottish Government Zero Waste team).
- 9.2. Despite the learnings of the role and the improvements we have made, we are not naive to the ongoing impact of litter, flytipping and other irresponsible waste behaviours that continue to blight the National Park. We have scratched the surface on some of these issues, gaining new insights, but we know that it has continued detrimental effect on communities, businesses, the environment and visitor experience here.
- 9.3. Like many of the difficult issues we wrestle with in the National Park, litter is a systemic and pervasive issue for the whole of Scotland. We invested in the dedicated Litter Prevention Manager role to accelerate discussion and action on irresponsible waste behaviours; but the scale of the issue remains.
- 9.4. We are cognisant and supportive of the ongoing efforts of Scottish Government and Zero Waste Scotland on leading the Litter and Flytipping Strategy, which we see as essential in reinforcing and furthering action across Scotland.

10. Conclusion

10.1. The Litter Prevention Manager role provided timely resource against a longstanding issue within the National Park, allowing us to ramp up our delivery and bring together a strategy for ongoing work.

- 10.2. During the role's time we were able to evolve our approach to communications weaving in behavioural insights, trial new ways of working to improve our own services and continued to provide regulation and enforcement across the National Park. From this focused approach we are confident that the National Park Authority's estate and services are in a more resilient position for litter management than they were prior.
- 10.3. However also within that time our operating context changed dramatically due to the Covid-19 pandemic, with pressures from it nationally raising the profile of visitor management work. We responded to these pressures by developing our own partnership with long-term and strategic approaches to visitor management. This allows us to aspire to multi-year place-based investments into solutions. Within resource limits, the National Park Authority will continue to work efficiently with partners in these areas of work and embed efficient litter management into these wider place-based initiatives.
- 10.4. Despite all this effort and action, litter remains a significant issue for the National Park and society as a whole. There are no easy solutions to this, but we are heartened by many other stakeholders becoming more involved, each playing their part to help make a difference, despite the challenges that remain. It is only together, through this collective action, and wider societal and systems-level change, that we can hope to see the shift that is needed to make litter an entirely unacceptable behaviour anywhere, least of all in a National Park.

11. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Summary of achievements 2019-2022 by Litter Strategy theme.

Authors: Nik Turner, Behaviour Change Manager
Kenny Auld, Head of Visitor Services

Executive Sponsor: Anna MacLean, Director of Engagement and Innovation