

Water Safety Policy

Agenda Item 9

National Park Authority Audit & Risk Committee

Tuesday 6th December 2022

Paper for noting

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. The purpose of this paper is to share with the Audit & Risk Committee on our work in relation to Water Safety and the associated Water Safety Policy.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the report.

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

- 3.1. National Park Partnership Plan:
 - Outcome 6.3 Water Recreation
 - Outcome 8.1 Visitor Management
- 3.2. Our 5-Year Plan:
 - Priority 2: Visitor Infrastructure
 - Priority 4: Attractive, Accessible and Healthy Destinations

4. Background

- 4.1. With increasing visitor numbers and an increase in water based recreational activities such as paddleboarding and open water swimming, water safety has become an increasing risk on our own Estate as well as through the wider National Park.
- 4.2. As a result, in recent years we have made concerted and continuous efforts to address this risk and consider this worth sharing with the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 4.3. Our work on water safety is not conducted in isolation and we have worked closely with our partners to help achieve the targets set out in the Scotland's Drowning Prevention Strategy 2018-2026 which aims to;
 - *Reduce accidental drowning deaths in Scotland by 50 per cent by 2026 and reduce risk among the highest-risk populations, groups and communities*
 - *Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide*
 - By:
 - *Improve fatality incident data and intelligence across Scotland by advocating for the Water Incident Database (WAID) and sharing WAID reports with partner organisations and local authorities*
 - *Promote and develop learning to swim, water safety education and initiatives within early years, primary and secondary schools*
 - *Develop water safety across Scotland's 32 local authority areas and promote the development of water safety policies*
 - *Promote public awareness of water-related risks and ensure a consistent message across campaigns and communications*
 - *Promote the safe participation of recreational activities across Scotland*
 - *Contribute to the reduction of water-related suicide.*
- 4.4. In 2020 we asked the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) to assess the water risks at our Estate. RoSPA provided a number of recommendations, and as a result we initiated a new Water Safety project for the NPA.
- 4.5. The project covered several areas, including developing a Water Safety Policy, undertaking new visitor and site risk assessments, working closely with our stakeholders and partners, and raising public awareness of water related risks and safety actions.
- 4.6. In addition to this, we have been working with other partners at a national level to provide a consistent approach to water safety, for example:
 - We are a member of Water Safety Scotland working closely with them to deliver key outcomes.
 - We are a member of the Partnership Approach to Water Safety (PAWS) groups which include members of the emergency services and local authorities. Groups set up in 3 key local authorities in the National Park.
 - We are a member of the Minister for Community Safety Water Safety stakeholder group.
 - Working with RNLI and Scottish Fire and Rescue the NPA have put 6 Rangers through training to become waterside responder trainers.

5. Project Update

5.1. Our Water Safety project is nearing completion, at which point our work on water safety will move into our 'core' work ensuring ongoing attention on water safety issues.

5.2. Over the course of the project we have achieved:

2020 – 2021:

- Phase 1 (Our Estate sites on Loch Lomond). Visitor and site risk assessments processed with Public Rescue Equipment (PRE) and hazard signage controls installed where necessary.
- Water Safety Policy drafted
- Monitoring and inspection programme implemented
- Working with other partners such as Local Authorities to improve water safety on their estate with consistent messaging and approaches

2021 – 2022:

- Phase 1 installations completed
- Phase 2 (Estate sites out with Loch Lomond) risk assessments and infrastructure progressing
- Enhanced water safety social media campaign linking with Water Safety Scotland. Awareness raising seasonal signage erected at key sites.
- Water safety events held at various sites across the National Park.
- NPA contributed to new education resources working closely with Education Scotland.
- Water Safety Policy completed
- Continued working with other partners and Local Authorities

6. Water Safety Policy

6.1. Our new Water Safety Policy is in place to ensure that the chance of people becoming injured or ill in bodies of water accessed from our Estate is reduced so far as is reasonably practicable.

6.2. The policy outlines roles and responsibilities, and our approaches to risk assessments, safety inspections, advice, signage, public rescue equipment, and public awareness, among other areas.

6.3. We have only recently finalised the policy after undertaking internal review including with staff across various teams such as Health and Safety and Legal colleagues. Now that it is in final form we will be sharing it with partners including Local Authorities who will be able to use it to inform their own approaches.

7. Risks

- 7.1. The work of the Water Safety project has reduced the risks associated with people accessing the water from our own sites, and through our awareness raising and partnership work, generally throughout the National Park.
- 7.2. In developing a new policy on Water Safety we now have a framework within which we can continue to work to actively address water safety risk on our Estate.
- 7.3. However, it also introduces new risks, in that we must ensure we maintain processes and resources in order meet the requirements we set for ourselves through the policy. For example, competing priorities (especially through very busy COVID-impacted visitor seasons) has meant it has taken longer to complete our site and visitor risk assessments than first anticipated, though we are now nearing completion on these. In addition, the site and visitor risk assessments have identified outstanding risks on some sites that a programme work will need to address. These are being dealt with based on priority of risk across our wider Estate actions.

8. Next steps

- 8.1. Activity will now transition from a project to normal business operations.
- 8.2. We will continue to work with partners and meet annual objectives collaboratively. Through Water Safety Scotland and the Minister's action plan we will help and support other agencies and Local Authorities to form water safety policies and share best practice.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Water Safety Policy

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