



# 2023 Joint Response Visitor Management Plan

## Agenda Item 11 - Appendix 1

### National Park Authority Board Meeting

13 March 2023

Paper for information

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#### Contents

1. Purpose of the Joint Response Visitor Management Plan .....	1
2. Who is involved? .....	1
3. Why the Plan was created .....	2
4. What is different in 2023 and why is this plan still needed? .....	2
5. How this Plan is laid out .....	4
6. Monitoring and Reviewing the Plan .....	5

#### 1. Purpose of the Joint Response Visitor Management Plan

1.1. This document provides a clear approach and collective plan of action from the range of public bodies involved in managing visitor related pressures across the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. It includes short-, medium-, and longer-term actions which aim to reduce the environmental and social pressures experienced from the high levels of visitors experienced in the National Park during the main visitor season of April to October. Whilst it focuses on 2023, it also contains some development actions requiring longer term investment, designed to alleviate visitor pressures in future years.

#### 2. Who is involved?

2.1. The public body partners signed up to the plan collectively form the National Park Safe Recovery Action Group (NPSRAG) which was founded in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the subsequent increase in visitor pressures resulting from the lockdown measures being relaxed.

The NPSRAG comprises of:

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority – Facilitator  
Police Scotland

Transport Scotland  
Forestry & Land Scotland  
Argyll & Bute Council  
Perth & Kinross Council  
Stirling Council  
West Dunbartonshire Council

2.2. All partners also engage with a range of other organisations and individuals who have a stake in visitor management in the National Park; from local businesses, to third sector bodies, land managers and local community representatives. Whilst these stakeholders are not directly members of the NPSRAG, their collective views and experiences have informed the creation and actions found in this plan.

### **3. Why the Plan was created**

3.1. Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park is home to some of the iconic landscapes in Scotland and attracts millions of visitors to enjoy its lochshores, mountains and woodlands each year. Its location so close to the majority of the country's population make it easily accessible for a diverse audience to undertake a wide range of recreational activities.

3.2. The National Park Authority has a duty to balance the needs of visitors with the protection of the environment and quality of life for the people who live and work within the area. Additionally other public bodies that cover the National Park area have related statutory responsibilities to maintain the safety and integrity of the public and public infrastructure networks.

### **4. What is different in 2023 and why is this plan still needed?**

4.1. The Joint Response Visitor Management Plan has (over the last 3 years) helped to provide a focus for partners to resources and to address the pressures associated with tourism in the National Park. Ensuring that tourism is sustainable will always be a key element of the work of the National Park Authority working alongside its partners, communities, and businesses. As such it is thought that it would be prudent to continue with this model, whilst making incremental improvements as appropriate. This commitment will be reflected in the next National Park Partnership Plan that will be developed in 2023.

4.2. In 2023 the cost of living crisis could see increased domestic visitor numbers with the potential for international tourism to be similar to pre-pandemic levels. As such planning for the 2023 season will be resourced based on the expectation that visitor numbers will be similar to those of 2022 and could even see a gentle increase.

4.3. Whilst some actions within this plan will be similar to those of the 2022 plan,

some have evolved, some are new and some have been superseded. There are also differences in the ability to resource these actions effectively, some positive and some negative. The National Park Authority made a new commitment to its Ranger Service by employing several Rangers on permanent seasonal contracts that reduces the yearly recruitment burden, gives the staff more security and means that skills are retained.

- 4.4. At a recent National Park Safe Recovery Action Group on February 20<sup>th</sup> partners confirmed that the collective funding position for visitor management is generally similar to 2022. Forestry and Land Scotland and some Local Authorities have tried to prioritise core funding towards visitor management, especially for frontline field staff who have made such a positive difference over the last few years. The National Park Authority has managed to secure an additional grant of £500,000 to direct towards managing visitors. Showing that even with current financial pressures the Scottish Government recognises the importance of sustainable tourism in the National Park. Forestry and Land Scotland have received £400,000 and the Better Places pot has been confirmed with £1M available for communities and Local Authorities to bid into for visitor management roles. The experience built up by the NPSRAG and at a national level should help in some areas to find efficiencies and cost savings.
- 4.5. There has been additional funding made available from the Scottish Government through Visit Scotland '[Strategic Tourism Development Fund](#)' to assist with the development of visitor infrastructure plans. This will ensure that capital projects such as improvements to visitor facilities such as enhancements to facilitate new sustainable transport ventures or more accessible toilets can be planned and delivered over a multi-year period. This will allow for improved community engagement and better value and quality of delivery.
- 4.6. It was strongly felt by all partners that to address these pressures the National Park Safe Recovery Action Group (NPSRAG) should continue in 2023. The National Park Authority will continue to lead it. The name of the group may be linked to its inception in the covid pandemic but will remain the same as it is established. Safety and environmental, social and economic recovery and improvements remain key reasons for managing visitor pressures.
- 4.7. At the end of the 2022 season a [visitor management review](#) was collated from across the partnership. This review identified the following key areas for further consideration:
- Continued focus on national and local partnerships to deliver a consistent approach to sustainable visitor management.
  - Working with Transport Scotland to improve signage on the A82 and additional measures to reduce dangerous parking.

- Launching an Aires scheme to provide overnight parking for motorhomes and campervans in the Tarbet and Arrochar area.
- Develop the use of Technology to help reduce visitor pressures.
- Joint working with communities of place, with a continued focus on developing projects as part of the Place Programme.

4.8. The key visitor pressures and issues experienced across the National Park in 2022 included:

- Irresponsible parking and road congestion
- Conflicts between motorhome use other day visitors at some sites
- Antisocial behaviour associated with some informal camping
- Irresponsible use of powered craft on Loch Lomond
- Irresponsible toileting behaviour
- Irresponsible fire and BBQ use
- Littering

4.9. At a national level, the Visitor Management Strategy Steering Group (created by Scottish Ministers) will continue to operate in 2023 following the '[Visitor Management Strategy for Scotland](#)'. Chaired by VisitScotland membership of the Strategy Steering Group includes NatureScot, both National Park Authorities, Forestry & Land Scotland, Highland Council, Police Scotland and Transport Scotland. In 2023 this group will continue to work toward the delivery of the four strategy pillars:

1. Educating our current and future visitors
2. Investing in Scotland's current and future visitor management infrastructure and services
3. Delivering a joined up and cohesive action plan across Scotland
4. Becoming and remaining a world leader in visitor management

In parallel with this, working Groups will focus on three key developing areas:

- Camping and Campervans
- Digital (effective use of technology)
- Transport

## 5. How this Plan is laid out

5.1 The visitor management measures contained within the plan follow a thematic approach used by the partners. The three management elements are:

**Information and Engagement:** The approach of the partners to engaging with visitors and people who live and work in the National Park and providing them

with accurate, consistent and timely information. This will support the positive, responsible enjoyment of the National Park and highlight the roles each of us as individuals, communities, groups and organisations play in this. Further information will be available on the [National Park Authority website](#).

**Infrastructure and Services:** The provision of high-quality infrastructure and services in the right location is essential in alleviating the pressures brought by current and increasing visitor numbers. Partners are working with each other and local and national stakeholders to deliver a prioritised [five-year programme](#) of visitor management infrastructure and service enhancements. There is still a balance to be maintained between developing plans and delivering projects on the ground.

**Regulation and Enforcement:** The use of regulation and enforcement is an important tool to manage visitor pressures but follows the use of active engagement and encouragement to address issues wherever possible, aiming to support and encourage people to enjoy the National Park safely and responsibly.

5.2 The table of actions (Appendix 2) list activities that the National Park Safe Recovery Action Group will be implemented at either the start, part-way, and after of the 2023 season, depending on development and lead-in times and resources. It should be noted that whilst all partners will use their best efforts to prioritise and progress the actions listed in this plan, this is dependent upon sufficient resources and capacity being available.

## 6. Monitoring and Reviewing the Plan

6.1 The delivery and further development of the Joint Response Visitor Management Plan will be monitored by individual lead officers from partners and overseen by senior staff from each organisation. Lead officers will meet at least once every two weeks through the season as part of the NPSRAG meetings in order to monitor progress and adjust management measures as required. Senior staff will meet together to review twice a year, with an end of season review and report being collated by the National Park Authority in the autumn of 2023.

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