



2023-24 Annual Operational Plan Progress to November

Agenda Item 13 – Appendix 1

National Park Authority Board Meeting

11 March 2024

Paper for information

Annual Operational Plan 2023/24: Progress to February

Rating Key:

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| Complete | On Track | Behind Schedule | At Risk | Postponed to 2024/25 | Cancelled |
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| AOP Activity | AOP Deliverable | YTD Progress Update (February) | Rating |
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| Theme 1: Tackling the twin challenges of the global climate emergency and nature crisis | | | |
| Develop monitoring and engagement plans to support the Future Nature Programme | Establish Future Nature programme reporting and monitoring. | Clear structure now in place for reporting to an operational working group (external) and the HPPB (internal). Ecosulis contract to produce dash indicator dashboard on track to complete by the end of the year. | On track |

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| | Produce a Future Nature engagement plan, informed by nature connection principles and behavioural insights. | In developing the workstream, instead of an overall engagement plan, an overarching comms plan was agreed upon for next year and focus was on delivering individual elements of the 3rd pathway, which have progressed well, e.g. over 2,600 conservation volunteering hours, the Ranger Service focusing on Future Nature action and engagement days, the WHW story map in soft launch, and developing options for a land collaborative network, amongst other activities. We're reviewing our approach to next year to better integrate with the overall project management of Future Nature and develop / collate the impact of the workstream. | On track |
| Taking action for nature | Publish a Herbivore Statement and Operational Delivery Workstream action plan for the National Park. | Progress delayed due to staff absence. Updated timeline to be provided. | Behind Schedule |
| | Expand delivery of the Peatland Action programme. | The Peatland Action team is now up to its full strength of 4 full time staff. Two restoration projects have been completed and are being checked to confirm final hectares restored and costs. Work on the 3rd and 4th schemes are scheduled for completion in March. Currently on track, with risks of slippage if significant snow cover returns. Total restoration is now projected to be slightly less than 500ha. | On track |
| | Accelerate the nature restoration programme through woodland improvement and expansion, water body improvements, INNS removal, and supporting and enabling improvement within targeted designated sites. | The majority of INNS and river restoration work is now complete pending final reports and invoicing for the work this year. Constructive meeting held with the Rivers Trusts in mid-February to review progress this year and discuss plans for next year. | On track |
| | Enable and support key landscape scale projects, such | Unfortunately, the TGTF coordinator has decided to leave his role, but we have a 'TGTF Vision Day' on 22nd Feb to | On track |

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| | as Wild Strathfillan and the Great Trossachs Forest | review progress to date and agree next steps for the partnership. Wild Strathfillan now has all the permissions to start, and planning and recruitment is underway to scale up for a major delivery programme over the next two years. Lomond Rainforest scoping work is on track to complete by March. | |
| Develop new funding and policy options (including Green Finance) to deliver for biodiversity and climate | Deliver landscape score carding through Investment Ready Nature Scotland project and next steps for Revere partnership to explore a woodland carbon plus scheme and enable practical opportunities for land managers to deliver on the ground. | We've made good progress with FIRNS project with Palladium establishing draft communications to clearly establish the role of the NPA in green finance and in Palladium work. Landscape Finance Lab work is now complete with final reports submitted in the coming days and a dissemination and review meeting planned for 7th March. | On track |
| | Development of a National Park Nature Network with enhanced opportunities for the promotion and application of nature-based solutions and natural infrastructure, including through the use of developer gains through the planning system, in line with NPF4 | Liaison is underway with various internal and external stakeholders on Nature Networks to develop material for the LDP evidence base. Liaison is also underway with AECOM and Nature Scot to contribute to the development of a GIS based Nature Network tool being developed as part of a CivTech Challenge. Discussions are continuing with infrastructure developers about delivering biodiversity gains. | On track |
| Upscale the pace of our Mission Zero programme, and consider the route to net zero for the National Park as a place | Install a new heating system powered by Air Source Heat Pumps in Carrochan, removing the aging biomass boiler and natural gas back up system. | Works progressing well, expected to complete by end of March 24 with some snagging likely in early April 24. | On track |
| | Increase our use of solar electricity at Carrochan through | Installation of PV panels progressing well, expected to complete by end of March 24 with some snagging likely early in Q1 24/25. | On track |

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| | the installation of PV Tiles/Panels and EV Chargers | Installation of PV tiles and solar car port delayed due to material lead times, estimated to complete during Q1 24/25. | |
| | Develop a Climate Adaptation Plan for the National Park Authority. | Consultancy support procured and commenced in January 2024 to provide National Park-specific climate change projections and a bespoke climate change risk and opportunity register. These are the first two steps in creating an Adaptation Plan. | Behind Schedule |
| | Agree programmes with local tourism businesses on net zero planning and nature experiences with measurable outputs to meet NPA objectives. | <p>The group agreed a process in November to research existing green tourism schemes to ascertain the quality and value of them plus the current level of engagement park wide.</p> <p>A second meeting was held in February. The first output will be a benchmark this spring of enrolment numbers and grade levels against which we can measure participation uptake and improvement.</p> | On Track |
| | Commence development of Route Map with delivery partners for the National Park as a place to become Net Zero. | <p>Capacity constraints continued into Q4, with staff resource necessarily focused on Mission Zero to a much greater degree than originally planned. This is temporary, once the Mission Zero resourcing gap is resolved, work will resume more fully on the next steps of net zero National Park.</p> <p>Most pressing elements of the work have been progressed nonetheless, particularly the coordinated action with the UK family of National Parks (NPs). All UK NPs have now adopted the target dates of their GHG Assessments and are jointly becoming the first national parks in the world to join Race to Zero. Race to Zero is UN-backed climate leadership framework that supports members to lead ambitious climate action in their local area.</p> | Behind Schedule |

| Theme 2: Promoting sustainable low carbon destinations with people, places and communities at their heart | | | |
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| Improve visitor infrastructure and enhance visitor experience across the National Park | Deliver phase 1 of a multiyear plan to reconfigure the Tarbet picnic site to better serve users (including better campervan and motorhome management), whilst also making greenspace improvements. | <p>Site set up commenced in late January and work is now underway. Clark Contracts (Paisley) are undertaking the work under the supervision of the design team led by Land Use Consultants, LUC, (Glasgow).</p> <p>Specialist works under the supervision of the archaeologist, ecologist and arboriculturist on the LUC team has gone well. Stakeholder relations remain positive, and we are currently finalising the Community Benefits package with the Contractor.</p> <p>A delay to completion of one month remains a possibility, and we are actively seeking to reduce the likelihood of this occurring and to manage the potential impact of this.</p> | Behind schedule |
| | Commence detailed design work for a series of visitor infrastructure projects along East Loch Lomond, allowing development of detailed planning and funding applications. | <p>A consultancy team was appointed in December 2023 to develop designs for Rowardennan. Engagement with local stakeholders on concept designs took place on 26 February and introduced early concept work towards a masterplan for Rowardennan. The next stage of completing the draft masterplan by the end of March is currently on track. This work is a key stage in facilitating development of detailed planning and funding applications in 24/25.</p> <p>Subject to NPA and partner staff resourcing then Balmaha could follow in 24/25.</p> | On track |
| | Complete Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Studies (STIDs) for Callander and Strathard and Trossachs, and undertake a final park-wide review and consolidation STID. | <p>The Strathard and Trossachs Study was submitted by the consultants to the National Park Authority in late November.</p> <p>The Callander Study is now on track for completion by 31 March 2024.</p> <p>Summary overviews of the studies will be presented at the corresponding March Visitor Management Group meetings,</p> | Behind schedule |

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| | | <p>and the full studies will be included in the June 2024 Board Report prior to publication.</p> <p>The Park-wide study will be presented in the form of an overview Route Map, focused on the priority areas identified in the National Park Partnership Plan, to deliver the Place Programme, and is on track for inclusion in the June 2024 Board Report for review, prior to finalisation and publication.</p> | |
| | Undertake year two of the Conic Hill Path upgrades. | <p>Work is continuing on site with 300 metres of pitching estimated to be completed by 31 March 2024. The contractors will stay on site through 2024-25 as there is space for path works to continue alongside public access. The public will follow path diversions where necessary and any impacts of trampling caused by these diversions will be restored through landscaping and grass seeding.</p> <p>A further 300 metres of pitching will take place in Q1 of 2024-25 taking the work to the top of the West Highland Way. The summit spur path will be constructed in Q2 of 2024-25 and we anticipate the path to be completed early in Q3 of 2024-25.</p> <p>The delay caused by helicopter maintenance means that a further uplift will be required in Q1 2024/25 requiring an anticipated week-long path closure, with associated comms planned. This will take place in the week beginning 22 April 2024.</p> | On Track |
| Prepare to implement the updated Loch Lomond (Navigation) Byelaws, in a clear and easy to understand manner | Ensure operational readiness for the new Byelaws from 1 April 2024, including implementing a new registration database, monitoring framework, navigation guides, and videos. | The approved 2023 byelaws will be implemented on the 1st of November 2024 with the current byelaws remaining in operation until then. The project focus remains on the delivery of the new database that is moving into the Alpha testing phase moving to Beta in the summer of 2024. This involves continued close working with the Scot Gov Digital Assurance Team using a service design approach to ensure that that loch users can register as easily possible whilst | On track |

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| | | improving operational efficiencies in managing the byelaws. The procurement of the Low-Speed Activity zone buoyage has been completed. There will be a focus on communication with loch users and stakeholders during the upcoming visitor season. Related to the byelaws the NPA have now procured a second new patrol boat to increase the reliability of the fleet. | |
| Empower our communities to take action for climate and nature | Support communities to establish Local Place Plans, including actions for climate and nature, in at least 4 areas' | Three Local Place Plans have been registered since the last update and once registered, these plans carry material planning weight. Support is being given to six communities as they prepare Place Plans and to another four as they consider the merits of preparing one. | On track |
| | Establish a framework approach – with key public sector partners – to providing advice and support to communities who are seeking to deliver their Local Place Plans. | Meetings continue with the Strathard Framework delivery partners with housing remaining the focus. Scoping work to establish a wider delivery framework approach to support communities to deliver Local Place Plans continues. | Behind Schedule |
| Improve sustainable transport services for visitors and communities | Complete early actions emerging from the Modal Shift Study, including a comprehensive National Park Active Travel Strategy, and the feasibility and early development work of gateway hubs at Balloch, Drymen/Balmaha, Dunoon and Aberfoyle. | Partner and funder discussions continuing including with Transport Scotland, Regional Transport Partnerships and Sustrans. | On Track |
| | Work with partners to pilot at least one visitor shuttle bus service at congested visitor hotspots. | Detailed viable service offer has been proposed by an operator and we are working to complete the funding package. | Behind schedule |

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| Support events and businesses to realise local economic benefit | Support delivery of a safe and enjoyable UCI Cycling World Championships 2023 event, providing a global stage for the National Park as an asset for the enjoyment of all. | Complete | Complete |
| | Facilitate the setup of an industry-led recruitment and retention programme for tourism and hospitality businesses. | Complete | Complete |
| Theme 3: Developing the plans, people and processes to support the National Park Authority's next chapter | | | |
| Consult on and implement our future vision for the National Park | Consult on and finalise the new National Park Partnership Plan for submission to the Scottish Government, incorporating the Regional Spatial Strategy. | The National Park Partnership Plan was approved by Members in December 2023 and submitted to the Scottish Government. | Complete |
| | Prepare a proposed Local Development Plan for consultation which will include key steps of finalising the Plan's evidence based and undertake informal engagement. | Main focus is still on updating the evidence base to the draft an Evidence Report. New timeline for submission of this to Scottish Government by end June 2024. Work to prepare a new Local Development Plan will commence fully in Q1 2024/25 with a target date still to be determined for publication and consultation. Internal governance and resource across the teams to be scoped and identified first to inform timescales. | Behind Schedule |
| Identify the organisational change we want to see over the next 5 years | Develop a Corporate Plan that aligns to the Draft NPPP and highlights the journey of change the organisation will embark on. | A series of workshops for staff engagement in the corporate planning process have been conducted by an external facilitator. The information from those sessions is feeding in to the document writing process. The draft Corporate Plan will be presented to Members for approval at the June meeting of the Board. | Behind Schedule |
| Take action to drive efficiencies and build resilience, including | Actively engage with key Scottish Government initiatives including its new Public Sector | Consultation response on Scotland's Biodiversity Framework submitted following approval by Members in | On Track |

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| through partnering and collaborating with others | reform work, and its work on new National Parks for Scotland. | December 2023, which included the Board's opinion of governance arrangements for National Parks in Scotland. Conversations remain ongoing with EELG partners in relation to efficiencies and shared services. | |
| | Commence the discovery process to support the development of our Digital Strategy, including a review of the tools and systems we use. | Supplier has been identified and initial documentation to contact them has been created. Next step is to reach out and start planning. | On Track |
| | Implement cloud-based disaster recovery capabilities which will increase business resilience. | Conversations have begun again with SG on using the SG cloud platform as a DR platform. Next step is to review the previous plans and make any adjustments. Discussions continue with IDOX and costs have been received and factored in to the 24/25 budget. Planning on this should begin soon. | On Track |