

2024-25 Annual Operational Plan Progress to September

Agenda Item 14

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Date Monday 30 September

Paper for information

Annual Operational Plan 2024/25: Progress to September

Rating Key:

Complete	On Track	Behind Schedule	At Risk	Postponed to 2025/26	Cancelled
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AOP Activity	AOP Deliverable	September 2024 Update	
Chapter 1: Restoring Nature			
Restoring Nature for Climate	Continue to expand the delivery of the Peatland Action programme of work, aiming to deliver 690 hectares of restoration at sites across the National Park	Work on one project at Ardvorlich has been completed. Two are at contract signing stage. Four projects have been developed and are at tendering stage. The final two are still under development. The budget has been confirmed by Scot Gov and regular reporting meetings are being held with SG Peatland team.	On Track
	Work with partners and stakeholders to create a 5-year woodland delivery and monitoring plan to increase and record the rate of woodland creation and improve woodland quality.	The woodland delivery action plan will be complete by end of September for sign-off as required and sharing with Partners. Woodland Advisors are progressing the monitoring plan. We continue to pro-actively engage with Forestry Agents, FLS and Scottish Forestry as well as the Forth Climate Forest.	On Track

	Produce a joint vision and shared ways of working for a landscape-scale approach to improving our water environment with key Future Nature partners including local Rivers and Fisheries Trusts.	Three agreements have been signed for contributions to Argyll Fisheries Trust, Forth Rivers Trust and Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust.	On Track
Restoring Nature for Healthy Ecosystems	Continue to deliver key landscape partnership projects including beginning large scale delivery in Wild Strathfillan and applying for development funding for a Loch Lomond Rainforest project.	Work is progressing well in Strathfillan. We have submitted the application for NRF development funding and are working on an Expression of Interest for National Lottery funding to move forward the Lomond Rainforest Project.	On Track
	Finalise a National Park Priority Area Herbivore Action Plan with support from agencies and relevant Deer Management Groups and continue with programme of Herbivore Impact Assessment training for land managers.	The Herbivore Statement will be complete by end of September for sign-off as required and sharing with Partners. The Herbivore Action Plan is in progress. We continue to engage with Deer Management Groups and have supported a holding with their Herbivore Impact Assessments for 2024 which provided valuable insight to the process.	On Track
	Deliver a capital programme of Nature Restoration including projects such as Invasive Non-Native Species control in The Great Trossachs Forest and habitat restoration and water course tree planting with the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts.	We will not receive NRF funding this year, and this programme will not happen this year. We are working with colleagues at SG to understand the funding picture going forward	At Risk
	Development of a National Park Nature Network and an approach	PIDS for the Nature Network and Biodiversity Enhancement for LDP have been produced and used to inform the project plan	On Track

	to securing biodiversity enhancement through the use of developer gains through the planning system, for inclusion in the draft Local Development Plan.	for the LDP. Discussions with SSEN on biodiversity enhancement have progressed, with proposals in place for some significant BE on nearby land holdings.	
Restoring Nature through Sustainable, Regenerative Land Use	Develop the regenerative land use programme covering soil health, biodiversity audits and soil carbon knowledge exchange for year 1 and trial on 3 pilot land holdings working with the owners / managers.	The Land Management Advisor vacancy has been filled. Work is underway scoping the Land Collaborative project and Future Land Programme. An EOI for the Resilient Farms has been drafted and we will engage with land managers over the Autumn, looking to appoint the 3 pilot holdings by the end of the calendar year.	On Track
	Working with the Palladium group continue the exploration of a trial ethical green finance mechanism to bring additional carbon market funding for woodland creation in the Park.	The National Park Authority work on the FIRNS project is complete. We are reviewing how to finalise some support and guidance for land managers, developers and communities based on what we have learnt.	On Track
Chapter 2: Creating a Low-Carbon Place			
Connecting Everyone with Nature and Climate	Implement the updated Loch Lomond Byelaws – including fully operational user database and operational readiness for 1 November 2024.	<p>The main focus of the project remains on the development of the database with Beta testing due to start in Q3 for the public facing portal alongside the development of the administrative system and the development of the App that will be used by Rangers on the loch.</p> <p>Engagement about the byelaw changes is underway with loch users and businesses supported by a leaflet and posters.</p> <p>Buoyage agreements have been completed with A&BC and WDC and buoys for these low-speed activity zones have started to be installed.</p>	On Track

	Conduct an internal review of the Camping Management Byelaws and begin early stakeholder engagement in preparation for the statutory review due to take place in 2026.	Refining of project scope and planning for workshop underway. Q3 will see the completion of the Project Initiation Document and the start of the internal review of the byelaws.	On Track
	Continue to develop and support the West Highland Way management group to enhance the sustainability of the route. With the group, set up a new charitable organisation to establish an expanded programme of fundraising to support the maintenance of the path.	SCIO application submitted to OSCR on 22.7.24 with reply from OSCR received 12.9.24 seeking further clarification on points relating to governance and community benefits. WHW BDM is progressing plans for transition to charitable status requirements pending approval of the SCIO application. WHW Management Group meeting was held on 20.8.24.	On Track
Improving popular Places and Routes	Complete the upgrades to the path on Conic Hill, concluding all works on the ground and fully reopening.	100 metres of pitching on path section 4 upper from mid-June to 6 August including 5 cross drains, 170m of revetment, 95m of ditching and 131m ² of landscaping. Previously eroded areas of bare ground have been seeded with an upland seed mix and is taking well because of warm and wet weather. These and other areas have been roped off and signed, requesting that people keep to the new path surface. From site visits this appears to be working well. The completion schedule for path sections 4 and 5 has slipped from mid-November to the end of December 2024. Snagging works, restoration of the stone storage site and additional landscaping of path sections 2 and 3 will take place in Q4 up to 31 March. A revised project program up to 31 March 2025 has been requested from the contractors.	Behind Schedule
	Complete Phase 1 of the works at Tarbet and complete the design of Phase 2.	The final programme shows the main works completed by early October.	Behind Schedule

		<p>Heras wire construction site fencing will remain around the main lawn area for a further 6-8 weeks (weather dependant) to protect the grass and wildflower seeding whilst this establishes. Remaining works of site furniture, EV chargers and tree planting will continue into the autumn. There should be minimal disruption to site operations and all works are expected to be complete by the end of the calendar year.</p> <p>Some preliminary in-house progress has been made on the detailed design of Phase 2. The progression of further work that would involve consultancy support and therefore spend in this financial year is subject to review in line with additional controls around discretionary spend issued by SG.</p>	
	<p>Continue the masterplanning work to be undertaken at Rowardennan and explore the works to be undertaken at Balmaha as part of the Place Programme.</p>	<p>Further stakeholder engagement was undertaken in June, including interest groups as well as the local community and businesses.</p> <p>The consultants have since incorporated the relevant comments into the designs and are currently completing the masterplan. By mid-September we will have the information ready to submit planning and funding applications for infrastructure improvements on the publicly owned land at Rowardennan, subject to final NPA and FLS landowner approvals and planning fees.</p> <p>The application will be delayed until the NPA has undertaken its Q2 review and considered the impact of additional controls around discretionary spend issued by SG .</p> <p>Positive discussions have been held with Stirling Council on improving the visitor experience at Balmaha. Short term inventions by Stirling Council are being discussed, alongside longer-term partnership solutions where external funding options are being explored.</p>	<p>Behind Schedule</p>

	Establish a partnership to oversee the preparation of a masterplan for the Balloch Pierhead area, which will also consider wider linkages and co-ordinated actions.	<p>Working closely with West Dunbartonshire Council a small staff team has been drawn together and we aim to have a Masterplanning and engagement consultancy on board to help deliver the project from September onwards. West Dunbartonshire Council are leading the procurement and the project is evenly co-funded.</p> <p>Commencement of establishing the partnership is anticipated to be late September/ October with preparation of the masterplan to complete early 2025. By the next Board report the project should be back on track.</p>	Behind Schedule
	Complete the Park-wide strategic tourism infrastructure consolidating study 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.	The Route Map final draft was included in the June 2024 Board Report for review, was approved and is within the June Board papers online available for view.	On Track
	Continue work to maintain and improve the Core Paths Network within the National Park, including priority sections at Gartmore and the West Highland Way.	Externally funded design work for remaining phases of Lochearnhead Railway Path is progressing in hopes that further capital grants will become available in 25/6 and beyond. Work continuing on externally funded barrier reduction project on National Cycle Route 7.	On Track
Low Carbon Travel for Everyone	Working with partners such as Transport Scotland, Sustrans, Local Authorities and Regional Transport Partnerships produce targeted sustainable travel and mobility strategies and action plans.	Significant relationships being built with Transport Scotland with regular meetings diarised. Further progress with RTPs who are actively committed to partnership working. Autumn meeting in planning with full partnership, including local authorities.	On Track

	Develop and deliver partnership arrangements around targeted shared resources which enable a new National Park Mobility Partnership and create a Route Map for enhanced sustainable transport in the National Park.	Major step forward with recruitment of National Park Mobility Partnership Manager in August, initially on an 8-month contract funded by SPT through the People and Places fund. This has strengthened links and discussion with SPT. Manager already working to build strategic relationships towards forming the Partnership and to map out early and longer-term interventions. Ongoing discussions with Stirling Council re potential shuttle bus continuity and car-parking initiatives.	On Track
	Work with partners to establish a multi-year programme of piloting and developing new sustainable transport services, including community transport alongside land and water bus initiatives.	<p>'Trossachs Explorer' Callander – Aberfoyle summer shuttle bus launched 1st July as planned, running until 30th September 2024, in partnership with Stirling Council and Midland Bluebird. Very successful and popular with both residents and visitors, many travelling free with the Scottish National Entitlement Card (under 22s and over 60s). Average 200 – 400 passengers per week, influence by weather. Strathclyde Uni engaged to gather monitoring data and report back on a number of measures at the end of the pilot.</p> <p>Other transport initiatives continue to be at discussion stage while funding landscape remains unsettled. However, we are investigating other potential funding sources, including the research-driven European Horizon fund.</p>	On Track
Chapter 3: Designing a Greener Way of Living			
Transitioning to a Greener Economy	Work with partners to explore new funding models in the areas of natural capital and green investment, including developing understanding of impacts and governance requirements. Including exploring Green Finance mechanism for the NP with partners such as Revere.	We continue to explore options to diversify the funding available including a large-scale National Lottery bid as well as options to receive and distribute corporate funding and donations.	On Track
	Develop green tourism action plans in conjunction with local tourism	The NPDG sub-group has been revised to move towards delivery of the NPPP Objectives – where businesses can lead	On Track

	and hospitality industry partners, working in partnership with the National Park Destination Group.	and focus on achieving the 2045 outcomes, focusing on the creation of a sustainable tourism action plan. One of the sub-group members has progressed with an application for the Green Tourism award and we are aware of other NPDG business also progressing with GT applications.	
Supporting Thriving Rural Communities	Write, design and undertake consultation on an updated Gaelic Language Plan.	Consultation on Gaelic Language Plan closed on 13 th May. Final recommended Plan presented to Board for approval in June 2024.	Complete
	Support remaining communities to produce Local Place Plans - including Croftamie, East Loch Lomond, and Balloch & Haldane.	Croftamie, East Loch Lomond and Ardentinny communities are progressing with preparatory activities and NPA financial contribution agreements are expected to be signed by mid-September with Port of Menteith by end September. Confirmation awaited from Balloch community on whether a financial contribution request will be submitted. Croftamie and East Loch Lomond communities are also working with University of Stirling PhD student to support engagement activities on heritage as part of the Local Place Plan process.	On track
	Scope out options for delivery support for community-led projects, Local Place Plans and programme activity - such as Community Climate Action Hubs - in collaboration with partners and the Local Place Plan Advisory Group.	The DTAS (Development Trust Association Scotland) Shared Development Officer work has resulted in a toolkit to be published online and used to support Community Development Trusts both across the National Park and nationally. We are continuing to work with DTAS to provide support for two community clusters as they explore approaches to sharing a development officer across communities to support local led action – Lomond (East Loch Lomond, Drymen, Croftamie, Kilmarnock) and Trossachs (Gartmore, Strathard and Trossachs) and are currently investigating the potential to develop links for communities in other parts of the National Park. We are continuing to support the Community Climate Action Hub's (both the Argyll and Bute Hub and Forth Valley) work including promoting community projects, seed funding, collaboration between the two NP hubs including setting up a	On track

		learning visit to Lochgoilhead and a river restoration project https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/991169202767?aff=oddtcreator	
Developing and Investing in the National Park	Prepare, and submit to Scottish Government, the Evidence Report for the Local Development Plan.	Work is well underway but is behind schedule. Timeline requires to be reviewed following re-assessment of internal capacity and resourcing options. Current focus has been on reviewing sufficiency of evidence base and drafting a series of topic papers. These are at various stages of drafting and further work is required internally before engaging and sharing these with external stakeholders.	Behind Schedule
	Begin to prepare an innovative and engaging draft Local Development Plan for consultation which drives forward the Outcomes of the National Park Partnership Plan.	Current focus is on the Evidence Report stage however consultancy support has been secured to inform approach towards supporting an increase in renewable energy technologies in the National Park.	On Track
Mission Zero	Continue to undertake the capital works required to meet our Mission Zero commitments, including the conclusion of work at Carrochan.	Majority of works now complete. Completion of tasks required to make the electric vehicle chargers operational outstanding which will likely, this is likely to go over into Q3 at HQ & BVC & will go over into Q3 at DMMS.	Behind Schedule
	Review priorities and timeline for the second phase of our 10-year MZ programme to be a net zero organisation by 2030.	Work is continuing on the second phase of the programme (2025-2030), with key documents drafted (Programme Initiation Document, timeline, brief for design team consultancy).	On Track
Net Zero National Park	Continue the development of the National Park Authority's Climate Adaption Plan.	New Climate Delivery Manager in post with responsibility for the Mission Zero Programme. As they transition fully into the role they will take on Adaptation Planning for the NPA, as well as capacity being released from Mission Zero to allow work to resume on NP Adaptation Planning.	Behind Schedule
	Start the development of a draft Net Zero National Park Route Map	As part of our collective, coordinated action on net zero with all 15 UK National Parks we are now members of the UN-backed	Behind Schedule

	<p>outlining the approach to achieving a net zero national park.</p>	<p>‘Race to Zero’ initiative; the first National Parks in the world to join.</p> <p>New Climate Delivery Manager in post as with responsibility for the Mission Zero Programme. As they transition fully into the role capacity will be released from Mission Zero to allow work to resume more fully on the next steps for net zero National Park .</p>	
	<p>Undertake the migration of services into the cloud, removing need for local disaster recovery for critical services/infrastructure.</p>	<p>IDOX readiness assessment being carried out at the end of Sept to identify level of prep work required by GIS and ePlanning staff ahead of migration. IDOX is confident they can complete this move by end of March 25.</p> <p>We have identified services that could potentially be rolled into Azure/M365 by our Power Apps engineer. We have identified at least 2 servers we can remove for now.</p>	On Track
Becoming a More Efficient Organisation	<p>Undertake a strategic review of our assets, alongside our business processes and structures, to progress our Estates Strategy</p>	<p>Work underway to established consolidated individual Site Management Plans across our Estate that considers the future role each site plays within our Asset Portfolio.</p> <p>We have implemented new ways of working for procuring goods and services in relation to our Estates portfolio which has driven efficiencies within the Estates Team. We have also conducted a review of how the Estates functions, with a view to achieving greater efficiencies, with a “One Team, One Visit” approach to sites requiring maintenance.</p>	On Track
	<p>Develop/invest in our digital skills and infrastructure and review our manual processes to achieve at least 5% efficiency saving by</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Leveraging workflow tools to automate cross organisation processes - Enhancements to existing systems, such as finance, 	<p>Work underway, beginning with internal paper-based processes, being automated.</p> <p>Updated Asset Management Solution is being brought in to replace the Estates Database, which will see further automation between Estates, Finance and HR systems, alongside the ability almost real-time management information.</p>	On Track

	<p>estates and HR to maximise automation opportunities</p> <p>Exploring potential benefits associated with creating central data repository to be used for reporting</p>		
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