

Frequently Asked Questions

We are pleased that you have taken the time to attend a meeting of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority.

To help you understand how our meetings held in public are run we have compiled some common questions and answers. We hope you find this information helpful. If you have questions, please speak a member of National Park Authority staff who will contact the Corporate Performance Manager / Proper Officer.

Q: Who can be a public observer?

- A: Public observers are those that can come to watch a meeting but are not directly involved in the business of the meeting. Public observers might include:
- members of the public
 - members of the press
 - representatives from organisations with an interest in the National Park

Q: Can public observers take part in the meeting?

- A: People who come to watch a meeting are there only as public observers. As a public observer, you will be able to listen to the business of the meeting, except when confidential information is being discussed (see *'Will I be able to listen to all the discussions?'* below for more details). However, you will not be able to participate in the discussions. So, you won't be able to ask questions, take part in voting or put your own views to the members of the meeting – unless you have formally requested to speak in advance of the meeting and your request has been accepted by the Chair.

Q: If I have any questions, who should I talk to?

- A: National Park Authority staff will welcome the public observers as they arrive for the meeting. They will do their best to help you with practical questions about the running of the meeting and the facilities available. If they are unable to answer your question they may refer you to another member of staff.

Q: How will the meeting run?

- A: At the start of the meeting there will be an introduction from the meeting Chair. The following items are usually discussed during the public part of the meeting:
- The agenda for the meeting.
 - The minutes of the last meeting.
 - Whether any National Park Authority Board/Committee member has a conflict of interest they need to declare.

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- Whether there will be a confidential element of the meeting. Any confidential papers will be closed to the public observers (see ‘*Will I be able to listen to all the discussions?*’).
- The Chair will then move on to the business of the meeting.
- There may be rare occasions when a meeting is entirely closed to public observers. This is because the Chair has decided that it will not be possible to conduct any business without referring to confidential information.

Q: Who will be at the meeting?

A: In addition to the Chair and National Park Authority Board/Committee members, the following people may be present at meetings:

- Senior members of staff who will speak to, present or have authored the reports being considered at the meeting.
- Members of staff involved in running and supporting the meeting.

Q: What will the Board/Committee members talk about?

A: Depending on which meeting you are observing and the stage of the development process for the topic being discussed, the Board/Committee may:

- Hear from officers about the topic they are considering.
- Discuss and make recommendations based on the evidence that is presented to them, including information received from registered stakeholders.
- Discuss how they will develop draft recommendations for consultation.
- Discuss comments from stakeholders and any informal or formal consultation feedback.

Q: Will papers be provided for public attendees to follow the meeting?

A: A draft agenda for the meeting will normally be provided. Papers for discussion, apart from any confidential items, are available for download from our website: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/park-authority/our-board-committees/meetings/>

You are welcome to download these documents and bring them along to the meeting.

Q: Will I be able to listen to all the discussions?

A: It depends on whether some of the information the meeting needs to discuss is confidential. If it is, then all public observers will be asked to leave the room while these discussions take place (this is called the confidential part of the meeting).

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Information classed as confidential includes confidential personal data and information that is called 'commercial in confidence'. This means that public disclosure of this information could have an impact on the commercial interests of the particular company or professional organisation, or the policy interest of the government.

Q: Will a decision about the topic be made at the meeting?

A: Depending on the topic being discussed and the stage of the process, the Board/Committee's decision and recommendations will be published on our website following the meeting. Depending on the topic being discussed and the stage of the process, the draft decision and recommendations may also be open to public consultation. You can find out more about the live consultations from our website at <http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/>.

If the decision needs to be based on confidential information, for example, 'commercial in confidence', it will always be made in the confidential part of the meeting and will not be publicly available.

There may be occasions when the Board/Committee decides it cannot make any draft decisions or recommendations because the evidence it has seen and heard is insufficient or requires further work or assessment. If this happens the Chair will indicate what the Board/Committee requires to enable it to make a decision or recommendation. The next steps will be agreed outside the meeting and we will update our website with further information as soon as possible.

Q: How long will it take to discuss each topic?

A: Meetings vary in length depending on the topics being discussed. This makes it difficult to predict how long it will take to discuss each topic and when a meeting will end. The agenda for the meeting will be provided and may give an indication of when certain topics will be discussed.

It is important that all public observers arrive promptly to ensure you receive the required briefing prior to the meeting. Meetings will not be delayed for late arrivals. To keep disruptions to a minimum, late arrivals may not be allowed into the meeting until there is a suitable break.

Q: Do I have to stay for the entire meeting?

A: No, but to keep disruptions to a minimum we ask that where possible public observers leave meetings during a suitable break.

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Q: What facilities do you have to accommodate people with accessible needs?

A: Our HQ at Carrochan complies with legislation on accessibility for people with disabilities. Our meeting rooms are fitted with an induction loop for people with hearing impairment, but please let us know in advance if you will need to use it.

There is a lift for wheelchair users. If you are a wheelchair user or have walking difficulties, please advise an officer on arrival so that we can ensure appropriate support is in place.

Please note if the meeting is held at a different venue than our Carrochan office we will ensure that the meeting venue complies with legislation on accessibility for people with disabilities.

Please advise a member of National Park Authority staff if you have any other specific accessibility requirements that you would like to tell us about before the meeting.

Q: Will refreshments be provided for public observers?

A: Refreshments will not be provided for public observers at meetings. During any breaks public observers can leave the meeting venue to purchase refreshments if required.

Q: Can I record and take notes at the meeting?

A: Within England and Wales recent changes to legislation entitled public observers to record the proceedings in a meeting. This legislation does not currently apply within Scots Law therefore audio or video recording, live reporting and photographing, of meetings is not authorised. If a public observer is found to be recording a meeting they will be asked to leave.

Public observers are welcome to take notes at the meeting, however the use of laptops or other electronic devices are not allowed during the course of the meeting.

Q: Can I quote what is said at a meeting?

A: When meetings are held in public, the meeting will debate the evidence thoroughly and will express a range of views. Any quotations for external publication are limited to the final summary, which is usually provided by the Chair. You may not quote what is said by any person or group present at a meeting directly or indirectly (for example, attribute the quote to an unnamed member or officer) unless explicit approval has been obtained from the National Park Authority and the relevant person has agreed to be quoted.

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Q: Can I report what is said at meetings without using quotations?

A: Yes. We are happy for external publications to publish information on the issues discussed at meetings as long as they do not attribute the text to an individual or particular group participating in the meeting. While, a range of views will be expressed at meetings, the draft and final recommendations are agreed by the Park Authority Board/Committee. These important decisions could not be reached unless discussions covered the full range of views before making the draft and final recommendations.

Q: Can I report what is said at meetings via social media?

A: Live reporting of meeting proceedings is not allowed during the meeting by public observers. If a public observer is found to be broadcasting the proceedings via any media during the meeting they will be asked to leave.

Q: Can I talk to members during the breaks?

A: We ask public observers to address any questions they ask a member of National Park Authority staff to contact Corporate Performance Manager / Proper Officer.

The role of Board members is to make an independent assessment of the evidence. It is therefore very important that no one tries to influence an individual Board member's view during the meeting, the breaks or outside the meeting on any topics that are under discussion. Requests for media interviews should be made through our Communications team by contacting pr&media@lochlomond-trossachs.org

Q: What will happen if a public observer tries to disrupt the meeting?

A: We expect that everyone who comes to a meeting will respect the work of the Board/Committee and will not cause any disruption. If a public observer causes any disruption, the Chair may insist that the individual leaves.

We may also restrict public observers who cause a disruption from attending any future meetings.