

# Local Development Plan - Evidence Report

## Agenda Item 3

### National Park Authority Board Meeting

Monday 10 November 2025

Paper for decision

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## 1. Purpose

- 1.1. The first milestone in the preparation of a new Local Development Plan for the National Park is the compilation of an Evidence Report. This is the gathering of a baseline of relevant policy, strategy, data and information and is a new step in the process of preparing Local Development Plans in Scotland. Introduced to seek to reduce dispute and disagreement on the evidence base for a new plan, this also seeks to ensure a robust, collaborative evidence-led plan process.
- 1.2. The period of engagement on the evidence base has concluded, and officers have now finalised the Evidence Report for the Board's consideration and approval to submit to the Scottish Government for an assessment known as a 'Gate Check'. In line with the relevant

guidance, the Evidence Report must be approved by the full Board before it is submitted for the Gate Check.

- 1.3. The purpose of this paper is to now seek Members consideration and approval of the Evidence Report for the new Local Development Plan, Appendices 1 - 4 of this paper, subject to minor delegated edits, prior to submitting to the Scottish Government later in the year.

## 2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. Members are asked to:

- 2.1.1. **Consider** the content of the Evidence Report,

- 2.1.2. **Note** the assurances regarding sufficiency of evidence,

- 2.1.3. **Approve** the Evidence Report – attached as appendices to this paper - prior to submission to Scottish Ministers, in accordance with the requirement on the National Park Authority Board, and,

- 2.1.4. **Approve** the delegation to the Director of Place to oversee minor edits and commence and complete the process to submit the Evidence Report.

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

- 3.1. In our Annual Operating Plan 2025/26 Action G/A/01 “*Prepare and engage on the Evidence Report for our next Local Development Plan, then submit to Scottish Government*”, delivers on Section 3: Designing a Greener Way of Living of our National Park Partnership Plan.

- 3.2. Our new Local Development Plan will be key for the delivery of our new National Park Partnership Plan. It will include policies and priorities that will guide all future development decisions and our work to influence land use and investment that realises our Vision for the National Park to be a thriving place that is nature positive and carbon negative.

## 4. Background

- 4.1. As noted in the CEO report to the Board on the 9 June 2025, which updated Members on progress, the first milestone in the preparation of the new Local Development Plan is the compilation of an Evidence Report for submission to Gate Check. This is the gathering of a baseline of relevant policy, strategy, data and information.

### The Local Development Plan process

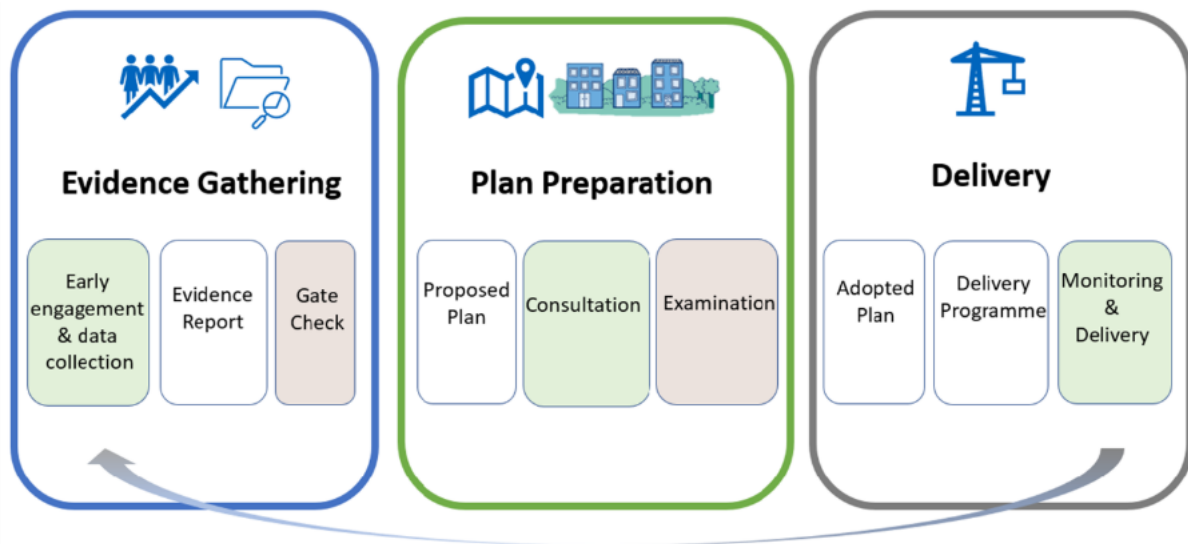
- 4.2. The Scottish Planning System is plan-led and Development Planning is required to manage the development and use of land in the long-term public interest. Planning decisions must be in accordance with the Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 4.3. The Development Plan comprises National Planning Framework 4 and the Local Development Plan. The role of the Local Development Plan is to show how local places will change into the future including where development should and should not happen. It must take account of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and any registered Local Place Plans. National Planning Framework shows the Scottish Ministers' national spatial strategy for Scotland. It sets out national spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy.
- 4.4. Within the National Park context, the National Park Partnership Plan also informs the evidence base for preparing the new Local Development Plan (and is already a material consideration when making planning decisions). The Local Development Plan is a key tool to help deliver the nine long term outcomes in the National Park Partnership Plan and its vision of the National Park being a thriving place that is nature positive and carbon negative by 2045.
- 4.5. Planning in Scotland's National Parks also differs from other Planning Authorities in Scotland, as they have a statutory duty to deliver the four National Park aims set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000. Where there is conflict between the first and any of the other aims, a National Park Authority must give greater weight to the first aim - to conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area. This statutory requirement places the National Park Authority in a distinctive position when preparing and implementing its Local Development Plan, ensuring that planning decisions reflect the long-term public interest and the safeguard special qualities of the National Park.
- 4.6. The diagram below shows the relationship between the Local Development Plan and other relevant plans, including our National Park Partnership Plan.



4.7. [Scottish Government Local Development Planning Guidance](#), Published May 2023 sets out that new Local Development Plans should have three overarching aims:

- Delivery-focused: aiming to achieve outcomes rather than just policies
- Place-based: focusing on the characteristics of places, local context, spatial strategy
- People-centred: promoting community participation, engagement and reflecting people's needs

4.8. The process of delivery of the new LDP has three key stages: (1) evidence gathering, (2) plan preparation, and (3) delivery and monitoring as illustrated below.



4.9. This plan making process is newly introduced by changes to the way in which Local Development Plans (LDP) are to be prepared by The Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997, as amended by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019. The key changes are as follows:

- Plan period extended – LDPs now reviewed every 10 years instead of every five.
- Front-loaded process – Introduction of an Evidence Report and Gate Check before drafting the plan.
- Stronger national alignment – LDPs must conform with NPF4, which now has development plan status.

#### Local Place Plans and the new Local Development Plan process

4.10. Planning authorities are to take into account any registered Local Place Plan when they are preparing or amending their Local Development Plan. Within the Evidence Report, Local Place Plans can be a means of linking the very local aspirations to more strategic issues and opportunities across the plan area helping to provide a ‘bigger picture’ basis to the local aspirations.

4.11. Local Place Plans were introduced by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, which contains a new right for communities to produce their own plans. Local Place Plans contain the community’s proposals for the development and use of land and provide a new opportunity for communities to feed into the planning system with ideas and proposals. Significant support has been provided to our communities to prepare their Place Plans with 13 in place and more in preparation.

## Evidence Report: Requirements and Process Summary

- 4.12. As a Planning Authority, the National Park Authority is required to prepare an Evidence Report that contains sufficient information to enable the preparation of a Local Development Plan. Attention is drawn to key areas of the Local Development Plan Guidance for this Evidence Gathering stage. The Guidance describes the Evidence Report as follows:

**Paragraph 79.** *Evidence informs plan-making, can help to justify the plan's content, and provides a baseline for later monitoring. The purpose of the Evidence Report is to support the quality and effectiveness of the LDP, given its significant implications for plans for people, places and finances. The Evidence Report should help make a better plan. The aim is to front-load the work and use the evidence to clearly inform what to plan for before the Proposed Plan looks at where development should take place. The Evidence Report is not expected to contain all the detail of evidence, it should provide a summary of what the evidence means for the plan.*

**Paragraph 80.** *The Evidence Report should be informed by the views of those who will be affected by the plan and involved in its implementation. It will be subject to independent assessment at the 'Gate Check'. This stage will check that there is a sound evidence base on which to prepare an LDP. The intention is that this will result in LDPs that are deliverable and more likely to achieve their intended outcomes.*

- 4.13. The Guidance Describes the 'Gate Check' as follows:

**Paragraph 127.** *The assessment of the Evidence Report, known as the Gate Check, will provide an independent assessment of whether the planning authority has sufficient information to prepare an LDP. It will be carried out by a person appointed by the Scottish Ministers, usually a reporter from the DPEA. The reporter may decide there is sufficient information, and, on being so notified, the planning authority may then move to prepare and publish their Proposed Plan, or the reporter may consider there is not sufficient information and provide recommendations for improving the Evidence Report. The Gate Check process should reduce the level of debate arising at the Examination at the end of the plan preparation period and make for a better evidence-led plan.*

## Land Use considerations

- 4.14. A central and cross cutting theme underpinning the whole of the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) is land use. The NPPP seeks to support more regenerative land use and create more sustainable land use

management within the National Park, as it is recognised that changes to land use and increased investment in natural capital can help secure a range of private, public and community benefits

- 4.15. Members will be aware that the National Park is currently a Scottish Government pilot 'region' to test how RLUPs and RLUFs could work in terms of roles, outcomes, processes, governance and funding. This is considered of relevance to the new LDP as there are potentially efficiencies in process and also benefits to bring land use, land management and development opportunities together.
- 4.16. The aspiration going forward into the Proposed Plan is to include as much information on land use in the new LDP as possible, given its significance for climate and nature. This will be subject to being able to comply with any existing and forthcoming statutory regulations regarding the status of these plans and strategies, and the process, governance and implementation of these plans and strategies. Sections 3.5 and 3.6 in Part A of the Evidence Report in Appendix 1 provide more information on the considerations.

## **5. Engagement on the Evidence Report**

- 5.1. An extensive engagement programme was delivered to inform the Evidence Report and the new Local Development Plan, building on long-term collaboration through the National Park Partnership Plan and Local Place Plans. Early engagement with key agencies, local authorities, and partners helped refine the technical evidence base across ten topic papers before wider consultation.
- 5.2. Between May and September 2025, engagement extended to a wider audience of stakeholder groups, including Community Councils and Community Development Trusts, alongside other key local stakeholders such as local businesses, groups and land managers. This was delivered through six area place-based workshops, focused correspondence, and online feedback opportunities. 68 people representing 44 different organisations attended the workshops and over 1,700 people accessed dedicated LDP webpages. Bespoke content was prepared for this engagement, in the form of the Place Based Papers (Appendix 3 – Part C). This allowed for detailed input to be received from Community Councils, agencies, and individuals via surveys and discussions, with findings directly integrated into the evidence base and points to be considered as the Proposed Plan is prepared.
- 5.3. Additional bespoke engagement ensured inclusivity, with tailored sessions for young people, disabled groups, Gypsy/Traveller

communities, and land managers. Highlights included a youth workshop at McLaren High School, engagement with a Local Access Panel on accessibility needs, a workshop on the integration of land use with representatives from the Scottish Land & Estates Land Management Forum and the National Farmers Union of Scotland, and surveys with Gypsy/Traveller communities. This comprehensive approach ensured that diverse perspectives were captured proportionately and meaningfully, providing a robust foundation for the preparation of the new Local Development Plan. An additional outcome was also to help raise awareness and understanding of the Local Development Plan process.

- 5.4. Across the online and in-person workshops, several common themes emerged that will be central to shaping the new Local Development Plan. Participants consistently highlighted the need for improved transport connections, including safer roads, better public transport, and enhanced active travel networks. Affordable housing and the impact of second homes and short-term holiday lets were raised as key concerns, alongside challenges of development viability in smaller settlements. Stakeholders also emphasised opportunities for renewable energy generation and the importance of securing local community benefits from such projects. Tourism management was seen as requiring more tailored, place-specific approaches, while flooding and water management, particularly in The Trossachs catchments, were identified as pressing environmental priorities. Broader economic themes included the need to support local jobs and investment. This engagement has provided valuable local insight to shape the new Local Development Plan, ensuring it reflects community priorities and practical experience. Further engagement, building upon this first phase as a foundation, will continue throughout the Plan's preparation to maintain active collaboration with stakeholders.

#### Topic Paper Engagement – strengthening our Evidence Base

- 5.5. Engagement with stakeholders has been vital in shaping and strengthening the Topic Papers, ensuring that each reflects current data, relevant policy context, and a broad range of local and professional insights. Feedback received through consultation has enhanced the accuracy and relevance of the evidence base supporting the new Local Development Plan.
- 5.6. Engagement on draft Topic Papers validated that the majority of data and information had been captured, and the responses supported us in ensuring a more comprehensive and up-to-date evidence base. The main patterns and themes of feedback that have enhanced the Topic



Papers comprise: the inclusion of additional information and evidence sources, strengthening and making clearer links between related Topic Papers, and clearer clarification of statutory roles including those between the National Park Authority and partner Local Authorities.

## 6. The Evidence Report

- 6.1. The Evidence Report sets out our baseline information and outlines the National Park Authority's interpretation of the evidence, alongside stakeholder's views and comments. This includes capturing what this evidence means for preparing the new plan by way of identifying key implications. There is no prescribed statutory format for Evidence Reports however the Scottish Government provides a suggested template and style which we have followed for the core Topic Paper content.

### Structure of the Evidence Report

- 6.2. The Evidence Report, attached to this paper is set out in four parts, Appendix 1 - Part A (Sections 1-7), Appendix 2 - Part B (Section 8 Topic Papers) and Appendix 3 - Part C (Section 9 Place Based Papers), and Appendix 4 - Associated Evidence Report Appendices.
- 6.3. **Appendix 1, Part A**, is the core of Evidence Report setting out: the introduction and purpose and setting the context for the National Park; making clear our roles and responsibilities as both a Planning Authority and a National Park Authority; key topics for consideration and how we have met legislative planning requirements; our Position Statement (Summary of implications for the Proposed Plan, Stakeholder agreements and our view on the sufficiency of the evidence); our engagement process and evaluating the success of current Local Development Plan.
- 6.4. The Position Statement comprises the Summary of implications for the Proposed Plan, Stakeholder agreements and our view on the sufficiency of the evidence. Each of the 10 Topic Papers are summarised to provide a high-level overview of the key implications specific to the National Park. At the end of each topic summary there is also a summary of stakeholder views on the sufficiency of the evidence, a summary of how stakeholder engagement has strengthened the evidence base and a summary of the NPA view on what the evidence and key implications arising from this mean for preparing the new LDP.
- 6.5. The topic papers then each provide more detailed consideration of NPF4 policies and their application within the National Park, as well as any implications or specific issues/tensions/crossover that is apparent

between NPF4 policy areas (for example between applying the housing and tourism policies in the rural area or for accommodating new development in flood-prone communities). The topic papers also identify where a divergence from National Planning Framework 4 Policy might be required, and where bespoke local policies might be required to address National Park specific issues and opportunities.

- 6.6. **Appendix 2, Part B**, is the Topic Papers and sets out how we have gathered and presented the evidence in 10 Topic Papers by grouping the most closely related national planning policies of NPF4. Each of these 10 Topic Papers aims to proportionately summarise relevant national, regional and local evidence and information for the given topic area. NPF4 Policy 8: Green belts has been excluded as there are no green belts within or located close to the National Park and as green belts have never arisen as an issue requiring consideration.

6.6.1. Each of these 10 Topic Papers aims to proportionately summarise relevant national, regional and local evidence and information for the given topic area. Each of the Topic Papers has the same format:

- A list of the relevant sections of the Planning Act (and any other relevant legislation and statutory requirements),
- Links to the evidence that informs that Topic Paper,
- Context of National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) and the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP)
- Summary of the selected evidence for that Topic Paper;
- Implications that the evidence presents for the preparation of the new LDP
- Summary of stakeholder engagement and
- Statement of agreement/dispute.

6.6.2. The Topic Papers have been prepared with advice and comments incorporated from public bodies such as SEPA, Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot, Transport Scotland and the Local Authorities that cover the National Park. Where data or information has not been available, is incomplete or currently in the process of being finalised, this has been highlighted in the Topic Paper and where relevant this will be actioned for the Proposed Plan stage.

- 6.7. **Appendix 3, Part C**, is Place Based Topic Papers for six proposed sub-areas, where as part of the evidence-gathering stage for the new LDP, six Place Profiles were prepared for sub-areas of the National Park to provide a locally nuanced understanding of place. reflect distinct geographic areas, settlements and the functional relationships between these, particularly in respect of shared services, facilities and transport links. Each Place Profile draws on a mix of data, policy context and community insights gleaned from registered Local Place Plans so far.
- 6.7.1. The profiles were designed to support engagement by presenting spatial information alongside known key issues and opportunities specific to each sub-area. This was intended to help stakeholders consider and share feedback on any information gaps. They were also intended to test if these six sub-areas represent easily identifiable and relatable geographic levels upon which a 'place based' approach can be developed when preparing the spatial strategy for the new LDP (and one where stakeholders will collaborate effectively to drive and support delivery).
- 6.7.2. It is important to note that the Place Profiles are a high-level point to evidence, not a detailed map or 'plan' that includes everything in the same level of detail. These papers supplement the other Evidence Report Topic Papers, and direct readers to those papers, rather than repeat them.
- 6.8. **Appendix 4**, Associated Evidence Report Appendices, includes: Report of pre-Evidence Report Engagement Consultation Workshops and the Equalities Impact Assessment, along with supporting appendices to the topic papers covering housing, strategic flood risk assessment, and play sufficiency, along with our Site assessment Framework.

#### Local Development Plan - Evidence base spatial data map viewers

- 6.9. Two interactive maps form part of the Evidence base developed by Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority as part of our new Local Development Plan and support the Topic papers: Local Development Plan - Evidence base spatial data, and the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment Map. They are live interactive maps and the information displayed may change over time as we obtain additional or new data. The maps contain a wide range of spatial datasets from both the National Park Authority and a number of partner organisations including Scottish Government, NatureScot and Scottish Forestry and SEPA.

## **7. Summary of Strategic Implications**

- 7.1. The implications identified with the Evidence Report are a key part of the Report. This section summarises the key implications arising from the evidence that will inform preparation of the new Local Development Plan. Please note that throughout consultation, and in the Evidence Report, we refer to the new Local Development Plan as the new LDP (the formal term is the Proposed Plan).
- 7.2. For each of the 10 Topic papers a high-level overview of the key implications specific to the National Park by Topic is set out and this is included below. These should be a particular focus for Members consideration. These are extracted from the Position Statement, Section 5 in Appendix 1.

### Topic Paper 1: Climate and Land Use

- 7.3. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed around responding to the significant climate and environmental challenges facing the National Park, including rising temperatures, increased flood and drought risks and coastal erosion.
- 7.4. A 2024 climate risk assessment identifies key hazards and vulnerable areas in the National Park, and a 2023 carbon footprint study identifies sources of emissions from residents, visitors and industry. This shows that travel is a large contributor to carbon emissions and is a key area for intervention. To achieve net zero by 2035, land use change focussing on peatland restoration and woodland creation is also required, alongside promoting more sustainable living and travel. As land use change is a significant issue (and opportunity) for the National Park, the preparation of the new LDP will explore whether the new spatial development strategy can also function also as a Regional Land Use Framework in order to achieve a more integrated approach towards guiding future land use change alongside supporting nature restoration and sustainable community and rural development.

### Topic Paper 2: Biodiversity, Natural Places, Forestry, Woodland and Trees

- 7.5. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed around identifying and enabling opportunities to restore nature and tackle climate change. The new LDP will require to identify where this can happen, support biodiversity enhancement in new developments and where possible guide land use change to reduce emissions. Key priorities include restoring peatland and new woodland creation, tackling invasive species,

managing over-grazing and supporting large-scale nature recovery projects such as The Great Trossachs Forest, Wild Strathfillan and the Loch Lomond Rainforest.

### Topic Paper 3: Infrastructure First

- 7.6. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed delivery of nationally significant infrastructure, including trunk road upgrades, improvements to the Sloy Hydro Electric Power Station, and enhancements to the electricity transmission network. Strategic growth will continue to be directed to Callander, Balloch, and Arrochar & Tarbet as identified in the National Park Partnership Plan. Key infrastructure challenges include limited electricity grid and wastewater capacity, variable digital connectivity, and some future localised pressures on school capacity at Drymen. The new LDP will align with the NPPP and be also guided by the National Park-wide Place Investment Delivery Route Map and Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Studies to coordinate delivery of improved visitor and community infrastructure.

### Topic Paper 4: Flooding, Water Management and Blue and Green Infrastructure

- 7.7. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed on the range of flood risks, including coastal, fluvial, and surface water flooding, with Potentially Vulnerable Areas such as Aberfoyle, Callander, Strathyre and Balloch requiring careful consideration. The new LDP will need to identify how to enable development necessary for local communities' needs in flood-prone areas, particularly where access routes are vulnerable against flooding. This will require further consideration and engagement on the application of NPF4 Policy 22 as the spatial strategy is being prepared. The LDP should integrate blue-green infrastructure to manage surface water and enhance water retention, support sustainable water management in response to increasing water scarcity and protect key ecosystems. Water quality is also a concern, with nearly half of the National Park's 97 water bodies in moderate or poor condition, highlighting the need for collaborative action to improve ecological status and mitigate impacts from development and hydropower operations.

### Topic Paper 5: Energy, Heat and Cooling

- 7.8. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed on the new LDP promoting an increase in renewable and low-carbon energy to meet the needs of local communities and businesses. Existing generation

includes hydroelectric and biomass, with some permitted solar capacity. Opportunities include rooftop and ground-mounted solar, heat pumps, community-scale heat networks, battery storage, and small-scale run-of-river hydro. Small-scale wind turbines may be considered where appropriate. The LDP will be guided by the Local Heat and Energy Efficiency Strategies prepared by the Local Authorities.

#### Topic Paper 6: Sustainable Transport

- 7.9. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed on how the new LDP can support the NPPP identified outcomes of reducing dependency on private cars and supporting modal shift towards sustainable travel, given that car-based journeys currently dominate travel to and within the National Park. The new LDP will need to acknowledge that there are gaps in public transport and the requirement to enhance active travel routes and infrastructure, including upgrading off-road paths and connections between settlements. The new LDP should also consider the role of primary and secondary transport gateways and hubs, opportunities for park and ride facilities, water-based transport options, electric vehicle charging infrastructure, and improvements to the A83 and A82 trunk roads.

#### Topic Paper 7: Housing

- 7.10. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed on how the new LDP can assist in addressing the projected population decline and ageing demographic in the National Park, with a reduction in children and working-age residents and an increase in households headed by people aged 65 or over. The new LDP will need to ensure that housing provision meets the needs of its local communities, including meeting the housing needs of smaller and older households, working-age families, key workers, and rural businesses. Planning for approximately 750 new homes over 10 years is ambitious however considered necessary. The new LDP will need to consider levels of affordable need and requirements alongside site availability, infrastructure and flood constraints and self-build opportunities, informed by Local Place Plans and rural economic needs.

#### Topic Paper 8: Local Living

- 7.11. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed on how the new LDP can support communities to live and work more sustainably. Place-based planning using six proposed sub-areas, informed by Local Place

Plans and stakeholder engagement, will guide future land use, development, and infrastructure to strengthen community resilience, connections, promote sustainable lifestyles and respond to climate change. The new LDP will also consider how to facilitate development of vacant and derelict land and identify where open space and play improvements are required.

#### Topic Paper 9: Cultural Heritage and Place

- 7.12. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed on the role of the new LDP in protecting and enhancing the historic environment, conserving buildings at risk and integrating cultural heritage, traditions, and community aspirations into planning decisions as much as possible. The new LDP will be place-based, supporting high-quality development that supports nature restoration, climate adaptation and mitigation, and local living principles. Climate change presents risks to historic assets and landscapes, including flooding, coastal erosion, structural damage, and biological growth, which the new LDP can seek to address by supporting repair, reuse and retention of important historic buildings and assets.

#### Topic Paper 10: Rural Economy

- 7.13. The key implications arising from the evidence and stakeholder engagement for this topic area are mainly focussed on the role of the new LDP in supporting a green recovery and sustainable economic development in the National Park, recognising opportunities in nature-based sectors such as agriculture, forestry, tourism and food and drink. It will need to consider and address the limited take-up of previously identified economic development sites, support local businesses and micro-enterprises, and consider the implications of visitor pressures, short-term lets and access to affordable housing for local communities and businesses. The new LDP will also need to support opportunities for communities to own and manage assets, ensuring economic, social, and environmental benefits are considered and integrated into the spatial strategy.

### **8. Considerations – Compliance and Statutory Assessments**

- 8.1. Members attention is drawn to the various supporting statutory assessments that are required to be undertaken. This includes a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) and Equality Impact Assessment (EqiA) relative to the stage in the Local Development Plan process.

- 8.2. Assurance is also given that the process to prepare the Evidence Report has followed the Scottish Government Local Development Guidance which sets out Scottish Ministers' expectations for implementing Local Development Plans. In terms of statutory requirements, as part of the Evidence Report, the National Park Authorities views must also be set out on a range of matters that are specified in Section 15(5) of the 1997 Act, as amended. These matters are about key characteristics and needs of the area, such as local demographics, infrastructure, housing, health, education and land use, and are included in the Evidence Report – Appendix 1.

### Sufficiency of Evidence

- 8.3. As noted earlier, the Evidence Report has been prepared in line with Scottish Government Guidance and within that engagement with stakeholders is a key factor in developing a robust evidence base. Officers consider the Evidence Report meets the requirements of the guidance.
- 8.4. Early engagement with Key Government Agencies, local authorities, and partners helped refine the technical evidence base across ten topic papers before wider consultation. Wider engagement allowed for detailed input to be received from community councils, agencies, and individuals via surveys and discussions, with findings directly integrated into the evidence base. Post engagement work with Key Government Agencies and other stakeholders, for example Local Authorities and Homes for Scotland, helped finalise the Evidence Base with formal "Statements of Agreement" being sought and secured from Key Agencies, as directed by the LDP Guidance.
- 8.5. Officers are confident with the sufficiency of the evidence to inform the next stage of preparing the new LDP and to be able to proceed towards Gate Check and then Proposed Plan stage. It is noted that there are several gaps in evidence identified in the Topic Papers however information is provided to explain how and when these gaps are being addressed, which is consistent with the approach set out by guidance for such a complex information gathering exercise.
- 8.6. In addition, officers have been seeking to mitigate any concerns in respect of the evidence by close monitoring of progress of other LDPs Gate Check assessments and addressing points where relevant and appropriate.



## Statutory Assessments

- 8.7. The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Scoping Report sets out the approach to assessing the likely environmental effects of the new Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority's Local Development Plan. The assessment matrix is based on the SEA objectives from Schedule 3(6) of the Environmental Assessment (Scotland) Act 2005 and follows the mitigation hierarchy to avoid, reduce, and offset potential impacts. The National Park Authority has engaged with the consultation authorities: Historic Environment Scotland (HES), NatureScot and SEPA. The SEA Scoping Report will be formally submitted to the consultation authorities for approval before being submitted alongside the evidence report to DPEA for gate-check.
- 8.8. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been prepared for the Evidence Gathering stage of the new Local Development Plan. This EqIA focuses on the engagement required for preparation of the LDP evidence gathering stage. It does not cover subsequent engagement and consultation through later stages of preparation, nor the management and or delivery of the LDP once it is adopted in future years. The EqIA will be updated and or a new one created as relevant for later stages.

## **9. Risks**

- 9.1. The main strategic risks to delivery of the new Local Development Plan relate to the Gate Check process and the ability to keep to our published timeline for preparing our new Local Development Plan in what is a complex multi-year project. Members attention is drawn to the new Local Development Plan Process whereby although we can progress some further preparatory tasks, we cannot move to preparation of the Proposed Plan until we have completed Gate Check. The Gate Check is an independent assessment of the sufficiency of our evidence that we must pass through, and the experience of other Planning Authorities is that this process can include requested amendments and in some cases resubmission. Although full resubmission has not been commonly required, requests for additional work and amendments have been common.
- 9.2. It is highlighted that work has been undertaken, described earlier in this paper, to mitigate the likelihood of a returned Evidence Report based on insufficiency of evidence and engagement, and to the need for monitoring of our planned timelines for development of the Proposed Plan stage. Officers will continue to utilise existing mitigation and control measures to manage these risks wherever possible.

## **10. Next steps**

- 10.1. The Evidence Report, once considered and approved by the National Park Authority Board, will be subject to an independent assessment by a Reporter appointed by Scottish Ministers. This Gate Check step is intended to confirm whether we have sufficient information to prepare the new Local Development Plan. The reporter will either decide that there is sufficient information or, if not, provide recommendations for improving the Evidence Report.
- 10.2. Once the Evidence Report has been submitted to the Scottish Government for the Gate Check Assessment, officers will launch a Call for Sites and Ideas process. This is a preparatory stage with the purpose to invite individuals, community groups, landowners, developers, and other stakeholders to propose specific sites or ideas within the National Park that they believe should be considered for future development, protection, or other land use designations in the Proposed Plan.
- 10.3. Site assessments will then be undertaken, alongside all remaining sites already identified for development in the current Local Development Plan and in Local Place Plans. The site assessment process is a core element in shaping the new Local Development Plan. A detailed methodology has been developed and is included as part of this Evidence Report and being submitted to the Scottish Government as part of the Gate Check.
- 10.4. Details on these stages and revised timescales (updated September 2025) will be placed in an updated Development Plan Scheme on the National Park Authority website.
- 10.5. Our engagement with the Board will continue appropriately as the preparatory work for the new Local Development Plan progresses and as the various milestones described above are achieved. At this stage Board Members are being asked to agree and approve the evidence base for submission to the Scottish Government. There will be opportunity to consider policy and strategy approaches as well as site selection at Proposed Plan stage. The next formal decision for the National Park Authority Board will be to approve the Proposed Local Development Plan for public consultation.

## **11. Appendices**

**Appendix 1:** Evidence Report Part A (Sections 1 -7)

**Appendix 2:** Evidence Report Part B (Section 8 – Topic Papers)

**Appendix 3:** Evidence Report Part C (Section 9 – Place Based Papers)

**Appendix 4:** Associated Evidence Report Appendices

- a) Report of pre-Evidence Report Engagement Consultation Workshops
- b) Equalities Impact Assessment
- c) Background Paper Housing; draft population and housing background paper for Topic Paper 7
- d) Strategic Flood Risk Assessment; background paper for Topic Paper 4
- e) Play Sufficiency Assessment
- f) Site Assessment Framework

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