

2025-26 Annual Operational Plan Progress to November

Agenda Item 11

National Park Authority Board Meeting

Monday 08 December 2025

Paper for information

Annual Operational Plan 2025/26: Progress to November

Rating Key:

Complete	On Track	Behind Schedule	At Risk	Postponed to 2026/27	Cancelled
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Reference and Corporate Plan Theme	AOP Deliverable	Progress Update to November	Rating
R/A/01 Approach	Continue implementation of long-term invasive, non-native species (INNS) delivery plan, controlling riparian INNS through National Park Authority staff and partnership with the Rivers and Fisheries Trusts and mink control with Forestry and Land Scotland.	Projects all progressing well. Riparian INNS season coming to an end and starting on work to review this year's program and plan for next year.	On Track
R/A/02 Approach	Develop delivery plans for the designated sites which include targeted projects, including Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve, Inchmoan and Blairbeich Bog and Inchcailloch management plans.	Project plan in place. Work underway on Inchcailloch management plan and planning further rhododendron removal at Blairbeich Bog SSSI. Started to scope up an updated review of designated sites to link to wider 30x30 plans	On Track

R/A/03 Approach	Progress our flagship landscape scale projects, including supporting delivery of Wild Strathfillan programme through match funding and staff support.	Countryside Trust and partners working hard to complete funded Wild Strathfillan projects by the end of the year – good progress being made. Great Trossachs Forest progress continues.	On Track
R/A/04 Approach	Develop the Landscape Connections National Lottery Heritage Fund opportunity, including development of rhododendron programme through Estee Lauder funding.	Awaiting funding decision on Landscape Connections National Lottery Heritage Fund bid in early December.	On Track
R/A/05 Approach	Develop the Resilient Farming Network, fulfilling our commitment to whole farm reviews and establishment of networks.	Recruitment in progress – hope to appoint new staff by end of 2025. Work has been delayed as a result of the vacancy.	Behind Schedule
R/A/06 Approach	Continue the delivery of the Peatland Action programme, targeting 11 projects which restore 865 ha. of blanket bog.	Three projects are completed on the ground. One more has commenced and three are lined up to start later in 2025, two are in procurement. The final two are postponed to 26/27.	On Track
R/A/07 Approach	Progress actions identified in the Herbivore Delivery Plan with support from the steering group.	Strong progress on herbivore work – herbivore statement and delivery plan now complete. Continued delivery through incentive scheme, training grant and a number of NRF projects supporting venison infrastructure.	On Track
R/A/08 Approach	Deliver year 1 of Woodland Delivery Plan including forestry case work, liaison with Forestry and Land Scotland, Scottish Forestry and other partners with the shared aim of approval for 400ha. of new woodland creation.	Strathyre Strategic Larch Removal Plan now approved by Scottish Forestry. Ptarmigan Land Management Plan is progressing. Glenfalloch woodland creation proposals are expected to submit EIA Screening Opinion Request in Dec 25.	On Track
C/A/01 Approach	Continue work to maintain and improve the Core Paths Network within the National Park, including priority sections at Gartocharn, Loch Earn and the West Highland Way.	West Highland Way works comprising of surfacing and drainage will complete by end of March 2026.	On Track

		<p>Lochearnhead Railway Path project is progressing – currently awaiting required Scottish Government approvals.</p> <p>Aber Bridge work is progressing well.</p>	
C/A/02 Approach	Develop and deliver the National Park Mobility Partnership arrangements around targeted shared resources and create a funding pipeline and Route Map for a programme of works/pilots which enhance sustainable transport in the National Park and deliver at least one pilot project in 2025/26.	<p>The Q3 meetings of the Leadership Group and Stakeholder and Insights Forum were held in November.</p> <p>Continued development of the Mobility Route Map including workshops with partners and stakeholders.</p> <p>The Trossachs Explorer completed its second year on 5th October with a 15% increase in passenger numbers from 2024. Evaluation underway. A prior information notice has been issued to the market for next year and engagement is underway with potential funders.</p> <p>The ELL Park and Ride Options Appraisal has been procured through PCS.</p>	On Track
C/A/03 Approach	Grow our engagement programmes so that more and diverse audiences can learn, connect and act for nature and climate.	<p>Summer inclusion project culminated in a successful Peace Day celebration in Balloch Country Park.</p> <p>Volunteer recruitment has also been successful with 53 full applications received. We've taken on 17 Volunteer Rangers and 27 Practical Conservation Volunteers.</p>	On Track
C/A/04 Approach	Begin a review of the Camping Management Byelaws and undertake stakeholder engagement in preparation for the statutory consultation in 2026/27.	Phase 1 Initial Engagements completed, 8 sessions in total. Key Themes and feedback being rationalised to inform phase 2	On Track

		engagement early 2026. Evidence gathering in final stages. PID updated with sign off pending following GIS and Comms clarification.	
C/A/05 Approach	Prepare and implement the operational management and reporting on the Joint Response Visitor Management Plan – Including Visitor Management Groups.	End of Season Report template has been amended following cross team conversations. Initial end of season updates have been shared with VMGs including newly formed groups Cowal & Strathfillan and Glen Dochart. Post season VMG have been held, and planning has begun for the 2026 visitor season	On Track
C/A/06 Approach	Review the effectiveness of the first operational season of the new Loch Lomond byelaws and make adjustments as required.	Key indicators include successful case reports to the Procurator Fiscal using the new Master Profile registration byelaw and underage masters. Speeding violations recorded in the new 6kph zones – year 1 (baseline stats – track results in year 2.) New online registration saw an increase in registration compliance.	On Track
C/A/07 Approach	Design, progress and deliver high quality visitor recreation sites and facilities as Part of the Place Programme across publicly managed sites at West Loch Lomond (Tarbet Phase 2), Falls of Falloch, East Loch Lomond (Rowardennan) and Balloch Pierhead.	Tarbet Phase 2 building work for the café is out to tender with the aim of appointing a preferred bidder late Q3. The Falls of Falloch planning application is now approved; the construction works tenders have been submitted and the process of appointing a preferred bidder is underway. Rowardennan Phase 1 works are currently out to tender and following finalising legal agreements with RTIF and Forestry & Land Scotland, the aim is to appoint a preferred bidder in Q4.	On Track

		Continued partnership working at Balloch Pierhead with West Dunbartonshire Council is re-starting with further stakeholder engagement and design work on delivering the Improvement Action Plan planned for late Q3, taking into account engagement plans for the Local Place Plan.	
C/A/08 Approach	Develop and coordinate a pipeline of transformational projects for future delivery through Place Programme partnership working to facilitate higher quality assets across publicly managed sites in the National Park.	<p>Follow up work is underway with those who have submitted expressions of interest to the Place Programme Fund, a stream of funding specifically directed at partner route map priority project development, with a view to completing full applications.</p> <p>Partnership working is being progressed focussed on East Loch Lomond, Arrochar, Balloch and Callander, with a community focus in Callander.</p> <p>Argyll & Bute Council remain delayed in progressing with their RTIF bid for Glen Loin facility in Arrochar, which they will complete when resources allow.</p> <p>Detailed design work is now progressing on final future phases at Tarbet to enable completion the delivery of the site masterplan, subject to funding, in future years.</p>	Behind Schedule
C/A/09 Approach	Support the effective establishment of the West Highland Way Trust in taking on its responsibilities as an operational Trust and continue to enhance the sustainability of the long-distance route.	The West Highland Way Trust is operational. Two specialist consultants are in the process of being appointed to aid the full set up of the Trust and for fundraising for the Trust.	On Track

		<p>A draft Service Level Agreement (SLA) detailing support from the National Park Authority has been submitted to the Trust for approval.</p> <p>A Project Board is being established. This board will comprise of representatives from the Trustees, the newly appointed Consultants, the NPA, and the WHW Management Group.</p>	
C/A/10 Approach	Support businesses in the National Park on the transition to a green economy and work with the National Park Destination Group on delivery of its annual plan, including the group's engagement with, and facilitating the best outcome for the National Park of, the introduction of any new Visitor Levy by local authorities in the area.	<p>Full NPDG meeting was held in September with the next one scheduled for end November. Findings from the Trossachs Explorer will be shared with the group at this meeting.</p> <p>Consultation meetings were held with DG businesses regarding the proposed Visitor Levy schemes for Stirling and West Dunbartonshire, facilitated by the NPA.</p> <p>The outcomes of the Visitor Levy consultations for Stirling Council, West Dunbartonshire Council, and Perth & Kinross Council are expected before the Christmas period. NPA provided full and robust responses to each consultation.</p> <p>Further partnership working includes collaborating with VisitScotland and local authorities as part of Scotland's Forth Valley tourism group, with focus on supporting regional business engagement on travel distribution and key strategic development opportunities.</p>	On Track

		Go Swim Loch Lomond, the largest outdoor swimming event in Scotland, was delivered successfully by the NPA in partnership with Still Going Strong Ltd the event organiser.	
G/A/01 Approach	Prepare and engage on the Evidence Report for our next Local Development Plan, then submit to Scottish Government.	Evidence Report was considered and approved by NPA at a special meeting on 9/11/25. It will be submitted to the Scottish Government to request a Gate Check independent review of the sufficiency of evidence during December 2025.	On Track
G/A/02 Approach	Begin the preparation of a draft Local Development Plan that delivers against National Park Partnership Plan outcomes and incorporates spatial land use planning including Nature Networks.	Initial internal scoping session held for Phase 2 which is to draft the new LDP, publish for consultation and consult.	On Track
G/A/03 Approach	Design an inclusive and engaging campaign to encourage people and organisations to get involved at key stages in preparation of the next Local Development Plan for the National Park.	Engagement window for the evidence gathering phase successfully completed and full report on outcomes is captured within the Evidence Report shared with for the special Board meeting on 10th November.	On Track
G/A/04 Approach	Support communities across the National Park who have not yet produced a Local Place Plan to do so – including Croftamie, East Loch Lomond, Trossachs, Port of Menteith, Ardentinny and Balloch & Haldane.	Ardentinny and East Loch Lomond Community steering groups continue to progress and aim to complete by the end of Q4. Balloch & Haldane LPP is progressing with the initial engagement stages. Current project planning suggests completion by end Q4 is possible but not confirmed. Croftamie LPP is also slightly behind schedule with slower progress than originally planned.	On track
G/A/05 Approach	Scope out options for delivery support of community-led projects and programme activity - including Community Climate Action Hubs - in collaboration with partners and the Local Place Plan Advisory Group.	Community Climate Action Hubs are established for the 4 Local Authority areas for the National Park and we are now chairing 6 weekly co-ordination and knowledge sharing meetings to identify programmes for delivery including adaption training for	On track

		communities, seed funding for climate related projects and initiating catchment scale working (McLaren and Balfron High School catchment) for community development trusts to address themes including energy, community growing, nature restoration.	
D/A/01 Approach	Redesign key internal governance processes to streamline and increase organisational transparency and efficiency including procurement, contract management and contribution legal agreements.	<p>Delegated Signing Authority guidance - ongoing monitoring continues to take place and controls being considered.</p> <p>Procurement guidance, contract management training and updates to contribution legal agreements all progressing well.</p> <p>Risk Appetite framework – initial research, bench-marking drafting and engagement carried out.</p>	On Track
D/A/02 Approach	Develop the long-term delivery plan for our Estates Strategy, including the finalisation and implementation of site management plans and Fleet Strategy and driving efficiencies using Asset Management Solution.	<p>Site Management Plans delayed due to capacity as a result of long-term sickness.</p> <p>Vehicles identified for disposal in line with the Fleet Strategy, which sees a reduction in our overall fleet by 4 vehicles.</p> <p>Asset Management Solution is being rolled out to the Ranger Service ahead of the 2026 Visitor Season and data is currently being loaded. Access Team are being onboarded to enable them to access information held on the system.</p>	Behind Schedule
D/A/03 Approach	Develop an external funding strategy, delivery plan and appropriate governance structure.	Delayed until Q4 due to capacity challenges. Awaiting outcome of lottery bid.	Behind Schedule

D/A/04 Approach	Finalise the development of and commence the second phase of our 10-year Mission Zero programme to achieve a net zero organisation by 2030.	Site audits concluded. Estates actions progressing. Net Zero Forward Look on pause due to staffing capacity challenges, following the departure of the Climate Delivery Manager.	Behind Schedule
D/A/05 Approach	Complete the National Park Authority's Climate Adaptation Plan.	Climate Adaptation Plan on pause due to staffing capacity challenges, following the departure of the Climate Delivery Manager	Behind Schedule
D/A/06 Approach	Begin the development of a draft Net Zero National Park Route Map outlining the approach to achieving a net zero national park, in collaboration with the 15 UK National Parks.	Work has begun but is currently on pause due to staffing capacity challenges, following the departure of the Climate Delivery Manager.	Behind Schedule
D/A/07 Approach	Deliver a cross-organisation programme of activity to encourage the use, learning and promotion of Deliver a cross-organisation programme of activity to encourage the use, learning and promotion of Gaelic in line with the commitments of the 3rd edition of our Gaelic Language Plan.	We've published our third Gaelic Language Plan (2025–2030). We've held focused meetings on training, translation, and the wider promotion of Gaelic across the park. Our social media channels have featured Gaelic content, including place names on the TEX and Loch Venachar, helping raise awareness and encourage engagement. Our next Gaelic Language Plan report is due in May 2026.	On Track
D/A/08 Approach	Design and deliver a series of campaigns to raise awareness, influence decision making and drive action on key outcomes set out in the National Park Partnership Plan and Corporate Plan.	The Loch Lomond Byelaws campaign generated over 10k impressions with a 3.5% engagement rate* across 2 social posts. The Nature Connections campaign delivered 96k impressions across 20 posts with a 3.5% engagement rate. A paid campaign was also delivered in collaboration with YoungScot to reach more young people, with a focus on the Trossachs Explorer. This involved inclusion in Young	On Track

		Scot's monthly e-newsletter, issued to 109.204 members and featured on YS's social channels with have a combine reach of 55k.	
D/P/01 People	Refresh our people strategy, including the completion of an organisational skills audit.	<p>Learning Framework in discussion with key stakeholders after Exec Review.</p> <p>Survey for People & Engagement Strategy developed and will be live in November. Five key themes have been identified.</p> <p>Reviewed mandatory training for Induction, which will be implemented shortly.</p> <p>Mapping the end-to-end employee lifecycle complete. Working through further review of all touchpoints to ensure that appropriate documentation is in place to support staff and people managers</p>	On Track
D/P/02 People	Deliver the first-year actions of our Equalities Outcomes for 2025-29.	Consultants have been secured for the 2 headline projects: scope an Equality Forum and to update our understanding of visitor representativeness.	On Track
D/S/01 Systems	Design, test and launch an accessible Beta version of the new website for the National Park Authority based on insights gained through audience research.	The new Digital Communications Manager started in October and the website timelines are being reviewed with our Digital Agency. A Website Content Coordinator (fixed term post) has also been appointed to lead this strand of work.	Behind Schedule
D/S/02 Systems	Design and test an internal system for tracking performance and delivery against NPPP and Corporate Plan priorities to aid decision-making on resource allocation and prioritisation of activity.	Q3 Portfolio reporting meetings established for November 2025 and template reporting document updated. AOP and budget reporting integrated – early indications for 2026/27 undertaken.	On Track

D/S/03 Systems	Automate key financial operational and reporting processes (purchase orders, management accounts, Scottish Government reporting, Statutory Accounts and Fixed Asset reporting) to create efficiencies and increase resilience.	Staffing challenges mean this work has been delayed.	Behind Schedule
D/S/04 Systems	Continue essential migration of services to increase resilience and efficiency, including the Scottish Wide Area Network service, IDOX e-planning service and Disaster Recovery (DR) Service.	Idox migration currently underway, Scheduled to be completed by end of December. DR migration on track with aim to carry migration to cloud DR in Q4 2025/26. SOC/SIEM solution with Acumen on track for completion by end of 25-26.	On Track
D/S/05 Systems	Implement actions from Digital strategy, including consideration of the use of technology to support visitor management across the National Park as a place.	Areas of focus still being determined.	Behind Schedule
B/A/01 Approach	Undertake Statutory Access Authority work and take actions to maintain the path network as required– including facilitating the Local Access Forum (LLTAF), upholding Access Rights, and delivering our Core Paths Plan.	Ongoing action on casework, including at East Loch Lubnaig, Glen Buckie and Glen Fruin. New infrastructure issue at Callander Crag – landownership information unavailable. Preparation work on year-long survey to be conducted on Conic Hill looking at public/dog behaviour. Local Access Forum met in November.	
B/A/02 Approach	Operate an effective Development Management service which, as a key part of delivering our statutory planning function, influences development proposals to deliver our vision for the National Park. We aspire to ongoing service improvements in line with the National Planning Improvement Framework.	Enforcement compliance on unauthorised development and use of land at a sensitive location near the river Teith Special Area of Conservation at Balquhidder has been a focused piece of work requiring staff resource	

		<p>and cross agency engagement – but with some positive outcomes.</p> <p>A Scottish Minister’s decision in August on our long running Appeal case relating to the proposed commercial Fish Farm at Loch Long resulted in a permission being granted contrary to the National Park’s decision to refuse. This has triggered the start of a new engagement with the developer to ensure best practice in the discharge of conditions etc and to build a positive relationship to minimise impacts on the location.</p> <p>The November Planning and Access Committee will consider the first Fee Charter for the Planning Service. This is in line with our timetable for service improvements under</p>
<p>B/A/03 Approach</p>	<p>Effectively manage the National Park Authority’s role in influencing and advising other statutory public bodies developing relevant infrastructure projects while delivering biodiversity enhancement, landscape and recreation benefits.</p>	<p>Good publicity has been secured for Scottish and Southern Energy Networks Biodiversity Net Gain.</p> <p>A83 Rest & Be Thankful is waiting on resolution of objections and lobbying for a different approach before further progress can be made.</p> <p>Two new TPOs have been Made to update existing ones and two more are progressing.</p>