



Draft minutes of meeting held on 8 December 2025

Agenda Item 3

National Park Authority Board Meeting
9 March 2026

Paper for approval

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Present

Heather Reid (Convener) (HR)

Martin Earl (Depute Convener) (ME)

Sarah Drummond (SD)

Colin Lee (CL)

Hazel Sorrell (HS)

Ronnie Erskine (RE)

David Mackie (DM)

Claire Chapman (CC)

Christopher Spray (CS)

Rhona Brock (RB)

David Fettes (DF)

Richard Johnson (RJ)

Iain Shonny Patterson (ISP)

Apologies

Sid Perrie

Gerry McGarvey

Maurice Corry

In Attendance - National Park Authority Staff
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Gordon Watson (GW), Chief Executive Officer

Stuart Mearns (SM), Director of Place

Anna McLean (AM), Director of Engagement and Innovation

Simon Jones (SJ), Director of Environment and Visitor Services
--

Dougie Smith (DS), Corporate Performance Manager & Proper Officer

Annie Fitzpatrick (AF), Governance and Information Advisor (Minute Taker)

Jane Kemp (JK), Head of Governance and Performance
--

Sam Stubbs (SS), Head of People and Assets
--

Kenny Auld (KA), Head of Visitor Services

Emily Davie (ED), Mobility Partnership Programme Manager
--

Nik Turner (NK), Strategic Engagement Manager

Michael Ward (MW), Finance Manager

Susan Brooks (SB), Communities and Place Planning Manager

Islay Jackson (IJ), Youth Committee Representative/Board Shadow

Items and Actions

Item 1: Welcome and Apologies

The Convener opened the meeting by welcoming all attendees to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Headquarters in Balloch.

HR reminded all Members to speak clearly into the microphones provided and not to speak over each other so that those following online are able to hear proceedings with clarity.

The Convener welcomed the members of the public observing the meeting online through a livestream on our website.

HR asked Members and National Park staff participating in this meeting to introduce themselves.

Attendance noted with apologies from Sid Perrie, Maurice Corry and Gerry McGarvey. HR confirmed that William Sinclair has tendered his resignation from the Board to the Scottish Ministers and is no longer a Member.

HR restated the Board's commitment to ethical standards in public life and highlighted Members' responsibilities under the Code of Conduct, emphasising

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section 3 on bullying and harassment and the Convener's role in upholding those responsibilities.

Item 2: Declarations of Interest

HR stated that an update had been made to her register of interests to reflect that she has been appointed as chair of the Scottish Committee and trustee to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. There is no conflict arising from this declaration for any of the items on the agenda for this meeting.

Item 3: Minutes of Meeting held on 15 September 2025

Typos will be updated. The minutes were proposed by RJ and seconded by DM.

DECISION: The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 15 September 2025 were approved by majority vote.

Item 4: Minutes of Special Meeting [re: LDP Evidence Report] held on 10 November 2025

The minutes were proposed by CS and seconded by DF.

DECISION: The minutes of the Board Meeting held on 10 November 2025 were approved by majority vote.

Item 5: Matters Arising from meeting held on 15 September 2025

The convener introduced the paper and passed to DS who provided an update on the ongoing actions.

Item 6: Board Leadership Positions – Convener and Depute Convener

DS introduced the paper highlighting the following:

For both positions we have had one valid nomination therefore there will not be an election for either position and Members will be requested to confirm the appointments.

RE has left Planning and Access Committee and William Sinclair has resigned from the Board and subsequently has left Planning and Access Committee and Audie and Risk Committee so it should be noted that there will be a future update on committee membership once we have our new appointee from Argyll and Bute Council. RJ has been elected Depute Chair of Planning and Access Committee subsequent to the production of the table included in the paper.

Members' attention was drawn to the table at point 5.4 to note that both proposed appointees for the Convener and Depute Convener have terms that end before the

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appointment period of the positions will be filled and to note the proposed governance arrangements.

HR thanked ME for his support as Depute Convener and thanks to the whole Board. CS thanked Convener and Depute Convener for their work.

DECISION: Members were asked individually for their approval of the paper. All members content to approve.

Item 7: Sustainable Transport Update

ED provided an update on progress of the programme, highlighting the following:

- key areas we are making progress with; leadership group, stakeholder insights forum.
- 2 studies delivered this year – car park study and Park & Ride options appraisal.
- Trossachs Explorer Pilot- Secured funding from an operator. Saw 15% increase in passenger numbers. Cost increased due to having a 3-bus operation. Crucial to build momentum to make this a permanent service.
- Concentrating on securing annual funding and unlocking revenues.
- Working on a Joint Delivery Plan with partners and stakeholder to develop a mobility route map.
- Key risks to the programme – continuation of funding beyond March, capacity across partners, defining roles and responsibilities across partners as the route map becomes clear and maintaining public support.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- Congratulating the team for excellent work
- Drivers' engagement was encouraging
- Feasibility of community bus
- Potential of a joined-up mobility map to create a seamless experience.
- Paying versus non-paying (bus pass) passengers
- Likelihood of delivering and developing a service covering west coast of Loch Lomond. Luss, Arrochar and Lochgoilhead.
- The excellent evidence base of the report

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- Benchmarking for sustainable transport
- Dynamic pricing
- Evaluation report. Will we use this evidence to put forward other proposals..

ACTION: KA to keep ISP in the loop with West Loch Lomond developments relating to Sustainable Transport [KA & ISP]

ACTION: ED to discuss with SD role of social enterprises and community transport re: transport sector capacity review proposed for 26/27 [ED & SD]

DECISION: Members noted the content of the report by majority vote.

Item 8: National Park Partnership Plan – 2024/25 Measures of Success Update

HR introduced the report and handed over to AM, who highlighted the following:

Thanks to the team who pulled this report together, giving our first annual update of the NPPP.

We will share and reflect on one year of reporting and in the new year we intend to use this as a basis for focused conversations with key delivery partners.

- Restoring Nature has had real success with woodland and peatland and succeeded their annual targets.
- Delivered significant wider nature restoration activity.
- Creating a low carbon place, engagement remains high and is up 40% on volunteer hours from the previous year. 2000 young people supported through outdoor learning.
- Successfully established the mobility partnership programme.
- Many measures are still being developed within the 'Greener way of living' however there have been multiple achievements including 14 communities completing their Local Place Plans and 4 community action hubs being established.
- Cost cutting themes, highlighting strong partner buy in and challenges over resourcing.

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Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- The format of the report is well laid out and covers all bases. Shows good progress.
- Partnership working priorities
- Next steps – can we strengthen the evidence based on green jobs.
- Herbivore Impact Assessment.
- Resilient communities
- Potential of obtaining data from the empty homes officers at local authorities.
- Green jobs methodology
- Resilient farming network
- Future years funding and risks
- Update on the National Lottery Heritage award.
- For areas less well-defined in the report, can we work more on high level measurable outcomes and outcome setting - what do we want to see more of/less of/where are we going.

HR noted thanks to all the team and staff who have worked on this report.

DECISION: Members noted the content of the report by majority vote.

Item 9: CEO Report

GW introduced the paper and highlighted parts of the report.

- Natural Environment Scotland Bill update including amendments to the National Park section.
- The government has been consulting on the draft environment strategy and land use strategy. Comments have been made and finalisation of these will be made in the new year.
- Update on visitor levy proposals and local authorities having different approaches to this. Talks of applying an amendment to legislation to apply a flat-rate as opposed to a percentage charge.

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- Update on West Highland Way Trust. Progress been made on transferring responsibility to the Trust as it establishes.
- Seasonal document produced about the Visitor Season and considerations being given to a more streamlined format.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- Progress on the introduction of a proposed Visitor Levy
- West Highland Way Trust – risks to the NPA
- Natural Environment Bill progress.

DECISION: Members agreed to note the content of the report by majority vote.

Item 10: Convener's Report

HR discussed the paper and highlighted the following to Members:

- Chairs forum taken place.
- Budget planning meeting taking place and HR and GW will attend.
- Special Board meeting taken place in November and a strategy session in September in Lochgoilhead. Thank you to those who attended.
- We have gone live on the public appointments website for new board members. Please advertise on networks. 5 January is the closing date.
- HR attended the 10 year celebration of the Great Trossachs Forest with NPA staff.
- 10:02.
- 1 December HR chaired invasive non-native species summit with partners Nature Scot, Scottish Wildlife Trust and Scottish Forum on National Capital and thanks to all staff who supported.
- Attended Killen the official opening of the pump track with ME and DF. Well done and thanks to DF for being the driving force in delivering this resource.
- If there is anything that members would like HR to attend and support, please let her know.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- Promoting the Board Ministerial Appointments process

Items and Actions

Item 11: 2025/26 Annual Operational Plan Progress Report

DS presented the paper and highlighted that there is an increase in deliverables that are behind schedule due to partner resources and internal capacity.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- Staff turnover, training and retention
- More insight on delays on digital strategy.
- Scots language obligations
- Discussion on damage to peatlands by invasive non-native species.

ACTION: AM to respond to CS re Scots language duty and how we will take this on board.

DECISION: Members noted the contents of the report by majority vote.

Item 12: Finance Report

MW took members through the paper and highlighted the following:

- Generated income exceeded budget. Planning fees remained below budget.
- Capital expenditure continued to be quite low.
- Peatland budget.
- Nature restoration budget.
- Capital expenditure has decreased.

Discussion and questions from Members followed. The discussion focused on:

- Main risks between now and the end of the financial year in terms of delivery.
- Planning fees.
- Budget will be discussed at the Board meeting in March.

DECISION: Members noted the contents of the report by majority vote.

Items and Actions

Item 14: Committee and Group Highlights

Planning and Access Committee – CC – Meeting in September and had general planning training, October was training for the Board on the Local Development Plan and November was a committee meeting. Next one is on 23rd February.

Audit and Risk Committee – DM – All actions from matters arising were closed. Presentation from Mazars. Annual reports and accounts were signed off. Internal Auditors visited and have a good relationship with our finance team. 2 pieces of work have been completed since the last meeting. 11 internal audit actions were reviewed, 3 have been closed and the remainder either partially closed or in progress at the moment. We will have a deep dive in March for unacceptable behaviour.

Futures Group – SD – Thank you to everyone who attended the last Futures Group session on ‘Climate adaptation and extreme weather events’ and thanks to our speakers. Next Futures Group session will take place on Tuesday 24 March 2026. Topic is Local Development Plan and themes like short-term letting. The committee will meet to discuss this further and plan on 13 January.

Countryside Trust – CS – Outgoing chief executive leaving soon and replacement identified – CS hoping to spend time with him following appointment. Delivery strategies-Wild Strathfillan has been very busy indeed. Getting to the end of the biggest delivery project-the NRF project. Hoping for lottery funding for Future Nature Landscape Connections bid. Plant and tree specialist nursery has been established. GTF agreements comes to an end in the near future. People focused groups around the park are continuing with huge support from the local communities and thanks to the Park for funding. 1-year-funding is difficult and looking to obtain longer-term agreements. HR thanked Sue for her work and wishes her well. HR will write on behalf of the board to thank her.

Local Access Forum – DF – Going well and thanks to the Access Team for comprehensive reports produced on activity going on around the Park. LAF asked to advise on an alternative route on a hill path.

ACTION – HR to write to Sue on behalf of the board to thank her for all her work and wish her well in her next role.

Item 15: Any Other Business

HR formally thanked William Sinclair, who has resigned from the board to take up a different role in Argyll and Bute Council. He has been a very active board member, sharing advice and views on various topics and has been part of Planning and

Items and Actions

Access and Audit and Risk Committees. Thank you for all contributions. HR will keep the Board updated on a new appointment to the Board.

ME also thanked William and wishes him well.

ACTION – HR will write to William to formally thank him.

Item 16: Date of next meeting

Monday 9 March 2026

Signed _____

Heather Reid, Convener

DRAFT