



# Future Nature Annual Report

## Agenda Item 8 – Appendix 1

### National Park Authority Board Meeting

09 March 2026

Paper for information

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# Future Nature

## ANNUAL REPORT

2025/6

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# Future Nature

## ANNUAL REPORT

Executive Summary

Future Nature 2025/6

## Executive Summary

### The Future Nature programme

Future Nature is an ambitious programme to tackle the effects of the global nature crisis happening here and now in Scotland’s first National Park. It aims to stop the decline and restore nature on a large scale. The programme uses a collaborative approach, working with partners from across the national park, to deliver a step-up in nature restoration.

### Our vision

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park is a resilient nature-rich National Park, where abundant wildlife and a healthy natural environment provide a wealth of benefits through an extensive, well-connected living network.

The Future Nature Route Map sets out the strategy for delivering the Future Nature programme and is structured around delivering two objectives – that we will reverse the decline in nature in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park by 2030 latest and ensure widespread restoration of nature across the National Park by 2040. This annual report provides an account of the work delivered during 2025/26 that contributes towards achieving these objectives and ultimately achieving the overall vision.

### RAG rating summary 2025/6

Green	High Amber	Low Amber	Red
Programme delivery	Partnership development	Existing nature – species	
Herbivores	Strategy development	Agriculture and forestry subsidies	
Peatland	Riparian INNS	Jobs and skills	
Landscape scale projects	Rhododendron	Community empowerment	
	Woodland expansion		
	River and wetland restoration		
	Existing nature – sites		
	Strategy and policy		
	Nature positive development		
	Regional Land Use Partnership		
	New funding models		
	Pro-nature behaviour		
	Nature-based visitor experiences		
	Education and outreach		
	Volunteering for nature		

We have seen positive progress this year. The Herbivores workstream moved from high-amber to green, ‘Programme delivery’ moved from low amber to green, ‘River and wetland restoration’ and ‘Existing nature – sites’ moved from low amber to high amber. ‘Jobs and skills’ is newly reported this year.

Key highlights from 2025/26 include £1 Million of Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) awarded to Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority (NPA) by Scottish Government, used to deliver 24 projects, so far, this financial year. The NPA Peatland ACTION team have put 604 hectares of degraded peat bog on the road to recovery, with another 302 hectares to be delivered by end of March 2026, and additional work by Scottish Water. Almost 4500 hours of Practical Conversation Volunteering took place, of which almost 3000 hours delivered projects for nature restoration, and more than 10,400 hours of engagement and visitor impact management was delivered by the Ranger Service.

### **RAG rating system**

To quantify progress in each area of the route map we have developed a RAG (Red, Amber, Green) rating system. This is based on two factors:

1. Progress on planned deliverables in the last 12 months
2. Overall progress towards 2030/2040 targets

For each theme in the route map, we have assigned a score between 1 and 4 for each of the above using the definitions below.

#### ***Progress on planned deliverables in the last 12 months:***

1	2	3	4
Little or no progress	Some progress	Good progress	Excellent progress
Key pieces of work are paused, stalled or cancelled this year	Some areas of progress but a number of key tasks are delayed or not progressed satisfactorily	Most areas of work are progressing on target to complete this year	All areas are on track and in some areas we have been able to do more than planned

**Overall progress towards 2030/2040 targets:**

1	2	3	4
Little or no progress	Some progress	Good progress	Excellent
We are unable to impact longer term systemic issues - we may be achieving business as usual - but we are not delivering step change	Positive signs are seen such as policy focus or effective working groups looking at key issues, but major uncertainty remains and on the ground things are largely still business as usual	New policy, legislation, structural or governance change is coming into place and starting to have an impact on the ground but there remains delay or uncertainty on the impact	New policy is in place and delivering major new step changes in pace and scale which is being realised in projects on the ground

These two scores are then multiplied together to give an overall rating indicating the level of overall progress made.

12 to 16	Green	Projects would only score green by getting good or excellent both this year and in overall progress
6 to 9	Yellow	This is a good score – it means there is both good progress in year and some level of step change - or vice versa
3 to 4	Amber	This likely means good progress in year - but little overall step change (though could be vice-versa)
1 to 2	Red	Means lack of in year and systemic progress



# Future Nature

## ANNUAL REPORT

### Full Report Future Nature 2025/6

This full report gives the details of all areas of the Future Nature Programme.

## Future Nature – overall strategy

### Partnership development

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **9**

**TREND:**



#### Key achievements

1. The Future Nature Operational Group continued to gather momentum and is increasingly providing opportunity for collaboration
2. The Future Nature Funding Group supported the delivery of a successful bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections

The Future Nature governance structure is now well established, consisting of the Operational Group, Fundraising Group, and Scientific Advisory Group. All groups continue to meet providing quarterly updates on strategic progress, operational delivery and priorities, and spotlight sessions.

The Scientific Advisory Group has provided valuable advice to the three landscape scale initiatives, The Great Trossachs Forest, Wild Strathfillan, and Loch Lomond Rainforest, and continues to provide a valuable link between the National Park and academia and research. For example, Wild Strathfillan supported several MSc and BSc students in placements and their final year projects.

The Fundraising Group continues to provide horizon scanning and collaboration opportunities for funding, and in particular supported the bid to National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections fund.

### Strategy development

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **9**

**TREND:**



#### Key achievements

1. The National Park Trees and Woodlands Delivery Plan was given formal approval
2. A Rhododendron Strategy for the National Park was produced
3. The Herbivore Delivery Plan and Position Statement for the National Park was published

A successful year for strategy development saw the formal approval of the National Park's Trees and Woodlands Delivery Plan, providing a steer for where to prioritise activities to support woodland and forestry activity (See section 1.2.1). The National Park Authority (NPA) appointed Land Use Consultants (LUC) to produce a Rhododendron Strategy for the National Park (see section 1.1.2). The National Park's Herbivore Statement and Delivery Plan were also published (see section 1.1.1), and

progress was made on producing a delivery plan for improving the condition of designated sites within the National Park.

## Programme delivery

**RAG rating** Annual progress: 4/4 Overall progress: 3/4 Overall rating: 12

**TREND:**



### Key achievements

1. Scottish Government awarded £1 Million of Nature Restoration Fund to the NPA
2. Delivery of 24 (and potentially 6 more) nature restoration projects across the National Park
3. A successful development phase bid submitted to National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections resulted in over £600,000 of funding received

### Nature Restoration Fund projects

The NPA was awarded £1.275m from Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) to deliver nature restoration activity across the National Park. Land managers, communities, charities and agencies received funding for projects that delivered against Future Nature Route Map objectives. Twenty-four projects have been funded and are in delivery and six more are in the pipeline to be completed by the end of this financial year. Outputs include:

- 15,150 native trees planted
- 7,500m of broken deer fence at altitude removed
- 6,600m of stock fencing to protect hedge, tree and riparian woodland planting from grazing.
- 1,940 m of new or restored hedgerow
- 400 Ha of self-seeded Sitka and Norway Spruce regeneration removed along with INNS from new native woodland creation sites located on old plantations previously harvested.
- 250 Ha of woodland pasture created
- 200 mature trees protected (riparian & wood pasture)
- 40 riparian invasive non-native species sites treated
- 5 venison larders (three created, and two upgraded), these included new approaches such as community interest company and mobile trailers
- 4 key indicator and iconic species; Pearl Bordered Fritillary butterfly habitat creation; Lamprey distribution research; Freshwater Pearl Mussel translocation research; and Water Vole monitoring group.
- 3 landscape-scale initiatives directly supported: Forth Climate Forest focused on the development of woodland creation and restoration projects, and identifying tree planting opportunities through Farm Woodland assessments; Wild Strathfillan concentrating on non-commercially viable felling of conifer blocks; The Great Trossachs Forest focus on conservation grazing, and INNS removal.
- 2 conservation grazing no fence cattle collar projects

- 1 Plant Nursery set-up costs to ensure long-term security for seed collection and native plant availability.

### **Future Nature in our Place Programme**

The National Park Place Programme is the co-ordinated multi-year strategic capital investment programme for the National Park's visitor infrastructure. It prioritises benefits for people, nature and climate, and aims to provide higher quality facilities that reflect a nature and climate conscious, and sustainable balance, between local needs and visitor demand.

In 2025/26 activity to benefit nature focussed on planning and design for future delivery, with site work plans being delayed. This activity included internal publication of the Visitor Infrastructure Design Guide and the development of designs for several sites where benefits for nature are fully integrated.

The Visitor Infrastructure Design Guide assesses all design principles and features against benefits for climate and nature. It helps to raise standards and ensure high quality and consistent design of visitor infrastructure that is owned and/ or managed by the NPA. It also aims to influence the work of other public sector partners within the National Park. Designs for sites include detailed plans at Taret, Falls of Falloch, Rowardennan, Balloch, and the Balloch Pierhead Action Plan.

### **Estates**

NPA Estates have produced a Planned Preventative Maintenance program that adopts a nature positive approach to support Future Nature outcomes. This includes adopting simple consistent site assessments focused on meeting people needs, and nature needs, and nature first maintenance such as a hibernaculum at Firkin Point, and wildflower meadow at Balmaha Visitor Centre.

### **National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections**

A joint bid by the NPA, RSPB Scotland, and Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust to the National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections stream has led to £676,137.00 awarded to bid partners to develop Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections (see section 2.1.5).

## Pathway 1: Act

### 1.1. Key threats

#### 1.1.1. Herbivores

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **4/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **12**

**TREND:**



#### **Key achievements**

1. The National Park's Herbivore Position Statement and Herbivore Delivery Plan published
2. The National Park Authority launched the Deer Managers Training Grant and Deer Management Incentive Scheme
4. Significant investment into venison larder and processing infrastructure

The Herbivore Position Statement and Herbivore Delivery Plan have both been published this financial year. The Statement provides a long-term, strategic approach, while the Delivery Plan describes current work underway and the next steps needed. The Delivery Plan has been developed between Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS), NatureScot, Scottish Forestry, the Association of Deer Management Groups (ADMG), and the NPA. It will be a rolling document, which will continue to evolve with partners and be updated on an annual basis.

The NPA launched the Deer Managers Training Grant in July 2025, and since then 32 grants have been approved for deer management related training courses (almost £8350.50 of funding). The aim of the grant is to help provide a skilled workforce to facilitate sustainable deer management in the National Park through encouraging skill development of current deer managers and enabling necessary training for people who'd like to get involved in deer management.

The Deer Management Incentive Scheme launched on 1 October 2025 and aims to encourage higher female and juvenile deer culls in the National Park by offering a financial incentive during the female cull season. There are currently 26 land holdings enrolled in the scheme, covering 20.5% of land in the National Park.

The East Loch Lomond Community Larder project now has a chiller trailer (owned and maintained by NatureScot and funded by the NPA). The trailer is located at a farm in East Loch Lomond and will be used as a trial 'community larder' for deer managers in the area.

Funding was also made available to Deer Management Groups to improve venison larder and processing infrastructure. The NPA have agreed funding for four projects in 2025/26 (three in the north of National Park, and one in Cowal). NatureScot and the NPA are also supporting Herbivore Impact Assessment (HIA) surveys on the Loch Lomond Islands.

The seven Deer Management Groups that are predominantly within the National Park, are all engaging with NatureScot and the NPA. NatureScot provide specific support to three of these groups (Cowal, West Loch Lomond, and Loch Lomond Islands), and both NatureScot and the NPA provide support to run the East Loch Lomond Land Management Forum to ensure effective deer management delivery at a landscape scale.

The NPA continue to work with the Common Ground Forum, a group of voluntary individuals and organisations who have come together to deliver positive change for upland deer management in Scotland. This has included taking part in the Forester’s event in Cowal, which explored key issues and perspectives regarding sustainable deer management in woodlands, and how important working collaboratively is, now, and into the future. The NPA are also working with the Common Ground Forum to explore how they could improve engagement and working relations between key individuals within a specific Deer Management Group.

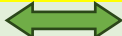
As part of the National Park’s bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (see section 1.2.6 Landscape scale projects), bid partners developed grazing and venison workstreams that will help to further develop and deliver the work of the Herbivore Programme.

### 1.1.2. INNS

This Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) workstream continues to be delivered across the National Park in partnership with a range of organisations, in particular the River and Fisheries Trusts.

Note that the decision was made within the Future Nature Operational Group that it would be helpful to split out reporting on riparian INNS and rhododendron to distinguish the levels of progress on different areas of INNS. Note that grey squirrels and mink are referenced within the species reporting.

#### Riparian INNS

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **9**  
TREND: 

#### Key achievements

1. Over 700 locations mapped and monitored for riparian INNS in 2025
2. Twenty-four per cent of known sites with riparian INNS were recorded as being eradicated
3. Forty-four per cent recorded as decreasing and only 1% as increasing

Throughout the National Park, this coordinated programme of riparian INNS control continues to be delivered at a catchment scale in partnership with a range of organisations in particular the River and Fisheries Trusts. Ongoing monitoring and

control of these plants at locations within the upper catchments remains a high priority along with locations within protected sites such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).

Over seven hundred locations in the National Park that are known to have riparian INNS were monitored in 2025. A total of 168 (24%) sites were recorded as eradicated with a further 306 (44%) showing a decrease.

The Argyll Fisheries Trust, Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust, and the Forth Rivers Trust have continued to deliver a comprehensive programme of monitoring and control for riparian INNS across the National Park.

The Forth Rivers Trust completed a programme of monitoring and control throughout the River Teith and River Forth catchments, including surveying of Loch Doine and Loch Voil in Balquhiddy Glen. The Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust completed a programme of monitoring and control throughout the Blane Water, Endrick Water and River Leven catchments. Argyll Fisheries Trust also completed a programme of monitoring and control of plants on the River Goil, River Eachaig and the Lettermay Burn, as well as carrying out a survey of the River Cur and Loch Eck.

The NPA Nature and Land Use team, with support from the NPA Ranger Service and volunteers, continue to carry out monitoring and control of all riparian INNS in the catchments of the River Falloch, River Fillan, River Dochart, Ogle Burn, Kendrum Burn, Loch Earn and East Loch Lomond. A survey of Loch Achray and Loch Venachar was also completed.

The NPA Ranger Service engaged Volunteers, Young Volunteers, Outreach Groups and Junior Rangers in monitoring and control of Himalayan balsam along several catchments including the River Forth, Loch Venachar, Loch Achray, River Turk, East Loch Lomond and West Loch Lomond. 12 practical sessions were delivered for 32 Volunteers who invested 58hrs to clearing the equivalent 7000m<sup>2</sup> of Himalayan Balsam at key sites across the park.

The NPA Estates Team monitor and control all riparian INNS locations on NPA-owned or managed sites.

This active restoration of riverside, lochside, and freshwater habitats has improved water and wetland connectivity and provided important ecological linkages to the surrounding wider landscape of the National Park. Removal of riparian invasive non-native plant species has helped to stabilise riverbanks against erosion, reduce the effects of diffuse pollution, improve water quality, and provide better habitats for wildlife.

## Rhododendron

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **9**  
**TREND:** 

### Key achievements

1. The Rhododendron Strategy for the National Park produced
2. Rhododendron locations have been recorded on NPA INNS app
3. Secured National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections funding to develop a National Park Rhododendron programme

The focus for Rhododendron this year has been strategic rather than operational. The NPA commissioned Land Use Consultants (LUC) to produce a Rhododendron Strategy for the National Park. The purpose of the strategy is to support Future Nature Partners in taking a more strategic, landscape-scale approach to invasive rhododendron control. It identifies the actions required to do this and strategic priority areas for control and habitat restoration. The strategy covers the whole of the National Park but focuses on the three landscape scale restoration areas identified in the NPA's Future Nature Route Map. These are Loch Lomond Rainforest, Wild Strathfillan, and The Great Trossachs Forest. Next steps are to turn the Strategy into an actionable delivery plan.

Survey work has been a further focus for Rhododendron this year. As part of Loch Lomond Rainforest (see section 1.2.6), RSK Biocensus were commissioned to undertake rainforest condition surveys across numerous sites around Loch Lomond, and part of their methodology was to map the presence of Rhododendron at these sites. In addition to this, drone surveys are being trialled to map presence of Rhododendron at Glenfalloch Estate and at Trossachs Pier, Loch Katrine. Development work such as this are vital to ensure a strategic and well-designed approach to Rhododendron removal at landscape scale. This will be the focus of 2026/2027 where funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund will be used to develop a Rhododendron workstream that focuses on delivery across our three landscape areas (see section 1.2.6).

Some important delivery work did take place, with the FLS rainforest team focusing on Rhododendron removal primarily in the Loch Lomond and Loch Goil catchments to provide support to landscape scale projects. The FLS rainforest team noted their strong preference for the usage of stem injection to control Rhododendron, with high efficacy and almost no regrowth noted from treated stems.

The NPA Ranger Service delivered 20 practical sessions to remove *Rp* at priority sites across the park, including continuing the focussed effort at Blairbeich Raised Bog. 74 Volunteers supported these sessions with around 250hrs of *Rp* removal.

### Self-seeded exotic conifers

Removal of self-seeded Sitka has been delivered by several Future Nature Partners this year including sapling removal at Tyndrum Community Woodlands by Strathfillan

Community Development Trust and Wild Strathfillan volunteers, and Sitka spruce regeneration removal from Moin Eich where volunteers cleared approximately eight hectares.

Forestry and Land Scotland have also undertaken works this year to remove Sitka spruce regeneration at West Arklet, Letter, Brenachoile, and Ben A'an. These plans form part of a wider longer term and ongoing Forestry and Land Scotland management plan for The Great Trossachs Forest.

The NPA Ranger Service delivered three sessions at Braeval removing 300 self-seeded Sitka seedlings and saplings.

A planning and delivery approach for self-seeded exotic conifers on strategically important sites will be reviewed as part of the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections (see section 1.2.6) development phase in 2026/27.

### 1.1.3. Water quality

*Reported under River and Wetland Restoration 1.2.3*

### 1.1.4. Climate change

Tackling climate change is central to the National Park Partnership Plan 2024-29, committing us to Paris Agreement-aligned climate action at the highest level of our organisation. Our aim is to become a Net Zero National Park by no later than 2035, and thereafter a carbon 'sink' supporting the level of change needed for the UK to meet its internal obligations and Scotland becoming a Net Zero Nation by 2045.

While there is no specific 'Climate Change' programme of delivery within Future Nature, everything that Future Nature Partners do, and is reported here, contributes to our aim of becoming Net Zero by 2035.

## 1.2. Key networks

### 1.2.1. Woodland expansion

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **2/4** Overall rating: **6**

**TREND:**



#### Key achievements

1. The NPA supported and guided development of three large-scale woodland creation proposals
2. Drafted applicant guidance for Environmental Impact Assessment Screening Opinion Request (EIA SOR) and assisted small conservation organisations prepare their EIA SOR submissions.

There has been some small-scale delivery of woodland creation activity in 2025/26 in the National Park, around 167 hectares. Smaller examples include Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) funded schemes (Mor Wood, Gartmore, 13.48ha) and other small-scale non-FGS schemes: the Crom Allt gorge montane woodland (6 hectares), and small-scale woodland creation at Auchleskine Estate, and Green Routes land at Gartmore. Wild Strathfillan created 2 hectares of new native woodland at Auchroch House Farm.

Forth Climate Forest have also contributed to woodland creation activity and have been administering the National Park's tree planting grant. This has funded planting of riparian woodland on the River Teith in Callander by the Forth Rivers Trust and Callander Community Development Trust (2.58ha), and individual trees on farmland near Balquhiddy by The Conservation Volunteers (TCV). Forth Climate Forest have also secured funding to map opportunities for further montane woodland restoration within the Wild Strathfillan project area.

Further woodland creation activity includes the FLS high elevation planting on ground above the Rest and Be Thankful, utilising a range of native species which will help slope stability and create additional habitat above the existing tree line. The project was delivered over four phases (170 hectares total) planted, with 36ha planted in 2025/26. Also, establishment of native woodland at Loch Katrine continues, working in partnership with Scottish Water to deliver 74 hectares of new planting with a further 32 hectares of natural regeneration claimed.

The 2025/26 woodland creation figure of 167-hectares, however, belies a significant amount of project development taking place behind the scenes by forestry agents and which is a necessary step in reaching operational delivery. Larger-scale woodland creation schemes have a long gestation period, often around two years, and require substantial investment from owners to develop a proposal. Such projects are subject to variables which influence owner commitment to woodland creation. As a result, some years may see well below the Future Nature target of 400 hectares woodland creation per year, while other years this will be exceeded.

In addition to woodland creation delivery, much project development has taken place behind the scenes by forestry agents, which is a necessary step in reaching operational delivery. Four projects make up for much of this development – which have not been delivered yet and therefore do not count to this year's woodland creation figures – and include Glenfalloch Estate (approximately 1100 hectares), Luss Estate (approximately 100 hectares), Glenogle Estate (approximately 170 hectares) and Woodland Trust's Glen Finglas Estate (120ha). The Glenfalloch Estate and Glen Finglas Estate projects are purely native woodland, while the other two combine native with commercial conifer. The NPA and Scottish Forestry have been involved in planning for the projects, providing feedback and guidance which has been taken on board by forestry agents to arrive at good designs which will address habitat connectivity and landscape fit.

The Trees and Woodland Delivery Plan was given formal approval in 2025/26, providing a steer for where to prioritise activities to support woodland and forestry activity. Three of the delivery actions are highlighted here.

Action 4 within the delivery plan saw the Tree Planting Grant (TPG) for the National Park taken on and run by Forth Climate Forest (FCF), with funding provided by the NPA via the Nature Restoration Fund. Whilst they operate only within the Forth catchment, it was agreed FCF would run the TPG for the entire NP area. The TPG is being run alongside the Free Farm Woodland Assessments provided by Scottish Forestry and being promoted by FCF within the Forth catchment area of the National Park. To date, there have been three successful applications to the TPG which will all be delivered before the end of the 25/26 financial year.

Action 7 has involved support of communities in relation to forestry projects. This began with improved understanding between the Sustainable Development Adviser and the Trees and Woodland Adviser. The improved understanding allowed for community-related advice to be incorporated into NPA feedback on forestry consultations, whether woodland creation or management/planning of existing forests. In a couple of specific instances this has allowed the NPA to intervene and help support understanding and successful resolution between forestry interests and community expectations.

Small organisations with little or no forestry experience often struggle with the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening Opinion Request (SOR), a statutory piece of screening required before any woodland creation is undertaken in the National Park. Action 8 saw the development of a fully instructed EIA SOR to walk applicants through the form and provide the required information. The form with its integrated guidance has been supported by Scottish Forestry. Also, with support from Scottish Forestry, the NPA Trees and Woodland Adviser has been able to complete the EIA SOR on behalf of applicants using the information provided by them. The result of these efforts is that small but highly beneficial woodland creation projects can now proceed with relative ease.

Elsewhere in the Trees and Woodland Delivery Plan, the following progress has been made:

- Regular liaison with forestry agents and FLS to maintain relationships and provide support.
- Development of a mapping tool to capture non-FGS woodland creation, including Tree Planting Grant funded, projects in the NP

Finally, the FLS and EU-funded SUPERB project was brought to a successful conclusion in December 2025 with a stakeholder event hosting project partners from across Europe at the Lodge visitor centre, Aberfoyle. Over the past four years the project has delivered three trial sites; high elevation planting for slope stabilisation in Glen Croe, natural flood management comprising a series of timber bunds and leaky dams, as well as riparian planting around the Allt Glas burn in East Loch Ard and a series of chrono-sequenced continuous cover forestry plots across Achray and Strathyre forests. Sites will continue to be monitored and available as demonstrations.

## 1.2.2. Peatland

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **4/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **12**  
**TREND:** 

### Key achievements

Over 600 hectares of degraded and underperforming peatland has been put on the road-to-recovery (as of 22 January 2026) with a projected total of 908 hectares for financial year end.

The National Park Authority is one of the delivery partners for the national Peatland ACTION programme, which uses Scottish Government funding to undertake peatland restoration across Scotland. Within the National Park, Peatland ACTION officers have been working closely with land managers to target and improve areas of deep, broken peat. During 2025/26, 604 hectares of degraded and underperforming peatland has been restored and put back on the road to recovery. Restoration delivery is complete on five projects, with two more currently in the delivery phase and another due to start in February 2026 with a projected total of 908 hectares for financial year end (Please note figures correct as of 22 January and will be finalised at year end).

Estate	Project name	Hectares restored (to 22 January 2026)
Auchlyne	Allt Riobainn	115
Auchessan	Phase 2	196
Glenfalloch	Loch Oss	169
Ledcharrie	Coire nam Meann	64.4
Glen Finglas	Phase 5	60.4
<b>Total</b>		<b>604 ha</b>

Works to be delivered in early 2026 include the final phase of peatland restoration at Glen Finglas. It also includes the first phase of restoring 57 hectares of degraded peat bog on Ben Lomond, including up to 10km of peat hag reprofiling, and up to 5.7km of grip blocking. Also, up to 85 hectares of peat bog is to be restored on Comer Estate before end of the financial year.

### 1.2.3. River and wetland restoration

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **2/4** Overall rating: **6**

**TREND:**



#### **Key achievements**

1. Consultant appointed to produce Water Delivery Plan
2. Fisheries and Rivers Trusts continue to deliver projects to improve water quality and habitat condition
3. Woodland Trust Scotland initiated a pond restoration programme at Glen Finglas

The NPA is in process of producing a Water Delivery Plan for the National Park to compliment Peatland ACTION plans and the Trees and Woodland Strategy and delivery plan. The Water Delivery Plan will review work to date, including a technical review of existing data and discussions with key delivery partners. A delivery plan will then be produced for the coming five years and looking forward to 2045. The Water Delivery Plan will be completed by end of March 2026.

With regards to operational delivery, the Forth Rivers Trust Kelty Water Project created 380 metres of species-rich hedgerow and areas of wood pasture as part of a farm-scale woodland creation project, enhancing habitat connectivity and landscape resilience. Riparian woodland condition was improved along the Kelty Water by installing tree pods to protect 180 trees from grazing pressure, supporting successful establishment. Finally, two carefully designed fencing schemes were installed to prevent livestock poaching, reducing sediment input to the watercourse and improving water quality and habitat condition.

The Forth Rivers Trust (FRT) Freshwater Pearl Mussel project delivered targeted habitat enhancement works at Witsend Farm and Stroneslaney, Strathyre, linked to freshwater pearl mussel recovery, including planting 500 native trees to improve riparian shading, bank stability and water quality.

Argyll Fisheries Trust (AFT) have completed green bank revetment as part of the ongoing habitat restoration and monitoring work on heavily eroded banks of the River Goil. On the River Eachaig AFT reduced riverbank erosion through 50m of coarse woody revetment and establishing new fenced riparian buffer zones including planting 1,500 native trees, improving bankside cover for fish.

Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust (LLFT) completed riverbank restoration on the Fruin Water and tributaries by planting 4,200 native trees and installing stock fencing to reduce bank erosion, improving water quality and increasing biodiversity. Newly installed baffles within the Fruin catchment have increased water depths during periods of low flow, improving access to additional spawning and refuge habitat.

Wild Strathfillan successfully obtained planning permission to create a wildlife pond at the Colin Burt Reserve, Killin. Additionally, a leaky dam was installed along one of many

drainage ditches at the reserve, which was an instant success and very quickly began to pool water. It is hoped that this will encourage the Beavers, already present on site, to create further pools to help land managers in their aim to rewet the wetland meadow habitat.



Photo credit: Graeme Auty, National Park Authority

Finally, Woodland Trust Scotland initiated a pond restoration programme at Glen Finglas, with the restoration of one pond already completed and starting to re-colonise naturally.

#### 1.2.4. Existing nature – sites

**RAG rating** Annual progress: 3/4 Overall progress: 2/4 Overall rating: 6

**TREND:**



##### Key achievements

1. New partnership between Naturetrek and RSPB Scotland through Naturetrek's acquisition of Stuckendroin (including Ben Vorlich SSSI).
2. Pollochro woods SSSI (RSPB Inversnaid and Glenfalloch Estate) moved from declining to recovering unfavourable condition.
3. NPA progressed Designated Sites Delivery Plan for National Park.

Progress has been made this year in producing a delivery plan for Designated Sites across the National Park. This is being led by the NPA, with input from Future Nature Partners and land managers. The purpose of the delivery plan is to get a comprehensive and informed understanding of the condition of all designated sites, and their features, within the National Park, and to work with land managers to set out a plan for


management actions that will help to move any unfavourable sites into ‘favourable’ or ‘favourable recovering’ condition.

RSPB Scotland have had major positive developments, including a new partnership with Naturetrek, who are the new landowners at Stuckendroin. This site, which RSPB Scotland will manage on behalf of Naturetrek, contains Ben Vorlich SSSI, notified for its alpine flush, sub-alpine wet heath, and tall herb ledge habitats, and is a key, strategically positioned site in restoring Loch Lomond’s rainforest. Last year also saw the completion of breeding bird and National Vegetation Classification baselines at the site which will inform the first management plan. Additionally, RSPB Scotland’s Inversnaid reserve formalised their Biodiversity Enhancement agreement with SSEN Transmission. The partnership will deliver upland habitat restoration, strategic herbivore management and invasive species control across the site. Furthermore, Pollochro woods SSSI which lies partly within the RSPB Inversnaid reserve, has moved from ‘declining’ to ‘recovering unfavourable condition’. Herbivore Impact Assessments show a trend of improvement over the last 5 years.

Woodland Trust Scotland’s Glen Finglas Estate finalised their current phase of woodland expansion plans, extending to around 120 hectares of new native woodland. The survey work is completed, and a Forestry Grant Scheme application should be submitted in 2026 for phased planting over the next three years.

Finally, the NPA and NatureScot have progressed updating the Inchcailloch Management Plan. This is a 10-year management plan which will reflect Inchcailloch’s place within Loch Lomond National Nature Reserve, the National Park, the rainforest zone, and its legislative requirements as a SSSI.

### 1.2.5. Existing nature – species

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **2/4** Overall progress: **2/4** Overall rating: **4**  
**TREND:** 

#### Key achievements

1. RSPB Scotland ran a successful trial using thermal drones to detect lekking Black grouse
2. 177 grey squirrels dispatched on Loch Lomond islands through a Saving Scotland’s Red Squirrels project
3. Another successful year for the Forth River’s Trust Freshwater Pearl Mussel programme

There has been a good amount of delivery work for species in 2025/26, however strategic development work is still to be progressed. Highlights of delivery work from partners are presented below.

A survey visit to A'Chrois (a smaller peak next to Beinn Narnain) by National Trust Scotland (NTS), and subsequent liaison with FLS, has highlighted the extent and importance of a population of Downy willow (*Salix lapponum*) at this site. Permission was granted for collection of cuttings of male plants where NTS collected seven cuttings, of which five successfully brought on, and the collection of seed by FLS. This important population will re-establish long term viability for the population of Downy willow at Ptarmigan, Ben Lomond.

The Forth Rivers Trust Freshwater Pearl Mussel programme has successfully completed another year of artificial encystment for a declining population. This continued work bolsters the breeding population and monitors how well the mussel population is doing, further protecting them from external pressures. This programme has, and with further funding will hopefully continue to, boost the population of freshwater pearl mussel on the River Teith which benefits wildlife, climate, and people now, and for generations to come.

RSPB Scotland trialled the use of thermal drones at the RSPB Inversnaid reserve to detect lekking Black grouse, with fantastic results. The drone was used to locate and count a new lek that was discovered and was also instrumental in capturing calling males from another part of the reserve that is difficult to see due to establishing woodland. Had this drone not been used, only four calling males would have been recorded, but with the drone they were able to record eleven calling males. The drone was also easily able to detect individual birds including cuckoo, willow warbler, redstart, from hundreds of meters away. A report has been produced and can be provided on request.

The Loch Lomond Bat Group has had a busy year with flight surveys and bat box checks across multiple sites. Key highlights include recordings of 340 and 355 Soprano pipistrelle bats on the 8th and 20th June 2025 respectively at the Balmaha Visitor Centre, and another 34 and 185 recorded on same dates at the Rowardennan car park facilities. Waterways surveys at Balloch recorded 65 and 185 Daubenton's bats on 11th and 19th August 2025 respectively. Waterways survey carried out by Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust volunteers also counted 144 and 106 Daubenton's bats on 14th and 25th August 2025. Surveys were also conducted at the Ben Lomond ranger base, SCENE grounds, and in Cashel Forest, where smaller numbers of bats were recorded.

Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels (SSRS) have shared finalised grey squirrel data from the Lomond Islands eradication programme. You can hear about the project via a [Scottish Wildlife Trust podcast](#) (from 19:20) that interviews Meja Vesterlund, Monitoring & Control Officer with SSRS. During the summer, 177 grey squirrels were dispatched from the islands. This project, supported by the Ranger Service Boat Team, has given insight into the spatial distribution of grey squirrels on the islands, helping to identify hot spots for trapping during the next phase increasing efficiency.

Species highlights from The Great Trossachs Forest include the Trossachs Water Vole Project receiving crucial funding to ensure project sustainability, including kit and

monitoring equipment such as rafts, cameras and traps. Also, existing Pearl Bordered Fritillary (PBF) habitat was expanded through scrub clearance on suitable burnside and wet flushes.

Summary information gathered on raptors have been collated from a number of sources covering trends within approximately the last 10 including Argyll Raptor Study Group, the Scottish Raptor Monitoring Scheme, and key individuals. Birds of prey and ravens appear to be present in moderate, stable, levels across the National Park, with increasing numbers of golden eagles and sea eagle sightings in the west. The only notable decline appears to be in peregrine falcon numbers, while hen harriers are only present in very low numbers, possibly declining, around most of the NP, with the exception of Argyll where numbers seem to be a bit higher and stable.

### 1.2.6. Landscape scale projects

**RAG rating** Annual progress: 4/4 Overall progress: 4/4 Overall rating: 16

**TREND:**



#### Key achievements

1. Loch Lomond Rainforest secured over £90,000 for rainforest habitat surveys
2. Wild Strathfillan delivered numerous projects in their final year of the NRF funded project 'From Lochside to Mountain Top'.
3. Nineteen decision-makers across 16 key stakeholder organisations attended The Great Trossachs Forest 10-year National Nature Reserve milestone event

A major achievement for all three landscape initiatives this year was securing £676,137 from the National Lottery Heritage Fund's Landscape Connections. This development phase grant will be vital for developing a host of programs that will work together to restore the National Park's Woodland habitats. See section 2.1.5 for more information on the funding award.

#### Wild Strathfillan

Wild Strathfillan is in its final year of the Nature Restoration Fund (NRF) project 'From Lochside to Mountain Top' and has delivered numerous nature restoration projects. This includes fencing the Crom Allt gorge at Scotland's Rural College (SRUC) Kirkton Farm to provide arctic alpine plants protection from grazing herbivores, native woodland creation at Auchreoch House Farm.

SRUC hosted a visit to Kirkton and Auchtertyre farm near Crianlarich as part of the DIGI rangeland project to explore how to integrate biodiversity onto the farm and develop techniques to measure outcomes using innovative technology. Wild Strathfillan was invited to discuss with the partners about ongoing biodiversity monitoring in the area.

The NPA Ranger Service delivered 20 practical sessions across Wild Strathfillan, engaging 107 volunteers.

A major development in Wild Strathfillan was progressing the specialist plant nursery at the RSPB Loch Lomond reserve. This nursery will be used to grow threatened, rare, and absent species of flora to support nature restoration projects. The Wild Strathfillan and NRF funded tree nursery at Glenfalloch also continues to be a success, and trees from this nursery will be planted as part of the Glenfalloch native woodland creation scheme noted in section 1.2.1 above.

### **The Great Trossachs Forest**

The Great Trossachs Forest work for nature, people and the future delivered positive progress across several work areas. This included establishing baselines for monitoring Black grouse, continued monitoring for Pearl-bordered fritillary, supporting Stirling University on their Water vole project, developing approaches towards conservation grazing, and continuing their programme of invasive non-native species control.

The Great Trossachs Forest also delivered an engaging and well-attended workshop on rainforest lichens and bryophytes. This workshop was delivered in collaboration with Plantlife Scotland and engaged 49 people from 23 organisations.

Finally, a condition report for The Great Trossachs Path was produced.

### **Loch Lomond Rainforest**


Loch Lomond Rainforest completed a development phase with funding from Scottish Government's NRF, administered by NatureScot. The NPA were awarded over £90,000.00 to undertake rainforest habitat condition surveys at multiple sites around Loch Lomond and produce habitat management plans. These plans will be used during the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections development phase to develop rainforest restoration projects at sites within the Loch Lomond Rainforest initiative area. Additionally, the NPA continued to grow their relationship with the Alliance for Scotland's Rainforest (ASR) and worked closely with Our Rainforest Futures (ORF) to ensure Loch Lomond Rainforest development plans aligned with the huge amount of development work ORF has already completed.

Several land managers within the rainforest zone have continued to undertake positive management for nature, and rainforest more specifically, including RSPB Scotland who were recently appointed to manage Stuckendroin Estate. RSPB Scotland were successful in their application to the Scottish Government's Rainforest Restoration Fund, administered by NatureScot and coordinated by ASR. They were awarded funding to part-fund a new Site Manager, who will lead the development of a restoration-focused management plan, coordinate monitoring and surveys, and design a programme of practical restoration work. Funding will also be used to undertake a drone survey of deer. In addition to this, they have submitted an Expression of Interest to NatureScot for NRF development phase funding to undertake comprehensive surveys across their site to inform management recommendations for habitat restoration.

## Pathway 2: Facilitate

### 2.1. Mainstreaming nature-friendly processes and practice

#### 2.1.1. Strategy and policy


<b>RAG rating</b>	Annual progress: <b>3/4</b>	Overall progress: <b>3/4</b>	<b>Overall rating: 9</b>
<b>TREND:</b>			
<b>Key achievements</b>			
1. Future Nature continued to develop as the delivery vehicle for the National Park Partnership Plan			
2. A Rivers & Fisheries Trust shared vision for our rivers in the National Park drafted			

The NPA published its Herbivore Position Statement, setting out ambitions for herbivore management towards the objective, “To work collaboratively with land managers to ensure sustainable local businesses thrive whilst reducing overall herbivore pressure where required, allowing widespread natural recovery and expansion of native woodlands, and the protection of fragile peat soils, wetlands and other land use interests”.

The Herbivore Delivery Plan covers a 5-year period, from 2025 to 2030 and sets out the actions that the NPA and its partners will deliver and how that approach will develop over the next five years to progress the realisation of the Herbivore Position Statement’s vision and objectives.

Water is a basic building block in all our ecosystems, affecting all our habitats and species and is equally affected by the land uses which surround it. The NPA facilitated a shared vision of Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust, Argyll Fisheries Trust and Forth Rivers Trust focused on riparian INNS control and a landscape scale and habitat approach to our rivers in the National Park. This supported the brief for a National Park Water Delivery Plan (see 1.2.3 River and Wetland restoration).

#### 2.1.2. Nature positive development

<b>RAG rating</b>	Annual progress: <b>3/4</b>	Overall progress: <b>3/4</b>	<b>Overall rating: 9</b>
<b>TREND:</b>			
<b>Key achievements</b>			
1. Work commenced on the restoration of 218 hectares of upland habitat at RSPB Inversnaid			
2. A woodland management plan has been secured for Inchconnachan			
3. Ecological advice on 125 planning consultations was given			
4. Four Tree Preservation Orders reviewed			

Work to secure biodiversity enhancement through individual planning applications continues and this has included the first significant off-site biodiversity enhancement project at RSPB Inversnaid as part of the refurbishment of the Sloy-Windyhill overhead line by SSEN Transmission. A woodland management plan has also been secured for Inchconnachan as part of a development on the island. This plan will protect and enhance the condition of the woodland habitat in the long-term through the eradication on invasive non-native species and the promotion of the natural regeneration by native species. Discussions are ongoing regarding the biodiversity enhancement measures for other large developments including the Dunoon to Loch Long overhead line replacement project and Sloy pumped hydro storage scheme.

Targeted biodiversity enhancement guidance for small-scale developments is being prepared to maximise the biodiversity benefits from the most common types of development in the National Park. It is anticipated that this will be published later in 2026.

Work on the new Local Development Plan (LDP) commenced with the production of the Evidence Report which will inform the preparation of the new LDP. The key implications of the report are that the new LDP will need to identify where nature restoration can take place and support biodiversity enhancement in new development. Embedding these principles in the new LDP will be a key focus in the coming year.


The LDP Call for Land, Sites and Ideas was launched in late January and this will help to gauge interest from land managers in supporting nature restoration and climate adaptation. This will include land managers who are potentially interested in working with developers to deliver nature restoration in situations where developers are unable to deliver biodiversity enhancements on their own sites.

The NPA have sought to influence the development of the Scottish biodiversity metric by sharing our experience of some of the challenges of using existing biodiversity metrics in the National Park with the NatureScot team developing the metric. Feedback was also provided to NatureScot on the proposed approach for recognising interventions that would contribute to strategic nature restoration objectives.

Ecological advice on 125 planning consultations has secured mitigation measures for protected species, protected sites, woodland and watercourses.

Four Tree Preservation Orders (TPO) have been reviewed; one has already been confirmed and the other three are on track to be confirmed in 2025/26. Work on a fourth TPO review, originally scheduled for 2026/27, has also commenced.

### 2.1.3. Regional Land Use Partnership

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **2/4** Overall rating: **6**  
**TREND:** 

#### Key achievements


1. Local Development Plan Evidence Report submitted to Scottish Government
2. Sixteen Land Managers engaged with an integrated land use event supported by Scottish Land & Estates
3. Support Scottish Government and Regional Land Use Partnerships transition from pilot areas to a national framework.

The Local Development Plan (LDP) will steer what new development is needed, such as new homes, land for businesses or tourist accommodation. It also influences how land is used, valued and protected to strengthen our collective work to tackle the climate and nature crises, and nature positive outcomes – such as through new woodland creation sites including Glen Falloch.

The NPA started evidence gathering in January 2025 including an in-person event attracting 16 land managers supported by Scottish Land & Estates to introduce the integrated land use concept of the LDP and outline the process. An Evidence Report was submitted to Scottish Government in December 2025 which included outlining our approach to integrate land use planning. Next steps include developing a draft plan and public consultation with a final plan coming into effect July to September 2027 following Scottish Government approval.

Additionally, we've worked with Scottish Government and other Regional Land Use Partnerships (RLUPs) areas to co-develop a national framework supporting the transition of RLUPs from pilot programme into a national framework. This is planned from Summer 2027 onwards.

### 2.1.4. Agriculture and forestry subsidies


**RAG rating** Annual progress: **1/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **3**  
**TREND:** 

#### Key achievements

1. NPA appointed new post with a focus on supporting Resilient Farming Network

This programme, which takes a broader sustainability and systems approach rather than a sole focus on subsidies, was paused during 2025/26 due to lack of dedicated resources. However, a new NPA Project Management Advisor post was recruited in January 2026. A key focus area for this post will be developing a Resilient Farming Network in 2026/27.

## 2.1.5. New funding models

<b>RAG rating</b>	Annual progress: <b>3/4</b>	Overall progress: <b>2/4</b>	<b>Overall rating: 6</b>
		<b>TREND:</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>			
1. Securing funding from National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections for an 18-month development phase			
2. The NPA distributed £1.275 million of Nature Restoration Fund to communities, projects and charities across the National Park			

Joint bid partners, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust, RSPB Scotland, and the NPA secured an 18-month National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections Development Phase. The Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections initiative aims restore some of the rarest woodland in the world, including temperate rainforest and ancient Caledonian pinewoods. The Initiative will do this while also providing support for rural economies through job creation, practical training, sustainable business development, and improved local venison markets – demonstrating how nature recovery can deliver real economic opportunities. Local communities will shape projects from the outset, putting communities at the heart of one of Scotland's most ambitious nature restoration programmes. At the end of the development phase, a further application will be made to National Lottery Heritage Fund Landscape Connections for more than £9 million to deliver ambitious plans to restore woodland habitats covering an area over twice the size of Glasgow in the National Park.

The NPA distributed £1.275 million to communities, projects and charities across the National Park, with a focus on nature restoration, building resilient communities and boosting biodiversity. This funding, provided via The Scottish Government's Nature Restoration Fund, marks a significant increase for 2025 and represents a welcome commitment to the long-term, sustainable funding required to urgently tackle the joint nature and climate crisis. The projects receiving funding represent the ambition, commitment and innovative practice required to deliver meaningful, positive change for people and nature in the National Park.

## 2.1.6. Jobs and skills

<b>RAG rating</b>	Annual progress: <b>2/4</b>	Overall progress: <b>2/4</b>	<b>Overall rating: 4</b>
		<b>TREND:</b>	<i>Newly reported</i>
<b>Key achievements</b>			
Securing funding via Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections to develop the Nature's Future Workforce programme.			

Securing the Landscape Connections development phase funding will help benchmark the existing 'green workforce' within the National Park and will help to identify the needs

and gaps before developing detailed solutions. The aims of this programme are to ensure that accessible inclusive pathways are embedded across the Initiative, creating more opportunities for people’s involvement, skills building, and career development as we accelerate the restoration of our woodland mosaic. Unlocking the benefits of nature restoration skills development for people (especially young people) will inspire them to become active partners and long-term guardians of the National Park and its natural heritage.

## Pathway 3: Inspire

### 3.1. Engaging and inspiring action for nature

#### 3.1.1. Engagement coordination for pro-nature behaviour

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **9**

**TREND:**



##### Key achievements

1. A new Nature Connections campaign was launched, with 2055 visits to the Nature Hub landing page
2. Social activity delivered 320,000 impressions and 11,500 engagements over 64 posts
3. Eleven pieces of media coverage related to the new campaign delivered a combined reach of 872 million people

A new Nature Connections campaign was launched, born out of a need for a wider reaching campaign which would support delivery of this program. Grounded in the insight that knowledge is a poor motivator for action, the campaign sought out firstly to inspire and facilitate opportunities for visitors and communities to connect with nature in the National Park, and secondly, to celebrate and showcase the benefits meaningful connection with nature delivers for our audiences.

The campaign involved development of a new creative look and feel and consistent messaging which was applied across all assets and resources. This included new education and outreach materials (the nature journal), a video to promote opportunities for group visits, and ongoing social content. A series of ranger led walks were also hosted at Balmaha Visitor Centre and media announcements and features throughout the year. Reactive and proactive media relations throughout the busy summer visitor season were also utilised to deliver messaging about the campaign and to promote opportunities to connect with nature in the National Park, safely and responsibly. An initiative was also launched to profile nominated 'Nature Heroes' who were profiled via social content and in media where appropriate with newly commissioned photography. All resources and events were made available to visitors at a new dedicated Online Nature Hub on the NPA website. Key highlights include:

- Over 2000 visits to the landing page, and most popular newly created pages were the events and Nature Hero pages.
- Social activity delivered 320,000 impressions and 11,500 engagements over 64 posts, this content delivering the most positive engagement sentiment of all content in 2025.
- The eleven pieces of media coverage generated including pieces on BBC Scotland and in the Herald and Lennox Herald, there were 100% positive and delivered a combined reach of 872 million people.

### 3.1.2. Nature-based visitor experiences

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **9**

**TREND:**



#### **Key achievements**

1. A paper on Regenerative Tourism was collaboratively developed and published with all UK National Parks
2. Over £900,000.00 invested in the restoration of the Conic hill path
3. The National Park Destination Group has grown with new members who deliver nature-based visitor experiences

The NPA worked with other UK National Parks, to develop and publish a Regenerative Tourism paper. This paper sets out how National Parks will champion and support tourism development that contributes to the enhancement and regeneration of the places and communities in which it operates. It addresses how it will do this while supporting tourism activity that helps reduce carbon emissions and increases nature-recovery, ensuring National Parks are relevant to everyone's needs.

The National Park continues to see a growth in the number of nature-based visitor experiences and tourism research affirms the move towards more visitors seeking a connection with nature and trend of visitors engaging in more wellbeing activities. Many businesses continue to diversify and add services aligned with these consumer trends. The NPA Tourism team continue to support the broad range of businesses through advice, signposting and collaboration with regional and national partner organisations to support business development contributing to the sustainable visitor economy of the National Park.

The National Park's key business forum, the National Park Destination Group, has grown with new members who deliver nature-based visitor experiences. These include the Director of Wellness and Leisure at the Cameron House resort; the sole trader of Curious in Nature and proprietor of Cobleland Campsite who have developed on-site authentic nature based and wellness products. The group has enabled collaboration between member businesses and effective sharing of good practice and further opportunities within the sector.

The investment of over £900,000.00 in the restoration of the Conic Hill path has enabled improved access to this popular hill walk. This is supported by delivery of Ranger engagement and interpretation at the Balmaha Visitor Centre, encouraging responsible access and information to explore and enjoy the local natural assets, landscape and islands of Loch Lomond. Additional capital infrastructure work has been progressed through the National Park's Place Programme, enabling an improved visitor experience and facilities at some of the NP's most visited locations which experience levels of visitor pressures and need for improved visitor infrastructure. This includes at Tarbet, Falls of Falloch, Balloch Pierhead and Rowardennan.

The NPA continues to provide direct funding and support to the West Highland Way (WHW). The WHW is in the process of establishing as a charitable organisation with board of Trustees. This aims to enable the WHW Trust to secure funding to support the long-term sustainability of the route, enabling path maintenance and business development opportunities.

The NPA also provides support to events taking place within the National Park. This includes our direct support to the Go Swim Loch Lomond event, which has grown to be the largest open water swimming event in Scotland. The event provides an opportunity for swimmers to try open water swimming in a safe, well-managed environment while connecting with nature.

### 3.1.3. Education and outreach

**RAG rating** Annual progress: **3/4** Overall progress: **3/4** Overall rating: **9**

**TREND:**



#### **Key achievements**

1. Youth Committee Young People Survey with 100 respondents stating 'nature' and 'reversing the biodiversity crisis' was their third top priority for the Youth Committee to focus on
2. Continuation of the Nature Schools project, supporting 11 primary schools
3. Projects with 3 secondary schools facilitating activities to aid understating of nature within the National Park

The National Park Nature Schools project that supports 11 local primary schools continues with a focus this year on water habitats in the National Park. A new webpage and resources have been developed as well as Ranger led delivery focussed on years' theme.

The NPA have also been working closely with secondary schools within the National Park to encourage engagement with nature and a better understanding of the threats to our shared natural environment. The NPA partnered with Stirling Council Youth Services to support McLaren High School pupils to create a Film about Nature in the National Park. The young people reported back that they had a heightened awareness of the outdoor environment, and increased knowledge of local flora and fauna, including moss and invasive species. A showcase screening event was held in Stirling.

The NPA delivered a session for the Moorland Indicators of Climate Change Initiative (MICCI) with Balfron High School in September. Additionally, the NPA have been supporting the Geography Advanced Higher Class on Moor Park near Drymen since 2019. The focus is on the effects of climate change on our peatlands but also covers the Peatland ACTION restoration work and climate change in the National Park. A presentation was delivered to the Vale of Leven Academy about the MICCI project, and they will be doing the site visit to Blairbich Raised Bog in March 2026, supported by the East Loch Lomond Ranger Team.

Through our schools engagement programme the NPA Ranger Service delivered 16 Climate & Nature sessions to 263 pupils.

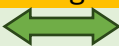
Additionally, Rangers delivered 30 Junior Ranger sessions to 138 participants, and working with our Education, Inclusion and Volunteering team delivered Climate & Nature sessions to 99 participants through 9 inclusion groups.

In 2025 the National Park published a Nature Journal to help facilitate engagement with visitors and groups taking part in nature connection activities. Self-led activities were also designed for inclusion on the Nature Hub website. Junior rangers and volunteers were selected to be Nature Heroes as part of the wider Nature Connections Campaign with significant press coverage and social media engagement highlighting the efforts of the Nature Heroes.

At Balmaha Visitor Centre we welcomed around 120,000 visitors in 2025. Nature engagement displays are developed and rotated throughout the season. Visitor Centre staff recorded approx. 14,000 engagements by visitors with the displays.

There has been an update and refresh of the National Park's suite of Future Nature Education Case Study resources. This ensures the accuracy of data and a narrative that reflects the priorities and achievements across the National Park for habitats, species and the key pressures in Future Nature including action on invasives.

### 3.1.4. Community empowerment

<b>RAG rating</b>	Annual progress: <b>2/4</b>	Overall progress: <b>2/4</b>	<b>Overall rating: 4</b>
		<b>TREND:</b>	
<b>Key achievements</b>			
1. Community knowledge and capacity to take action for nature and biodiversity has improved through our support for the four Community Climate Action Hubs			
2. Community engagement, benefits and wealth building principles are embedded in the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections development phase			
3. National Park Authority Board 'Strategy In Action' day hosted by Lochgoil Community Development Trust			


The NPA continues to work closely with Community Climate Action Hubs operating across the National Park, supporting and encouraging joint working, keeping a focus on National Park communities. As well as helping to co-ordinate and build on existing activity, hubs have been working together to learn from each other and share good practice. Both Forth Valley Climate Action Hub and Argyll & Bute Climate Action Network (ABCAN) are well established hubs, with Perth and Kinross coming online in this last year and West Dunbartonshire recently established.

Activities in 2025 included:

- Capacity building workshops and events programmes focusing on climate adaptation measures for local communities (including flooding matters).
- ABCAN Education work focussing on carbon literacy support training for schools (linking with our NP Nature education programmes)
- Presenting and providing advice on Future Nature and INNS for West Loch Lomond community groups (NP Nature and Land use team attendance at ABCAN event at Cove Park).
- Forth Valley, West Dunbartonshire, and ABCAN provided seed funding for community initiatives, supporting both smaller scale initial grants and developing next steps leading to larger initiatives, covering the following areas (not exclusively):
  - Community growing spaces including food growing and orchards
  - Public engagement and events to increase climate awareness
  - Climate training and education
  - Energy including renewables and improving domestic heating efficiency/investigating opportunities for retrofit solutions
  - Improved spaces for biodiversity and nature
- Community Development Trusts working collectively across the McLaren High School catchment area are looking to deliver mutual Local Place Plan climate action priorities.

The NPA worked closely with Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust to support finalisation of the Embedded Communities programme that will be developed as part of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections. This would enable National Park communities to thrive by building capacity and a skilled workforce so that they can maintain and sustain environmental and land regeneration activities into the future. Dedicated funding is required to support grass-root community development, engagement and capacity building to improve community understanding of the links between biodiversity and land management, to support meaningful community participation in land use decision-making and to deliver community-led nature restoration action.

### 3.1.5. Volunteering for nature

<b>RAG rating</b>	Annual progress: <b>3/4</b>	Overall progress: <b>3/4</b>	<b>Overall rating: 9</b>
<b>TREND:</b>			
<b>Key achievements</b>			
1. Almost 4500 hours of Practical Conservation Volunteering, of which more than 2,990 was tagged as Nature Restoration			
2. More than 10,400 hours of Ranger Service led delivery, engagement, and impact			

From the 1 April 2025 to the 31 December 2025 the National Park Authority delivered more than 9,800 hours of volunteer work across the National Park. This includes more than 4475 hours of Practical Conservation Volunteering, of which more than 2,990 hours were tagged under the Restoring Nature Category. This encompasses a wide

range of tasks including INNS removal, wildlife surveying (such as bats, mink, and water voles), tree planting, and landscape scale restoration.

The NPA have continued to develop ranger-led opportunities, and as part of that have created an interactive reporting dashboard to allow for easy reporting and visualisation.

Key highlights include:

- More than 10,400 hours of engagement across all the groups that we support (Community, Inclusion, Junior Rangers, Schools, Volunteers, and Young Volunteers).
- Maintained more than 38km of paths and trails.
- Planted more than 38,000 seeds, saplings, and trees.
- Cleared 431 drains and water bars.
- Removed 150 bags of litter

## Glossary

<b>Abbreviation</b>	<b>Definition</b>
<b>AFT</b>	Argyll Fisheries Trust
<b>DMG</b>	Deer Management Groups
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>FLS</b>	Forestry and Land Scotland
<b>FRT</b>	Forth Rivers Trust
<b>HIA</b>	Habitat Impact Assessment
<b>INNS</b>	Invasive Non-Native Species
<b>LLFT</b>	Loch Lomond Fisheries Trust
<b>LLTLC</b>	Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Landscape Connections (initiative)
<b>LLTNP</b>	Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park
<b>LLTNPA</b>	Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority
<b>LDP</b>	Local Development Plan
<b>NP</b>	National Park
<b>NPA</b>	National Park Authority
<b>NPF</b>	National Planning Framework
<b>NPPP</b>	National Park Partnership Plan
<b>NRF</b>	Nature Restoration Fund
<b>RAG</b>	Red, Amber, Green
<b>RLUP</b>	Regional Land Use Partnership
<b>RSPB</b>	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
<b>SAC</b>	Special Areas of Conservation
<b>SLE</b>	Scottish Land and Estates
<b>SSRS</b>	Saving Scotland's Red Squirrels
<b>SSSI</b>	Site of Special Scientific Interest
<b>SUPERB</b>	Systemic solutions for upscaling of urgent ecosystem restoration for forest-related biodiversity and ecosystem services
<b>TGTF</b>	The Great Trossachs Forest
<b>TWS</b>	Trees and Woodland Strategy
<b>TWVP</b>	Trossachs Water Vole Project