

National Park Partnership Plan – Progress Update 2025/26

Agenda Item 12

National Park Authority Board Meeting

14 September 2026

Paper for noting

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1. Purpose

- 1.1. This paper outlines the progress made towards delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan 2024-2029, reflecting on the first two years of activity (2024/25 and 2025/26). The paper provides National Park Authority Board members with a summary of successes and challenges in delivery of outcomes and objectives across the three chapters of the Plan. It also notes learnings gained so far and provides insight to inform where to prioritise action over the remaining years of the Plan. A summary of progress against the Plan’s measurements of success for 2025/26 is included in Appendix 1.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. Board members are asked to **note** the contents of this paper.

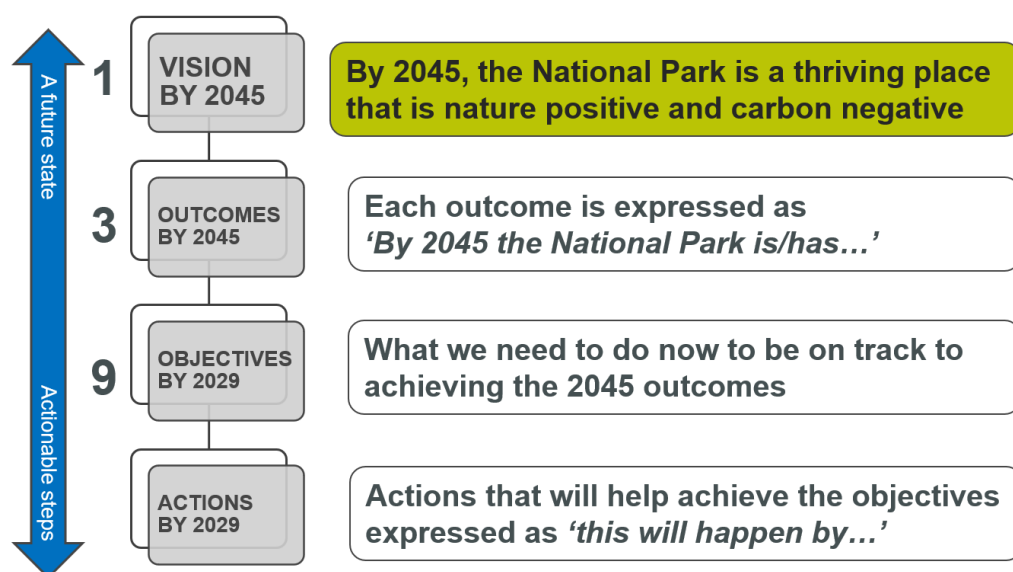
3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Corporate Plan

- 3.1. This paper summarises reflections from National Park Authority officers on the progress made towards the delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) in 2025/26. The measurements of success (in Appendix 1) are the agreed methodology for monitoring the progress of the Plan.
- 3.2. The NPPP is complemented by the National Park Authority's Corporate Plan, which is our organisational strategy for 2025-2030. The Corporate Plan outlines how we will develop as the lead organisation responsible for driving forward the NPPP, including outcomes to 'hold ourselves and NPPP delivery partners to account in delivering the priorities set out in the NPPP and in our Corporate Plan.' This paper therefore also contributes to that Corporate Plan objective.

4. Background

- 4.1. The National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) sets the strategic priorities for the National Park, as a place. It is drafted and consulted on by National Park Authority officers on behalf of a much broader partnership of organisations whose collective actions have the power to deliver the change that is set out in the Plan.
- 4.2. The Plan's vision for the National Park is that by 2045 Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park is '**a thriving place that is nature positive and carbon negative**'. The objectives and actions in the Plan set out what needs to happen from 2024 to 2029 to make that vision a reality.
- 4.3. The NPPP 2024-2029 is split into three chapters: Chapter 1: Restoring Nature; Chapter 2: Creating a Low-Carbon Place and Chapter 3: Designing a Greener Way of Living.
- 4.4. Each chapter has three outcomes to be achieved by 2045 (expressed as 'by 2045, the National Park is / has...'). Within that, each outcome has three objectives that set out the actions to be taken by 2029 to achieve that outcome. See Figure 1 below for more detail.

Figure 1: The structure of the National Park Partnership Plan's Chapters



- 4.5. As a result, for the whole Plan we have 9 outcomes and 27 objectives. The 'Plan on a Page' is supplied as Appendix 2 to visualise these.
- 4.6. Each chapter has a measure of success which will be undertaken once every 5 years – to monitor how progress towards achieving the long-term vision of the Plan. Alongside that, there are 13 more frequent measures that are monitored and reported on annually. It is these measurements that we provide a progress update on for 2025/26 in this paper, with a full overview provided as Appendix 1.
- 4.7. While the National Park Authority is responsible for drafting the Plan and reporting on its progress, delivery of the outcomes within the Plan relies on work from a wide range of delivery partners.
- 4.8. The National Park Authority (NPA) plays different roles in delivery of the objectives set out in the Plan. Delivery of many of the objectives are led by the NPA, and in others the NPA has more of an influencing, enabling or supporting role. As the name suggests, being a Partnership Plan, it also identifies partners whose action is required to achieve each of the objectives.
- 4.9. While this report is intended to provide National Park Authority Board members with an update on progress on delivery of the Plan to date, the data and insight is also a critical tool for engagement with delivery partners as we near the mid-point in the Plan's 2024-2029 cycle.
- 4.10. Following this Board update a series of partner engagements will take place with NPPP delivery partners to:
- use the insight from this update to reflect on NPPP delivery to date;

- recognise the significant progress that has been made so far;
- agree how we will focus our efforts in the remaining years of the Plan to deliver the greatest impact on achieving the Plan's long-term outcomes.

5. Executive summary of performance

5.1. Performance during Year 2 (2025/26) of the NPPP indicates that delivery is broadly on track, with most Measures of Success (see Appendix 1) either demonstrating positive progress or establishing the evidence and monitoring arrangements required to assess future outcomes. Across the Plan, delivery has continued to mature, with an increasing number of objectives moving from initiation and scoping into active delivery.

5.2. Measures of Success show the strongest progress in areas where delivery programmes, partnerships and resourcing are well established and sustainably resourced, including in nature restoration, visitor and community engagement and infrastructure investment. In several areas, activity in 2025/26 focused on creating the foundations for future impact through baseline development, evidence gathering and programme design, reflecting the long-term nature of many NPPP ambitions, particularly in relation to Chapter 3 of the Plan (Designing a Greener Way of Living).

5.3. A small number of measures are progressing more slowly and one indicator was not able to report performance against agreed indicators in 2025/26 (although for 2026/27 it is already on track). While these do not currently present a significant risk to overall NPPP delivery, they highlight the reality of the complex delivery landscape we operate within, ongoing economic pressures and the immediate priorities of partners not always being aligned with NPPP priorities. This reiterates the importance of prioritising NPA time where it will make the greatest difference to long term outcomes for the Park and making conscious choices on where to invest our time on areas that are dependent on wider partner action, specialist capacity, funding availability or external policy developments.

5.4. Overall, the Year 2 position suggests that implementation of the NPPP is developing as expected for a partnership-led, long-term plan during a time of change and a complex operating environment. The majority of Measures of Success provide assurance that progress is being made towards intended outcomes, while the review also identifies the key dependencies and risks that will require continued attention as delivery accelerates during the remaining years of NPPP 2024-2029 delivery. Conversations with partners about how we can best work together and where we focus our collective efforts in the coming years will take place post-Board.

6. Our operating environment – what's changed

- 6.1. In the years since this National Park Partnership Plan (NPPP) was first drafted, consulted on and approved, the context that we operate in has evolved as political, economic, environmental, technical and societal influences shift. Even since our last update on NPPP progress in December 2025, aspects of our operating environment have come more to the fore.
- 6.2. Public sector reform (PSR) is a clear priority for the new Scottish Government, with a new dedicated Cabinet Secretary to oversee the implementation of this as a cornerstone of the [Programme for Government 2026-2031](#).
- 6.3. At its heart, PSR seeks to make public services more joined-up and efficient, focused on preventative efforts to tackle root causes of problems, with the needs of the citizen at the heart. These priorities align well with the systems-level, place-based lens we take to the complex issues we tackle through our work.
- 6.4. As set out in our Corporate Plan, the National Park Authority will actively seek efficiencies in how we work and to deliver joined-up public services. With our public sector partners also focusing on PSR within their organisations, there will be the opportunity to take a renewed look at shared NPPP objectives to seek further integration for maximum benefit. With the proposal for structural change and the prospect of some of our partners being merged into a larger new national environment organisation, we will need to consider how best to work with, and seek opportunities, from these changes.
- 6.5. In addition, the [Natural Environment \(Scotland\) Act 2026](#)'s requirement for a Scottish Government National Park policy statement is likely to emphasise the central role of National Park Partnership Plans, and the heightened responsibility on partners to deliver them, now set out in the Act. With the expected phased commencement starting in October this year, it is an opportune moment to reflect with partners on these changes and implications for how we work together. Some measures including the forthcoming introduction of Fixed Penalty Notices will carry operational and resourcing considerations and will also require partner collaboration to implement effectively.
- 6.6. Alongside these political and policy changes, the impacts of climate change are becoming increasingly felt across Scotland, including here in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. Recent extreme weather, including flooding, storms, wildfires and periods of intense heat, has affected communities, businesses, visitors and habitats, reinforcing the urgency of action. While reducing emissions remains critical, there is now an equally

important need to strengthen resilience through climate adaptation. This should be reflected both in our collective delivery with partners and in how we communicate the route to achieving the NPPP's long-term outcomes.

7. Overall reflections on progress in 2025/26

- 7.1. As we outlined in the last update on the NPPP, not all objectives or measures of success were at the same delivery stage or maturity when writing the Plan. This reflects the varying scale and nature of the objectives, with some of them requiring more urgent action now to achieve the 2045 vision, and some requiring more exploratory work or more systems-level change to progress significantly.
- 7.2. With the direct alignment of our Annual Operational Plan (AOP) reporting to the NPPP and Corporate Plan objectives, and other strategic updates to the Board, Members will have noted our progress through the detailed quarterly updates. This paper therefore does not seek to give that level of granular update across all objectives. Rather, the purpose of this annual update on NPPP progress is to reflect upon notable areas of delivery to draw out overarching themes that help understand the barriers and keys to successful implementation of the Plan.
- 7.3. The NPPP is deliberately ambitious and aspirational – reflecting the step change needed to deliver the vision for the National Park of a thriving, nature rich, climate resilient place. When the Plan was drafted, some objectives within it were already in action, with a clear trajectory for delivery (provided continued resourcing and a pipeline of willing partners). Other objectives within the Plan require more systemic change, action from a broader range of partners or a reprioritising of partners' resourcing to be achieved – reflective of the inherent complexity of the work involved.
- 7.4. Significant progress has continued to be made across the whole NPPP. Of the 27 objectives, 14 of these have progressed from their original rating to a more mature stage. There are now 14 objectives in full delivery, 13 in initiation and only 4 remain in scoping stage. Given the breadth of work captured within the NPPP and the remaining years for this Plan, this is a positive shift into active delivery.
- 7.5. The measures of success capture a broad spectrum of information, and not all directly relate to quantifiable targets or areas of work that can be defined through a simple binary of 'on track'/'off track', though where we are able, in Appendix 1 we have stated whether a measure of success is on track or not.
- 7.6. 12 out of the 13 measurements of success are reporting for 2025/26, which means seven methodologies and new intelligence has been brought in as baseline information to track against, compared to last year. We now have

baseline information for: 'land under effective conservation and restoration management'; 'visitor representativeness'; 'rural transport provision'; 'jobs and skills'; 'action taken by National Park communities', and 'nature and net zero outputs secured through new development'. Due to NPA staffing changes, the only measure not reporting in 2025/26 was the measure related to tracking the number of regenerative farming projects. With resourcing now in place and pilots instigated in early 2026/27, we are back on-track and progress will be noted in the 2026/27 NPPP update.

7.7. In considering 2025/26 progress, the main themes that came through as levers, or indeed inhibitors of delivery from our 2024/25 update still stand. These are explored below and in Section 10 (Risk and Opportunities).

7.8. Where we have seen marked progress, it directly reflects the decisions the NPA and/or our partners have taken to prioritise that area, where we have an established work plan with partner buy-in and resourcing in place. The successful National Lottery Landscape Connections bid is an excellent example of this. Building on the established Future Nature Route Map, three partner bodies came together, recognising the power in bringing in additional funding streams beyond public funding. This is now coming to fruition as we work together in the development stage to hopefully secure £10m of funding for an 8-year delivery phase.

7.9. Barriers to progress include where:

- resourcing or funding does not yet match the scale of the ambition;
- resourcing and/or funding are uncertain in future years;
- lead or delivery partner priorities have shifted since the Plan was written;
- the action plan is still in development.

7.10. In further effort to address these barriers, we are increasingly focused on the areas where we, the National Park Authority, have the greatest opportunity to make change happen in the National Park, and where our delivery partners need to take a lead role, or where greater cross-agency collaboration is needed. In some cases, this may mean deprioritising areas for delivery until the wider delivery context is more settled, roles and responsibilities are more clearly defined, partner relationships are further developed, or better financial and resource capacity is in place.

7.11. In some areas of delivery that are less developed, it may mean we utilise our unique convening role to bring together partners around complex issues that remain, to explore the root causes to develop and test solutions. This reiterates the need to work even closer with partners, with a clear and shared sense of responsibility to the National Park to safeguard its future. Over the coming months, we will be discussing the insights shared in this

paper with strategic partners to agree where we focus our attention in the remaining years of the Plan.

- 7.12. Continued investment and support from the Scottish Government and other funders is crucial to the delivery of the NPPP outcomes. Therefore, we must strive to ensure the work we prioritise for delivery aligns with the new Programme for Government 2026-31 (announced just as this paper was being finalised) and the revised National Performance Framework so we can clearly demonstrate how work within the NPPP is delivering for Scotland as a whole. For the National Park Authority this will centre around clearly communicating our role and the value the National Park brings, both in the delivery of tangible results for climate, nature and people, and in surfacing issues, convening and testing out solutions to systemic problems affecting the people and businesses of Scotland.

8. Chapter 1: Restoring Nature

Reflections on progress

- 8.1. The Restoring Nature chapter is where we have seen the most marked shift into delivery, with 5 objectives moving into active delivery from earlier stages, and no objectives remaining in the scoping stage. It is also a chapter where the NPA clearly owns its delivery, identified as the lead or joint lead organisation for 7 objectives.
- 8.2. When the NPPP was drafted, the Future Nature Route Map had just been adopted, giving us a route to positive change and the expansion of a delivery partnership. As a result, we were able to prioritise and bolster staff resource to this work in the first two years of the NPPP. This is demonstrable evidence of how having a clear and actionable plan, with appropriate resources can quickly shift the dial towards progress.
- 8.3. Another proof point of the benefit of having a clear plan and resourcing in place is the ongoing success of our Peatland Action Programme. We remain on track for our 2030 peatland restoration target, with 1,048ha of peatland being put on the road to recovery by the NPA and delivery partners over the last year.
- 8.4. Whilst 2025/26's measured expansion of tree cover was below the 400 ha average annual rate in the NPPP target, it is positive that 93% of planting was native species, and the long-term picture for the remainder of the Plan looks strong. There are several significant woodland creation schemes undergoing the approval process, and provided those all move to delivery, the total 5-year average would exceed our 400ha per year target.

- 8.5. As a National Park Authority, we have a unique opportunity to restore nature at landscape scale, taking an ambitious, but essential, approach to restore some of our rarest habitats, whilst unlocking a wealth of nature-based benefits for people. The successful National Lottery funded initiative Landscape Connections is a prime example of showcasing how working with partners invested in this vision can unlock new funding streams and lead to large scale, long-term change.
- 8.6. Through our allocation of Nature Restoration Funding, we have distributed significant levels of funding round delivery partners to support their own projects, as well as through our deer management incentive scheme, deer management training grants and venison larder funding. We also continue discussions at a UK National Park-level and exploration of a range of green finance options to complement this.
- 8.7. The importance of this continued investment in nature restoration cannot be reiterated enough. Halting, and then reversing, the decline of biodiversity takes multiple years of focused and sustained investment to see change. This is as relevant for ongoing areas of work as it is for newer projects. There also remains a systemic challenge in the competing tensions created by differing objectives for land management which are supported by public funding and policy such as managing upland livestock or wild deer, alongside large-scale nature recovery action for woodland creation and peatland restoration. Additionally, we face the challenge of annualised budget cycles with short and limited timeframes limiting long-term partnership building and multi-year delivery.
- 8.8. Whilst we have been unable to report against pilot regenerative farming projects for 2025/26 due to staffing changes, following a period of recruitment positive progress is being made in the current year on our Resilient Farming Network with three host farms now being appointed across the National Park.
- 8.9. Reflecting the interconnected nature of the NPPP, reflections on how we support more regenerative land use and further prioritise land for nature are captured in Section 10 of this report, in discussion of the new Local Development and Land Use Plan.

Where we need to focus

- 8.10. With recent examples of both flooding and extreme high temperatures/water scarcity, we can see the impacts of the climate emergency to people and place are being experienced, with increasing frequency and severity.
- 8.11. Whilst we clearly articulate the nature-based solutions for climate change through our nature restoration work, and weave wider climate mitigation

actions into the other chapters of the NPPP, particularly through our mobility partnership work (explored more in section 9 of this report), we will strengthen our approach and supporting messaging on how nature can help climate adaptation through increasing resilience to extreme weather events.

- 8.12. There is also scope to more clearly communicate with audiences how climate mitigation and adaptation strategies can deliver simultaneous tangible benefits for nature and people. We have started to see the work of our communities and partners in becoming more resilient, (which is explored more in section 10 of this report), and we have commenced our own climate change adaptation plan for the Park Authority.
- 8.13. In our last update, we highlighted that the water environment within the Park requires a more focused effort by the relevant authorities if we are to see the same positive foundations for recovery that have taken place in our other priority ecosystems; woodlands and peatlands.
- 8.14. Considerable scaling up of partner focus, support and capacity, as well as a clearer funding and delivery models to restore the water environment are needed. This is important through the lens of biodiversity and habitat restoration but also water quality and adaptation for the impacts of extreme weather such as flooding and droughts. There is also an opportunity to strengthen our messaging about how what happens on land affects water.
- 8.15. Through the Future Nature programme an external review was commissioned in this area and following this, a water delivery working group established, clear priority delivery actions identified, and these are to be set out in a Water Delivery Plan. Nonetheless, it also highlights a systemic lack of capacity, leadership and clarity of ownership and funding, as well as data gaps which make it difficult to get a clear overview of the current water environment and a pathway (or route map) to improving this. We now need to escalate awareness of these issues, as they will not be unique to the National Park, and consider with national partners what the sustainable solutions to this are.

9. Chapter 2: Creating a Low-Carbon Place

Reflections on progress

- 9.1. This chapter is the one that is showing the most sustained delivery, with 6 objectives well established. Largely, this chapter represented established programmes of work, particularly for 'connecting everyone with nature and climate', which collects our education, inclusion and volunteering programmes along with our visitor management objectives. Measures of success for this objective are reporting, and our participation measure shows particularly strong continued progress.

- 9.2. While participation figures remain strong (measure 2.1a), their true value is best demonstrated through participant outcomes. The 'Awe Aye' nature photography project (shared in our [Equality Outcome Board report](#)) engaged almost 100 people from 20 countries, many visiting the National Park for the first time, helping foster a stronger sense of belonging, ownership and stewardship.
- 9.3. Investment in engagement programmes delivers both immediate and long-term benefits. Alongside direct benefits for wellbeing, confidence and volunteering, these programmes help build lifelong connections with nature and develop future advocates for the National Park. The progression of Youth Committee Board Shadow Islay Jackson from Junior Ranger to youth representative illustrates the long-term impact this investment can achieve.
- 9.4. Visitor management remains a significant area of delivery within the NPPP. Years of sustained investment by the NPA and partners have created a mature, collaborative approach that combines visitor management, byelaw enforcement and education to support safe and responsible access across the National Park.
- 9.5. A strong, trusted and productive partnership approach is delivered annually through an internal Visitor Management Action Group and two well-established Police Scotland operations, Operation Ballaton (for West Loch Lomond) and Operation Elms (East Loch Lomond). The efficiency and effectiveness of these relationships have been evident across recent seasons, particularly during busy sunny periods which draw more people to the area.
- 9.6. Visitor safety, particularly around water and wildfire risk, remains a growing priority. Strong partnerships with Water Safety Scotland and Scottish Fire and Rescue Service support a prevention-first approach, helping ensure visitor safety messages are evidence-based, coordinated and effective, taking a prevention-first approach.
- 9.7. Much like the Future Nature Route Map, the NPA's Place Programme was well established at inception of this NPPP, with a clear vision and route map for delivery of infrastructure improvements putting us on the front foot to deliver on our objectives. Partnership working to deliver the route map continued in 2025/26, with continued good progress being made on developing and delivering high-quality visitor infrastructure.
- 9.8. The Place Programme continues to demonstrate how infrastructure investment can deliver multiple NPPP outcomes. Development of Tarmachan (crucially backed by VisitScotland and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund) as a sustainable travel hub is a strong example, combining

sustainable transport, tourism development and greater accessibility through partnership investment and delivery. A more detailed update on progress in 2025/26 was provided to Board members in the [June Place Investment Strategy update](#).

- 9.9. Continued investment in the path network has improved access while protecting key recreational assets across the National Park. Notable achievements include establishment of the West Highland Way Trust to support the route's long-term sustainability, alongside infrastructure improvements at Conic Hill (£900,000 invested from 2022-2025) and new community-led connections such as the St Fillans to Lochearnhead path.
- 9.10. Establishment of the Mobility Partnership and Mobility Route Map is a significant achievement, bringing partners together behind a shared long-term vision for sustainable transport. The partnership is funding the Mobility Partnership Manager role which is key to helping address longstanding barriers to connectivity, while demonstrating the value of shared investment, expertise and delivery.
- 9.11. The NPA led two successful Trossachs Explorer pilots which demonstrated demand for sustainable transport and provided the evidence required for Stirling Council to adopt the service year-round for two years. Work continues to explore a similar model for West Loch Lomond despite funding complexities and route challenges.

Where we need to focus

- 9.12. While establishing the Mobility Partnership has created a strong foundation for delivery of a better transport network, maintaining momentum and commitment from all partners will be essential. Key challenges remain around long-term funding, partner capacity and governance arrangements needed to support delivery and accountability.
- 9.13. East Loch Lomond also remains a priority location for the Mobility Partnership with partner discussions, and economic and modal shift interventions advancing well. If an intervention can be delivered, it would provide an exemplar of sustainable transport and visitor management for other areas of the Park.
- 9.14. Key challenges remain around the long-term funding risk for sustainable and active travel, securing partner capacity in the absence of a formal governance structure, and holding partners to account on ownership of agreed actions.
- 9.15. The approach and engagement from partners during the Camping Management Byelaw Review demonstrates the strength of the partnerships

developed through many years working together on visitor management. Extensive engagement has helped shape proposals that balance responsible access with environmental protection. Feedback from current public consultation will further inform the recommendations that will be made to the NPA Board in December 2026.

10. Chapter 3: Designing a Greener Way of Living

Reflections on progress

- 10.1. This chapter remains at an earlier stage of delivery than other parts of the NPPP, reflecting its focus on longer-term strategy and system change. The most significant progress has been the advancement of the Local Development and Land Use Plan (LDLUP), which will become a key delivery mechanism for many of the objectives within this chapter.
- 10.2. Using its unique position, the National Park Authority is developing a Local Development and Land Use Plan that brings together planning, land use, nature restoration and community priorities within a single framework. This innovative place-based approach aligns with [National Planning Framework 4](#) and the principles of Scotland's fourth [Land Use Strategy](#) and will help drive coordinated investment in rural development, climate resilience and nature restoration across the National Park.
- 10.3. Completion of the Evidence Report and its successful passage through [Gatecheck](#) has maintained momentum towards publication of a draft Plan in 2027.
- 10.4. The evidence base for the LDLUP has been strengthened by growing community involvement across the National Park. Fifteen Local Place Plans have now been prepared, with a further two nearing completion, providing a strong foundation for understanding local priorities and aspirations.
- 10.5. Community ownership and stewardship also continue to grow. Community acquisition of 27 acres of land at [‘The Field’ in Kinlochard](#) is a notable example, securing a valued local asset for environmental enhancement, recreation, learning and community benefit. The acquisition will enable the community to protect and enhance a valued local asset identified through its Local Place Plan. Community ownership will create new opportunities for recreation, learning and local enterprise, while supporting the long-term resilience, wellbeing and sustainability of the village.
- 10.6. The Landscape Connections initiative (currently in development phase to prepare for a £10m lottery bid) will further strengthen support for communities by exploring how nature restoration can deliver wider benefits for people, businesses and visitors through a community wealth building

approach. This work will help ensure that environmental investment contributes to stronger, more resilient communities across the National Park.

- 10.7. The NPA continues to support appropriate development through the existing Local Development Plan, while preparing the new LDLUP, ensuring investment contributes to NPPP objective 3.3.2 by delivering measurable nature restoration and net zero outcomes.
- 10.8. Work during 2025/26 has strengthened the evidence base for measuring nature and net zero outcomes from development, while planning decisions have secured a range of biodiversity enhancement measures. In 2025/26, approximately 75 planning conditions supporting nature restoration were attached to planning consents, covering biodiversity enhancement, habitat protection, woodland management and protection of designated sites.
- 10.9. Meanwhile, approval of the former Ministry of Defence site at Arrochar will support a large derelict site to be brought back into positive use, in line with the Local Development Plan. This demonstrates how regeneration, tourism investment, community benefit and environmental enhancement can be delivered together through the planning system.

Where we need to focus

- 10.10. Supporting sustainable tourism remains a priority. Strong partnerships are in place through the National Park Business Destination Group and work is progressing on a Sustainable Tourism Strategy and supporting business engagement plan.
- 10.11. Wider economic pressures, workforce challenges and seasonality continue to affect tourism businesses across the National Park. Maintaining a clear, shared focus with partners on sustainable tourism growth will be essential.
- 10.12. Although progress on green jobs and skills has been slower than anticipated, a range of programmes across the National Park are helping develop green skills, stewardship and long-term engagement with nature. Our grassroots education and volunteer programmes are helping people build knowledge, skills and lasting connections with nature, while professional development opportunities like Deer Management Groups support best practice and collaborative action in delivering sustainable land management. Together, these initiatives support the NPPP's ambition to build the capacity, skills and partnerships needed to restore nature and support thriving communities.
- 10.13. Although these National Park programmes and our continued investment in peatland restoration contribute to skills development and the green economy, opportunities remain fragmented and are influenced by wider

national challenges around skills, housing, services and rural workforce sustainability.

- 10.14. Whilst we have improved our understanding of employment sectors within the National Park and identified indicators for nature-based jobs, nationally, the green skills landscape continues to evolve. Further work with national partners is needed to establish a clearer roadmap for implementing and monitoring systemic change.
- 10.15. In the meantime, we will focus on the projects and programmes where we have the greatest ability to influence outcomes: the 'Nature's Future Workforce' programme being developed through the Landscape Connections initiative; building on ours and partners' existing youth programmes, while continuing to work with national partners to develop a clearer long-term approach built on Just Transition principles.
- 10.16. The Local Development and Land Use Plan remains the principal delivery priority for this chapter of the NPPP. As work progresses on the spatial strategy and stakeholder engagement, it provides an opportunity to demonstrate how planning, land use reform, nature recovery and sustainable development can be delivered together to support NPPP outcomes, enabling nature and communities to thrive together.

11. Risks and opportunities

- 11.1. The following risks (or opportunities) could negatively (or positively) affect delivery over the remaining Plan period:
- 11.2. **Funding certainty and external investment:** continued delivery relies on sustained investment from Scottish Government, external funders and, where relevant, delivery partners. Annual funding cycles and resource constraints can limit long-term planning, partner confidence and the pace of delivery. Conversely, more security regarding longer-term funding builds confidence, making delivery of an ongoing pipeline of work (e.g. tree planting or infrastructure investment) easier to plan and deliver.
- 11.3. **Partner capacity, ownership and collaboration:** many objectives require coordinated action from multiple organisations. Changes in partner priorities, capacity or leadership could affect progress (either positively or negatively), particularly in areas requiring significant cross-agency collaboration.
- 11.4. **Policy and legislative change:** the evolving policy landscape, including Public Sector Reform and implementation of the Natural Environment (Scotland) Act 2026, may alter delivery expectations, responsibilities and resource requirements for partner organisations.

- 11.5. **Climate change impacts and adaptation pressures:** the increasing frequency and severity of extreme weather events, including flooding, storms, drought and wildfire risk, may place additional pressure on communities, partner organisation resourcing, infrastructure, habitats and operational resources across the National Park.
- 11.6. **Objectives requiring system-wide change and longer-term behaviour change:** to date, progress has been slower in areas that depend on wider behavioural, economic or policy change, including a more systemic shift towards sustainable transport, water environment recovery and green skills development. These areas require ongoing collaboration, advocacy and long-term commitment from national and local partners.

12. Conclusions

- 12.1. Two years into delivery of the National Park Partnership Plan, significant progress is being made across the majority of objectives. This narrative within this paper brings to life examples of the impact being made and Appendix 1 provides an update against the Measurements of Success.
- 12.2. Performance during Year 2 (2025/26) of the NPPP indicates that delivery is broadly on track and on the whole implementation of the NPPP is developing as expected for a partnership-led, long-term plan during a time of change and a complex operating environment.
- 12.3. New measures of success are now established for almost all areas of the Plan, providing a stronger evidence base to understand both achievements and remaining challenges.
- 12.4. Across the three chapters, a clear pattern emerges: progress is strongest where there is:
- a well-defined route map
 - dedicated resource in place
 - clear ownership of delivery and
 - strong partner commitment.
- 12.5. Progress within Future Nature, The Place Programme, Peatland Action and Nature Restoration Funded projects, visitor management partnerships and the Mobility Partnership illustrate this.
- 12.6. The challenge now is to continue to deliver in those areas, while applying the same conditions for success to the areas where progress remains slower.
- 12.7. So far, we can see that progress is slower where delivery depends on:
- wider system change

- dedicated partner buy-in and capacity
- policy development or funding decisions beyond the National Park Authority's direct control.

12.8. As we move into the second half of the National Park Partnership Plan period, our priority is not to create new ambitions, but to accelerate delivery of those areas that will have the greatest impact on achieving the Plan's long-term outcomes.

12.9. This may mean making choices to deprioritise some areas of the Plan in order to give sufficient resource to others. This is something the National Park Authority will be working through with partners in the sessions we are planning with them post-Board.

12.10. In the coming year(s) of the NPPP our focus with partners will be on maximising progress by focusing our collective efforts on:

- Accelerating nature recovery and climate resilience:** building on the strong foundations established through peatland restoration, woodland expansion, Future Nature and Landscape Connections, while increasing focus on climate adaptation, the water environment and landscape resilience.
- Turning transport planning into transport delivery:** leveraging the significant partnership working to date on transport planning to shift into the sustainable transport delivery that is needed to make a long-term improvement in how people get to and around the National Park, without the need for a car.
- Using the Local Development and Land Use Plan (LDLUP) as a delivery mechanism:** ensuring that the LDLUP becomes a practical tool to enable multiple NPPP outcomes to be delivered, through integrated, place-based approaches to housing, development, communities, nature restoration and land use change. And supporting communities, businesses and young people to be part of the solution to the challenges the National Park faces.
- Convening action where systemic barriers remain:** using the National Park Authority's unique role in bringing partners together on the 'wicked issues' that remain – where no single organisation can deliver change alone (e.g. improving the water environment).

12.11. Delivery over the remaining years of the Plan will be strengthened by:

- Continued long term investment** in nature recovery, infrastructure investment and sustainable transport
- More alignment on national funding** mechanisms and National Park priorities.

- c) **Clear leadership and accountability** across organisations delivering shared objectives together.
- d) **Recognition of the National Park as a place to test and learn** from innovative, place-based approaches to planning, land use, climate action and joined-up user-centred action across public bodies and partners.

13. Next steps

- 13.1. Following this Board update, using the insights and reflections captured in this paper, National Park Authority officers will meet with key NPPP partners to reflect on progress to date, and agree the areas where we have the most collective influence to bring about further positive change to achieve our long-term NPPP vision for the National Park to be 'a thriving place that is nature positive and carbon negative'.
- 13.2. These sessions will provide an opportunity to review the objectives within the NPPP that have not made the progress we would have liked by this stage of the Plan and to be clear on the barriers to progress and how we might overcome them together. Where barriers remain, or wider systemic change is required to make the shift needed, the National Park Authority will continue to use its influence and platform to advocate for and evidence the need for change.
- 13.3. As we move into the second half of the Plan period, *how* we deliver the NPPP becomes as important as *what* we deliver. Now more than ever, with Public Sector Reform as a cornerstone of government policy, we have the opportunity to work with partners to strengthen collaboration, reduce duplication and focus resources on the outcomes that matter most for the National Park. Using the service design and improvement skills we have within the organisation will help the organisation focus its finite resources towards the areas of greatest impact, and ensure that delivery of the NPPP is increasingly joined up, efficient and user-focused.
- 13.4. Securing continued investment, political support and partner commitment will be critical to delivering the remaining ambitions of the NPPP. We will continue to engage proactively with strategic partners, elected representatives, government and wider funders to demonstrate the value of the National Park and the contribution the NPPP makes to national priorities. Alongside this, we will strengthen how we communicate our role and impact, sharing what we have achieved and learned through place-based public service delivery here through our advocacy, stakeholder engagement and wider communications approach.

14. Appendices

Appendix 1 - Measurements of Success 2025/26 update

Appendix 2 - NPPP 'Plan on a Page'

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