

Notes and Actions

Visitor management in your area – Trossachs 1

Wednesday 13th January 2021



Present: Martin Earl (Chair – National Park Authority Board), Gordon Watson (National Park Authority), Matt Buckland (National Park Authority), Emma Hislop (National Park Authority), Suzanne Humpris (National Park Authority), Stuart Chalmers (Forestry & Land Scotland), Andy Bushell (Police Scotland), Craig Stephens (Police Scotland), Carlyn Fraser (Stirling Council), Susan Whyte (Perth & Kinross Council), Neil Macfarlane (Transport Scotland), David Johnston (Balquhidder, Lochearnhead & Strathyre Community Council), Stuart Mattieson (Drummond Estate), Kelly Clapperton-Bates (Strathfillan Community Development Trust), Theresa Elliot (Killin Community Development Trust), Helen Terry (Callander Town Council), Stuart Gavigan (St Fillans Community Council), Brian Luti (Callander Community Council), Stuart Horton (Killin Hotel), Susan Holden (Callander Community Council), James Fraser (Friends of Loch Lomond & The Trossachs)

Agenda Item	Subject	Note	Action
1.	Welcome and introductions	<p>Martin Earl (chair) welcomed everyone to the call and set out the purpose of the meeting. This is one of a series of meetings taking place this month to review visitor management challenges seen across the National Park last year and to discuss initial plans to help manage visitors in 2021. Based on feedback from last year, these meetings are trialling a place-based approach with the aim to bring together community representatives, businesses and landowners with key partners operating in specific areas of the National Park. This meeting covers the following community council areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Balquhidder Lochearnhead & Strathyre • Callander • St Fillans • Killin • Strathfillan 	
2.	Current operations in lockdown	<p>Gordon Watson provided an overview of operations in the current lockdown for both the National Park Authority and partners (see slide 2 in PowerPoint presentation). As a public authority, the National Park is complying with all Scottish Government guidance and helping to spread the 'stay at home, stay local' message. Offices and buildings remain closed, however visitor facilities like car</p>	

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		parks and toilets remain open in line with normal winter opening hours for use by local residents. Some outdoor work is able to continue, such as maintenance and repair work and single-crew Ranger patrols.	
3.	Overview of the 2020 visitor season in your area	Matt Buckland ran through key visitor management challenges in the area in 2020 (see slide 3 in PowerPoint presentation), including traffic related pressures and irresponsible parking particularly felt at Invertrossachs Road at South Loch Venachar, Bracklinn Falls, Loch Lubnaig, Balquhidder Glen, Falls of Falloch and the South Loch Earn Road. Other pressures included COVID-19 measures for services with the provision of adequate toilets and reduced capacity of campsites for tent based camping. This was exacerbated by an increase of new audiences visiting the National Park in place of their usual holidays and activities. This did lead to an increase in antisocial behaviour associated with camping such as fire damage, cutting of live wood, littering and noise nuisance. Irresponsible toileting continued to be an issue at Loch Earn even with public toilet provision being provided at both Lochearnhead and St Fillans. At Loch Earn there was also antisocial behaviour associated with the use of powered water craft.	
4.	Plans for 2021	<p>Matt Buckland then gave a short presentation on some of the visitor management approaches that are being worked on and proposed for the 2021 season across the three themes of Information & Engagement, Infrastructure & Services and Regulation & Enforcement.</p> <p>Information & engagement (slide 4) The National Park Safe Recovery Action Group (NPSRAG), made up of the National Park Authority, Local Authorities, Transport Scotland and Forestry & Land Scotland, will continue to meet regularly to plan resource deployment and make adjustments based on the latest intelligence.</p>	

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		<p>Rangers and Volunteer Rangers will be on the ground speaking directly with visitors – this activity will need to follow the most recent COVID guidelines but it is hoped that these patrols will be able to begin much earlier in the season this year. They will also be liaising with other partner staff such as Forestry & Land Scotland staff and Local Authority enforcement officers.</p> <p>A Visitor Management Plan is being produced through the Callander Landscape Partnership which will look at long term actions to reduce pressure in and around Callander and include a focus on car parking.</p> <p>There is already a small group meeting to focus specifically on the issues of powered water crafts at Loch Earn. It is hoped that this group will continue to meet and that the remit of the group is expanded to focus on finding and agreeing new approaches to tackling other visitor pressures.</p> <p>A joint National Park Visitor Management Communications Plan is being developed, alongside a Visitor Management Response Plan, which will ensure a joined up approach to communications from all partners. Along with ongoing website and social media updates for visitors, communities and stakeholders, this will include plans for various campaigns aimed at influencing visitor behaviours (including topics such as water safety, responsible fire lighting and toileting, etc). These campaigns will be supported by pop-up engagement stalls being planned at key locations to directly engage with visitors on responsible access and safety.</p> <p>Along with a joined up approach across the National Park, we also continue to sit on the national Visitor Management Strategy Group that is led by VisitScotland and reports directly to Fergus Ewing. The group is responsible for developing approaches to reducing the pressures of visitor management.</p>	

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		<p>Infrastructure & services (slide 5)</p> <p>We will be looking to extend the scheme that we ran in 2019 to provide the facility for campers to pack out or bury human waste dependent on the suitability of the area. We are also ensuring that National Park Authority staff have the training and equipment to remove waste from sites when needed. We are also looking at some different options for high capacity rural toilet provision with a particular product that is new to market looking particularly promising both in terms of cost and effectiveness.</p> <p>There is the potential to deploy variable messaging signage at key locations where needed (for example this could be deployed at either end of the South Loch Earn road). We are looking to build on the pilot project trialled last year to provide 'live' updates about traffic and car park facilities on our website using car park sensors. This will also give us data that will be useful to provide an evidence base for further traffic pressure reduction measures.</p> <p>Work has been completed on the expansion of the Bochastle Car Park, providing some additional parking capacity. There is still potential to look at some overflow car parking in the area which we are keen to progress with landowners and the community. Capacity for hill walkers looking to access Ben Vorlich would be the first place to focus.</p> <p>Thinking longer term – a big area of focus for this year will be to look at sustainable visitor transport, including the potential for a visitor focused bus service between Callander and Aberfoyle. This will also look at existing car parking infrastructure and the provision of overnight parking for motorhomes and the necessary service points.</p>	

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		<p>Regulation & enforcement (slide 6)</p> <p>Rangers will continue to enforce the Camping Management Byelaws with support from Police Scotland, including the National Park Police Officer. Training and support materials will also be provided to Police Scotland to ensure that officers who are not familiar with the area will have an understanding of local byelaws and the Environmental Protection Act. At Loch Earn the two police divisions will liaise to see if there are efficiencies that can be made and to ensure a consistent approach.</p> <p>The temporary clearways managed by Stirling Council will be made permanent with signage and passing places installed at Bracklinn and the Invertrossachs Road. The temporary clearway and speed limit on the A83 is being reviewed and considered for permanency.</p> <p>Bespoke camping management signs will be installed at South Loch Venachar, South Loch Earn (St Fillans) and at North Loch Venachar.</p> <p>There is some investigation going on to look at Alcohol Byelaw expansion and changes in the Stirling Area for some lochside locations. There is potential to introduce alcohol byelaws and some limited clearways in the communities around Loch Earn. There is a meeting set up in the coming weeks to continue discussions around managing powered water crafts on Loch Earn, including the re-introduction of a Code of Conduct and some additional physical restrictions to make illegal launching much harder.</p> <p>A new 'PARC' (Partnership Against Rural Crime) in the Park is being established with Police Scotland.</p>	

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5.	Discussion	<p>Discussion and Q&A for attendees to ask for further details on the approaches discussed and to provide thoughts on where efforts are planned for this season.</p> <p>Points raised included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Current guidance on exercise allows a 5mile distance from local authority boundary. • Evidence of poor visitor behaviour in areas of the National Park where camping byelaws are not in place – the National Park is currently planning to patrol hotspot areas however budgets for the year are still unknown so patrolling details have not yet been fully confirmed. It is hoped that there will at least be more capacity from Volunteer Rangers this year to help with softer engagement (although not enforcement) in areas where camping byelaws do not apply. • Parking in Balquhidder – existing parking provision completely overrun due to dramatic increase in the number of visitors to the area last year. Providing additional parking is reliant on discussion with key landowners. Stirling Council looking to identify locations for additional passing places. Stirling Council also still discussing contract amendments for the hours/days enforcement officers are available. • Alcohol byelaw – there is an update on the alcohol byelaw due to be discussed by Stirling Council at a meeting planned for 3rd March. Police Scotland and Stirling Council are working on the wording of the byelaw, as currently the offence is around consumption of alcohol which can be more difficult to enforce. There is currently a restriction on the consumption of alcohol outdoors in all Tier 4 areas. • Targeted visitor messaging before people leave their homes – throughout last year responsible behaviour messaging was aimed at visitors before point of departure and this will continue this year. 	<p>Carlyn Fraser to continue conversation on parking and passing places with community and landowners.</p> <p>Martin Earl to ask for an update on weekend plans for enforcement officers.</p> <p>Martin Earl to ask for update on alcohol byelaw.</p>

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6.	Engagement in 2021	Emma Hislop spoke briefly about the trial meetings being run this month following evaluation of our engagement with communities and stakeholders during the 2020 visitor season. As part of the joint communications plan being developed we are also planning regular communications to communities, businesses and landowners about the visitor season, as well as further opportunities for everyone to feed into discussions about how we manage visitors and other broader topics. To help shape these plans, attendees were asked to reflect on the session with their organisations – was it useful, how well it worked, were the right people there, etc – and feedback any thoughts, comments or observations.	Attendees to feedback thoughts to feedback@lochlomond-trossachs.org to help shape engagement opportunities throughout the year.