

National Park Authority Board Meeting



Agenda Item 8 – Appendix 1

Your Park Project Update

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Your Park Project Update

The operational element of the Your Park project went live through the implementation of the byelaws on the 1st March. Three months into operation, the National Park has experienced high visitor numbers and fantastic weather, allowing us to test most elements of the project. Staff have been working hard to ensure that our engagement with the public, whether through our online booking system, or our Ranger Service has been forefront in everything that we have been doing. The key elements of progress are as follows:

Permit area / site development and operation

Loch Chon campsite was open on the 1st March, and within the first few days we had people booking onto the site. Our first group used the site before the end of March and provided us with some good feedback on the quality of their experience. We have been working on a daily basis to make small improvements to the site, and to complete any snagging remaining. We are still awaiting a permanent solution to potable water on-site, but in the meantime, we continue to provide drinking water in bottles for anyone visiting. Staff are on-site daily, and are focussed on providing an excellent experience for those who book on to use the site. We are delighted to say that the feedback from those who have stayed over at Loch Chon campsite consistently recognises the helpfulness and knowledge of staff at Loch Chon, with two-thirds of those who responded specifically mentioning how much the Rangers on duty added value to their experience, whether it was through their overall approach, their knowledge of the area or the quite simply the warm welcome they received.

In addition to this, we continue to undertake an ongoing review of our permit areas. Through staff on the ground, and feedback from visitors we are able to amend which permit areas are available for camping on at any one time. We are also able to respond more effectively to queries regarding litter found, or people camping without a permit.

All site signage for camping permit areas was installed for the 1st March. This includes signage marking the extent of permitted camping areas as well as welcome signs to assist visitors with orientation. We have experienced some technical issues with some of the installed signs, but these have all now been repaired. We are currently mapping out where any additional signage would be useful to help visitors understand where and when they can camp within the National Park.

Threshold signage was installed on public roads and recreation routes to mark the Camping Management Zones for the 1st March. Exit signage has been installed on footpaths. Exit road signage has been designed and specified and installation will be undertaken shortly.

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Alongside our work on the ground we are continuing to work on introducing more facilities for campers in the coming year. As set out in our [Camping Development Strategy](#), we are keen to provide toilets and more parking facilities in the larger permit areas in the Three Lochs Forest Drive and South Loch Earn. We are also looking at improving motorhome facilities on West Loch Lomond.

Operational Management

The booking system for campsites and permits has been live since mid-February and bookings are being made on a daily basis, either online or over the phone. From the beginning of March until the end of May we have had more than 1600 permits booked, equating to more than 2200 permit nights (permits can be booked for a maximum of three nights at any one location).

We are really pleased that the vast majority of engagement that our Ranger Service have had with members of the public on the ground has resulted in a positive behaviour change. This ranges from people agreeing to get a permit, through to deciding to move outside the Camping Management Zone for their stay. Enforcement action remains a last resort and we are pleased that, as with our experience on East Loch Lomond, most people do the right thing when asked to do so.

We continue to work closely with Police Scotland to ensure we are aligned in the information we provide to the public and we value the additional support provided by Police Scotland officers through our continued joint working on Operation Ironworks.

Our Volunteer Rangers continue to be an invaluable source of additional information about what is happening on the ground. They are also helping with the delivery of visitor engagement at Milarrochy and Balmaha Visitor Centre.

Monitoring and Reporting

As part of our approval of the byelaws by Scottish Government in January 2016, we are committed to writing an annual report on the delivery of the camping management byelaws. This element of project work is focussed on gathering information from patrol reports, booking systems and a wider range of feedback sources, to ensure that we can respond to feedback as the season progresses, and also able to effectively review and report on progress at the end of the season.

Communications and engagement

An extensive programme of awareness raising, communication activity continues to be delivered. We have created a [series of videos](#) to help explain why byelaws are needed, how they operate, the different types of camping that are available in the Park including how permit areas work. On Facebook alone we know these three short videos have reached more than 40,000 people so far.

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We are providing our Community Councils within the Camping Management Zones with regular updates on how things are progressing. We also have a focus on responding in a timely manner to queries that we receive.

We have a continued liaison with a wide range of businesses and stakeholders in the areas, who have materials and information to provide to their customers / communities.

The second meeting of the Your Park Stakeholder Forum was held on 30th March. The meeting, chaired by Colin Bayes, saw open and constructive discussions, with presentations from National Park Authority staff and useful input from many of those present on how the first weeks on the new byelaws had progressed. A summary of the meeting, the information presented and a list of organisations invited and attendees is available at www.thisisyourpark.org.uk/downloads.

One of the most important elements of our delivery at the moment, is gathering feedback, whether this is through the booking system, follow-up surveys that are sent to everyone who books a permit or into one of our campsites, general emails, or through our communities, visitors and partners..

Since March we have received 431 feedback survey responses from people who have stayed over in a permit area. On a daily basis this feedback is logged and where relevant any follow-up actions are noted and allocated. Below is a short summary of the findings to date:

- 82% of people have booked their camping/motorhome permit before they arrive
- 91% of people said it was easy or very easy to book their permit
- Only 7% of people felt they were not provided with sufficient information about how the byelaws operate
- 82% of people found it easy or very easy to find their permit area
- 86% of people said that they would be quite likely or very likely to recommend staying over in a camping/motorhome permit area
- Half of those who responded had met a National Park Ranger during their stay

The feedback received is invaluable in helping us to deliver a high quality experience. As a result we are in the process of making some changes on the ground to permit areas, and providing additional information online to help improve the experience had by all.

This feedback, including constructive criticism, and continuing dialogue with our key partners, is being used to inform improvements to the experience and provide more clarity for campers. We are currently reviewing a number of operational matters and making changes to improve the experience and provide more clarity for visitors. Once this has been completed full details of the changes will be shared through the usual channels.