

National Park Authority Board Meeting



Agenda Item 8 – Appendix 1

Your Park Project Update

Appendix 1

Paper for Information

Your Park Project Update

We are now six months into the operation of the new Camping Management Byelaws, approaching the end of the first season. The National Park has continued to experience high visitor numbers despite the wet summer weather and this has helped us to understand the areas of the Your Park project that are working well and highlighted areas for us to refine for the 2018 season. Staff and communication efforts have focused on providing clear messages about the new byelaws and aiming to deliver good customer service and a high quality visitor experience.

The key elements of progress in this period are as follows:

Loch Chon Campsite

Loch Chon campsite has now been operating for six months and continues to be popular with visitors, with some weekends coming close to operating at full capacity. The total nights booked up until the end of August was 1160 with an average stay of 1.5 days. These bookings were representative of 1843 people; 1362 adults and 481 children.

The wet summer has highlighted the need for alternative surface materials on a few of the pitches and improvement works will be carried out this autumn. Design issues with the new water supply have resulted in ongoing issues with potable water, and a backup system has been in place with bottled water being provided for campers. A permanent solution has now been found and will be implemented in September. We continue to staff the campsite with Rangers who maintain the facility and act as a point of contact for customers. The response rate that we have had from campers to our follow up surveys has been good with 92% of respondents as of August likely or very likely to recommend Loch Chon campsite.

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The Permit System

The permit system and booking system have bedded in well, with improvements being made to permit areas and online booking information as a result of visitor and stakeholder feedback. As well as using our Land Operations Team and Ranger Service to patrol and manage permit areas, we are working with landowners to ensure that permit areas are maintained in a good condition, recognising that the management of litter and human waste remains an ongoing challenge moving forward. Our daily intelligence-led Ranger patrols allow us to react quickly to issues on the ground and make adjustments when needed.

Up until the end of August we have had 5329 bookings representing 7144 nights. These bookings are representative of 13,139 people; 11,018 adults and 2,121 children. These figures are broken down into the four Camping Management Zones in the table below;

Camping Management Area	Bookings	Nights	People	Split between children and adults
West Loch Lomond	1804	2265	4322	3728 adults 594 children
East Loch Lomond	432	514	859	818 adults 41 children
Trossachs West	106	150	217	200 adults 17 children
Trossachs North	2987	4215	7714	6272 adults 1469 children

The final element of the initial signage installation will be completed shortly, with the erection of 'hot spot' and 'repeater' signage which is designed to help remind visitors that they are in a Camping Management Zone. The signage locations have been chosen using feedback gathered from local communities and Rangers and aim to balance the need of providing additional clarity to campers, whilst avoiding signage clutter in the National Park.

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Improving Facilities

The proposals for the provision of camping opportunities and related facilities have been previously outlined to the Board in the Camping Development Strategy, October 2016. Our prime focus for the 2018 season is the investment in an upgraded campsite on the Three Lochs Forest Drive, working with our partners in Forest Enterprise Scotland. When the campsite is completed this will give the National Park an additional seventeen camping pitches, two of which will be all ability access. Presently we are still exploring options for the potential installation of new toilet facilities at South Loch Earn, but following discussions with a key landowner this provision is unlikely be able to be progressed during the current financial year. We are also planning to improve facilities at Inveruglas, Tarbet and Firkin Point on West Loch Lomond, whilst ensuring that we are getting best value for this capital investment to improve the overall visitor experience.

Communications and engagement

We continue to respond to a high number of public enquiries and media enquiries in relation to the new camping byelaws. We have also been proactive in getting our messages across to our visitors using our updated 'Camping in the National Park' leaflet, a series of short videos to explain how and where you can camp in the National Park and through the use of social media.

We continue to gather feedback from various sources including our online survey. From March until the end of August we have received in total 1066 feedback survey responses from people who have camped 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:

- 85% of people have booked their camping permit before they arrive;
- 93% of people said it was easy or very easy to book their permit;
- 6% of people felt they were not provided with sufficient information about how the byelaws operate;
- 85% 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;

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- Nearly half of those who responded had met a National Park Ranger during their stay.

Since the last Your Park Project Board update in June we received 522 survey responses, with the overall feedback changing very little from the rates outlined above.

The feedback that we have been receiving from visitors, partners, community groups, stakeholders and our field staff will all play a very important role in our upcoming review of the first season. This will not only allow us to improve the experience of camping in the National Park for our visitors but refine our internal systems to allow more efficient operational delivery.

Byelaws and Fixed Penalty Notices

Our Rangers have been patrolling daily, engaging with visitors and using the new byelaws proportionally and with discretion in this first season. Our aim is to use preventative and educational approaches first, to ensure good compliance and prior to resorting to any enforcement action. To date two byelaw cases have been reported to the Procurator Fiscal by National Park Authority staff and five by Police Scotland. Currently one case is due to be tried in court on the 11th of September. Four fixed penalty notices have been issued for fly tipping.

Next Steps

As we come to the end of the first season of the operational season of Your Park our attention is already turning to 2018 and improving on the successes and lessons of this year. We will be undertaking a detailed analysis of the first season using the feedback and data gathered from both external and internal sources throughout the year. As well as exploring trends and extracting key ideas from our customers, we will be engaging with stakeholders, and with our field staff who have been delivering the project on the ground.

Using the quantitative and qualitative data gathered we will:

- Identify areas in which to improve visitor experience;

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- Review permit area function and provision, and investment plans in the Camping Development Strategy for 2018 and beyond;
- Refine procedures and training for field staff;
- Ensure that staff resources are being deployed in the most efficient way possible;
- Design the stakeholder engagement and communications plan for the 2018 season;
- Map out how we move from project mode of the first season, to the on going business of visitor management.

Following the end of season review we will then compile a report to Scottish Ministers, outlining the operation of the first season of the new camping byelaws. It is anticipated that this report will be presented to Board in December.

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