

The December LL&TTNPA Board Meeting and the “refreshed” Outdoor Recreation Plan

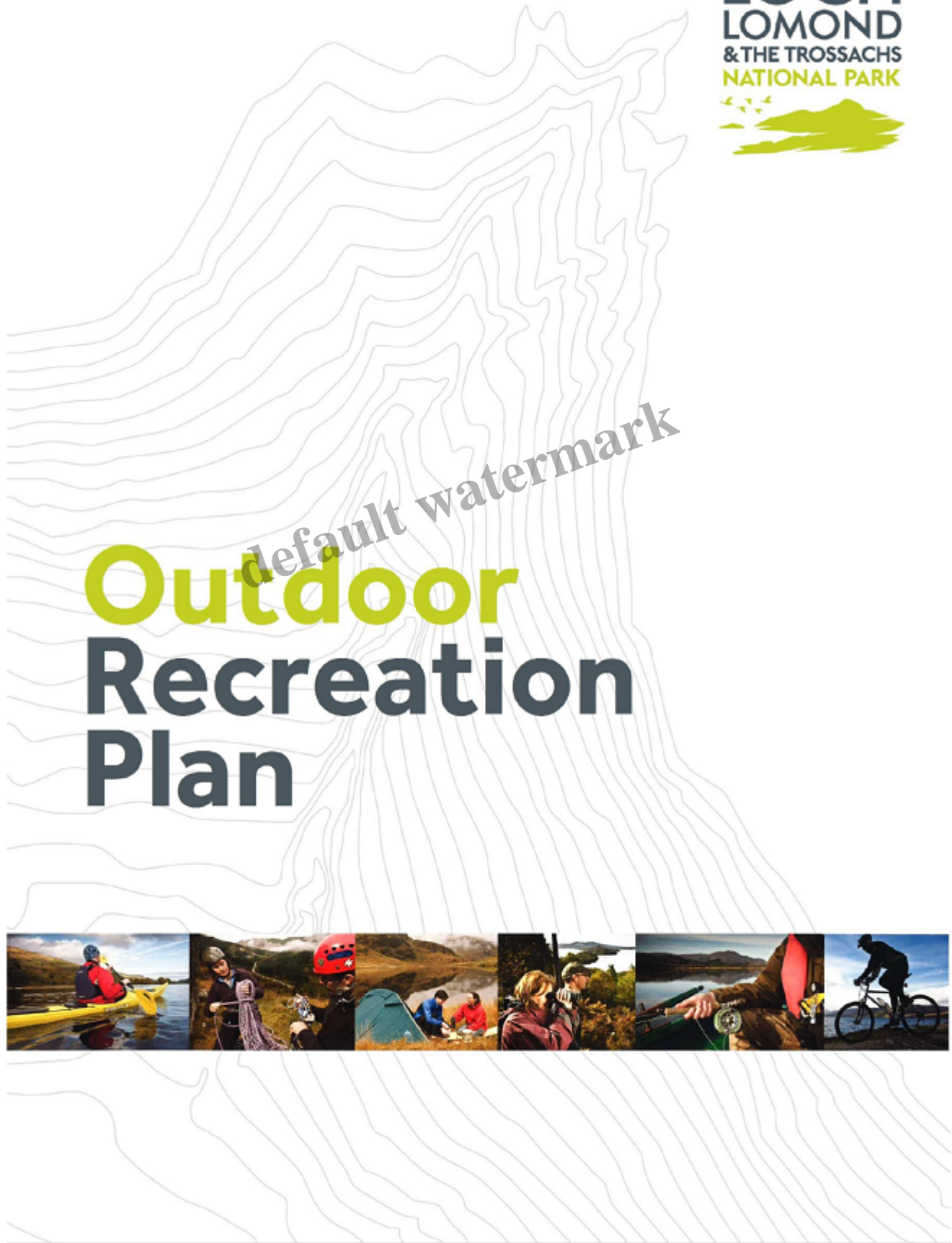
Description

The meeting on 9th December got off to a late start as several of the Board members were late for the 9.30 am kick off – change from the usual 10.00 am start. The Agenda was very full with only one break from start to finish. This was a very welcome change from last year’s debacle where set times were given to main the Agenda Items. That resulted in a very long interval mid-morning due to time over-estimation and a lunch break of 1hr 15mins whereupon the Board decanted to the Balloch House Hotel for their Xmas dinner!

My main interest in this Board Meeting was what was referred to in previous Board papers as *“the refreshed Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP)”*

The Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013 – 2017

“On 17 June 2013 the National Park Authority Board approved the Outdoor Recreation Plan for Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. The plan outlines commitment to actions and aspirations which enhance outdoor recreation opportunities across the Park from 2013 to 2017. The plan has been developed in conjunction with a variety of stakeholders.” [\(see here for documents\)](#)



Outdoor Recreation Plan



The 2013-17 ORP

This ORP was very specific in Actions and Aspirations, both of which were clearly defined:

“What is an ORP Action? An action has received commitment from the lead partner that it is of high value and will be included within five-year work plans.”

“What is an ORP Aspiration? An aspiration has value which is appreciated by potential project partners but at this time has received no firm commitment within work plans.”

Kayaking & canoeing

AIM: Well promoted network of good quality opportunities for a wide range of abilities.

Loch Lomond – central and north

- ORP Action 32: Network of fit for purpose access and egress points throughout Loch Lomond
- ORP Action 57: Balmaha capacity Issue resolved
- Aspiration: Network of fit for purpose access and egress points at Aldochlay, Inchmurrin, and Inversnaid
- TS Action 46: Encourage businesses and other interests to collaborate to develop packages of itineraries and products that provide a coherent and quality offering alongside marketing and consistent messages

Balquhiddier

- Aspiration: Fit for purpose launch site with associated parking at Loch Vail
- TS Action 46: Encourage businesses and other interests to collaborate to develop packages of itineraries and products that provide a coherent and quality offering alongside marketing and consistent messages

Northern Trossachs Lochs

- ORP Action 33: Fit for purpose access and egress points at eastern end of Loch Katrine
- Aspiration: Fit for purpose access and egress point at Inversnaid and Loch Achray
- Aspiration: Community Outdoor Sports Hub in Stronachlachar
- Aspiration: Provision improved at Loch Drunkie with promotion linked into 3 Lochs Forest Drive Improvements
- Aspiration: Formalised parking and access at Leny Falls
- TS Action 46: Encourage businesses and other interests to collaborate to develop packages of itineraries and products that provide a coherent and quality offering alongside marketing and consistent messages

Southern Trossachs Lochs

- Aspiration: Provision of safe portage opportunities using the Old Military Road and fit for purpose forestry links
- Aspiration: Improved surface for portage and launching at Milton end of Loch Ard
- Aspiration: Fit for purpose access and egress point at Inversnaid
- TS Action 46: Encourage businesses and other interests to collaborate to develop packages of itineraries and products that provide a coherent and quality offering alongside marketing and consistent messages

Loch Eck

- ORP Action 34: Promoted access and egress point at Loch Eck
- TS Action 46: Encourage businesses and other interests to collaborate to develop packages of itineraries and products that provide a coherent and quality offering alongside marketing and consistent messages

Sea Lochs

- ORP Action 44: Promoted sea lochs opportunity supported by shoreline infrastructure
- Aspiration: Network of fit for purpose access and egress points at Kilmun, Ardentinn, Lochgolthead and Arrochar
- Aspiration: Fit for purpose access and egress point on Ardgartan Peninsula
- TS Action 38: Raise the profile of long distance routes and increase the number of visitors and the opportunities for businesses on the routes
- TS Action 46: Encourage businesses and other interests to collaborate to develop packages of itineraries and products that provide a coherent and quality offering alongside marketing and consistent messages

Land-based motorised activities

AIM: To continue the current level of provision, new provision would only be supported where it did not affect the special qualities of the Park or conflict with other recreationalists.

- ORP Action 57: Monitor trends in participation levels
- TS Action 52: Create a one stop contact at the National Park for outdoor event organisers
- TS Action 53: Introduce a sustainable events checklist for use by outdoor event organisers

Motor boating

AIM: To develop and encourage improvements to mooring and berthing opportunities for powered craft using Loch Lomond. This will enable more opportunities to enjoy the loch, reduce pressure on the currently limited locations to go ashore, and improve opportunities for local business to benefit economically from water borne visitors.

- ORP Action 43: Overnight public moorings on Loch Lomond-pilot project
- ORP Action 44: Promoted Sea Lochs opportunities supported by shoreline infrastructure
- ORP Action 58: Promoted network of public berthing opportunities on Loch Lomond
- ORP Action 60: Loch users awareness and education programme
- Aspiration: Strategically placed re-fuelling station on Loch Lomond
- Aspiration: Programme of training events on basic boat skills
- TS Action 22: Invest in visitor facilities, toilets, campsites, parking and develop innovative solutions for long term sustainability
- TS Action 33: Identify gaps in accommodation provision and working with partners such as SDI, promote opportunities to investors

Personal Water Craft

AIM: This activity continues to be enjoyed at sustainable levels and within appropriate areas which help reduce any potential impacts on other recreational activities.

- ORP Action 60: Loch users awareness and education programme
- Aspiration: Investigations carried out into potential areas where this activity can be concentrated with associated facilities and economic benefits for local businesses

Recreational Towing

AIM: This activity continues to be enjoyed in appropriate areas which help reduce any potential impacts on other recreational activities.

- ORP Action 59: Community Outdoor Sports Hub

Rowing

AIM: Continued growth in participation

- ORP Action 59: Community Outdoor Sports Hub
- Aspiration: Increased activity profile at beginner level

Sailing

AIM: Loch Lomond is valued as a popular area for beginners learning to sail, whilst also being used by more experienced sailors to maximise where appropriate.

- ORP Action 44: Promoted sea lochs opportunity supported by shoreline infrastructure
- ORP Action 60: Loch users awareness and education programme
- TS Action 50: Promote a calendar of events for the brand

Ski Mountaineering

AIM: Continued sustainable development

- ORP Action 67: Monitor trends in participation

Stalking & Field Sports

AIM: Support continued participation in these activities alongside management of any impacts

- ORP Action 35: Heading for the Scottish Borders
- ORP Action 67: Monitor trends of participation

Swimming – Open water

AIM: Open water swimming participation throughout the Park sustainably and equitably

- ORP Action 59: Community Outdoor Sports Hub
- Aspiration: Promotion of safe open water swimming with guidance
- TS Action 51: Promote a calendar of events for the brand

Extract from ORP summary showing many of the actions and aspiration for water based activities

As far as Water Recreation on Loch Lomond is concerned none of the Actions, never mind the Aspirations, were actually delivered, e.g:

- ORP Action 43: Overnight moorings on Loch Lomond

- *ORP Action 44: Promoted Sea Lochs opportunities supported by shoreline infrastructure*
- *ORP Action 58: Promoted network of public berthing opportunities on Loch Lomond*
- *ORP Action 60: Loch users education programme ORP*

NEITHER were:

- *ORP Action 26: Balloch Cycle Hub development or*
- *ORP Action 59: Community Outdoor Sports Hubs (Balloch and Callander – which were intended to include: Archery p13; Recreational towing p.47; Rowing p.47 ; and Open Water Swimming; p. 51).*

The National Park Authority Board Meeting of 24th October 2016 had considered progress on the actions from the Outdoor Recreation Plan (2013-17) at Agenda Item 10 (with a detailed list of progress against actions given in Appendix 1 [see here](#))

8. *“Current projects underway 2016-17 Community Outdoor Sports Hubs (Loch Lomond Watersports Hub) Summary: Ambitious project which includes the design and construction of a bespoke facility which creates a shared club house for existing sports clubs, which stimulates participation, increased memberships and community ownership. The project is currently in the design and planning permission phase, final construction costs are expected to be around £2M”*

The Community Outdoors Sports hub at Callander has apparently been delivered but not Balloch (perhaps because the piece of land earmarked was scheduled to be included in the Flamingoland plans??).

The proposal for Balloch resurfaces – in a slightly different guise – in the consultation on the new Outdoor Recreation Delivery Plan:-

8. *“Support the development of outdoor activity hubs at key locations*

This initiative will look at the best partners to take forward potential projects such as a Watersport hub at the south end of Loch Lomond, ...”

Is this on the Riverside Site at Balloch or not?

The new ORP and the LL&TTNPA Board Meeting – 9th December 2019

The Outdoor Recreation Delivery Plan consultation (ORDPC) was considered at agenda Item 5 ([see here for papers](#)) under the names of Claire Chapman (Board Member) / Simon Jones / Kenny Auld



The consultation document itself (ORDPC) is available on the Park website ([see here](#)), runs to the 31st January and is the long overdue replacement for the first Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) 2013-2017.

LL&TTNPA plans are generally written on 5 yearly basis and the revised ORP should have run until 2023 BUT it is not yet past the consultation process. The consultation says the ORP will run over the next 5 years but gives no dates: by my reckoning that takes us to 2025 at the earliest. Given that it has taken from 2017 to 2020 to produce the 'refreshed' plan perhaps it's time to make a start now on the follow-up plan?

There is conflicting information in the Board Papers about what period the first ORP actually covered.
Under the covering Paper for approval:

1.2 The Delivery Plan is not a statutory document but replaces the previous Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013-2018 and develops the strategic priorities set out within our National Park Partnership Plan.

4.1 The Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) 2012-17 was a prioritised 5 year action plan which contained commitments and intentions of the National Park Authority and other stakeholders for the development and improvement of the Park's recreation provision.

Then in the [Consultation Document](#) itself there is a reference to “Building on the National Park’s previous Outdoor Recreation Plan 2013-17....”

So, there we have it ... 3 different timescale references to the original ORP!! What dates will appear on the new release given its tardy appearance?

Kenny Auld presented the ‘refreshed’ ORP (now ORDPC) and read through parts of each section of the document giving page references (52 pages in all compared to 87 in the last ORP). One would have thought that given today’s technology it would not have been an onerous task to have presented this on the in-situ screen in the Board Room. Simon Jones used this later for 4 or 5 pictures!! Perhaps IT can only cope with 1 presentation at a time and S Jones being the more senior got priority?

There are 6 key themes in the consultation document all of which come with statements on “Delivery Principles”, some of which come with “Case Studies” and each section has its own “Where we will focus our efforts”

1 – A Park for All;

- *Promote and protect the public’s right to responsible access and remove barriers where they exist. As an Access Authority, the National Park Authority has statutory responsibilities to uphold public access rights under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.*
- *Consider a National Park Access Panel & Ambassador Programme*
- *Creative, effective and sustainable path monitoring and maintenance programmes.*
- *‘Step into the Park’ initiative to develop, promote and celebrate entrance level outdoor recreation opportunities.*

2 – Active and Vibrant Places;

- *Develop Aberfoyle and the Trossachs as an internationally recognised Active Tourism destination*
- *Promote a National Park Active and Sustainable Travel Forum*
- *Develop the first “Bike and Hike Life” assessment of cycling and walking development within the National Park*
- *Support the development of outdoor activity hubs at key locations*

3 – Happy and Healthy People;

- *Vale of Leven Outdoor Health Partnership*
- *Promote National Park sport, recreation and lifestyle partnerships*
- *Continued development of the Walk in the Park programme*
- *National Park Daily Mile Programme*

4 – Connecting Places;

- *Continue to develop the National Walking and Cycling Network within and around the National Park*
- *Enhanced public transport hubs and services that connect with active travel and tourism networks around the National Park*
- *Shared E-Bikes scheme that connects communities and places*

- *Develop a Mobility as a Service pilot programme providing single ticket journeys and itineraries across the National Park*

5 – Exploring Further;

- *Protect and improve Scotland's Great Trails within the National Park*
- *Reconnect people with cultural heritage through historic glen routes, coffin roads, drovers and pilgrim routes and hill lochs.*
- *Develop a suite of full-day route cards and itineraries*
- *Woodland and Forests which maximise the opportunities for exploration and escape (and one would hope that this includes Drumkinnon Woods in Balloch which if Flamingoland goes ahead is scheduled to be built on)*

6 – Coasts and Water;

- *Promote a National Park wide "Into the Water" infrastructure programme*
- *Develop and promote high quality paddlesport and boating itineraries*
- *Promote integration of open water swimming lessons into Active Schools Programme*
- *Development of Blue Space and Blue Health Projects*

An admirable aspirational list. Each of the 24 points outlining where the LL&TTNPA will focus its efforts includes its own list of "Delivery Partners". In other words, whilst all of the aspirations and visions belong primarily to the LL&TTNPA, with perhaps some input from others (Under P7 of the ORDPC there is a section on "*How has it been created*") it is obviously not really going to be deliverable as there is no definite plan in place as to who delivers what. Interestingly, there is no list/appendix as to WHO had input to ORDPC, other than LL&TTNPA, but Appendix 1 at the end is a list of "Potential Delivery Partners"

At the meeting it was apparent that at least some Board Members had actually read the ORDPC. As a regular onlooker to NPA Board Meetings this has not always been the case in years gone by! A number of well – earned complimentary approbations about the document were offered followed by questions and/or made statements about the plan, eg:

- Actions could be firmer;
- consultation should be more specific;
- upping the numbers of people coming to the National Park increases transport issues;
- need for transport companies to liaise re timetabling;
- how was the Plan to be achieved?;
- the possibility of supplying outdoor kit for visitors to enable more people to participate

All reasonable points but none were taken up. As with the LL&TTNPA's Trees and Woodland Strategy (TWS) ([see here](#)) the 'Plan' is not a plan but a vision. I was reminded of the discussion about the delivery of the TWS at the Board Meeting in Oct 2019) where Simon Jones (Director of Conservation & Visitor Operations) stated in response to a question that the document "*deliberately didn't give detail of how to achieve the strategy*"!! Board Member Claire Chapman introduced the document on the ORP in similar vein when she said its "*not our document, its for our delivery partners*". This should be called out as passing the buck:



Who will deliver the plan?

The National Park Authority is just one of a number of organisations who work to provide a landscape to be enjoyed and cherished by everyone. From national organisations to community groups, specific outdoor recreation interest groups and land managers, the National Park can only be the place we all want it to be if there is a shared vision with shared values. 'We' are all of the delivery partners. Specific delivery partners are referenced under the relevant themes.

This is meaningless nonsense which confirms there is no delivery plan just a list of potential delivery partners.

Kenny Auld was, I felt, deflated by the overall response of the Board and I did feel a great deal of sympathy for him. He was, after all, following the remit he had been given and following the formula/template that most LL&TTNPA documents/Plans seem to use these days under the sponsorship of the afore-mentioned Simon Jones.

Perhaps this lack of commitment to action and giving a lead from senior management and the Board is due in some measure to the fact that the LL&TTNPA has been having significant trouble balancing its books this year and knows this is about to get worse.

Agenda Item 10 Financial Report (interesting reading!!)

6.2. The Executive are comfortable with the currently forecast deficit of £32k. We will continue to work throughout the year to bring this to balance. We expect that there is likely to be delays in some spend areas, and therefore expect that a broadly balanced budget will be delivered at the end of the financial year.

Code for more actions won't be delivered. This was re-inforced by:

Agenda Item 9 Annual Operational Plan (AOP) 2019-20 Progress Report – 21 November 2019

There were concerns from the Board at the number of priorities at risk (4); behind schedule (18); cancelled (1) or postponed (1) – all of which indicates a Public Authority which is struggling. Even Health and Safety is now being abandoned:

*“Procurement of new boat to maximise efficiency of water patrols and allow safer and efficient maintenance to navigation marks Purchase of maintenance boat delayed due to budgetary constraints. To be reviewed In January 2020 for decision to go ahead in 2019/2020 or delay until 2020/21. Replacement of new patrol boat will be part of 2020/21 budget process or a specific capital request to SG. **Postponed**”*

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. access rights
2. Governance
3. LLTNPA
4. Tourism
5. visitor management
6. water sports

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