

The Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Authority – is there anybody there for outdoor recreation?

## Description

Most people I know who are working at home are getting more work done there than if they had the distractions of the office. This has also been claimed in the press to be the case. But in the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) it appears that during the Covid crisis much of the managerial type office/paperwork has fallen even further behind schedule, been postponed or cancelled. Here I take a look at Outdoor Recreation which should have been given greater priority than ever before.

## The replacement for the Outdoor Recreation Plan (ORP) 2013 – 17

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 which enhance outdoor recreation opportunities across the Park from 2013 to 2017. The plan has been developed in conjunction with a variety of stakeholders.

Screenshot LLTNPA website

The new plan, named “*Active Park, Healthy People: Outdoor Recreation Delivery Plan*” (revised after ‘Consultation’) was meant to be presented to the NPA Board last year but wasn’t.

2. Enhancing our visitor experience, volunteering, and active living opportunities		
2.1 We will continue to promote ways to get active in the outdoors.	Finalise our ‘Active Park, Healthy People’ plan	Work now restarting. Tim June 2021 so that COVID can be fully absorbed.
	Progress key aspects of our Active Park, Healthy People plan such as developing new health projects.	No capacity across partn 19 to fully consider and c projects at this time.

Dec. 2020 Board Meeting

For several years now the Outdoor Recreation Plan has been pushed further and further down the line. The sad history, since the last plan ended, is as follows:

Board Meeting 19 June 2017 – No mention of updating ORP

Board Meeting December 2017 – No mention of updating ORP

Board Meeting 12 March 2018 – Agenda Item 5 – Draft Annual Operational Plan – Appendix 1 – Draft 2018/19 Annual Operational Plan provides the first mention of updating ORP I can find, with a target completion date of December 2018:

<u>NP Partnership Plan Priority</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Measurement of Success</u>
5.1 Path Provision 5.2 Path Maintenance 5.3 Active Travel	6. Improving and extending the National Park's recreational path network	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree with partners a strategy and funding model for the management and development of the West Highland Way</li> <li>- Outdoor Recreation Plan refresh drafted by December 2018</li> <li>- Facilitate feasibility and funding applications for Community and Improving Public Access path development projects</li> </ul>

Board Meeting 14 June 2018 – Agenda Item 12 – Annual Operational Plan Progress Report – Appendix 3, “on track”:

5.1 Path Provision 5.2 Path Maintenance	6. Improving and extending the National Park's recreational path network	On Track Note: 3	5 - Public/Active Transport 6 – Active Recreation	Agree with partners a strategy and funding model for the planned management and development of the West Highland Way Outdoor Recreation Plan refresh drafted by December 2018
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Board Meeting – 10 Dec 2018 – Agenda Item 9 – Annual Operational Plan Report – Appendix 1 suggested the “refresh” had been drafted but it was not presented to the meeting:

<u>NP Partnership Plan Priority</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>NP Partnership Plan Indicator of Success</u>	<u>Measurement of Success</u>
5.1 Path Provision 5.2 Path Maintenance 5.3 Active Travel	6. Improving and extending the National Park's recreational path network	On Track	5 - Public/Active Transport 6 – Active Recreation 7 – Visitor Economy	Agree with partners a strategy and funding model for the planned management and development of the West Highland Way Outdoor Recreation Plan refresh drafted by December 2018

Board Meeting – 18 March 2019 Agenda Item 13 – Annual Operational Plan Progress Report:

5.1 Path Provision 5.2 Path Maintenance	6. Improving and extending the National Park's recreational path network	On Track	5 - Public/Active Transport 6 – Active Recreation	Agree with partners a strategy and funding model for the planned management and development of the West Highland Way Outdoor Recreation Plan refresh drafted by December 2018 Facilitate feasibility and funding applications for Community and Improving Public Access path development projects
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Board Meeting – 17 June 2019 Annual Operational Plan 2019-20 – Agenda Item 10.2, reports ORP to

be presented to Board by June, but it was not on the agenda:

<u>NP Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-Year Plan Priority</u>	<u>Activities</u>	<u>Rating</u>	<u>NP Partnership Plan Indicator of Success</u>	<u>Measurement of Success</u>
5:1 Path Provision  5:2 Path Maintenance  5:3 Active Travel  6:2 Waterbus Network	7. Improving and extending the National Park's recreational path network and effective promotion of land and water recreation opportunities.	On track	5: Public/Active Transport  6: Active Recreation  7: Visitor Economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agree with partners a strategy a model for the planned management development of the West Highland Way</li> <li>- Refreshed draft Outdoor Recreation Strategy associated consultation/engagement presented to the National Park Authority by June 2019</li> <li>- Facilitate feasibility and funding for path development projects to develop 2kms of new/upgraded path and in Strathfillan, Drymen/Balmaha.</li> </ul>

Board Meeting 29 Oct 2019 – No mention ORP

Board Meeting 9 Dec 2019 – Agenda Item 5 covered consultation on the ORP:

- 6.3 Following consideration of consultation responses, any revision and refinement will be made with the intention of bringing a draft 'Active Park Healthy People' Outdoor Recreation Delivery Plan to the Board for adoption in March 2020.

Board Meeting 16 March 2020 – Agenda Item 14 “ORP Update Paper”:

- 5.7 A full Consultation Report will accompany the final Delivery Plan when it is tabled to the Board in June 2020.

Board Meeting 15th June 2020, Agenda Item 7 “Operational Plan Re-prioritisation”:

Progress key aspects of our Active Park, Healthy People plan such as developing new health projects.	Discussions starting with key partners to reassess priorities in light of COVID-19 impacts and opportunities.	On hold to COVID-19
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Board Meeting 14th September 2020, Agenda Item 6:

## 2. Enhancing our visitor experience, volunteering, and active living opportunities

2.1 We will continue to promote ways to get active in the outdoors.	Finalise our 'Active Park, Healthy People' plan	Timeline being revised so consider COVID-19 implications
	Progress key aspects of our Active Park, Healthy People plan such as developing new health projects.	New timeline and task list with provisional target of December

This Board Meeting also considered the final Report on the Annual Operational Plan 2019/20 which stated:

L. Revised Outdoor Recreation Plan, consultation and finalisation	Final draft document and launch delayed due to COVID-19 implications.
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That takes us to the December 2020 meeting, just three months later, where it was reported that the ORP had been postponed to June 2021, i.e. 2021/22!

### Meantime the recreational soundbites and failures continue

Gordon Watson the Chief Executive of the LLTNPA was quoted in the Helensburgh Advertiser (Jan 14 2021) :-



Public toilets and car parks in the National Park, including the facilities in Tarbet, will remain open to allow people living locally to exercise in the area. Photo Screenshot –



## Helensburgh Advertiser

Gordon Watson, the National Park's chief executive, said: "While it hasn't been the start to the new year that we had hoped for with another national lockdown, we must all do our bit to help stop the spread of the virus by staying at home and staying as local as possible.

"Getting outside into nature and exercising is going to be important for everyone's health and wellbeing particularly during the winter so we know that people living in and close to the National Park will be keen to enjoy the park where they are allowed to within the guidelines.

"This includes only going out with one other person or meeting up with one other person from another household and staying in your local area.

"Our car parks and toilets remain open, on winter operating hours, to support people to do this responsibly."

The evidence from Loch Lubnaig and Rowardennan ([see here](#)) shows otherwise.

The claims of Forest and Land Scotland (FLS), who were also reported in the Helensburgh Advertiser Jan 14 2021, are more credible:

**Forest walk routes stay open**

■ **FORESTRY** and Land Scotland's walking and mountain biking trails in Helensburgh and Lomond will remain open for local access under Scotland's latest lockdown limits.

The agency says it wants to help members of the public maintain mental and physical health and wellbeing alongside efforts to slow the transmission of Covid-19.

The FLS trails in the Argyll Forest, including those at Arrochar, Ardgartan and Cruach Tairbeirt, will remain available for members of the public living locally.

Simon Hodgson, the FLS chief executive, said: "We understand that there will be instances where young children, older people and less able people will not be able to manage that short walk to their local woods, so we have kept our car parks open to help give them as much opportunity as we can."

While access rights have never been suspended at any time during the Covid crisis at least FLS does not appear to be putting barriers in the way of enjoying the countryside, unlike the LLTNPA with its locked toilets and car parks.

Meanwhile elsewhere spanners are being thrown in the works to prevent folks enjoying the great outdoors:

### Arrochar car park for sale - Argyllshire Advertiser

<https://www.argyllshireadvertiser.co.uk/2021/01/06/arrochar-car-park-for-sale> ▼

06/01/2021 · An **Arrochar car park** leased by Argyll and Bute Council has been placed on the market – for an asking price of £150,000. Property consultancy Galbraith is handling the **sale** of what it describes in sales literature as ‘a prime 4.3 acre site with an active **car park** at **Arrochar**, Argyll and Bute’. Harry Graham of Galbraith said: ‘The land includes an area developed as a **car park** and ...

### Arrochar land and car park on the market for £150,000 ...

<https://www.helensburghadvertiser.co.uk/news/18954726.arrochar-land...> ▼

18/12/2020 · A PATCH of land in a Helensburgh and Lomond village described as a “gateway to the Highlands” has been placed on the market. The 4.3-acre site in Arrochar, which includes part of the car park at the head of Loch Long, has gone up for sale at offers over £150,000.

Readers may recall ([see here](#)) the hike of car park charges in the aforementioned carpark by Argyll & Bute Council from £4 to £9!! Incredibly, given these car parks are for sale:

### Loch Long Boat Cruise plans turned down due to parking ...

<https://www.helensburghadvertiser.co.uk/news/19018814.arrochar-boat...> ▼

18/01/2021 · PROPOSALS for commercial boat tours in Arrochar have been **turned down** by planning chiefs due to concerns over parking in the village. The Loch Long **Boat Cruise** venture, put forward by Brendan and Nicola Thomson, would have seen a small vessel operate from the pontoon which was installed on the foreshore and officially opened to the public in 2019.

If that doesn't

demonstrate the need for a properly thought out and resourced Outdoor Recreation Plan I am not sure what does!

### Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

### Tags

1. Governance
2. LLTNPA
3. outdoor recreation

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