

Pre-season stakeholder briefing on visitor management in the National Park

Question & Answer session

Friday 26th March 2021



1. James Fraser, Friends of Loch Lomond & Sir Walter Scott Steamship Trust

Q1: Has concerns around West Loch Lomond side and the A82 corridor regarding litter management, conscious that volunteers can't tackle that and there is a desire to experiment with litter bins.

A: Simon explained that with regards to litter on West Loch Lomond there are some real issues. As well as being technical it's an incredibly challenging place due to a safety perspective. This has been flagged with relevant partner authorities and discussions are being held around the best way to tackle it. Litter messaging will also be a key part of our communications plan.

Q2: With regards to Tarbet, what are the current plans for car park charging and the implications for buses in that area? There is a plea for an early action to work on a RTIF bid with Arrochar and Tarbet group to see if we expand provision. In the Trossachs, the Steamship Trust have taken the lead and have received planning permission for two car parks near Loch Katrine but need to raise some additional funding. Any support for funding from the National Park or Stirling Council would be much appreciated to help deliver the programme.

A: Gordon explained that with regards to car park charging at Tarbet the National Park Authority are looking at practical issues such as school drop offs as well as different users of the site. The introduction of the system is not imminent. On RTIF there is further funding becoming available and also the Scottish Government announced a 5 year capital spending review, so that means the National Park Authority can start to put together some more ambitious RTIF. Arrochar / Tarbet area will be one of the areas of focus with community engagement over the coming months.

2. Falcon Frost, Glenfalloch Estate

Q: Is there going to be a dedicated hotline or email address for land managers, communities etc. to feed into the national park where hotspots arise that the rangers haven't covered and to collate going forward the impacts and problems we are having?

A: Joanne confirmed that a dedicated 'feedback' inbox had been set up last year and will be used again. This is not for urgent incidents but would like to hear from stakeholders, land managers, communities etc. where they are seeing issues so that this can be used for deployment plans and future planning. That email address will come out following the meeting in an information pack which will include other useful contact details.

3. Gene Maxwell, Trossachs Community Council

Q: What is being done to inform people on other opportunities locally around the Trossachs and Ben A'an area. Will there be an education programme to inform people on other places to go on the Dukes pass where there are several car parks?

A: Kenny explained that Ben A'an is a special case as an entry level hill which people go to for a specific view and experience. We are seeing a growth in numbers but we do need to be careful about diverting people and we want them to progress onto other hills when ready. There are different tools being used such as a new journey planner launching later in the season which will be able to promote public transport, this will also say to people that where they are going will be busy and offer alternatives. Through our communications we do try to promote alternatives. Happy to discuss further and listen to suggestions on specific locations we can integrate into our comms plan.

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A: Simon confirmed that it is an area that we are trying to progress with emerging technology. To be able to redeploy people you need a live active feedback system that has very reactive good communications so you know where is busy and where is not. We are running a pilot with Stirling Council using remote sensors in car parks. It's very much a work in progress and interested to hear where there is spare capacity in car parking. We need to develop and are trialling new things this year to try and be more reactive.

4. Mark Hamilton, Frenich Farm

Q: In Strathard there are sections of Loch Ard, Loch Chon, Loch Arklet that sit outside the Camping Management Zone and are occupied by significant numbers of people knowing that the camping byelaws are not enforceable but they are clearly impacting on the environment, traffic taking up passing places. Is there someone looking at the CMZ in relation to the Visitor Management Plan?

A: Simon said that we know some of the hot spot issues and have put in more signage. Wild camping is allowed providing its done responsibly. Finding a way to ensure that it is done responsibly takes up a lot of the time of the National Park Authority. There will be more active patrols in those areas this year as we have additional staff. Last year there were significant issues due to campsites being closed, so we hope this year some of the private sites will be open and there will be more provision for formal camping. Open for discussion to try and tackle problems re wild camping and irresponsible behaviour whether inside or outside a CMZ. Please stay in touch through the feedback inbox and ranger presence.

A: Gordon explained that the areas that are currently within CMZ were decided following significant consultation and contention about introducing these and it was based on evidence of repeat issues, mainly on loch sides that are accessible from a public road. To contemplate any additions we would have to go through a similar process of consultation, evidence gathering etc. but we are not at that point yet to make changes. We will be patrolling hotspots that are not in CMZs. We do have one or two other powers such as litter powers and working with police on antisocial behaviour. Feeding in things is really important to help us respond. We will be monitoring what the new patterns are and try to gauge any long term change and that will be informing all visitor management planning over the next couple of years.

A: Stuart Chalmers, Forestry and Land Scotland, explained that he had a meeting with Strathard Community Council and that they are considering a temporary change to the youth campsite in Loch Ard Forest along by the river. FLS are planning to put in a planning application for this. This might help alleviate some of the issues and the community will have the opportunity to feedback re the planning application. Aiming to improve the security around that whole area with the patrolling that they will be doing.

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5. Marilyn Moore, Callander Community Development Trust

Q: There is no campervan space in the town, however Station Road car park is underused and could take quite a lot of motorhomes with relatively minimal spend. Currently it is in the Callander Parking Management Plan which hasn't yet started, is it possible to extract motorhome parking from that Parking Management Plan so that we can accelerate the facilities needed? This would help Callander businesses as well because if we could accommodate more motorhomes within the town then more local business are likely to be used stimulating economic growth.

A: Bruce Reekie at Stirling Council will pick this discussion up with colleagues in the parking service. Bruce, Drew & Lesley will sit down with yourself and discuss through some of the potential options and Drew can give an update on the Parking Management Plan.

A: Kenny highlighted that he spoke with David Hopper in Drew's team yesterday and was aware that this is an active conversation and there are other potential sites around Callander.

6. Amanda Clarke, Killin Community Council

Q: On behalf of KCC there have been good discussions with Stirling Council. There is a plea for the partners to not forget Killin on the outer periphery of the National Park. They are very fortunate that they don't have the same issues as other areas but if people are pushed out of the busy areas they are pushed into Killin.

A: Kenny said we will not forget Killin and the acute nature of what we are seeing in the others at times can sometimes be taken that way. Derek Manson within the Forward Planning team is doing a lot of good work with the community and around more strategic planning. The sustainable transport work will hopefully come on line and will provide good recreational opportunities around Killin and more positive economic growth for the area and benefit residents. Looking at Glen Dochart connections and looking at more strategic work. At the moment we are delighted that they are not seeing issues such as that of other areas, but do let us know as there is ranger capacity in that area of the park and can react when required.

A: Martin suggested that the notes from the meeting which took place last week to be sent across.

7. James Macintosh, Wits End

Q: James has a farm in Strathyre which is on the cycle path from Strathyre to Balquhiddy. There is a layby at their entrance which is always filled with litter and defecation and never seems to get picked up. As there are no public toilets in Strathyre people using the gateways where livestock are and farm yard area for toileting. Who is responsible for picking up litter from the farm yard and field gates?

A: Simon explained that NFUS or SLE states the landowner has responsibility for most of these things which is the way things currently stand. As we touched on earlier the easiest thing is to take off line and have discussions with Nik Tuner who works on our litter prevention and to have a discussion with ourselves and local authorities on how we can look at specific site based issues. Simon is happy for James to contact Simon directly and will take forward offline.

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8. Bob Darracott, LLTNP Board Member

Q1: A couple of people have asked about reverse communication and speaking to our partners in terms of providing intelligence. Will we be able to provide through the National Park one point of contact and will this provide a further link to other partners and if not, can other points of contacts be provided to ourselves when that information has been passed out?

A: Joanne explained that in terms of the intelligence from communities that comes into the feedback mail box we will use the information to share with the safe recovery partners for forward planning, it won't be for urgent immediate incidents so we will share a quick guide on who to contact about what, this will provide some clarity on who to contact and to keep it as simple as possible.

Q2: Question to Stuart Chalmers at FLS, the plan than Kenny put up showed the Ardentiny beach area, and the review of the site being proposed by FLS, what does that entail?

A: Stuart commented that they met with reps from Ardentiny Community Council last week, this is another site that they are aiming to put in a planning application for. FLS are looking at formalising campervans at Ardentiny and looking at making a bigger area that is less accessible to cars and a proposal to make a camping area. Also looking at putting basic things such as bunding to try and stop inappropriate parking. Trying to get additional staffing to help manage the issues there. Setting up a meeting next week to chat through wider proposals.

9. Kelly Clapperton-Bates, Strathfillan Community Development Trust

Q: With regards to the additional staffing, will rangers just be going to key areas or across the National Park? Strathfillan CDT are in the process of looking at the Better Places fund with a view to employing two local rangers in the Tyndrum and Crianlarich areas because they felt there was no ranger support at all last year in their area. Will the NP be willing to work in partnership with them in terms of coordination, some help with recruitment and training for rangers – what support will the National Park give individual communities who are looking to help themselves?

A: Simon explained that even with one of the biggest ranger services in the UK as well as all the partner staff it's a big place to cover and staff have to concentrate on the absolute busiest places, and that has been Camping Management Zones. There have been parts of the park that don't get as much ranger presence as the busiest areas do but that doesn't mean that patrols don't pass through the area. The Park Authority have made additional resources available to the ranger managers this year to try and recruit for additional capacity for places like Breadalbane, Cowal, Killin etc. so there will be some additional roving capacity. There's been a bit of a rush in Scotland for new rangers as it's quite a busy market place. We are clearly looking for people with good visitor experience.

The National Park Authority very much welcome the opportunity to talk to any organisations or landowners etc. that are thinking about taking on their own rangers. We have lots of experience in this and we welcome it but it needs to happen in a coordinated way so that there is understanding from the public point of view and from the local residents what the different rangers/wardens, enforcement officers do. New funding is available and in everybody's interest to be coordinated so we encourage you to please get in touch.

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A: Gordon commented that one thing missing last year because of Covid was our volunteer rangers. This year we will have a uniform volunteer ranger presence as well, obviously very valuable to us, engaging with visitors in a positive way and help reduce issues. Will look at how we deploy across the National Park at various locations.

10. Stuart Cordner, Cruise Loch Lomond

Q: In terms of reporting anti-social behaviour and to ensure we have the correct line of communication. Who should incidents be reported to in the first instance?

A: Joanne explained that if serious antisocial behaviour is occurring and you want action on at the time then it should be reported directly to the Police as this is the quickest option. If it's an ongoing issue and you want to feed into the National Park and partners to address through deployment planning then use the feedback inbox, these details will be shared.

11. John Sweeney, Sweeney's Cruise Co.

Q1: Has concerns about the length of time it takes to get through to the Police when Phoning 101, this is not an option when you are busy and there is anti-social behaviour going on around you. There needs to be a better solution.

A: Roddy McNeil, Police Scotland explained that if it's not an emergency the only other option they have is the 101 service. As there is no longer any localised control rooms in the area and he appreciates that there are some issues. Roddy will consider with his superior as to whether the direct numbers of supervisors in the Alexandria and Helensburgh team could be provided to some stakeholders an option.

Q2: What month is Lomond Bridge reopening and is there any updates on what is happening with Stonymollan roundabout?

A: Iain Bain of West Dunbartonshire Council confirmed that the bridge will reopen on 15th May.

A: Martin suggested that the information regarding stonemollan roundabout will be clarified to John offline.

A: Kenny commented that there will be enhanced enforcement on the trains coming out of Balloch. Additional transport police on the train lines are planned for the summer.

12. Mike Luti, Monachyle Beag, Callander

Q1: Really pleased that there is extra support but what powers will the National Park and FLS staff have as he has concerns that not all visitor behave.

A: Kenny explained that National Park Rangers are skilled on taking engagement with visitors to a certain level in terms of influencing behaviour before taking any further enforcement action themselves or and at certain points escalating matters to the Police.

A: Stuart at FLS commented that the powers that their staff have is the power of a 'smiling face' and our role is to encourage visitors to behave better. The reason they are putting patrols in is to get to visitors to care about sites then there's much more chance that they will behave more responsibly. There are 3 steps, the role for FLS, the NP have byelaws in the appropriate areas and moving into criminal will be for the police. The main role is promoting positive behaviour.

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Q2: Locals staying in towns and villages also like to have quiet areas. Is there any recommendations for not over marketing certain areas?

A: Kenny suggested that as we move forward with strategic work this will come through. We wouldn't promote areas adhoc. We won't be focusing on promoting entirely around dispersal, as having people in focused areas also allows focused investment of infrastructure. When people are in one area we can build economic arguments for investment easier, allowing us to provide facilities and shift behaviours. It's all part of our considerations and will work on that.

13. Katy Lamb, Kinlochard Village Hall

Q: Wanted to reiterate the point re who do people phone? It's a massive query that comes up all the time in the community. Would you consider the partnership looking at having some kind of coordinated response?

A: Gordon wanted to re emphasis that the email address that Joanne spoke about earlier is monitored throughout the weekend, duty staff monitor and communicate across partners. If we can respond to we do our best to do that as staff are out on patrols. This email is about information sharing and if a quick response is required we do our best to deal with it. If something is clearly a police matter, then please contact the police call centre. Please use the email feedback address for information sharing.

Q2: Is it feasible that people will stick to the government guidelines and stay within their local area until the 26th April, are the police trying to police up to the 26th or just let it happen?

A: Roddy stated that they are currently doing their best to police the current restrictions and sending people home. This is very manpower intense. They are issuing fixed penalty tickets for breaching the travel guidelines and this will remain in place until the 26th and will monitor under a tier system going forward. If there are still restrictions in place they will be policing them.

A: Gordon highlighted that the role of the National Park is eyes and ears and to report anyone that is obviously out with the local area and have breached travel. This will be shared with Police colleagues. Restrictions will also be communicated in our camping booking system and various channels as required.

14. David Scott-Park, Portnellan

Q: Communication with visitors is a priority. David gets lots of enquiries, one of which is when Duncan Mills slipway will be open as its not stated on the National Parks website?

A: Joanne confirmed that as of today the information will be shared publicly.

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15. David Lowes, Glenfalloch

Q: Echoes the point about communication. Would advocate even if at some level, either community council or higher level, a hot line or hot desk communication reporting mechanism because I think email doesn't cut it and the need to prioritise it. Email is fine for reporting and recording incidents but would advocate to keep under review. Also has concerns re police cover in Crianlarich and Glenfalloch areas, Tyndrum and Strathfillan area, police cover looks like its reducing rather than increasing and is a worry and the litter collections, Stirling said fortnightly collections he don't think is enough and needs lifting more quickly – happy to take offline.

A: Martin commented that communications has come up on a regular basis and will kept under review through the ongoing work of the Safe Recovery Action Group. Helpful if these other strands are taken off line and discussed with relevant partners.

16. Fergus Duncanson, RYA Scotland

Q: Should anticipate an upsurge on water activity, all good and healthy although this may cause problems with regards to safety on Loch Lomond and Loch Earn but also aspects of access as some craft need to be able to unload near the waterside. Hoping that clearways and parking are taken into account.

RYA has been working with the Visitor Management Group re problems at Loch Earn, tacking antisocial behaviour and dangerous water craft, looking for improvement there. May have to contact the police if it doesn't get under control there.

A: Kenny fully agrees that there are opportunities but considerations around vehicle access and safety behaviours will be taken into account and will make sure that we talk to RYA and the Scottish Canoe Association.

17. Sandy Fraser, Oak Tree Inn

Q: Would like to mention the C6 from Balmaha to Rowardennan. The harsh facts are that there is around 700 parking spaces less than there were 18 years ago and because it's now a Clearway cars can't stop in between Balmaha to Rowardennan. Sallochy car park is now closed. Is there some additional car parking at Rowardennan, how much and will Sallochy stay shut for the season?

A: Kenny commented that they are aware of the capacity issues, and we are actively looking when guidance is lifted at enhanced shuttle bus options and transport options along with FLS overflow car park, conscious of the sheer volumes of people that want to enjoy East Loch Lomond.

A: Gordon confirmed that Rowardennan is a priority in terms of looking at future capital investment and as mentioned there are parts of the nearby forest estate that can be used as overflow, however these will still not meet the demands. The Clearway is needed because of the need for access of emergency vehicles. Last year there was a major issue that there was a number of rescues were hampered so there is the need for access. Not sure where 700 spaces comes from. We certainly can't build more and more car parks so will need to look other transport options including water access.