

Environment, Climate Change and Land Reform Committee

Draft Budget 2020-21

Written submission from Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority

Since its creation in 2002, the work of the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority has been guided by the requirement to secure the balanced delivery of the four statutory aims set out in The National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage of the area;
- To promote the sustainable use of the natural resources of the area;
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the special qualities of the area by the public;
- To promote sustainable social and economic development of the communities of the area.

While the Park Authority delivers a number of statutory functions and services, the majority of its priorities and outcomes are achieved through partnership working with a wide range of organisations. This is driven and co-ordinated through a five year [National Park Partnership Plan](#), which sets out a strategic vision, outcomes and priorities for action which address issues and opportunities in the National Park area while also focussing on activities that contribute to the achievement of relevant Scottish Government National Outcomes. Sitting below the Partnership Plan we have the 2018-2023 Corporate Plan, '[Our 5-year Plan](#)'. Each year we prepare an [Annual Operating Plan](#) outlining annual activity to deliver the National Park Partnership Plan.

The range of work the National Park Authority delivers, particularly its responsibility to promote the sustainable social and economic development of its communities, also contributes towards other Government portfolio priorities such as Climate Emergency, Planning and Rural Development, Housing, Community Empowerment, Renewable Energy and Tourism. Much of the Authority's work demonstrates how the protection and enhancement of the environment can be delivered alongside enabling sustainable economic development. Ultimately the Authority endeavours to take a place based approach making connections between different issues and interests to deliver innovative and integrated solutions creating significant benefits for relatively small investments.

The National Park Authority's areas of direct responsibility include our:

- regulatory functions of being the full statutory Planning and Access Authority for the area and operating byelaws to manage and prevent a range of negative visitor impacts;
- ownership, operation and management of a network of visitor facilities, sites and recreation routes, and;

- operation of one of the largest professional ranger services in the UK, including waterborne patrolling capability.

	Total (£000s)
Grant in Aid	7,680
Income	848
Total Income	8,528
Operating costs including staff costs	7,444
Projects	1,084
Total Expenditure	8,528

The Park Authority budget for 2019-20 is:

Grant in Aid consists of revenue £6.52m and capital £0.96m;

Income includes planning fees, rental income, camping, toilet, car park charging, piers/ pontoons and boat launching income;

Projects include:

Conservation: Wild Park (habitat, invasive non-native species, water vole, Great Trossachs Forest, red squirrel, herbivore impacts, water improvement), tree planting, peatland restoration, land management, TPO review, Trees and Woodland strategy, grant scheme and Countryside Trust

Visitor Experience: Outdoor recreation, Active town development, path upgrades, grant scheme, Police Scotland partnership, permit area improvements, human waste project, Your Park monitoring, motorhome development, Education and Inclusion (including John Muir, Junior Rangers, Youth Committee, travel grant, Backbone project, climate change, Young People volunteer programme), West Loch Lomond and East Loch Lomond visitor infrastructure upgrades including signage, Estate upgrades, car park upgrades, piers and pontoon repairs, visitor survey, events and Estates Database

Rural Development: Callander Landscape Partnership, NP grant scheme, Community Partnership.

National Outcomes and National Indicators

The ECCLR Committee is specifically interested in receiving:

- an update from us on any work that is being done currently that links preventative spending within the ECCLR portfolio (for example, in the area of biodiversity) to economic and health benefits;
- estimated costs of programmes, and evidence of cost savings on other parts of the budget;
- how we would intend to action the results; and

- to understand how future spending will be directed to preventative action and how this will impact national outcomes and indicators (particularly on health and the economy: "We are healthy and active" and "We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy").

Our structures, programmes and projects support the delivery of more than one National Outcome. Through delivery of both our National Park Partnership Plan and Our 5-Year Plan many of our activities deliver multiple benefits and we therefore deliver to varying degrees against these nine National Outcomes:



We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe



We are healthy and active



We value, enjoy, protect and enhance our environment

We will also contribute towards achievement of these six National Outcomes:



We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy



We are open, connected and make a positive contribution internationally



We grow up loved, safe and respected so that we realise our full potential



We are well educated, skilled and able to contribute to society



We have thriving and innovative businesses, with quality jobs and fair work for everyone



We are creative and our vibrant and diverse cultures are expressed and enjoyed widely

National Outcome: We are healthy and active

Average Annual Park Authority Budget Spend £265,000 3% of total budget
 Annual Average Leveraging £1,340,000

Path Creation and Restoration: We continue to invest resources and channel external funding into our excellent path and cycleway network, which provide multiple health and tourism benefits, close to Scotland's Central Belt. Over 14km of new paths have been completed over the past year, notably upgraded sections of the Rob Roy Way and West Highland Way, and a new multiuse path in Lochgoilhead. The [Mountains and the People project has continued with several upgraded](#) paths on our busiest hills including Ben Narnain in the Arrochar Alps, Ben Vorlich, Ben Lui, and Ben Duchraig. Monitoring data indicates the Park's paths continue to be enjoyed by an increasingly significant number of users each year and in the coming year we have allocated £30k for further path investment.

Active Places, Healthy People: The ['Walk in the Park'](#) initiative coordinated by [Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust](#) continues to go from strength to strength and is widely respected as an exemplar project of its kind. Over the last year 260+ people enjoyed taking part in this project; a 52% increase on the previous

year. We continue to develop extend Active Travel networks connecting communities and creating local community paths, and this year we have supported the Countryside Trust to pilot an eBike demonstration scheme in the Trossachs.

Through our media channels, including [website/social media](#) we promote enhanced information on different levels/all abilities opportunities for water and land-based recreational activities.

For our staff and volunteers we are proud to promote our Cycle Friendly Employer status, and along with cycle-friendly facilities, a small on-site gym, we now adopt the FitForLife scheme which encourages all staff to take part in a 15-minute walk in the National Park, within work time, every working day. Approximately 80% of staff have signed up to the pilot scheme and sickness absence amongst those staff has reduced by 44% from the previous year.

Cost Savings on other budgets: Along with the £1.34m leveraging that our partnership delivery approach takes, we believe that the ongoing significant investment in accessible recreational and active travel infrastructure means that we continue to deliver effective preventative spend for Scotland's health and well-being.

National Outcomes:

We have a globally competitive, entrepreneurial, inclusive and sustainable economy

(We value, enjoy and protect our Environment)

Average Annual Park Authority Budget <u>Spend</u>	£3,770,000	44% of total budget
Annual Average <u>Leveraging</u>	£1,410,000	

Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park is one of the most popular visitor destinations in Scotland, with an estimated 7+ million visitor days per year. As an internationally recognised landscape it plays a very important role in supporting the overall national tourism product. A significant amount of the Park Authority's resources are devoted to maintaining and enhancing the quality of the landscape that people come to see and at the same time ensuring that the fabric and quality of visitor infrastructure reflects the standards to be expected of an international destination. The National Park aims to target visitor management measures to prevent some of the negative impacts of high visitor numbers, such as anti-social and irresponsible behaviour, damage to the environment and littering, while at the same time improving facilities to improve the visitor experience, and support business growth.

In 2016 the National Park's tourism economy was worth an estimated £340m. The experiences of 2018 and 2019 so far would suggest significant further growth, including a marked increase in day visitors and an expanding market of overseas tourists to the National Park.

Visitor Management Projects

Visitor Infrastructure: The Park Authority has, and will continue to invest the majority of its capital budget into the visitor infrastructure within the National Park;

piers and pontoons, popular visitor sites, toilets, car parking and paths. As well as being the 'shop window' of the visitor experience, this infrastructure gives some opportunity for income generation through charging for some services such as car parks, camping bookings, pier charges and boat slipping services. In the coming year we will investing an additional ~£58k into our car parks, to upgrade them and introduce charging and provide a sustainable source of income.

In the last year we opened a new campsite by Loch Achray in the Trossachs and were also successfully awarded Rural Tourism Infrastructure Funds to upgrade toilets and car parking on West Loch Lomond), which will avoid the need for future complete rebuilds, upgrades to the ageing Balmaha Visitor Centre, and additionally funding towards new path and bridge infrastructure at the iconic Falls of Leny. These funding awards have been leveraged in by our matching capital budget.

Visitor Management: Alongside the management of visitor infrastructure, the Park Authority uses a suite of measures to proactively manage visitor impacts and therefore help reduce the amount of reactive spend on litter and enforcement. An important preventative tool alongside education and infrastructure has been the use of byelaws to manage visitor impacts and behaviours at particularly popular locations in the Park. Significant reductions in anti-social behaviour, litter and over use are already being observed. To manage the visitor pressures we also invest significantly in a large, professional land and water-based Ranger Service that supports visitors having an excellent visitor experience, promotes inclusion, and encouraging behaviours compliant with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. In the coming year we plan to investment in a replacement Ranger workboat to allow us to more efficiently maintain water recreation infrastructure, such as buoys, pontoons and piers on Loch Lomond.

This year we have also made an investment in tackling the growing problem of litter, through employment of a Litter Prevention Manager who is leading a new initiative to reduce litter and waste across the National Park. Success in this project will be an important step in future preventative spend. Additionally partnership working with Argyll and Bute Council has seen improvements in litter management and grounds maintenance at visitor sites along the A82, and in the coming year we have targeted an additional funding on litter infrastructure and our innovative [human waste project](#).

Tourism Initiatives and Signature Events:

Signature Events: Over the past year our focus has been on using signature sporting events to promote the area to an international audience, bring additional income to the area and encourage an uptake in physical activity for all. Along with the new [Go Swim](#) event, the recent successful [Women's Tour of Scotland](#) showcased the National Park and raised the profile of female cycling to spectators and television audiences alike.

Biodiversity and Climate Emergency Projects:

Peatland: The peatlands of the National Park store more than 20 million tonnes of carbon – a nationally important resource in terms of tackling the climate emergency, and for biodiversity and water resources. Our National Park Partnership Plan targets 2,000 hectares of restored peatland by 2023, which will hold an estimated 800,000

tonnes of carbon. Over the last 3 years working with land owners and SNH the restoration of over 400 hectares of peatland has been achieved, led by our Peatland ACTION Project Officer and plans are in place for an estimated 600 hectares of further restoration over the next two years. To date we have channelled ~£350k of Peatland ACTION funding into the National Park, excluding in-kind contributions.

Woodland: The native woodlands and productive forests of the National Park hold an estimated 2.5 million tonnes of carbon, along with internationally important biodiversity, recreation opportunities and an economically valuable forestry sector. Our National Park Partnership Plan targets 2,000 hectares of woodland expansion by 2023, and this year we have drafted a new Trees & Woodlands Strategy to drive forward delivery of this target. This has led to agreement from colleagues in Scottish Forestry for an extra 10% uplift for tree planting grants in the National Park.

In the coming year we plan to invest in biodiversity projects, through our [Wild Park](#) programme.

This includes facilitating local community tree planting initiatives, waterbody improvement projects and tackling invasive non-native species.

Climate Ready Organisation: This was the first full year of working to deliver our [Climate Change Action Plan](#) which lays out the actions we will take to help tackle the climate emergency, both at a corporate level and across the National Park. Activity included a 'Climate Change Awareness Month' for staff in November 2018, with events such as tree planting, peatland restoration and a waste and recycling survey at Carrochan. Led by our Facilities Team, we decreased electricity use by 60,000kWh, through energy-saving investment in more efficient lighting and better management of computer monitors. Following the previous investment in electric/hybrid vehicles, we successfully drew down funding from the Energy Saving Trust to purchase new E-vehicles, replacing older, diesel cars and vans and constructed three new charging points in 2018/19. We also stopped the purchase and regular use of single use plastic cups and cutlery.

In order to migrate our ITC to a more cloud-based system, we are investing significantly into ITC upgrades and working with colleagues in SEPA to gain access to S.W.A.N. As well as reducing longer term hardware and software costs this will also reduce our power consumption and therefore carbon emissions by negating the need for office-based servers.

Place-based Approach: Along with focused delivery through local communities and land managers we also target investment into key settlements in the National Park. We are currently leading [Callander's Landscape](#), a £2.2m National Heritage Lottery funded partnership project in its second year of delivery. Working with 15 partners to deliver a total of 19 separate projects, these focus on the dramatic landscapes in and around Callander and seek to improve the area's natural and cultural heritage and enable more people to access the landscape and better appreciate, understand and look after it

Cost Savings on other budgets: along with an estimated £1.4m in leveraged funding, we believe that our work on this National Outcome results in cost savings in

local public realm capital infrastructure, litter and waste collection costs (including along trunk roads) and climate change impact costs.

National Outcome: We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe.

Average Annual Park Authority Budget <u>Spend</u>	£469,000	6% of total budget
Annual Average <u>Leveraging</u>	£177,000	

Community Empowerment and Community Led Planning: We use our planning function as a strong enabling tool to secure a wide range of outcomes particularly to support community growth and resilience. Similarly encouraging communities to take the lead has been at the heart of National Park work since its creation and there is now a strong network of Community Development Trusts and a [Community Partnership](#) underpinned by up to date Community Action Plans. This has supported the sustainability of communities and some services through acquiring improving and running assets and creating initiatives to address community concerns such as skills training and local facilities.

A key focus in the coming years will be supporting our local communities to become more climate-ready, in order to help them mitigate against and adapt to the climate emergency. Scoping and establishment of a project on community social enterprise will also be delivered during 2019/20.

Affordable housing: Integral to the Park Authority's award-winning local development plan LIVE Park is the encouragement for the development of affordable housing. This year saw the [planning approval](#) of over 80 new affordable homes in Drymen within the National Park.

Partnership with Police Scotland: Our unique partnership with Police Scotland continues to deliver '[Operation Ironworks](#)' and has involved an investment over the last 10 years to deliver enhanced police presence at the busiest peak season times. Through joint and co-ordinated Police Scotland and Ranger patrols this has successfully progressively reduced instances of serious crime and anti-social behaviour which has both reduced the burden on the criminal justice system and boosted an improved visitor economy in some of the busiest parts of the National Park. The preventative spend benefits are difficult to quantify, but this approach to tackling these issues has undoubtedly led to visitors and local communities having a safer experience and reducing the need for reactive policing of serious incidents.

Cost Savings on other budgets: Along with the estimated £177k of leveraged funding, we believe that our work on this National Outcome results in longer-term cost savings in relation to rural community resilience and populations, public safety and law enforcement.