Written submission from Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority

Introduction

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority (NPA) covers Scotland’s busiest area of countryside with more than 4.5 million visitors per annum. The National Park is very close to a large number of urban areas and can suffer from high levels of visitor pressure in certain key locations, such as Loch Lomond and its shores and islands and The Trossachs. This visitor pressure includes high levels of informal camping, picnicking, fishing in and around the many loch shore locations.

The statutory purpose of the NPA is to ensure that all four aims, as set out in the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, are achieved collectively and in a coordinated way.

These aims are:

- To conserve and enhance the natural and cultural heritage
- To promote the sustainable use of natural resource
- To promote understanding and enjoyment (including enjoyment in the form of recreation) of the Park's special qualities
- To promote the sustainable social and economic development of the Park's communities.

If there is a conflict between conservation and enhancement of the natural and cultural heritage and the other aims that cannot be resolved, then the NPA must give greater weight to the first aim.

The strategic management of the National Park is set out in the National Park Partnership Plan 2012 -2017. The approach to visitor management in the Park is set out in pages 29 to 35. A copy can be found at [http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/nationalparkplan/](http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/nationalparkplan/)

Tackling visitor management issues

The NPA has to deal with two distinct visitor management issues. The first is the problem of success – the problems, such as litter, toileting and traffic associated with large numbers of people seeking to recreate within a relatively small and accessible area of Scotland. The second is the problem of excess – the extreme issues caused by a minority of people engaging in a range of anti-social behaviour including littering, abandoning camp sites, excessive fires, drunkenness, vandalism, criminal damage, assault, vehicular trespass etc. These categories are not always mutually exclusive and typically occur in the same geographical areas and locations within these areas.
Within the National Park there is an evidence-based approach to visitor management that seeks to ensure the most appropriate responses are put in place to deal with any issues in discussion with local residents, visitors, user groups, land managers and organisations. In the National Park visitor management is taken forward using three key tools:

a) Infrastructure and service improvements;

b) Education, outreach and volunteering;

c) Enforcement;

The Park Partnership Plan identifies the high-pressure visitor management areas where resources will be focussed.

The NPA has tackled the issues associated with success and excess in a number of different ways. This has included:


- Investing with partners in visitor infrastructure, such as public toilets, campsites, kiosks, car parks, paths and bridges. This is progressed through the development and implementation of specific visitor management plans for priority areas in the National Park.

- Working in partnership with the police in the award winning Operation Ironworks as part of the overall Respect the Park campaign.

- Education and Outreach with schools, groups and individuals both in the National Park and from across west central Scotland.

- Establishment of a volunteer ranger service.

- Working towards a co-ordinated approach to litter management with local authorities and police.
The table below shows the types of issues encountered and recorded by ranger patrols for the 5 Lochs area of the Park (Loch Venachar, Loch Lubnaig, Loch Earn, Loch Achry and Loch Voil):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Patrol Route</th>
<th>No of Patrols</th>
<th>Total tents observed</th>
<th>Total litter observed*</th>
<th>Total Fires observed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Loch Venachar</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>204</td>
<td>190</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Earn</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>1760</td>
<td>216</td>
<td>739</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loch Lubnaig</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>377</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* = black bag equivalents

In addition to this data the NPA has commissioned a litter audit for the 5 Lochs area which Keep Scotland Beautiful recently completed. This provides further detailed evidence of the extent of the problem particularly at key loch shore sites, popular with visitors.

**LLTNPA Call for Action**

In order to help tackle the environmental and experiential impacts that litter and associated issues have on the National Park, we would call for the introduction of enforcement powers for National Park Rangers, or authorised staff, in order to tackle littering, abandoned camp sites (often including tents, sleeping bags, bottles, chairs and associated rubbish), fires and minor environmental damage such as chopping of live trees (often used for fire wood or shelters). The current legislation does not allow for the NPA to undertake an enforcement role which is held by local authorities whose priorities for litter management lie within urban areas and very rarely extend into the rural areas.

The NPA’s has experience of using the three mechanisms for managing visitors through education and awareness raising specifically delivered as part of our “Respect the Park” campaign; physical management measures through infrastructure developments and provision at key sites including bins, toilets, picnic areas, fire pits, parking and camping, and finally the enforcement elements through byelaws for Loch Lomond and for camping management on east Loch Lomond.

The NPA would welcome further discussion on the issues, as they are crucial to ensuring success in achieving a well managed and cared for National Park both for residents and visitors.