

Harnessing Community Engagement For Visitor Management Planning in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park



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LOCH LOMOND
& THE TROSSACHS
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Table of Contents

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
2. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND	4
3. METHODOLOGY & PROCESS	7
4. ANALYSIS OF DATA COLLECTION PROCESSES	8
5. ANALYSIS OF VISITOR PRESSURES AND POSSIBLE SOLUTIONS.....	11
6. ANALYSIS OF COMMUNICATION CHANNELS.....	14
7. PROJECT EVALUATION	17
8. NEXT STEPS	19
9. APPENDICES.....	23

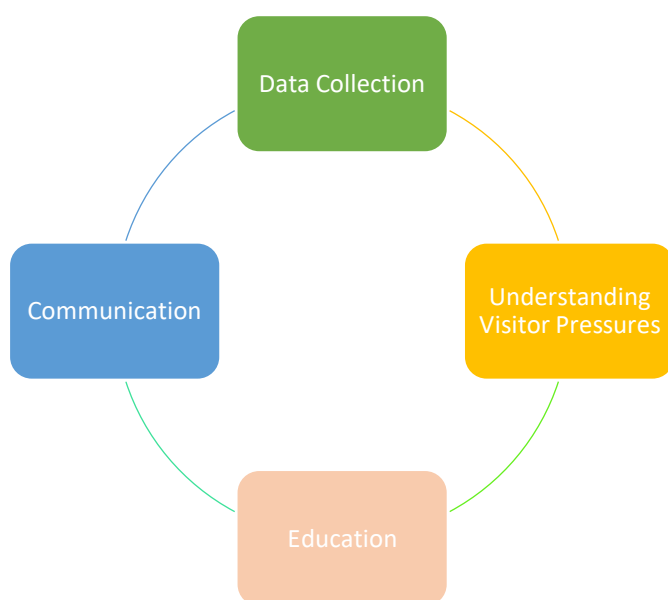
1. Executive Summary

This document reports on a short-term community engagement programme, funded by Nature Scot’s Better Places Green Recovery Fund Phase 1, and led by Loch Lomond & the Trossachs Countryside Trust. Consultants SKS Scotland were employed to carry out the work during March 2021 to explore (i) data collection by communities within the National Park, with particular reference to the pressures faced by them due to the increase in visitors as a result of COVID-19; and (ii) communication methods between the Park Authority and local communities in relation to visitor management issues. In addition, specific issues arising in local communities as a result of visitor pressures, and possible solutions to address them, were also identified.

The programme focussed in particular on communities not currently included in the National Park Authority’s visitor monitoring framework i.e., communities outside of the traditional visitor ‘hot spots’, but also took account of several others included within the framework as was understood that the issues are experienced throughout the Park.

We engaged with sixteen community groups which were keen to assist and work with the National Park Authority towards developing solutions. We are very grateful to all the individuals that gave of their time to speak to us.

Four main themes emerged from our conversations with the communities with which we met remotely: (i) the data collection process; (ii) visitor pressures; (iii) education; and (iv) communication. These are explored further through the document and form the basic structure of our exploration of possible next steps.



When looking at these areas within next steps we have suggested possible solutions within appropriate time scales.

It is hoped that this report will be a working document to help guide projects and inform actions going forward.

2. Introduction & Background

In February 2021 the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs Countryside Trust (LLTCT) was awarded funding through NatureScot’s Better Places Green Recovery Fund Phase 1. This fund aims to support local communities in addressing the challenges and pressures placed on Scotland’s countryside and outdoor places by high levels of public use, notably as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. Due to the short-scale nature of this funding (only available until the end of March 2021) the project was developed and delivered within five weeks.

The project was overseen by a Project Advisory Group (PAG), chaired by Susan Warren (Transformation Director, LLTCT) and involving: Matt Buckland (Visitor Operations Manager, Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority); Kelly Clapperton-Bates (Development Officer, Strathfillan Community Development Trust); and Margaret McDonald (Secretary, East Loch Lomond Development Trust).

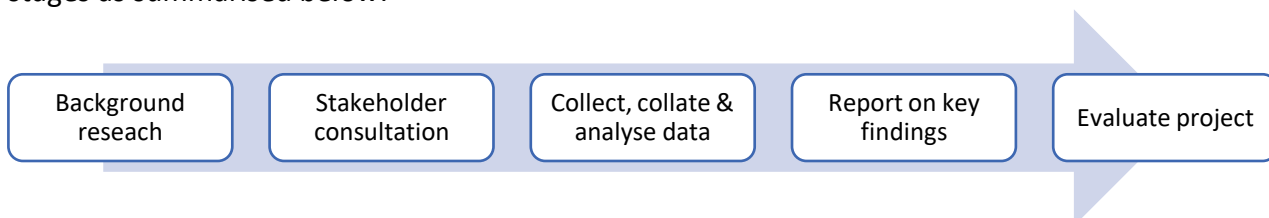
Project Objectives

- Consult and discuss with local community groups to establish what data has been and should be gathered to support community-led action.
- Provide evidence to the National Park Authority (NPA) on place-based issues in relation to visitor pressures in local communities.
- Gather feedback on current communication methods with the NPA and understand ways in which they can be improved.

The research and engagement process focused in particular on communities not currently included in the NPA’s visitor monitoring framework i.e. communities outside of the traditional visitor ‘hot spots’. Consequently, understanding of visitor pressures in these communities has been less well documented or understood, which this project aimed to start addressing. However, the same issues – particularly around communication – also exist for communities who are already included in the visitor management framework and so a number of them were engaged with to investigate further.

Project Approach

The preparation of this Report took place during March 2021. It involved a number of different stages as summarised below:



The results of this project will inform future methods of visitor management planning and engagement across the NPA. Specifically, this project was designed to help to address two important aspects of future visitor management planning:

Part 1 Understanding visitor impacts in communities

This element of the work had a particular focus on communities in Strathfillan, Killin (including Glen Dochart), eastern Cowal (Lochgoil, Kilmun, Blairmore, Ardentinny), and Port of Menteith, which are

Background

During the NPA Board Meeting held in September 2020¹, the CEO's update noted that; *"The uncertainties and restrictions affecting taking a holiday abroad, coupled with the absence of many other traditional summer activities such as festivals and sporting events, has meant that many more people are choosing to visit the Scottish countryside as an alternative. This has meant right through the summer the National Park has experienced unprecedented visitor numbers since the official unlocking, and to some extent before restrictions were officially lifted."*

In addition, point 3.16. states that; *"Communications have been a constant area of work throughout the summer. The National Park Safe Recovery Action Group² also had a sub-group of communications staff to ensure good co-ordination of visitor information and messages. The National Park Authority website and social media feeds were kept up to date with all the latest information for residents and visitors. A Think, Check, Plan campaign³ was used to encourage visitors checked information on facilities and the situation at popular locations before travelling. This has been used consistently by all the partners including national organisations."*

It has become apparent, however, that some communities who are not considered to be in the 'hot spots' of excess tourism pressures in the Park, have felt remote to the NPA's communication processes and response.

Some background research has been undertaken to examine organisations/comparators currently dealing with similar issues to the NPA and how they are addressing them, such as Walkhighlands and Visit Scotland. Relevant tourism trends have also been highlighted.

Comparators

It is clear that organisations similar to the NPA are creating responsible access campaigns this year. For example, Walkhighlands will be replacing the 'Stay at Home' messaging to a call of ['Let's Keep Scotland's Outdoors Special'](#), which *"aims to reinforce [Scotland's Outdoor Access Code](#), but focuses more specifically on the key issues which affected rural areas last year: littering, parking issues, wild-camping, dogs, and campervans / motorhomes. Improved ranger services, temporary parking areas and additional toilet facilities will all help. But we are calling for mutual respect to be shown by both visitors and residents towards one other, in order to help all to minimise issues as far as possible in trying circumstances."*

Visit Scotland is aiming to help Scottish tourism recover as quickly as possible in a responsible way, saying; *"Scotland will be the first market to recover and through our domestic marketing campaign we are focusing on responsible tourism with the key message of ['Let's keep Scotland special'](#), building national pride to protect Scotland now and for future generations."*

The key messaging of this campaign is:

- Scotland, yours to enjoy. All of ours to care for/ Let's keep Scotland special.

¹ https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Board_20200914_Agenda5_CEO-Update-inclusive-of-Visitor-Management-Update.pdf

² The National Park Safe Recovery Action Group (NPSRAG) was founded in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the subsequent increase in visitor pressures resulting from the lockdown measures being relaxed.

³ <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/park-authority/covid-19-coronavirus/checklist-visitors-coronavirus-pandemic/>

- Sub-level messaging to tackle issues such as littering, dogs not under control around livestock, irresponsible camping and overcrowding.
- #RespectProtectEnjoy



This will be delivered via a '[Hero Film](#)/responsible visitor promise' (see screen shot left) using the marketing mix of social activity, radio adverts, influencer marketing, out of home advertising and e-comms.

Relevant Tourism Trends in Scotland

The following tourism trends⁴ have been growing for a number of years and relate to Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park even more significantly following COVID-19.

Responsible Tourism

Developing sustainable tourism that benefits communities, protect landscapes and develops the economy, alongside providing a fantastic experience to the visitor.

Transformational Tourism

Helping visitors '*receive the transformation they seek while understanding the needs of locals and the environment*'.

Eco-Drive

Travellers are looking to reduce their carbon footprint and for destinations that have good "green" credentials.

Reviewistas

Customers can become advocates. Businesses & organisations must respond to feedback and criticism.

3. Methodology & Process

The LLTCT sent an initial email to key community contacts, inviting them to participate in the project. This included a Project Information Sheet, outlining the context and main aims of the study. This was followed up with emails from SKS Scotland, requesting interviews and to provide further information. It was explained that this was to enable a better understanding of place-based issues in relation to visitor pressures in their community and how this information can be better gathered to inform future visitor management planning in the Park and their areas.

⁴ VS Insight Trends 2020

Meetings were then organised to deliver a schedule of semi-structured interviews (see Appendix 1 for format), with questions designed to enable us to understand the issues and develop an action plan that will help support the challenges faced by increased visitors due to COVID-19. The option of Zoom/Teams was offered for this process, so that multiple people from each community could participate, encouraging communication and collaboration. It also enabled the stakeholders to identify priorities and actions collectively, ensuring that the resulting Report reflects the views of the whole group.

Fifteen interviews were carried out (see interview list in Appendix 2), usually with two interviewers to enable interview direction and note taking. Interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour. Emails to thank interviewees were sent following the interviews and feedback regarding the process and evaluation requested.

The discussions that took place are summarised in section 4 below.

4. Analysis of Data Collection Processes

The following section summarises community feedback (gathered through the engagement process) in relation to the collection of data by communities. It goes on to provide an analysis of this, identifying current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

“Not enough volunteers, mostly retired people. Lack of capacity to do the work involved”.

“Would be happy to collect data if it would be useful.”.

Summary

	Data Collected	Gaps	Process
East Loch Lomond Community Trust	Survey in 2020 to collect positive ideas to tackle visitor management issues	Road traffic figures. Car park figures.	How to communicate this data to NPA?
Kilmarnock Community Council	Currently undertaking community survey	They have no existing data.	
Loch Goil Community Trust	Informal data collection on usage of new paths (unofficial).	Could get data from holiday park, hotel, scout camp and moorings. Traffic cameras would help.	
Killin Community Development Trust	Last survey was in 2015 on Public Toilets with some visitor management info. Currently going through Community Place Plan process.	Visitor numbers/footfall	The village/area is not fully contained in the NP & so to date they haven't thought there's any point collecting data.

Harnessing Community Engagement in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

Port of Menteith Community Council	Friends of Loch Lomond and Trossachs are doing a community survey that will feed into a Visitor Management Document. Due end of March 2021.	No existing data. No CAP or Local Place Plan.	They don't have the resources/people to do this. If they were given support to do it they would.
Drymen Community Council	Currently taking part in community survey (organised by Kilmarnock CC)	No existing data. No CAP or Local Place Plan.	
Killin Community Council	Local place plan in progress. No data collected.	Could get data from the angling club?	
Strathfillan Community Development Trust (2 meetings carried out)	Place Plan but not directly relevant. It is in the process of being developed. Visitor management is a big part of this, and we should have suggestions and actions. The rangers that visited last year were collecting number of visitors to car park etc. Photo evidence/anecdotal data.	No other data collected.	Would like an email address to send data to. How could we collect it? We are a small community (who run businesses) and can't be expected to do it. Look at #Tyndrum for last year and count number of mentions on Twitter etc. Police complaints could be counted.
Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust	Arrochar, Tarbet & Succoth 'Issues Old & New' Jan 21, document with photos, problem areas etc.	Would be useful to take some photos of what happens on a nice day. Car parks will be full by 9.30am. Take photos of cars on verges, yellow lines and across people's driveways.	Who to send the info to?
Kilmun Community Council (2 separate interviews with 2 individuals)	Anecdotal only. There is a survey currently underway re habitat at the Loch. Lack of capacity to do work required.	Happy to try to help gather data that would assist.	There is lethargy amongst the community following Covid and the impact on them re visitor pressures.
Loch Goil Community Council	Drimsynie Holiday Park may keep data. Cormonachan Woodland has recently put a visitor counter in place. 5-year plan was made a few years ago which is referred to. They are noticing visitor trends but all anecdotal.	No other data collected.	No method of collecting data.
Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui Community Council	Anecdotal only. Email feedback from CC.	Car park usage data. Records of antisocial behaviour.	Feedback info to Bob Darracott who passes it on.
Ardentinny Community Council	Survey on residents' views recently completed (Feb 2021).	They're not sure what would help.	Forestry & Land Scotland and the NPA don't seem to talk to each other, and the community isn't sure who

			takes responsibility/who to contact).
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To summarise the different types of data collected:

Quantitative There were a few **community surveys** being carried out which contained some reference to visitor issues.
 Some communities have produced or started work on **Place Plans**, some of which do contain references to visitor management issues.
 Communities referenced **local businesses** as a source of visitor numbers e.g. Holiday Parks.

Qualitative The majority of “data” collected was **anecdotal**. Most communities felt they did not have the resources to carry out formal data collection themselves.
 Many communities have taken **photos** as evidence of visitor impact issues, some of which have been passed on to the National Park.

The following SWOT provides a framework on which to analyse the above information and note strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, building a bridge between the current data collection situation and possible opportunities to enhance and develop data collection in the future.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some communities have already gathered significant information. • Some communities have secured funding to develop visitor management plans. • Local Place Plans often contain information related to visitor management. • Some local tourism businesses will collect data. 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some communities have very little/no data. • Communities not sure how to give data to NPA without it getting ‘lost or ignored’. • Small communities do not have the capacity and/or skill set to collect data. • Anecdotal information. • Communities not sure how to share info with NPA or what would be useful.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with communities to fill gaps in data. • Clarify the possible benefits of collecting data to the communities. • Provide a framework to enable communities to communicate data without fear of it being lost or ignored. • Some communities would be happy to carry out surveys and collect data. • Create data collection email address. • Approach local businesses/organisations to see if they would share their data. • Use innovative methods e.g. count #mentions, police reports etc. • Possible opportunities/benefits to the NPA from community data collection include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • a set of validated and consistent data sets, hitherto not collected, to shape and broaden a place-based approach to NPA VM planning. • developing trusting and ongoing conversations and relations with communities. • enhancing the reputation of the NPA among communities. • providing a platform for further community discussion/participation (fulfilling community empowerment act duties) 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not interacting with communities and further alienating them. • Not having a holistic understanding of visitor pressures faced by local communities.

5. Analysis of visitor pressures and possible solutions

The following section summarises the visitor pressures experienced by the various communities we engaged with and possible solutions that arose during the discussions. It goes on to provide an analysis of this, identifying current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

“Our unique selling point is the natural environment, but at the moment we’re not offering a good visitor experience”

“Might be alleviated in future with the engagement of a dedicated officer, ranger or warden, to have a visible presence at peak times to offer info and advice on various outdoor activities, along with suggesting overspill parking options or to erect barriers if car parks are completely full.”

Summary

	Main Issues	Solutions
East Loch Lomond Community Trust	Traffic. Parking. Litter.	System for redirecting traffic when car parks are full. Prebook carpark system. Community ownership of Balmaha carpark. Identify additional parking areas. More litter bins. Increased collections. More monitoring staff.
Kilmarnock Community Council	Litter. Lack of signage. The NPA ‘pushes’ visitors from inside the Park to those just outside it i.e. Gartocharn and surrounds.	Extra bins. Provide signage. Better communication on web site etc.
Loch Goil Community Trust	Litter, human waste and parking from wild campers.	Infrastructure improvements e.g., more/bigger bins. Toilet solutions.
Killin Community Development Trust	Pedestrians walking on narrow roads. Access to the Falls. Litter (local people have to tidy up). Camping. Not enough infrastructure/investment to cope with visitors.	Clarify who should take responsibility for access issues etc (would help the Development Trust). Extra bins. More investment. More infrastructure.
Port of Menteith Community Council	Littering. Parking. Human waste. Mainly related to wild camping. Traffic and campers displaced from other areas of the NP.	More public toilets or alternative solutions e.g., human “dog-poo-style” bags.
Drymen Community Council	Traffic congestion – streets/junction come to standstill. Q’s miles back. Residents struggle to get their own cars out.	Mini roundabouts (proposed to Stirling Council). NPA should be more visible – even sitting their vans in Drymen would possibly act as deterrent.

Harnessing Community Engagement in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park

	Parking by cars/motorhomes/boat trailers is dangerous and cause some roads to become single lane.	
Killin Community Council	Traffic congestion displaced from NP. Parking blocking road access. Toileting a big problem. Litter from wild camping. Campervans parking irresponsibly.	Feel the problem is caused by displacement from the NP. Education. Litter management.
Strathfillan Community Development Trust	Littering in villages, verges, and Monroe's for 1 st time last year. Picked up hundreds of bags of litter. Council given locals bin bags to share with visitors! Human waste, creating health hazard/smell/waste put in bottles and abandoned. Traffic congestion – police had to intervene. Irresponsible parking (often due to hill walkers parking in laybys). Fires in woodlands etc. Wild camping, constant rubbish, fires. Threatening behaviour. Campervans and motorhomes massive problem. People don't want to pay for disposal of toilet cassettes.	Provide skips in litter hot spots. Do not close public toilets again. More signage to show where to access toilets/litter bins. Create 'Community Rangers': locals that help litter picking, communicate with visitors etc. Improve infrastructure, investment required. Education needed. If people have rights of access it comes with responsibilities. Trying to get the NP to accept that is impossible. No concept for what you can do in the countryside which needs to be respected. Should be more fines and rangers given more powers.
Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust	Parking – issue with who owns the car parks. Barrier to development. Toileting – reduction of toilets available (cafes/pubs closed). More people. Littering – lots of fast food, BBQ litter, marine litter.	A dedicated officer, ranger or warden based in Arrochar & Tarbet - visible presence at peak times to offer info & advice on various outdoor activities. There is potential to make the current car parks better. Car parks need toilets. The park needs more litter bins. Lessons and experience could come from a joint Anti-Social Behaviour project on East Loch Lomond - Operation Ironworks.
Kilmun Community Council (2 separate interviews with 2 individuals)	Bad congestions (causing buses to get stuck). Parking everywhere. Not enough car parks so visitors even park in area where kid's park. Irresponsible fire lighting – had to phone fire service. Toileting everywhere – not enough public toilets. (A&B sold local toilets). Massive littering problems, causing rats. Altercations between locals and visitors.	Education around driving on single-track roads. There are areas where new/bigger car parks could be made. More public toilets, with signs telling people how long until the next toilet to stop people just stopping in a lay-by and 'going'. More/larger bins which are emptied. Responsibility taken for them by one of the authorities.

	Motorhomes/campers pushed up from Loch Lomond, following implementation of camping regs there.	
Loch Goil Community Council	Lots of single-track roads which cause issues with an influx of visitors. (Forestry etc can cause problems too). Lack of public toilets causes problems. Wild camping in unofficial places. Significant increase in motorhomes.	Some people are setting up new businesses to take advantage of influx of visitors eg microbrewery, café etc.
Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui Community Council	<p>“Unprecedented volume of visitors” Irresponsible parking. Irresponsible toileting. No local facilities available. Litter – once one group leave a mess, others follow suit.</p> <p>Wild campers – bring a “festival culture” – alcohol and music. Particularly at the Torpedo range.</p>	<p>Rather than relying on giving traffic tickets later on in the day – have support and advice earlier in the day to provide information to people about where to park.</p> <p>QR code scanning in the car parks to find out where there are spaces. Would help disperse people. Reduce footpath erosion. App could prompt you to take your litter home at the end of the day.</p> <p>Electric shuttle bus between the car parks. If you come for a week’s holiday, you could park your car up for a week and not have to move it whilst you explored the area.</p>
Ardentiny Community Council	<p>Single track roads + increased visitor numbers = congestion and parking issues. Fires on the beach. Bad littering – day visitors the worst. Camping in the picnic area/on the beach. Noise. Motorhomes. Area promoted on-line as a ‘free site’.</p>	<p>Forest & Land Scotland want to introduce some kind of parking charge, but who will monitor it? Community wants signs to say when it is full. Booking online. Create vandal-proof BBQ areas.</p> <p>Camping permit system. Supervision. More camping areas.</p>

The following SWOT provides a framework on which to analyse the above information and note strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, building a bridge between the current visitor pressure situation and possible opportunities to help address visitor pressures through a variety of approaches.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some communities are pro-actively looking at solutions (WhatsApp groups, new Forums, surveys). Communities pride in environment – want to solve problems. When visitors are allowed to come local businesses thrived. Some visitors end up picking up litter from other people as they are embarrassed. Some people are setting up new businesses to take advantage of influx of visitors e.g. microbrewery, café etc. No communities mentioned issues with free-roaming dogs. 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NPA seen as being inactive. Lack of investment in visitor facilities and infrastructure. Lack of public education. No powers to help control visitor management (Police/NPA/community). Problem/culture is Scotland wide. Who deals with the problem? NPA, police, private landowners, council etc? Some public toilets have been sold by local councils and are no longer open. Single track roads + increased visitors = congestion. Fires, BBQs/mess, cutting down trees, pulling branches. Lack of supervision.
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>Infrastructure</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> To not engage with the community and support them. Communities losing faith in the NPA and stop trying to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve infrastructure & invest in future of tourism industry. • Provide more litter bins, make sure they are emptied. • Put skips in litter hot spots. • Create more car parks. • Provide more public toilets. • Look for innovative solutions to human waste. • Create vandal-proof BBQ areas. • Camping permit system. Supervision. • More camping areas. <p>Communication</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve signage. • Signs to say when car parks are full. Booking online. • Change language on website to consider communities just outside the Park too. • Have staff on the ground. • For the NPA to become more 'visible' i.e. park their vans in hot-spots. • Create Community Rangers: locals who help litter-picking, communicate with visitors etc. <p>Education</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure messaging on website/social media etc give information about how & why people should respect the NP and act appropriately. • Education programme required nationally. • Lessons and experience could come from a joint Anti-Social Behaviour project on East Loch Lomond - Operation Ironworks. • Lobby the government to address problems. • Provide more guidance to people who hire campervans from the businesses that rent them out. <p>Partnerships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Joint working between community groups and tourism businesses e.g. supporting business 'forums; identifying common concerns/solutions; joint/cross messaging (websites, signage); litter/recycling projects; etc. Larger businesses if persuaded, may even have cash to invest in such initiatives? 	<p>assist.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poor reviews from visitors. • Communities are threatened and suffer from visitor's anti-social behaviour (minority). • Visitors stop coming to these areas because of litter, lack of toilets etc. • Issues of human waste / food waste causing public health issues, rats etc.
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6. Analysis of Communication Channels

The following section provides a summary of the communications used between the NPA and communities (gathered through the engagement process) and goes on to provide an analysis of this, identifying current strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

"We feel abandoned and disenfranchised at the moment, we'd like more engagement with the National Park".

"A member of the NPA's Board lives locally. He is great at getting info to and from the Park. We feel we have a good relationship with the Park and can approach them through various routes".

Summary

	Main Communication Channels with the NPA	Actions / Ideas
East Loch Lomond Community Trust	Feedback email Emails to NPA staff Attend community meetings	Suggest key stakeholder database, responsible for distributing information. Follow-up communications from feedback email. Community interaction with rangers.
Kilmarnock Community Council	Community Council meetings	The NPA should be less defensive and engage with communities to find solutions. Invite local people to sit on their committees etc.
Loch Goil Community Trust	Lack of awareness that they can report issues to the NPA.	Supporting events like litter picking Information on rangers.
Killin Community Development Trust	Other local towns get little help from the NP, so KCDT don't even try. Newsletter. Planning Department support. No rangers visiting for a year.	Provide a structure for communication. Encourage communities to work together. Clarify what the Countryside Trust will be doing.
Port of Menteith Community Council	Individual email contacts at NPA. "It's never very clear who you should contact." Community meetings – not involved in decision making process.	Park newsletter is useful – needs to go to more people. Need a version for the wider community not just CC and CTs.
Drymen Community Council	Invited to sit in meetings/forums but they're reactive and of no notable benefit. Park representatives defensive.	Work more closely with key community groups.
Killin Community Council	A local Councillor is their main channel to the park. They have a "slightly detached" relationship with the NP, because only some of the village is part of the NP. Don't have a NP presence here. They have the National Trust in the village – closer relationship with them.	Need a joined-up approach with police and council. The hinterland needs rangers, but it's outside the national park.
Strathfillan Community Development Trust	An NPA Board member sits on the CDT so he tends to pass on emails etc. Meetings are useful. They've sent emails (with photos etc), don't usually get response). Had discussions with Access Officers over recent years – information is not passed on! Very frustrating.	Make it clearer how to communicate with NP. Could be a button on their website that you can upload photos and info to log it at least, so that the info is recorded.
Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust	Communicate via councillors. Regular rangers help control problems & be a visible presence.	Information on which authority/organisation deals with which problems. Regular meetings with rangers would help. More rangers/officers to have visible presence at peak times, directing to overspill parking etc. Collate accurate info & upload to social media/radio etc.

Kilmun Community Council (2 separate interviews with 2 individuals)	Communicate well via a community representative who sits on the NPA Board.	The CC has a database of 52 contacts in the area, so info gets passed on – filters down. Elderly population don't use websites/social media/on-line meetings to obtain info. Must look at other solutions.
Loch Goil Community Council		They often have to deal with NPA, Forestry & Land Scotland and A&B Council – time consuming and confusing.
Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui Community Council	A local resident who sits on the NPA Board is the main point of contact with the park. No contact with rangers. Don't use website or social media. Didn't know about the feedback email.	There is no focal point – someone they can go to when they have issues. Would like a dedicated officer or warden that they could go to with issues and tackle them in a proactive way.
Ardentiny Community Council	Local rep is helpful. Took photos and sent them to NPA, no response. On edge of Park so feel ignored. Had good communication with Community Partnership.	NPA should work with Forestry & Land Scotland. They have to collaborate and work out a solution. The biggest problem is a lack of supervision.

The following SWOT provides a framework on which to analyse the above information and note strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats, building a bridge between current communication between the NPA and local communities and possible opportunities to improve existing and develop new channels of communication in the future.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attending community meetings. • The feedback email address was seen as positive move. • NPA personnel can be responsive and communicative. • The Parking advice on NP social media channels/website. • NP newsletter. • Communities want to communicate more with NPA (if it is 2-way). • Some personal links with the NP are strong/productive. • Some local reps are very helpful. • Some good communication with Community Partnership. 	<p>Weakness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biggest community frustration is lack of communication from the NPA • An NPA run community meeting was cancelled which created bad feeling. • Can't find up to date information on website. • No clear way of communicating with the NPA. • One way flow of information. Communities not involved in decision making • Access Officers not passing info onto NPA. • Feeling of there being no point trying to communicate if it is ignored. • Elderly population don't use websites/social media/on-line meetings to obtain info. • Communities often have to deal with NPA, Forestry & Land Scotland and A&B Council – time consuming and confusing. • Outlying communities feel ignored.
<p>Opportunities</p> <p>General</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide clearer methods of communication. • Clearer messages from the NPA as to how visitors should behave (on website/social media/adverts etc). • Use the key stakeholder database responsible for distributing information/ensure it is up to date. • Ensure any emails sent by stakeholders are responded to / followed-up. • More rangers/officers could have visible presence at peak times, directing to overspill parking etc. • More advice from NPA on how to access information. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities may disengage further if communication isn't improved. • Visitors feel unwelcome. • Parking fees put visitors from coming and spending money in local businesses. • Negatives reviews for the LLTNP.

<p>Use of digital platforms</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There could be a device, such as a clear button on the Park's website, that you can upload photos and info to log it at least, so that the info is recorded.• Collate accurate info & upload to social media/radio etc. <p>Collaboration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Community interaction with rangers.• Encourage more interaction between communities.• NPA should establish closer contact with local businesses eg Destination Arrochar Alps, Association of Scottish Self Catering Businesses etc.• NPA should collaborate more with Forestry & Land Scotland.	
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7. Project Evaluation

Due to the tight time scale of this short-term project, a number of community groups did not respond to the email that was sent shortly after their interview to thank them for their participation and request their evaluation of this project. It might be worthwhile to ask again when sending out information about this Report. However, we were able to gain feedback from some community participants, the Project Advisory Group, and the wider National Park Authority.

The main themes from the evaluation were as follows:

- The extent of community engagement undertaken, despite the tight timescales.
- The opportunities provided for the communities to feel heard and listened to.
- The quality and depth of the information collected.
- The value of an independent charity in the Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust in commissioning the work, and SKS consultants in undertaking the community engagement.
- The value of the report in providing evidence to support funding bids by local communities to address visitor management pressures.
- The identification of a range of short and longer-term solutions to address visitor management pressures in local communities.

Specific and direct comments are provided below:

Community representatives

- *“Very valuable – people appreciated being able to vent and give their views. It also enabled communities to talk together about it, helping to focus minds and start discussing possible solutions.”*
- *“The community is very happy that the information they worked hard to collect last year is going to be put to something useful. People put a lot of work into gathering that and are glad it will be productive.”*
- *“I commend the collating of this research and final report in such a tight timeframe. It hits all the points this community has expressed and says loud and clear communities are not feeling heard by the NPA. I hope and believe this report, if acted upon, could lead to a sea*

change in the relationship between the NPA and the people who live and work within its boundaries. There are indications this is may be already be beginning. The report emphasises the needs for 2-way communication and building cooperation which communities have been hoping for many years.”

- *“It was a great opportunity to get our voices heard, whereas before we felt that any data or information we were passing on was not getting to where it needed to be. We really hope that this will enable the NP and communities to move onto substantive actions that will benefit all parties, including visitors. It has already been beneficial as we plan to use this report to support a funding application for a project to help us cope with our likely 2021 visitor management issues.”*

Loch Lomond & The Trossachs Countryside Trust

- *“It was great to be able to access the Better Places Fund to help support communities dealing with the extremely challenging pressures they face from visitors, and to identify a number of possible solutions and next steps across a wide range of places and issues”.*

National Park Authority representatives

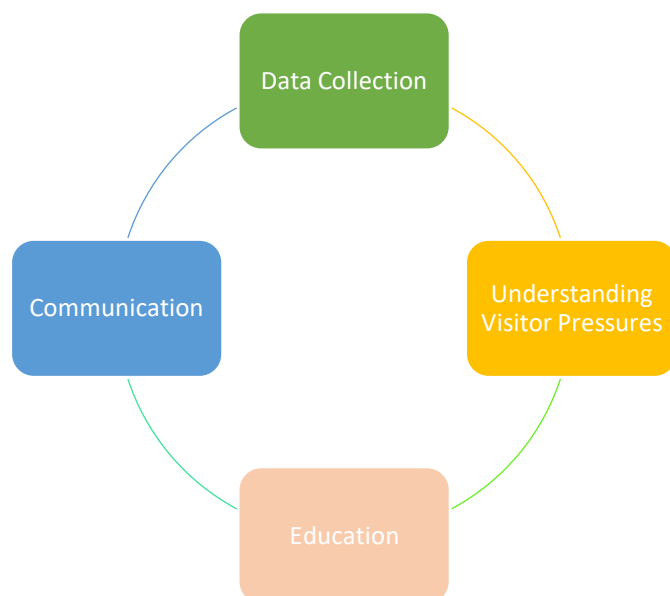
- *“As the research was independent with clear methodology, it provides baseline approach and information on ‘community perspectives of visitor management pressures and planning in the National Park.”*
- *“The process overtly acknowledges the value and validity of the ‘community perspective’ in relation to visitor management planning, which is an empowering approach that should be nurtured.”*
- *“In a very short timescales a broad range of community members were spoken to and the methodology seems to have provided an opportunity for them provide honest feedback but also suggest potential solutions”.*
- *“The amount and quality of information gathered not only provides information and insight that can be used to plan further community engagement and planning regarding visitor management but usefully highlight some ‘quick wins’ that may be able to be implemented relatively simply.”*

SKS Scotland

From our perspective as consultants, we were aware of concerns within the project team regarding the tight timescale around this piece of work and whether or not a significant number of the selected community groups would be willing and/or able to participate in interviews. However, the response rate and desire to participate was extremely high, with only 2 out of 16 groups not participating (and 2 others actively seeking to be involved). We feel that this is indicative of the perceived value of the project to the communities engaging in the project. All the community representative that we interviewed were keen to engage, give their feedback and see progress with the NPA, whilst at the same time sometimes being frustrated with perceived ‘lack of action and poor communication’ in the past. SKS being a third party seemed to be an advantage as interviewees talked openly and enabled frank discussions.

8. Next Steps

This section of the report looks at possible next steps that were suggested by communities during the engagement programme and ideas that have arisen as a consequence of it. We have broken this down into four different areas: (i) visitor pressures; (ii) the data collection process; (iii) education; and (iv) communication. Possible quick response steps have been considered alongside identifying longer-term solutions.



DATA COLLECTION PROCESSES

Short-term

- Establish what data would help the NPA make informed decisions e.g. annual visitor counts, monthly infrastructure checks etc. Discuss with communities to encourage input and some ownership (e.g. how gathering this information will help the NPA help communities).
- Ask individual communities if they are able to help collect data (some are small/elderly/do not have capacity to do this).
- Provide a framework to enable communities to communicate data without fear of it being lost or ignored.
- Create data collection email address.
- Approach local businesses/organisations to discuss possible data sharing opportunities.

Long-term

- Consider using innovative methods e.g. count #mentions, police reports etc.
- 'Smart Villages' – community-led digital solutions⁵. An example of the information gathered from pilot counters recently placed on the West Highland Way [can be found here](#).

⁵ A Forth Valley/Lomond Leader Co-operation Smart Villages project is currently working with some community development trusts in the National Park to pilot community-led digital solutions/sensors to monitor visitor car parks and traffic pressures. This is likely to initially focus on the traditional 'hot-spots' but if successful could potentially lead to further digital solutions elsewhere.

VISITOR PRESSURES

Short-term

- Prioritise budget/funding against 'easy' infrastructure improvements e.g. more litter bins/temporary toilets/pop-up camping areas etc/camping permits/vandal-proof BBQ areas.
- Improve signage/install signs to say when car parks are full.
- Have more staff on the ground/ become more 'visible' i.e. park vans in hot-spots.
- Create Community Rangers: locals who help litter-picking, communicate with visitors etc. Explore possible funding opportunities for communities to recruit their own Community Ranger.

Long-term

- Create online parking systems/parking apps and electric shuttle buses.
- Work towards greater government/agency investment for rolling programme of tourism infrastructure improvements.
- Look for innovative solutions to human waste.

EDUCATION

Short-term

- Ensure messaging on website/social media etc give information about how & why people should respect the NP and act appropriately (i.e. encourage mutual respect between visitors and residents. Most interviewees are happy to share their local areas and realise many issues came from a minority of inconsiderate visitors).
- Provide more guidance to people who hire campervans from the businesses that rent them out.
- Antisocial behaviour from wild campers and campervans could be improved with rangers or volunteers available to welcome visitors and give them information on toilets, litter etc. Also, try to provide info on the Outdoor Access Code so that wild campers are familiar with it.

Long-term

- As a nationwide issue, the problems need a joined-up approach. Collaborating with other agencies and organisations is required.
- Lobby the government to address problems.
- Lessons and experience could come from a joint Anti-Social Behaviour project on East Loch Lomond - Operation Ironworks.

COMMUNICATION

Communication between the NPA and the communities that lie within it (often a significant part of the discussions that took place and clearly a source of frustration amongst many communities) has been looked at alongside suggestions that were made to improve it.

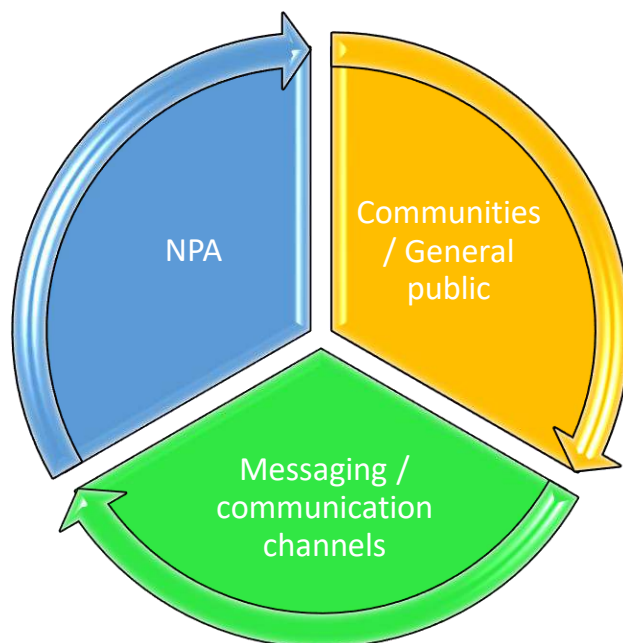
We looked initially at the existing communication channels between the NPA and communities, and examples of issues arising:

Website	Email Newsletter	Social Media	Feedback email address	Meetings	Ranger Contact
Not always regularly referenced. Change language to consider areas on Park boundaries	Relies on key contact to distribute information	Not on social media or not following NP	Not all aware of this. Lack of feedback to make user feel heard	Not all aware of meeting. Not always attended.	Not all areas have rangers.

The graphic above helps to illustrate that the NPA currently utilises the major communication touch points mentioned by community groups throughout the engagement programme: website, email, social media, newsletters, some ranger contact and meetings. The research carried out shows, however, that different audiences within the key communities access the information in different ways, using a mix of channels e.g. more mature audiences may not access social media/websites as frequently as others. There must therefore be clarity as to the information available and how stakeholders – and the general public – can access it.

COMMUNICATION	<p>Short-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities would like regular “in person” contact, with a representative or ranger from the park. • Provide timely, follow-up responses to any emails received by the NPA from communities (including actions to be taken, if relevant). • Phone reporting would help service community members who do not use email, websites and social media. • Provide clear ways in which to provide data/give info. • Website - easy ways to upload info/send emails. • Newsletter (for general community too). • Social media - respond to queries/acknowledge info.
	<p>Long-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities would like to be involved proactively in finding long-term solutions. • Enable communities (particularly the more remote ones) to continue attending meetings virtually once restrictions are eased.

The communication and messaging process between the NPA and communities within it / the general public is, therefore, seen as critical to harnessing community engagement for visitor management planning, and could enable and assist productive data collection further.



Developing partnerships

During the programme of community engagement, interviewees suggested possible partnership opportunities, with some direct approaches made to SKS by interested parties. These include:

- Destination Arrochar Alps - a local business consortium.
- Association of Scottish Self-Catering businesses, based in Arrochar.
- Cruise Loch Lomond operates ferry and boat cruises on the Loch for visitors and may have accumulated details on visitor trends and demands.
- Local Councillors in the area.
- Forest and Land Scotland may have data on numbers of walkers using paths.
- Forest Holidays operate a Cabin Complex at Ardgartan re a commercial operator that would accumulate data on visitor numbers and have a view on issues around visitor management.

9. Appendices

Appendix 1: Semi-structured interview format

Community and Development Trust Questions & Answers

Intro:

[who we are / what we are doing / how you can help / rough idea of the areas we're asking for feedback on]

Find out:

- If the communities currently collect data and how this happens?
- What information / data do they currently have?
- Do they feed this back to the NPA?
- What information could they collect that would support specific visitor issues?
- What do they think would be the best way for their community to gather this information?
- How can the Park Authority can help with this?

Questions:

VISITOR IMPACT DATA GAPS

- What has the visitor impact on your community been in recent years?
- Do you gather info from community stakeholders?
- Is this recorded?
- Is this shared with the Park Authority?
- What information do you think should be gathered to be more proactive in the future?

MECHANISIMS TO FACILITATE DATA COLLECTION & INFO EXCHANGE/COMMUNICATION

- Do you currently communicate with other communities and how can this be improved?
- How can communication with the Park Authority in relation to visitor management be improved?
- How do you pass information from the Park Authority on to your communities?

EVALUATION - DO YOU THINK THIS APPROACH AT COMMUNITY IS USEFUL?

- We know this is early stages, but do you think this approach is useful?
- How can it be improved / made more effective?
 - Different communication methods?
 - Should it be done regularly?
 - What value do you hope your community will gain from it?

Feedback:

VISITOR IMPACT NEGATIVES	
Traffic congestion	
Irresponsible parking	
Irresponsible fire lighting	
Irresponsible toileting	

Littering	
Anti-social behaviour associated with camping	
Inadequate service provision for visitor numbers	
Motorhomes	

DATA COLLECTION	
Local survey	
Data on visitor numbers	
Local businesses with visitor data	
Visitor Management Plan	
Community Action Plan	
Local place plan	
Other	

COMMUNICATION	
How do they communicate with the NPA	
Do they communicate with other communities	
Did they use the feedback email address?	
Have they had contact with Matt? Emails? Meetings?	
Contact with rangers?	
Website / Social Media	
Meetings	
Where things get lost? why don't people think they are being heard?	

EVALUATION	
Do you think this approach is useful?	
What would you like your community to gain from it?	
How could the process be improved?	

Appendix 2: Interview List

Contact was made with key representatives in Strathfillan, Killin (including Glen Dochart), eastern Cowal (Lochgoil, Kilmun, Blairmore, Ardentinny), and Port of Menteith – see table below. These areas are not currently included in the National Park Authority’s current visitor monitoring framework. Meetings were organised to deliver a semi-structured interview schedule, with questions designed to develop understanding of the key issues.

Interviews carried out	Organisation
Strathfillan	
Strathfillan Community Development Trust	Development Officer
	Farmer
Killin & Glen Dochart	
Killin & Ardeonaig Community Council	Chair
Killin & Ardeonaig Community Development Trust	Secretary & Project Manager
Port of Menteith	
Port of Menteith CC	Member
Cowal/Lochgoil	
Lochgoil Community Trust	Chair & Member
Lochgoil Community Council	Secretary
Kilmun Community Council	Convenor
	Secretary
Ardentinny Community Council	Secretary
Ardentinny Conservation & Heritage Group	
Arrochar & Tarbet	
Arrochar & Tarbet CDT	Secretary & Acting Treasurer
	Chairman
Arrochar, Tarbet & Ardlui CC	National Park rep for CC
East Loch Lomond	
East Loch Lomond Community Trust	Secretary

Interviews were also carried out with the following Community Councils:

Additional Interviews carried out	Organisation
Kilmarnock Community Council	Chairman
Drymen Community Council	Secretary

Zoom was predominately used for this process, so that multiple people from each community could participate if preferred and to encouraging communication and collaboration. It enabled the

stakeholders to identify priorities and actions collectively, ensuring that the resulting Report reflects the views of the whole group.

A total of sixteen interviews were carried out over two weeks.