

Agenda Item	4
Report No	LA/13/20

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Lochaber Area Committee

Date: 28 September 2020

Report Title: Visitor Management

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the current issues around Visitor Management in the Lochaber Area.
- 1.2 This report discusses actions taken and future proposals around Visitor Management.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are invited to consider the contents of this report.
- 2.2 Members are asked to support the approach to Visitor Management.

3 Implications

- 3.1 Resource – availability of funding and sufficient officer time for the relevant project work are critical to the success of many of the solutions identified in this report.
- 3.2 Legal – existing legislation is used in resolving the issues identified in this report.
- 3.3 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural) – tourism benefits and sustains communities; community engagement is critical in resolving the issues in this report.
- 3.4 Climate Change / Carbon Clever – sustainable solutions are prioritised where possible.
- 3.5 Risk – there are socio-economic risks if the issues in this report are not addressed because tourism is key to the Lochaber Area and Highland economy; safety and environmental health risks are addressed in the report.
- 3.6 Gaelic – no implications, other than to ensure that relevant signage complies with The Highland Council Gaelic Language Plan.

4 Visitor Management

- 4.1 Visitor Management in this report refers to the increasing numbers of tourists to the Lochaber Area, and the wider Highlands. Volume tourism creates pressure on the existing infrastructure at visitor attractions, beauty spots, towns and villages, and increasingly rural roads, remote glens and trail heads where visitor numbers have often not created issues previously.
- 4.2 This summer, after a quiet spring due to Lockdown, COVID-19 world travel restrictions have caused large numbers of people to holiday in the UK, while many campsites and other holiday accommodation providers have remained closed (and initially also much of the hospitality sector). This has amplified the volume tourism issue creating widespread problems, and improvements are sought wherever possible before the start of next season.

5 Summary of Key Issues Highland Wide

5.1 Roads, Parking and Transport Services issues:-

- a) Insufficient amount of parking provision in tourist hotspots leading to safety issues - parking congestion, obstruction of the carriageway, and inappropriate use of lay-bys;
- b) Insufficient capacity on some narrow rural and single-track roads to cope with large numbers of vehicles; large motorhomes/campervans causing congestion (introduce “not suitable for large vehicles” signs);
- c) Sub-standard passing places (not large enough) and too infrequent on some routes; investment required;
- d) Inappropriate use of passing places; reinstate missing passing place signs; educate visitors;
- e) Driver behaviour on single track roads – driving too fast and too slowly, with Motorhomes being rented to drivers who aren’t used to driving large vehicles on rural roads;
- f) Parking overnight in non-designated areas; designate areas for parking (carparks, parallel parking); designate areas to overnight (lay-bys);
- g) Parking on soft verges causing damage to verge and road edges;
- h) Introduce charges for parking and overnight stays; parking income helps to fund improvements (infrastructure, services – car parks, buses, rangers, etc.);
- i) Clear signage required for car parks, information points, trail heads;
- j) There may be locations where alternative transport arrangements can alleviate traffic and parking issues; community bus schemes, park-and-ride, additional seasonal loop bus routes;
- k) Community tolerance of influx of visitors created inappropriate responses e.g. erection of signage, barriers across some public roads, introduction of roadside hazards (placement of boulders/rubble/logs on the verge or in lay-bys);
- l) Difficulties of enforcement; in remote areas there is a lack of Police resource to tackle speeding, dangerous driving, obstruction, anti-social behaviour; and
- m) Roads Scotland Act; Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) can be introduced where there are safety critical issues; caution and communication are required so that prohibition is not introduced without appropriate prior consultation; enforcement staff/rangers are required (remote areas).

5.2 Amenity, Waste, Council Outdoor Access, Tourism Teams, and Corporate Communications issues:-

- a) Lack of a network of waste disposal facilities for campervans/motor homes;
- b) Investment in public toilets required (human waste issues at hot spots);
- c) Increased investment in litter bins, frequency of bin emptying and litter-picking required;
- d) Improved visitor signage at beauty spots (information, facilities, behaviour);
- e) Community wardens/rangers for enforcement, education, ambassadorial role;
- f) Enhancing the visitor experience; tourism benefits and sustains communities;
- g) A joined-up, service-wide, whole Council approach is required for Visitor Management;
- h) Use of social media, website, video; share messaging with other partners (e.g. Scottish Outdoor Access Code, wildfire warnings, etc); and
- i) Work with other agencies – includes Government Ministers, Visit Scotland, other Local Authorities, National Parks, NatureScot, Forestry & Land Scotland, business associations, community groups, CAMPA (campervan & motorhome professional association).

5.3 A cross-service officer Visitor Management Working Group has been established in order to ensure a co-ordinated, service-wide, whole Council approach in resolving the Tourism Management issues; includes Roads, Parking, Public Transport, Amenity, Waste, Outdoor Access, Corporate Communications and Tourism Team representatives.

The group is chaired by the Development and Infrastructure Environment Manger and after informal meetings during Lockdown and Lockdown Easing, held its first formal meeting on 26 August 2020.

6 Lochaber Area Visitor Hotspots Summary

6.1 Glen Nevis

- a) Local Roads staff and Police Scotland have been in attendance to manage traffic and in some cases remove vehicles; and
- b) The local Roads team are working with Parking Enforcement colleagues in drafting TROs for year-round waiting restrictions to improve the situation by managing the inappropriate parking near the cemetery.

6.2 Traigh and Morar Area

- a) A local community-led meeting has been arranged to allow stakeholders to discuss the issues and solutions;
- b) The local Roads team are drafting a TRO for seasonal waiting restrictions to improve the situation by managing the inappropriate parking near Toigal; and
- c) Roadside hazards were introduced by some members of the community without consultation; after consultation the local Roads team have plans in place to remove these (boulders, rubble) and replace with verge markers where appropriate.

6.3 Glen Etive and Glencoe

- a) A new RTIF bid scheme is now underway for Glen Etive combined with Glencoe. The scheme development is being led by the National Trust for Scotland (NTS). Local council officers are working closely with the NTS and their project manager; and

- b) For immediate action, funded from the Roads budget, the local Roads team have agreed to replace 26 of the 94 identified missing passing place signs (at agreed priority locations), including maintenance of some adjacent passing places and lay-bys.

6.4 Commando Memorial

Discussion is ongoing with local officers about issues and requirements at this site.

6.5 Many roads have been affected; some of those that have been commented upon include:-

- a) Clachaig area – roadside hazards introduced by the community without consultation (presumably to try to manage road-side parking). These have been removed and discussion is ongoing about the issues and possible requirements here;
- b) Loch Arkaig – issues have occurred here this summer where there were few previously;
- c) Kilchoan – local Roads team investigating parking issues near the cemetery regarding possible TRO; and
- d) Kinlochleven – boulders placed in lay-bys without consultation – Roads team investigating.

6.6 Other Council services (Amenity, Waste, Tourism, Communications)

Reference Section 5.2 and 5.3 above, other Council Services in addition to Roads and Transport are fully engaged in the Lochaber Area in seeking solutions to the issues under their remit, including waste disposal, litter and toilet provision, education and enforcement.

6.7 Corran Ferry

- a) The ferry has been exceptionally busy. It is worth noting that the smaller vessel (the Maid of Glencoul) would not have coped with the traffic volumes;
- b) The serious RTC which closed the A82 on Thursday 03 September 2020 caused the Corran Ferry to be inundated with large volumes of diverted traffic. The A861 diversion caused significant traffic issues and required the Highland Council to put the relief vessel the MV Maid of Glencoul into service to assist the MV Corran; and
- c) These issues highlight the key role that the Corran Ferry service plays in Visitor Management.

6.8 Verge grass cutting

- a) It has been a very challenging season in terms of tractor breakdowns. The subsequent delays in verge grass-cutting have exacerbated the roadside parking issues at times; and
- b) The Roads service is seeking to restore sufficient capital funds for the maintenance and replacement of its specialist vehicle fleet.

7 Additional Information

7.1 Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

- a) The Highland Council Tourism Team co-ordinates the RTIF bids;
- b) The latest reports to the Highland Council Tourism Committee summarise the latest position. The reports [TC/01//20](#) - Future Tourism Strategy, and [TC/02/20](#) - Tourism Infrastructure;
It is hoped that the RTIF criteria may be altered by Scottish Government to broaden the scope of improvements that may be funded; and
- c) It is hoped that the overall RTIF fund will be increased, and that timescales will allow progress to be achieved where possible before next season.

8 Expectations and Communication

- a) All parties are acutely aware of the importance of not only achieving as much improvement as possible before next season, but also the importance of managing expectations; and
- b) Officers are aware that many of the issues around visitor management are locally sensitive, and therefore communication and consultation are key.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 10 September 2020

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Background Papers: [TC/01//20](#) - Future Tourism Strategy, and [TC/02/20](#) - Tourism Infrastructure