

Agenda Item	3
Report No	TC/05/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Tourism Committee

Date: 16 June 2021

Report Title: Highland Council Visitor Management Plan

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with an update on the progress in delivering the activities outlined in the Highland Council Visitor Management Plan.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to note the information provided by each Service on progress to date on delivering the Visitor Management Plan actions as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** -The resources required for the group to meet and to produce of the plan have been met from the relevant Services budgets. The implementation of the activities described in the plan have additional resource requirements with these met largely from the £1.5m funding allocation for Visitor management agreed at the Council budget meeting on 4 March 2021. Some additional internal costs such as staffing to deliver many of the activities are being met from existing service budgets.
- 3.2 **Legal** - There are no implications arising directly from this report. However, existing legislation and guidance such as traffic regulations, the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and Covid specific requirements are used in resolving some of the issues identified in the Visitor Management Plan.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)** - Tourism benefits communities through being a major part of the Highland economy and through helping sustain local facilities and services. Projects designed to address some of the issues described would be expected to produce positive benefits for communities as well as for visitors. Place-based community engagement is also deemed critical in resolving the issues in the Plan.

- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - There are no implications arising directly from this report, but some projects included in the plan help reduce climate change impacts. Many of the visitors to the Highlands are vehicle-based and the Plan does attempt to reduce the environmental impact of these visitors by reducing vegetation damage and promoting additional public transport opportunities.
- 3.5 **Risk** - There is a risk that without a visitor management plan the challenges and issues felt last season will be repeated this year.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising directly from this report. However, in keeping with agreed Council policy there would be a Gaelic element to projects subsequently undertaken as a result of being identified in this plan.

4. **Highland Council Visitor Management Plan**

- 4.1 The Highland Council's Visitor Management Plan approved by this committee on 21 April was created to recognise and start to address the issues that were anticipated to occur due to the increased numbers of visitors to the Highlands and their activities. The relaxation of many Covid restrictions from 26 April has seen visitors begin returning to the Highlands and while this has not yet caused significant issues monitoring has already begun which should help adapt plan activities if required.

5. **Delivery of the Visitor Management Plan activities**

- 5.1 The activities detailed in the plan are delivered by teams from across the Council most notably those dealing with roads, parking, public transport, countryside, waste, public conveniences and tourism. To help plan and co-ordinate delivery the cross-service officer group has continued to meet and individual members of this group have also engaged with other groups and public sector partners to assist in the delivery of plan activities.
- 5.2 While some activities are already under way, others will be delivered either continually or at different times across the summer season. In order to keep Members informed of progress a reporting system has been established which allows each service to contribute updates on their particular activities as and when they take place. This should allow up to date reporting to members of this and other Council committees and to external groups without the need for frequent individual requests. The first version of this report is attached as an appendix to this report.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure and Environment

Date: 26 May 2021

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