

Agenda Item	8
Report No	CP/26/21

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Communities and Place

**Date:** 31 August 2021

**Report Title:** Visitor Management Plan: update on service implementation

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

### 1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 The Visitor Management Plan (VMP) was approved by the Tourism Committee on 17 March 2021 was supported by one-off investment agreed by the Council in March 2021 of £60k to increase provision of comfort schemes and investment in public toilet improvements and £180k for increased waste collection services for key visitor sites. This report provides an update on implementation of these service enhancements following the [comprehensive report](#) considered at the previous Committee meeting in May 2021. Other VMP services are run in the Infrastructure and Environment Service.

### 2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are invited to Note:

- I. the one-off investment for public conveniences will be fully committed this year and is augmented by an award of £11,000 from the NatureScot Better Places funding;
- II. the enhanced public convenience service with Council public conveniences now numbering 75, with infrastructure improvements for 7, operational support for the new Storr toilets, 14 new providers for the comfort scheme now numbering 50 for this season and support for a community group running portaloos;
- III. the one-off investment for enhanced waste services is fully committed and the additional seasonal waste staff and fleet are responding to increased litter and waste arising; and
- IV. that all further opportunities for additional external funding will continue to be sought.

### 3. Implications

#### 3.1 Resource

Most of the additional resource for public convenience enhancements has already been committed (£55,255) and a further £11k has been sourced successfully from NatureScot's Better Places funding (with £9,800 already committed). All one-off funds

and core funds for public conveniences and enhanced services will be fully committed this year.

3.2 The Service will take up the opportunity to bid for further Rural Tourism Infrastructure Funds (RTIF) to further develop and support these functions. This will include potential refurbishments to a number of facilities, where charging is already in place and the addition of charging at Smoo Cave and Dunvegan. Work is also underway to prepare business cases for any capital funding available.

3.3 The Property and Housing Service as corporate landlord is commissioning condition surveys of depots and this will now include closed public conveniences in the Council's estate. This will inform future asset management planning and any bids for resources for refurbishment.

3.4 Some local funds are also being deployed to support public convenience provision including ward discretionary grant and Common Good Funding.

3.5 Legal

The Council does not have a statutory responsibility to provide or operate Public Conveniences. There are no legal obligations to provide bins; the relevant duty is contained within the Environmental Protection Act 1990, Section 89 which is to ensure that all land in our direct control which is open to the air and to which the public has access is kept clear of litter and refuse, so far as is practicable.

3.6 Community (Equality, Poverty and Rural)

The VMP aims to support positive visitor experience given the economic benefits to the region, and to reduce potential harms and nuisance for communities. In many locations, community bodies have improved infrastructure and found solutions to support visitor management. The report highlights the need for engagement and joint work with local Members and communities responding to issues and opportunities arising in-season.

3.7 Climate Change/Carbon Clever

As noted in the VMP 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 active travel opportunities.

3.8 Risk

Enhanced service delivery and frequent monitoring of visitor management at hot spots is helping to mitigate risks experienced last year. Ongoing monitoring and rapid responses will be needed throughout the season and at least to mid-October as more incidents and difficulties may be experienced by then. An internal audit of the implementation of the Visitor Management Plan is included in the internal audit plan.

3.9 Gaelic

There are Gaelic implications for any new signage required ensuring it has bi-lingual content in keeping with the Council's policy.

**4. Public convenience service enhancements**

4.1 Members noted at the Committee meeting in May 2021 that one-off investment would be targeted at improvements to several Council public conveniences and extending the comfort scheme of other providers.

- 4.2 Storr public convenience opened on 12 May 2021 and this brings the number of Council operated facilities to 75. Of the £60,000 allocated as part the Plan, over £40k is committed on:
- infrastructure to enable additional charging at Ullapool and shower charging at Kingussie, Aviemore and Grantown;
  - installing counters at Dornie;
  - improvements and repairs at Muir of Ord;
  - drainage works at Castletown;
  - Storr toilets operating costs; and
  - An award towards community run portaloos in Foyers.
- 4.3 In the absence of the Council being able to fund any new sites or invest in existing sites further the comfort scheme provides a cost-effective, no risk solution to providing an important service to local people and visitors alike. Around £15k is committed to new comfort schemes.
- 4.4 In the previous report to Committee a further 6 comfort schemes had been agreed by May 2021. This has now increased to 14. The additional £11,000 awarded by NatureScot for supporting public convenience provision must be spent by October 2021 and this has been allocated to support additional comfort schemes, with £9,800 committed at the time of writing.
- 4.5 The comfort scheme has grown from 36 providers to 50 for the current season. The additional comfort schemes are shown in the table below. A verbal update will be provided at committee on any further provision.

Table 1 List of New Seasonal or 1 Year Comfort Scheme Providers for 2021

Facility	Ward Number	Address	Start Date
Salen, Acharacle	21	Salen Jetty Salen ACHARACLE Argyll	01/04/2021
Traigh Beach	11	Traigh Beach, MORAR	01/04/2021
Rum Enterprise (one)	11	Ferry Pier ISLE OF RUM	01/04/2021
Ardnamurchan Natural History Visitor Centre	21	GLENMORE	01/04/2021
Coach House Bar and Restaurant	4	Coach House Bar and Restaurant Castle Street DORNOCH	26/04/2021
Dornoch Castel Hotel	4	Dornoch Castle Hotel	26/04/2021

		Castle Street DORNOCH	
Sea View Hotel, John O'Groats	3	Seaview Hotel John O'Groats CAITHNESS	01/05/2021
Loch Ness Hub	12	Drumnadrochit Tourist Information Car Park, DRUMNADROCHIT	15/05/2021
Kinlochleven Community Trust	21	Unit 4A Kinlochleven Business Park Kinlochleven	01/06/2021
Glendale Hall	10	Glendale Hall 4 Lephin Glendale Isle of Skye	01/06/2021
Helmsdale Community Centre	4	Helmsdale Community Centre Dunrobin Street Helmsdale	14/06/2021
Portree Pier	10	Portree Pier Quay Street Portree Isle of Skye	14/06/2021
Am Bothan	6	Am Bothan Alness	14/06/2021
Castle Moil Restaurant	10	Castle Moil Restaurant Kyleakin Isle of Skye	01/07/21

## 5. Waste management service enhancements

- 5.1 The enhanced waste service is being provided by a combination of larger 1100 litre bins with lid design to reduce the risk of fly-tipping and a larger number of smaller 240 or 360 litre litter bins. In addition, the service is providing an increased frequency of litter bin collections. The increased collections are across all Highland areas with a focus on locations that are known to generate significant amounts of waste from visitors.
- 5.2 The planned 8 additional seasonal staff are all in post and working well. The staff are using pick-up vehicles to exchange full litter bins and through an increased frequency of service are keeping the hotspot areas clear of litter and refuse. The staff are mobile

and can provide a quick response to any reported waste related issue. As the tourist season has progressed, areas have also responded by using additional weekend work to manage increased visitor waste.

- 5.3 The number of requests from Community Groups to carry out litter picks has remained high this year, with over 60 community litter picks supported by the waste team. This will be in addition to many informal arrangements undertaken by groups and individuals helping to keep their communities clean and tidy. The Council will support as much as possible any group wishing to carry out a clean-up of accessible public areas and open spaces. Groups can request litter-picking sticks, bags and arrange for the waste to be collected by the Council after the event. Area Waste Management Officers are the point of contact for Community Groups.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Communities and Place

Date: 18 August 2021

Author: Caroline Campbell, Head of Service (Community Operations and Logistics)  
Alan McKinnie, Senior Waste Manager

Background Papers:

[https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/78143/11\\_progress\\_report\\_on\\_implementing\\_the\\_visitor\\_management\\_plan](https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/78143/11_progress_report_on_implementing_the_visitor_management_plan)