

Agenda Item	10
Report No	SR/15/21

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Isle of Skye and Raasay

Date: 30 August 2021

Report Title: Visitor Management Plan

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

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 legal 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 by individual services is also deemed critical in resolving the issues in the Plan.

- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** - There are no Climate Change / Carbon Clever 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 and delivery of the actions within it, the previous challenges and issues will continue or be repeated during 2021.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** - There are no Gaelic implications arising directly from this report. However, in keeping with agreed Council policy there is a Gaelic element to relevant projects that are subsequently undertaken as a result of being identified in this plan.

4. **Highland Council Visitor Management Plan**

- 4.1 A Highland Council Visitor Management Plan was approved by the Council's Tourism committee on 21 April 2021. This plan was created to recognise and start to address the issues that were anticipated to occur due to the expected increase in the numbers of visitors to the Highlands as Covid restrictions were relaxed.

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

- 5.1 The activities detailed in the Visitor Management plan are delivered by teams from across the Council most notably those dealing with roads, parking, public transport, countryside, waste, public conveniences and tourism. In some cases, activities are delivered through a partnership with external partners. To help plan and co-ordinate delivery the Council's 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. In doing so, the Council participates in a strategic Highlands & Islands Visitor management group and in 3 sub-Highland level Visitor Management Operations Groups each with public sector partners such as Police Scotland, the Scottish Fire & Rescue service and SEPA. The South VMOG covers Lochaber, Skye and South West Ross.
- 5.2 While the activities described in the Visitor Management Plan are now under way, some were on-off activities while others are being 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. The most recent version of this report, with some more specific references to some of the Skye activities added, is attached as an appendix to this report in order to update members on activity to date.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 13 August 2021

Author: Colin Simpson, Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film

Appendix 1 - Visitor Management Plan Progress report, Skye & Raasay Committee

Visitor Management Plan Activity	Progress	RAG Status	Budget
Road & Parking improvements			£280,000
General	New roads Technician (Visitor Infrastructure) started 31/05/2021, and will help deliver a programme of improvements, informed by Member input through Ward Business Meetings.	Complete	£35,000
Passing places and lay-bys - replacement of damaged or missing Passing place signs and some road strengthening	Glen Nevis – liaising with partners to rationalise road signage. Renewal of passing place signs in Glen Etive. B8008 Curtaig area – liaising with partners & parking team regarding parking solution. Glen Coe ski centre access road repairs/improvements. Planning for some Loch Ness, Sutherland & Wester Ross area schemes under way – including Gairloch viewpoint, Liathach access (Glen Torridon), Tornapress, Loch Fleet & Kilmore (Drumnadrochit).	Complete	Est. £12,000 Est. £10,000 - Est. £30,000
Road signs - additional advance warning Variable Message (VMS) signs where required	New VMS sign at entrance to Glen Etive planned with NTS. New VMS signs sourced for use in Arisaig / Morar area. Temporary VMS for Chanonry Point being sourced.	Complete	-
Road verge protection - strengthening and marker posts	B8008 Traigh/Tougal/Curtaig area – removed boulders from verge/replacing with verge markers, strengthen road verge, etc.	Complete	£10,000
Traffic orders - additional restrictions such as clearways and waiting prohibitions to address safety concerns	Glen Nevis, and B8008 Seasonal Parking Restriction Orders created.	Complete	-
Liaising with stakeholders about additional parking	Ongoing process and is being informed by Visitor Management resilience arrangements.	Complete	-

Car parks			£250,000
Regulation at tourist dominated car parks and locations. Improved signs & regulation.	Ongoing refresh work at tourist car parks – Nairn x 3, Kyleakin & Drumnadrochit complete. Rosemarkie & Chanonry Point traffic management schemes – TTRO required. Glenmore Roadside parking management TTRO required, working with Ward Members. Allow Motorhomes to stay in specific Car Parks for a Max stay of 24hrs in designated Bays to be agreed with members. (£15000) None agreed yet.		(£15000)
Parking charge schemes - 21 sites to be considered by E&I committee for early intervention with further sites in longer term rollout	Ongoing local Ward discussions on 21 “Invitation to Pay” car parks. Car parks in Nairn and Inverness have been delivered and work will continue in other areas. Early discussion on Dornoch Beach Area Parking for Invitation to pay also Golspie, Wick, Wester Ross		£82600
Parking Enforcement Officers	Overtime Activity - £5000 Chanonry Point Marshalling - £3000		£8000
Parking enforcement - review of regulations & improved enforcement / liaison with enforcement agencies	Ongoing through weekly Visitor Management Multi Agency Meetings. VMOG-W, VMOG-N. Chanonry Point CCTV - £8000		£8000
Signs - upgrade of Car Park signage and information for users	Ongoing rollout of refreshed signing and working with community groups when requested. Mobile VMS Signs £18,000. Glenmore DYs £7000. Glencoe DYs £6000		£31000
Access Rangers			£300,000
Employment of 10 seasonal rangers to promote responsible behaviour (litter, parking, fires, dogs) with possible enforcement. To include weekend and evening work to address informal camping issues.	154 applicants, 40 interviewed, 17 recruited as NatureScot confirmed Better Places 2 funding for 7 additional posts in collaboration with community groups. Team now at full strength. 13 Rangers started Induction week on 10th May. 4 rangers started on 31 st May. Introductory site visits with Access & LDR Officers. Supplied with temporary vehicles and toolkit. Feedback has been positive. 13/8/21- Site Ranger commenced at Chanonry Point & Rosemarkie for 6 weeks.	Complete	
Ranger team to work in co-operation & co-ordinate with	Ranger team manager takes part in Public sector resilience plan group meetings.		

<p>communities, land managers and other organisations, such as Highlife Highland, NatureScot, Forestry & Land Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Nevis Landscape Partnership, Police & Fire services.</p>	<p>Rangers are making many community and land manager contacts and building local networks. From 3/8/21- Ranger Team Manager attends National VMS Operational Group and submits fortnightly reports on NC500 & Morar/Arisaig</p>		
<p>Monitoring the use of countryside car parks, roadside parking and informal camping. Minor improvements to, and maintenance of, countryside sites & paths.</p>	<p>First patrols on weekend of 15th/16th May Noted small numbers of campers, many fires sites, some smouldering and doused by Rangers litter (removed). Large numbers of motorhomes in north & west with. Weekend of 29-31st May- notable increase in campers and motorhomes particular hotspots of Glen Etive, Arisaig, Durness. Parking issues in other places e.g. Does. 17/8/21- Rangers submitting weekly & monthly reports with user numbers. Highlighting issues with informal camping, parking, litter & overflowing bins, fires, outdoor toileting. Hotspots identified as above and others. On nearly 800 patrols, over 11,000 people spoken to/ advised of Access Code. 5500 tents off-site with 2276 fires (71 causing a risk), nearly 2000 toileting sites, 700 bags of litter removed. Of nearly 12,000 motorhomes observed, 21 cases of black waste on roadside. Over 40,000 vehicles were observed parked with 200 parking warning notices issued.</p>		
<p>Work with local communities to establish and train a local volunteer warden scheme to assist with monitoring and liaison with visitors.</p>	<p>JUNE onwards- Contacts made with communities in; WESTER ROSS: Applecross, Shieldaig, Torridon, Kinlochewe, Lochcarron, Lochbroom, Gairloch, Poolewe, Dornie, Glenelg SKYE: Staffin, Minginish, NORTH: Lochinver, Tongue, Strathy, Bettyhill, Melvich, Durness, Dornoch, Brora, Helmsdale LOCHABER: Kinlochleven, Arisaig, Glencoe & Glenetive, INVERNESS & ROSS: Strathglass, Does, Glen Urquhart, Glengarry, Fort Augustus, Stratherrick, Fortrose, Nairn, Garve</p>		

	Also numerous land managers, businesses, agencies and individuals.		
Installing and maintaining temporary signage and other communications on safe and considerate visits to the countryside.	Signs received covering subjects such as fires & camping. To be installed by Rangers as required, informed by intelligence gathered through resilience arrangements. Nationally produced SOAC guidance and motorhome guidance leaflets being distributed by rangers.		
Public Conveniences			£60,000
Provide additional comfort scheme provision at key locations, including seasonal scheme if required.	Members at the C&P Committee noted the planned operational deployment of the £60k additional resource for public convenience provision. Increasing the number of seasonal or one-year comfort schemes from 37 already in place. This now includes composting toilets as part of the scheme. As at 2.6.21, twelve further comfort schemes have been agreed for Rum, John O'Groats, Drumnadrochit, Dornoch (x2), Acharacle, Traigh Beach, Ardnamurchan, Helmsdale, Glendale, Kinlochleven and Alness. Three applications for Better Places Funding were submitted for: increased provision (comfort schemes, counters and charging barriers @ £75k); a new modular unit in Aviemore and composting toilet in Cromarty (£92.5k). The Better Places scheme has been successful and have offered £11k for increased comfort scheme provision. The other two bids were unsuccessful. The spend so far will be part of the match funding towards the Better Places bid. As at 10.08.21, one further comfort scheme has been agreed for Portree (pier).	13 schemes agreed	£23,750
Improvements to interior facilities and installation of motion sensor lighting at Council operated facilities.	Investing around £46k in some of the Council's 75 buildings for additional charging for showers and toilets, people counter infrastructure and undertaking some vandalism repairs. This affects our facilities in Ullapool, Aviemore, Kingussie, Grantown, Muir of Ord and Dornie. Improvements in other facilities are also being considered with e.g. condition surveys underway. Works are being done within the following facilities; painting at Portmahomack, drainage works at Castletown, taps replaced at Broadford,	Ordered, awaiting delivery and installation	£48,000

	<p>improvements at Rogie Falls and supporting Foyers Community Council with funding towards their provision of portaloos.</p> <p>In addition, a review of public conveniences previously identified as surplus to requirements or unaffordable to improve/repair is being undertaken with property surveys requested. This will support any engagement with community groups on further community asset transfers. Bringing any back into use would likely require significant capital resources and consideration of sustainability, value for money as well as any community interest issues.</p>		
Promotion of the current network of public toilets and comfort scheme locations through tourism groups, visitor websites etc.	Council website updated with new locations. Wider activity to follow.		£0
Installation of additional footfall counters.	New counter at Dornie comfort scheme - installed	Complete	£1,500
Increase provision of charging at some locations.	See above.		
Waste management			£180,000
Increased bin capacity through a combination of larger 1100 litre bins with lid design to reduce the risk of fly-tipping and a larger number of 240/360 litre bins. Bins will be a combination of both general waste and where possible recycling bins.	Procuring and siting of additional waste bins, including larger 1100 litre bins with lid design to reduce the risk of fly-tipping and a larger number of smaller 240/360 litre litter bins has been rolled out. The bins are for general waste and recycling. The bins are clearly marked with information on responsible waste disposal.		£35,000
Increase collection frequency of litter bins by a combination of swapping bins over using additional seasonal staff and pick-up vehicles and existing refuse collection vehicles and staff.	Increasing the frequency of collections in locations with expected high visitor numbers. This is being done by the recruitment of 8 seasonal staff and additional fleet operating from May to September. The staff are using pick-up vehicles to exchange full litter bins and through an increased frequency of service, keep the hotspot areas clear of litter and refuse. The staff are mobile and cover areas where they are most needed. They are based in the		£145,000

	<p>following locations and augment local teams also supporting the visitor management plan:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • North West Coast – base in Lochinver; • West - base in Ullapool; • Lochcarron; • Portree; • Brora/Golspie; • Fort William; • Aviemore; and • Inverness – Loch Ness areas. 		
Additional seasonal staff and pick-up vehicles used in the North West, North Coast, East and Central Sutherland, West Coast, Dornoch /Tain, Skye, Lochaber, B&S and Loch Ness areas; to swap over full bins, increasing litter picking and fast response to reported incidents of fly-tipping.	See above.		Included in staff costs above
Supporting community litter picks.	The waste team is supporting groups 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.		Included in staff costs above & existing budgets
Roadside litter clearing	The first coordinated road verge litter pick took place over the weekend of the 24th and 25th of April in all areas of Highland. This cost £2.5k and was not budgeted. Further litter picks are planned and an application for £20k Better Places Funding has been made with a decision expected in early June.		£2,500
Motorhome facilities			£200,000

Investigate options for installation of a new facility in Ullapool alongside planned car park improvement work	A project is being developed to install a new facility at the Latheron Car Park, Ullapool. Support is in place from the Community Council. Contractor appointed to finalise design.		
Creation of template design for future motorhome waste disposal points.	Ongoing. Design for Brora facility being used as a template. Additional funding contributed to assist development of facilities in Nairn & Kinlochewe.		£5,000
Bid in grant scheme for commercial caravan & campsites	Scheme launched early May. 18 sites across all areas of Highland participating.	Complete	£9,000
Promotion - production and distribution of a guide to motorhome waste disposal sites. To be circulated through business groups etc.	Partnership with CAMPA – participating sites have been added to CAMPA website. Destination Organisations and business groups contacted to assist with promotion of sites. Enjoy the Highlands in your motorhome guide produced which includes advice on waste. PDF version being used online and promoted through Social media. Printed copies used for face-to-face distribution by Access Rangers.		£0 £900
Supporting commercial provision through production of a guide to planning and licencing requirements for small scale overnight facilities.	Guide now complete. Available on Council website at https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/23616/guidance for temporary motorhome stopover sites and has been circulated to all those who had previously showed an interest. Additional enquiries continue to be received from landowners.	Complete	£0 (covered by existing budgets)
Public Transport			£60,000
Enhanced bus service in North Skye for three peak months. To include a park & ride provision to reduce car traffic to congested locations.	Stagecoach have agreed to provide extensions to existing services. These services have been registered with the Traffic Commissioner and will commence from 28 June 2021 to coincide with the start of summer school holidays. In overview, each of the following locations will be serviced by five daily return journeys to/from Portree: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Man of Storr Car Park • Fairy Pools • Fairy Glen A quick quote was issued in May for complementary service provision (i.e. to supplement the Stagecoach extensions particularly to locations where a		

	larger bus is unsuitable to the road/site conditions); however, no responses were received. As an alternative, direct negotiation was carried out with Go Skye and a service agreed.		
Promotion of bus services through development of tourist-oriented transport publicity and a multi-journey or multi-operator ticketing scheme.	Ongoing work.		
Bus Partnership Fund bids to Transport Scotland for infrastructure provision which will enable improved bus services,	Bids were submitted but not all successful. A bid for improved Skye infrastructure to support visitor focussed public transport infrastructure is therefore being submitted to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.		
Joint activity - Cairngorms National Park			£175,000
Joint initiative with Cairngorms National Park Authority to improve visitor management in Glenmore corridor.	Project under way – contracts returned and site meeting on 19 May. Involves improved pay & display parallel parking at Loch Morlich (Glenmore end) and changes to speed limits.		£175,000
Engagement			£0
National Visitor Management Strategy - continued engagement with national visitor management strategy group.	ECO, Infrastructure, Environment and Economy attends to represent Local Authorities. Head of Roads & Transport attends sub-group on infrastructure issues.		No additional budget committed
Establishment of a Visitor Management Partners group for the wider Highlands & Islands area - evolving from the existing Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership and Local Delivery Groups – anticipated to be one for each Police Scotland Area Command.	Council attends and contributes to H & I meetings; chaired by Police Scotland. 3 Visitor Management Operations Groups involving Council & emergency services in place:- Cairngorms National Park VMOG - South – Lochaber, Skye, SW Ross VMOG - North – Caithness, Sutherland, rest of Ross-shire Council staff involved in each, 2 are chaired by senior ward managers. Highland Ranger managers group established with others employing Rangers.		- all costs covered through existing service budgets