

Agenda Item	4
Report No	TC-02-22

HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: Tourism

Date: 16 February 2022

Report Title: Visitor Management Plan

Report By: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a final update on the delivery of the activities outlined in the Highland Council Visitor Management Plan for 2021.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **note** the information provided by each Service on progress in delivering the 2021 Visitor Management Plan actions and associated budget spend as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** - The resources required to produce the plan and for the officer group to meet have been met from the relevant Service's budgets. The implementation of the activities described in the 2021 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. Where additional internal costs such as staffing to plan or deliver some of the activities are required, these have been 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 although some tourism pressures affect mainly our rural communities. Projects designed to address some of the issues described are expected to produce positive benefits for those communities as well as for visitors. Place-based community engagement by individual services is also deemed critical in resolving some of the issues being addressed through the Visitor Management 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 through actions to protect the natural environment and by promoting additional public transport opportunities.
- 3.5 **Risk** - There was a risk that without a visitor management plan and delivery of the actions within it, the previous challenges and issues would continue during 2021. The activities undertaken during the 2021 season helped mitigate those risks.
- 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.
- 4.2 Previous reports were made to this Committee at their meetings on 28 September 2021 and 6 December 2021 indicating that these activities were largely successful in reducing many of the visitor pressures (although not preventing them completely). Section 5 of this report and **Appendix 1** provides an update on those activities.

5 Delivery of the 2021 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 met throughout the season and some members also engaged with other groups and public sector partners to assist in the delivery of plan activities.
- 5.2 Many of the activities described in the Visitor Management Plan were specific to the busier season that runs from spring until autumn so were completed and reported to this committee at their meeting on 6 December 2021. However, some elements remained to be completed and one (the employment of access rangers) was extended into the winter period to undertake work in preparation for 2022.
- 5.3 The main activity that is being continued over the winter is the retention of five of the access rangers. In part their retention was designed to allow some preparatory work "on the ground" to be done in advance of the summer 2022 – for example site clearance /

tidying or small-scale repairs to fences, paths etc. In addition to this work the access rangers also undertook work to produce four dedicated visitor management plans for areas that saw some of the greatest pressures during 2021 – Arisaig / Morar area, Glen Brittle, Assynt and Durness area. Further details on this work are being presented to Members through a separate report to this committee.

- 5.4 In order to keep Members informed of progress a reporting system was established which involved each service contributing updates on their particular activities to a dynamic document as and when they took place. The most recent version of this document is attached as **Appendix 1** to this report. This document also gives the spend to date on activities and gives an indication of the expected final spend on each area of activity through showing any future commitments that are required deliver any work still outstanding.
- 5.5 As the 2022 Visitor Management Plan will be under way by the time of the next meeting of this committee it is anticipated that this report will be the final one on the 2021 Visitor Management Plan but future reporting on the 2022 plan will be able to pick up on progress with any projects yet to be completed.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 2 February 2022

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Appendix 1:

The Highland Council 2021 Visitor Management Plan February 2022 Progress report

Visitor Management Plan Activity	Progress	RAG Status	Budget	
	Project complete (appointed but ongoing for staff posts)			
	Project under way but yet to be completed			
	Progress behind schedule or no longer proceeding			
Road & Parking improvements			£280,000	
			Actual spend*	Committed
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.		£35,000	
Replacement of damaged or missing Passing Place signs/ road signs.	Glen Nevis – liaising with partners to rationalise road signage & road markings. Glen Etive - Renewal of passing place signs in Glen Etive. Inverness Area Skye Caithness & Sutherland		£12,000 £10,000	 £20,000 £40,000 £40,000
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.		£5,000 £5,000	£5,000
Road verge protection/ edge strengthening/ marker posts	B8008 Traigh/Tougal/Curtaig area – removed boulders from verge/replacing with verge markers, strengthen road verge, etc. Rosemarkie Marine Terrace		£10,000	£20,000
Traffic orders - additional restrictions such as clearways and parking restrictions to address safety concerns	Glen Nevis, and B8008 Seasonal Parking Restriction Orders created, and possible enhancements for 2022 are under review and in discussion with stakeholders. Rosemarkie Terrace one-way. ON GOING Glenmore parking restriction order (preventing parking on new footway). COMPLETE		£500	£1500

<p>Liaising with stakeholders about additional parking areas/ lay-by improvements/ roadside parking</p>	<p>Ongoing process and is being informed by Visitor Management resilience arrangements.</p> <p>Kilmore car park improvements Drumnadrochit Gairloch Viewpoint & Tornapress Liathach lay-by improvement Torridon</p> <p>B8008 Curtaig area – liaising with partners & parking team regarding possible parking solutions. Similarly, Fortrose overspill car park discussions ongoing.</p> <p>Loch Fleet Sutherland lay-by/car park design in conjunction with NatureScot - no funding identified yet.</p> <p>Sutherland, Ross-shire, & other areas - various RTIF schemes – Highland Council receive/assist with funding with further visitor infrastructure improvement funds in 2022?</p> <p>Hilton of Delnies beach access car parking Nairn - discussion ongoing with the estate.</p>			<p>£30,000 £20,000 £5,000</p>
			TOTAL Spent / committed	£
Car parks			£250,000	
<p>Regulation at tourist dominated car parks and locations. Improved signs & regulation.</p>	<p>Ongoing refresh work at tourist car parks – Nairn x 3, Kyleakin & Drumnadrochit complete. Rosemarkie & Chanonry Point traffic management schemes – TTRO required Ongoing. Glenmore Roadside parking management TTRO COMPLETE, working with Ward Members re On-street Pay & Display. (£16,000) Allow Motorhomes to stay in specific Car Parks for a Max stay of 24hrs in designated Bays. (£15000) Agreed by Members, installation underway Feb & March 2022</p>			<p>(£31,000)</p>

Parking charge schemes - 21 considered by E&I committee for early intervention with further sites in longer term rollout	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. Members have agreed sites in Wester Ross, Caithness, Sutherland - installation underway Feb & March 2022		£82,600	
Parking Enforcement Officers	Overtime Activity - £5000 Chanonry Point Marshalling - £3000 Posts appointed Mallaig, Ullapool £8000 (21/22 allocation)		£16,000	
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		£8,000	
Signs - upgrade of Car Park signage and information for users	Ongoing rollout of refreshed signing and working with community groups when requested. Fixed VMS Chanonry point Purchased £16,000, Install Feb 2022 Mobile VMS Signs £18,000. Glenmore DYs £7000. Glencoe DYs £6000 Install Feb/Mar 2022 Car Park signage £20,000		£41,000	(£26,000)
			TOTAL Spent/ Committed	£204,600
Access Rangers			£300,000	(plus BPF2)
Employment of 17 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. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 13 Rangers started Induction week on 10 May. 4 rangers started on 31 May. Introductory site visits with Access & LDR Officers. Supplied with vehicles, uniform and toolkit. Feedback has overwhelmingly been positive. 13/8/21- Site Ranger commenced at Chanonry Point & Rosemarkie for 12 weeks.		£277,329 staff costs to date £15,641 equipment training & uniform to date	£45,700 vehicles to date

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 3 Rangers end contact on 30 Sept • 14 Rangers end contract on 31 Oct • 5 Rangers retained on VM work over winter months in Loch Ness, Durness, Ullapool, Dornie and Fort William • Claim submitted to NatureScot Better Places 2 fund, covers 7 posts, and received. 			
<p>Ranger team to work in co-operation & co-ordinate with communities, land managers and other organisations, such as High Life Highland, NatureScot, Forestry & Land Scotland, National Trust for Scotland, Nevis Landscape Partnership, Police & Fire services. Partnership of 7 posts with Skye Connect, VILN, Wester Ross Biosphere & Applecross Trust</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What App groups with FLS, NTS, Naturescot and Community Wardens. Some joint patrols and communication • Ranger team manager takes part in weekly public sector operations resilience plan group meetings for North and South Highland. • Highland Ranger Managers group meets monthly, info sharing. • Ranger Partners meetings fortnightly • 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 • Winter Rangers producing 4 Location Actions Plans 		£3150	
<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). Largest numbers of motorhomes and off-site tents in north & west.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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. Dores. <p>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.</p>			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> By end of October: On 1534 patrols, over 19,724 people spoken to/ advised of Access Code. 8,639 tents off-site with 3463 fires (160 causing a high risk), 4253 toileting sites, over 1500 bags of litter removed. Of nearly 24,573 motorhomes observed, 87 cases of black waste on roadside. Over 75,000 vehicles were observed in car parks and roadside with 278 parking warning notices issued. 			
Work with local communities to establish and train a local volunteer warden scheme to assist with monitoring and liaison with visitors.	<p>JUNE onwards- Contacts made with communities in;</p> <p>WESTER ROSS: Applecross, Shieldaig, Torridon, Kinlochewe, Lochcarron, Lochbroom, Gairloch, Poolewe, Dornie, Glenelg, Arnisdale, Stromeferry, Kyle</p> <p>SKYE: Staffin, Minginish, Glendale,</p> <p>NORTH: Lochinver, Tongue, Strathy, Bettyhill, Melvich, Durness, Dornoch, Brora, Helmsdale</p> <p>LOCHABER: Kinlochleven, Arisaig, Glencoe & Glenetive, Kinlochleven</p> <p>INVERNESS & ROSS: Strathglass, Dores, Glen Urquhart, Glengarry, Fort Augustus, Stratherrick, Fortrose, Nairn, Garve, Alness, Edderton, Ardgay, Ardross, Fearn, Golspie, Nigg, Tain, Tarbet</p> <p>Also numerous land managers, businesses, agencies and individuals.</p>			
Installing and maintaining temporary signage and other communications on safe and considerate visits to the countryside.	<p>Signs received covering subjects such as fires & camping. To be installed by Rangers as required, informed by intelligence gathered through resilience arrangements.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> SOAC guidance and Highland motorhome guidance leaflets distributed by rangers. Installation of barrier fencing 		£5944 materials, signs and leaflets to date	
	TOTAL Spent/ Committed		£347,764	

Public Conveniences			£60,000	
Provide additional comfort scheme provision at key locations, including seasonal scheme if required.	<p>Members at the C&P Committee noted the planned and implemented operational deployment of the £60k additional resource for public convenience provision at the May and August Committees in 2021.</p> <p>The number of seasonal or one-year comfort schemes increased to 50 with 14 new schemes agreed and one of those a replacing a previous comfort scheme in Skye. The Comfort Scheme now includes composting toilets as part of the scheme. As at 31.8.21 the new schemes are located in Acharacle, Traigh Beach, Rum, Ardnamurchan, Dornoch (x2), John O'Groats, Drumnadrochit, Kinlochleven, Glendale, Helmsdale, Portree, Alness, and Kyleakin.</p> <p>Additional comfort schemes have also benefitted from £11k grant from the Better Places scheme.</p>		£20,650	£4,300
Improvements to interior facilities and installation of motion sensor lighting at Council operated facilities.	<p>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 on Spey, 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, improvements at Rogie Falls and supporting Foyers Community Council with funding towards their provision of community run 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 underway, commissioned by the Property and Housing Service.</p>		£49,340	£13,275

	<p>This will support the development of options for their use including the scope for further community asset transfers. These could be supported by the new Community Loans Fund agreed by the Council in September 2021.</p> <p>An assessment of capital requirements is also underway for the maintenance and refurbishment of public conveniences and scope for new charging infrastructure.</p> <p>The new Storr toilets opened in May 2021. Until the installation of charging infrastructure is in place for the facilities, a revenue budget pressure for servicing them is created - anticipated to be £10k.</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	Covered from existing budgets
Signage at public conveniences	Provision of signage at public conveniences regarding motorhome waste		£1,100	
Installation of additional footfall counters.	New counter at Dornie comfort scheme - installed		£1,500	
Increase provision of charging at some locations.	See above.			
TOTAL Spent/ Committed			£90,165	

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 following locations and augment local teams also supporting the visitor management plan: <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. 		£145,000	
Additional seasonal staff and pick-up vehicles used in the North West, North Coast, East and Central	See above.		Included in staff costs above	

Sutherland, West Coast, Dornoch/Tain areas, 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.				
Supporting community litter picks.	The waste team has supported over 60 community litter picks. This will be in addition to many informal arrangements undertaken by groups and individuals helping to keep their communities clean and tidy. 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 & from 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. 15 further litter picks have been undertaken/planned. The application for Better Places Funding was not successful, so additional costs involved will be quantified at the end of the season for VMP funding.		Additional costs to be confirmed at end of season	
TOTAL Spent/ Committed			£180,000	
Motorhome facilities			£200,000	
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.			£60,000
Creation of template design for future motorhome waste disposal points.	Design for Brora facility being used as a template. Brora facility now not being progressed due to local objections		£0	£0
	Funding contributed to assist development of community facilities at: -		£14,600	£3,000

	Nairn - £2,500 Kinlochewe – £3,000 Elgol - £3,000 Balintore – £3,000 North Kessock (THC managed) – £3,000 Duisdale - £3,000 Fort Augustus - £100			
Bid in grant scheme for commercial caravan & campsites	Scheme launched early May. 19 sites across all areas of Highland participating.		£9,500	£0
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 also includes advice on waste. PDF version being used online and promoted through Social media. Printed copied being produced for face to face distribution by Access Rangers.		£900	£0
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.		£0	(covered by existing budgets)
TOTAL Spent/ Committed			£28,000	
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 provided enhancements and extensions to existing services during the summer school holiday period, providing five daily return journeys on weekdays between Portree and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Old Man of Storr Car Park • Fairy Pools • Fairy Glen 		£60,950	

	<p>GoSkye provided four return journeys each way between Portree and Storr, and between Portree and Fairy Pools, on Saturdays and Sundays. Due to no responses being received to the Invitation to Tender, a direct negotiation was held and the service did not start until 7 August, but it continued until 12 September.</p> <p>The short lead time before the services commenced limited the opportunity to publicise them. Passenger figures reflected this but nevertheless showed that there is demand for such services, which can be built on for future years.</p>			
Promotion of bus services through development of tourist-oriented transport publicity and a multi-journey or multi-operator ticketing scheme.	Passenger figures show the Stagecoach service was being used quite well, although publicity should be improved if repeated. Go Skye was promoted by a press release and through HC Twitter, Webpage and Facebook, as well as locally by Go Skye themselves. Time did not permit introduction of multi-operator ticketing in 2021, which in any case would have been of limited use given that it was only on Saturdays that two operators were available on any route. Provision of free travel by GoSkye mitigated this.		£0	
Bus Partnership Fund bids to Transport Scotland for infrastructure provision which will enable improved bus services.	The BPF bid was unsuccessful but a notification of interest was submitted for the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund for similar projects. A full bid is to be considered next year.		£0	
TOTAL Spent / Committed			£60,950	
Joint activity			£175,000	
Joint initiative with Cairngorms National Park Authority to improve visitor management in Glenmore corridor.	Project under way. Involves improved pay & display parallel parking at Loch Morlich (works have commenced, starting at Glenmore end) and changes to speed limits.		£175,000	

NC500 Study	£10,000 was allocated for jointly funded study into visitor sentiments and local views on NC500 (with VisitScotland / HIE) – Now not taking place this year or in the form expected – no funding required		£0	£0
Total Spent / Committed			£	
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. Outdoor Access Manager attends sub-group on Operational Co-ordination		No additional budget committed	- all costs covered through existing service budgets
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.			
TOTAL Spent/ Committed			£0	

* Where staff posts are concerned, and staff are contracted to the year end all staff costs are shown as actual spend.