

<b>Agenda Item</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Report No</b>	<b>ECI/16/2022</b>

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Economy and Infrastructure

**Date:** 25 August 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 an update on the delivery of the activities outlined in the Highland Council Visitor Management Plan for 2022.

### 2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to **note** the information provided by each Service on progress in delivering the 2022 Visitor Management Plan actions and associated budget spend for Q1 as detailed in **Appendix 1**.

### 3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The resources required to produce the plan and for the officer group to function have been met from the relevant Service’s budgets. The implementation of the activities described in the 2022 plan have additional resource requirements with these met largely from the £1.5m funding allocation for Visitor Management agreed at the Council budget meeting in early 2022. 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, Rural and Island)** – 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 2022. 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 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 the Tourism Committee at their meetings on 28 September 2021, 6 December 2021 and 16 February 2022 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 a brief update on 2022 activities. A more detailed report on service specific activities will be taken to the next committee as monitoring becomes available.

#### **5 Delivery of the 2022 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 bodies. To help plan and co-ordinate delivery the Council's cross-service officer group continues to meet throughout the season and some members are also engaged with other National groups and public sector partners to assist in the delivery of Visitor Management activities.

- 5.2 Initial feedback from 2022/23 Access Rangers suggest that visitor numbers are similar to last year although made up of different types of visitors, with more European cars and coach tours. June, with the exception of the Jubilee weekend, was quieter than last year with less favourable weather in the Highlands than the rest of the UK but numbers have increased dramatically in July. As a result, all car parks are over capacity on most weekend patrols, and 156 Parking Warning Notices have been issued. Motorhome numbers are similar to last year but distributed differently with South Skye and East Lochaber being far busier whilst West Lochaber and North West Sutherland had slightly fewer. Informal camping numbers have reduced slightly, but not in East Lochaber. There is a large increase in off road vehicle camping with roof tents without landowner consent and which do not have access rights. There are still considerable cumulative issues with fires, outdoor toileting and litter associated with informal camping including 27 abandoned camp sites. The Rangers have collected over 1000 bags of litter to date, reported 149 waste issues and 34 incidents of motorhome waste dumping. To the end of July, the Rangers have engaged with 12,271 people mostly to inform them of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and facilities available.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 A full VMP report will be presented to the next committee in November, detailing service activity and spend. Future reporting on the 2022 plan will pick up on progress with any projects yet to be initiated/completed and the report will start to identify priorities for the future.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

Date: 8 July 2022

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Visitor Management Plan Activity	Progress	Budget
<b>Roads Management</b>		<b>£240,000</b>
		<b>Allocation</b>
Allocations made to each roads area to cover small scale activities including: - - Signage (passing place signs / road signs / variable message signs) - Roadside parking/ lay-by improvements - Verge protection/ edge strengthening/ marker posts		
Calthness & Sutherland	Passing Place signs	£10,000
Ross & Cromarty	Passing place improvements	£60,000
Skye	Passing place signs and layby works	£20,000
Inverness	Passing place signs and imor improvement works in various locations	£75,000
Lochaber, Nairn B&S	Passing place signs and minor improvement works in various locations.	£68,000
	Remaining funds to be used as a contingency, then reallocated to projects near end of financial year.	£7,000
Carry forward from 2021 plan	Carry forward will be used as a contingency, then reallocated to projects near end of financial year.	£9,668
<b>Roads management sub total</b>		<b>£249,668</b>
<b>Parking management</b>		<b>£160,000</b>
Complete Ph1 Invitation to pay/signing	Installed at 20 locations	£18,000
Short stay overnight parking for motorhomes	Additional lining & Signing	£22,000
Improved passing places/ safety improvements at Chanonry Point	CCTV installed, VMS sign installed	£25,000
Daytime motorhome parking in Inverness	Torvean & Shore Road	£10,000
Traffic regulation orders for cemetery car parks	100 sites identified	£40,000
Increased Enforcement Resource - seasonal posts for Ullapool & Mallaig	Officers in post and active, Additional patrols	£52,708
Continue rollout of ITP Ph2	Colaboration with Countryside Rangers to identify locations	£60,000
<b>Parking management sub total</b>		<b>£227,708</b>
<b>Public Transport</b>		<b>£110,000</b>
Enhanced public transport provision in Skye	Priority has been on ensuring shuttle bus service to Fairy Pools, which was by far the most popular destination last summer with VM-supported journeys. Saturday service commenced from 28 May, will continue to late October. Monday-Friday service during Summer school holidays.	£35,000
Enhanced public transport provision in Lochaber	Working with Shiel buses to increase journey frequency to/from destinations and areas with higher visitor traffic during the Summer months. Focus primarily on Mallaig and connections.	£75,000
Enhanced public transport provision in the Cairngorms		£0
Promotion of bus services and ticketing scheme(s)	Permit secured from OATS to ensure access issues at Fairy Pools car park are addressed; publicity and promotion.	£750
<b>Public Transport sub total</b>		<b>£110,000</b>
<b>Access Rangers</b>		<b>£350,000 (+£170,000 BPF3)</b>
Employment of 18 seasonal Rangers, including van hire, equipment and uniform.	Secured Better Places 3 funding to increase Ranger team from 14 to 18. Start dates have been phased as season progresses. 1st April = 7, 25th April= +5 FTE, 1st June= +5, 7th July= +1	£370,000
Continue employment of 4 of the seasonal rangers over winter 2022/23		£75,000
Work with communities to establish and train volunteer wardens	Established volunteer group on Skye. Arranging Beach cleans in Lochalsh. Arranging volunteer work days near Gairloch	
Employ 6 peak season site-based Rangers at hotspot locations	Currently reduced to 3 as problems with recruitment and retention due to lack of available accomodation.	£50,000
Upgrade & Improvement of North Kessock Ranger Base	Cannot apply for infrastructure improvements this year	
Visitor Site improvements and installing and maintaining temporary signage	Signs have been ordered and in process of installing. This includes; 30x Nearest Toilet sign, 30x No Camping, 100x No Fires/Leave No Trace signs. More permanent camping restriction signs have also been ordered for Arisaig and Durness.	£25,000
Monitoring the use of countryside car parks, roadside parking and informal camping	This is carried out by all Rangers on 3 days per week	
		<b>£520,000</b>
Activities above with a shaded background will be undertaken if additional funding is obtained from NatureScot managed Better Places fund		
<b>Public Toilets</b>		<b>£190,000</b>
Supporting additional Comfort Schemes	15 additional comfort schemes in place for the year	£30,000
Installation of additional charging schemes		£5,000
Facility improvements - hand driers installed to improve service and reduce vandalism	being rolled out, hand dryers all purchased, install being done by street lighting colleagues	£115,000
Minor improvement works to bring sub-standard facilities up to an acceptable level	painting, shower upgrades	£40,000
Glencoe Public toilets upgrade - match funding for RTIF funded project		£27,500
		<b>£217,500</b>
<b>Waste Management</b>		<b>£220,000</b>
Employ 9 seasonal waste staff to increase frequency for bin emptying and to keep known hotspots clear	The service has employed nine Visitor Management Operatives (VMO) who were employed on a fixed contract basis, (May to October). The VMO's have been provided with 3.5 tonne box van vehicles for their operational work. The service has also provided additional bins, bin stands and bin stickers. The 2022/23 VMO's are based in: 1. Lochinver 2. Ullapool, 3. Lochcarron, 4. Portree, 5. Brora, 6. Fort William, 7. Aviemore, 8. Inverness (Loch Ness), 9. Black Isle	£195,000
Provision of additional litter bins, bin stands and stickers		£25,000
		<b>£220,000</b>
<b>Motorhome Activity</b>		<b>£55,000</b>
Support community provision of motorhome waste disposal points	Portree & Braes Trust for Bayfield, Portree - £700	£45,000
Production & installation of new approved road signage for waste disposal points		£8,000
Piloting online information on congested sites	Support provided to Assynt Development Trust to help fund online and social media based information service for NW Sutherland to reduce pressure at busy sites	£2,000
		<b>£55,000</b>
<b>Communications</b>		<b>£15,000</b>
Production of social media animations etc. with good practice messaging	Litter/Waste/Motorhome guidance animation created and scheduled to promote throughout August, Sept & Oct	£2,000
Refresh and reprint leaflet with guidance for motorhome visitors	Motorhome guidance revised and printed for distribution via the Rangers team, also available online and promoted via PR and frequent social media	£1,000
Online promotional activity / paid social media posts with key behavioural messages	Consistent weekly/daily social media messaging- programmed good practice and behavioural messaging on Visitor Management topics: waste, litter, water safety, fire, road safety, avian bird flu, toilet vandalism, support local and plan-ahead at key hotspots/high season	£7,000
Dedicated officer time to deliver good practice messaging	Press Release written examples - Planning ahead is key to enjoying the Highlands in 2022, Spring and Summer x2 'Welcome/Visit the Highlands responsibly', Overnight parking for MH in THC designated Car Parks, B8008 Limited parking signs Morar-Arisaig, Inverness - Top 16 European City to visit in 2022, Visiting the Highland in your MH/Campervan guidance, Localised Action Plan, Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Plan, VMG multi-agency approach, Highland Pictish Trail launch, VMG & Police joint patrols and short term let license and control area pilot	£5,000
		<b>£15,000</b>
<b>Joint Activity with Cairngorms National Park Authority</b>		<b>£160,000</b>
Roads / transport activity in Glenmore corridor		£100,000
Glenmore Public Conveniences		£60,000
Additional Police Patrols Glenmore	Joint project with CNPA/FLS 3k contribution each	£3,000
<b>Partner Engagement</b>		<b>£0 (staff participation only)</b>
National Visitor Management Strategy	Continued engagement with national visitor management strategy groups where Highland Council is Local Authority representative.	£0
Highlands & Islands Strategic Visitor Management Group	Continued engagement with the existing Highlands and Islands Local Resilience Partnership and Visitor Management Groups involving Police Scotland, Scottish Fire & Rescue and other Local Authorities.	£0
Local Delivery Groups	Continued engagement with 3 sub-regional Visitor Management Operational Groups (VMOGs) that lead on delivery of activities and with local Glencoe / Glen Etive and Arisaig / B8008 Road to the Isles Working Group	£0