

Ms Katherine Byrne
Assistant Clerk to the Local Government
Housing and Planning Committee
The Scottish Parliament

By email: Katherine.Byrne@parliament.scot

19th April 2023

Dear Katherine

RE Inquiry into Community Planning

Thank you for your letter of 15 March 2023 requesting the National Park Authority's comments on the work of Community Planning Partnerships (CPPs). Whilst noting the specific questions outlined in your letter, I would make the following comments.

As a statutory Partner in Community Planning Partnerships the Park Authority is committed to supporting joint planning with other public agencies and community bodies.

The National Park boundary encompasses four Local Authorities: Stirling, Argyll & Bute, West Dunbartonshire, Perth & Kinross. The Park Authority's capacity to attend all four Community Planning Partnerships and their multiple subgroup meetings is therefore necessarily limited. However, the Park Authority has attended or engaged over time on the three Partnerships which cover the majority of the Park's area; Argyll & Bute, West Dunbartonshire and Stirling. There has been no particular barriers to our effective engagement, we would only observe that given the range of work programmes within Partnerships the Park Authority has only been able to engage on topics where it has expertise or has relevant duties to ensure a meaningful contribution and collaboration. The Park Authority works with all relevant partners when there is alignment with one or more of the four aims of the National Park Authority, and this includes informing the development and delivery of partners' Local Outcome Improvement Plans.

Our partnership working is expressed and delivered through the National Park Partnership Plan and our other plans and strategies. We engage with communities and other bodies in a host of different ways, examples include by supporting and funding project delivery, co-designing plans and frameworks (such as the Strathard Framework) and supporting communities to prepare Local Place Plans.

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One practical example of how we work with multiple agencies and communities is in relation to visitor management. The Park Authority convened a National Park Safe Recovery Action Group (NPSRAG) in 2020 as a response to the COVID-19 global pandemic and the subsequent increase in visitor pressures post-lockdown. A clear joint approach and collective plan of action from the range of public bodies involved in managing visitor related pressures across the Park was developed, called the Joint Response Visitor Management Plan. A place-based network of Visitor Management Forums with public agency and community membership simultaneously evolved (and continues to evolve) enabling operational and community knowledge to inform the decision-making of the strategic Group and infrastructure development. The joint nature of this model means partner members will inform their respective CPPs that operate in the National Park.

From our experience, the strength of CPPs are that they provide a statutory mechanism for the Third Sector to inform community planning, delivery and evaluation. CPPs also offer an opportunity for public agencies and communities to share news and information. It is important however, to ensure that CPPs align with and are informed by other joint communication, statutory or place-based mechanisms, such as Health/Social Care Locality Planning networks, Community Councils, or community-led Community Action and Local Place Plans. There is an opportunity for CPPs to be transparent about how they harness the information, expertise and grassroots knowledge of other and existing collaborative to inform their decision-making and avoid duplication.

The support and infrastructure provided by the Third Sector Interfaces (TSI) to support engagement with CPPs is also a strength because TSIs can enable the views from a broad range of voluntary/non-profit/community groups to be heard. However, TSIs also have limited capacity and will often have to prioritise their engagement, networking and support services on communities experiencing high levels of multiple deprivation. This could inadvertently impact negatively on some rural communities, which experience hidden pockets of deprivation or challenges in accessing services but do not score high on [SIMD](#), e.g. those that are classified as 'accessible' but which have tiny populations and have limited community capacity, core funding or governance structures to engage effectively. It is important therefore for TSIs to be funded appropriately and for them to consider the most effective ways to enable broad access to their networks and services.

I trust the above is helpful and I would be happy to provide more information if the Committee would find this helpful.

Yours sincerely

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Director of Place

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