

Operational Plan February 2022 - December 2022

Background

The North West Highlands Geopark Ltd is a Charity and a company limited by guarantee. It is governed by a Board of 12 directors who set the strategic direction of the organisation. For the period January 2022 – January 2023 the Board have set the following six strategic objectives:

1. **Promote** the Geopark, in particular to partners, the local community, visitors and those seeking knowledge of the area's geology.
2. **Conserve** and enhance our geological heritage and promote and engage in the discussion of broader environmental issues.
3. Encourage awareness of, and educate about, the geodiversity, historical, cultural and economic importance of the area, and encourage further geological and related research (**Engage**)
4. Work closely with businesses, educational groups, voluntary and statutory agencies to generate further employment and environmentally responsible and sustainable economic activity within the Geopark (**Develop**)
5. Develop such systems, management structures and methodologies as are required to The Charity currently employs two permanent part time staff (0.7FTE) and two additional staff on fixed-term contracts (1.4 FTE). Fundraising support is given on a freelance basis at two days per week (0.4FTE). Voluntary supplement these strategic objectives (**Manage**)
6. Secure and maintain a pipeline of future funding (**Finance**)

These objectives are organised into the Business Plan, which is updated every six months.

The Charity's work is split between projects and core activities. Core activities include management, and stakeholder engagement. Projects are developed and agreed by the Projects and Fundraising sub group of the Board.

In the period prior to this plan, the following objectives set by the Board have been completed:

Status	Activity	Link to strategic objective
RLUP/NW2045	At least 12 organisations regularly attend the Geopark Alliance meetings	Engage
Complete	Number of volunteer hours per annum exceeds 10% of staff hours	
Complete	Establishment of the Geopark Business Network	Develop
Now part of the North West 2045 steering committee and the Regional Land Use Partnership	Establishment of the Geopark Estates Network At least 20 estates regularly attend the Estates Network meetings	
Complete	Subject to available unrestricted funding, to grow the organisation to 2.5 FTEs by 2022–23	Manage
Complete	Develop a partnership	Revalidation

Resources

7. Support for IT and communications contributes 0.1 FTE. This equates to 2.6 FTE available for operations across the organisation. The Board has approved a full time contract for the Geopark Manager beginning on May 1st 2022. This will increase capacity to 3FTE.

In December 2022, the operational team met to review progress against the 2019-2023 business plan and set targets for the coming year. This has led to the development of the below operational plan.

Operational aims

Core activities

- Build relationships
- Grow capacity
- Use the Global Geopark framework as a planning reference
- Improve record keeping and approach to marketing publications
- Strengthen external communications
- Increase visibility and confidence to share knowledge
- Encourage conservation in partnership
- Get a better understanding of economic development requirements
- Continue strengthening support systems
- Complete 2019 revalidation recommendations
- Evaluate
- Celebrate success

Milestones and timescale

The following section sets out how the operational team will achieve their aims for 2022-2023.

Aims	Activity / Output	Milestones / Targets	Team member	Resource	Timescale / Deadline	Link to business plan metrics	Link to strategic objective
Build relationships	Meet with Colin Simpson & Wanda Girard Prudon	Highland Council mentions Geopark in Visitor Infrastructure Management Plan	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 2 hours per week approx..	April 2022	Number of mentions in other organisations' strategies increases.	Promote
	Participation in the Regional Land Use Partnership	Geopark mentioned in RLUP plans	Laura		April 2022		
	Participation in Highland Adapts communications group	Highland Adapts mentions Geopark in Communications plan	Laura		August 2022		
	Baseline created	Review which strategies the Geopark is already mentioned in	Laura		October 2022		
	Liase following Scourie Rocks stakeholder meetings and build a relationship	1 new supporter/ ambassador in Scourie	Pete / Iain	Ambassador program resources	January 2023	Number of community members requesting to use Geopark branding increases annually, the target for 2021 is 2 in each community council area.	
	Build a relationship with Loch Duart Salmon		Laura				
	Speak to new Tongue director for ideas	1 new supporter/ambassador in Melness, Tongue & Skerray	Pete	Ambassador program resources			

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Improve record keeping and approach to marketing publications	Increase Pebble Route sales/ Use	Carry out Stock Take of Pebble Routes	Alison	Pebble route sales	February 2022	Increasing demand for Geopark publications	
		Reduce stock in storage by 20%			October 2022		
	Increase sales of Walker's Guide to Coigach & Assynt	50% of stock distributed/ sold	Alison	Income from Walker's Guides	October 2022		
	Build a suite of Walker's Guides	Speak to Kinlochbervie Community Company about online sales of their guidebook	Alison		March 2022		
Develop plans for Walkers' Guide to Durness		Laura	October 2022				
Strengthen external communications	Communications strategy in place	Establish baselines	Alison	Hero Grant	February 2022	Social media engagement increases, particularly sharing original content	
		See communications strategy					
Evaluate	Monitor average stays	Target funding for STEAM report	Matthew	Adapt & Thrive Grant	February 2022	The average stay in the Geopark increases.	
		STEAM report available for 2020 - 2022	Laura	Identify Grant Funding	January 2023		
Encourage conservation in partnership	Engage RLUP partners with the achievements of the Geopark	Explain Geopark concept to RLUP officer	Laura	Unrestricted reserves Approx. 0.5 hours per month	February 2022	The Local Geodiversity Action Plan is reviewed and updated and adopted and/or	Conserve
		Explain Geopark concept at first Board meeting	Laura		April 2022		
		Share annual report with RLUP Board	Laura		October 2022		

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		Invite Board members to Ambassadors training	Laura		December 2022	valued by the Highland Council, SNH and Landowners.	
	Build relationships with most engaged estates and invite them to become ambassadors	Participate in Reay estate open day	Laura / Pete	Unrestricted reserves 1.5 days	12/05/2022	Estates covering at least half of the sites in the Geopark registered on the Geological Conservation Review have joined the Geopark Estate Network.	
		Research benefits / benchmark other areas	Laura	Unrestricted Reserves 1 day	May 2022		
		1 estate joins ambassador scheme	Pete	Ambassadors programme resources 1 hour	October 2022		
	Resource monitoring and protection of sensitive sites	Discuss requirements and monitoring with NatureScot	Laura	Unrestricted Reserves 1 hour	October 2022	No further damage is recorded for the 17 LGAP sites with moderate to high conservation requirements	
		Target interface funding for monitoring	Matthew	Adapt & Thrive Grant	February 2022		
Grow capacity	Invite Beth to do more tours	Larger Geotour in September	Pete	Geotour income 1 hour	May 2022	Number of Geotour participants increases	Engage

Aims	Activity / Output	Milestones / Targets	Team member	Resource	Timescale / Deadline	Link to business plan metrics	Link to strategic objective
Increase visibility and confidence to share knowledge	Ask Inchnadamp Lodge and other accommodation / activity providers to add the Geopark to booking materials	At least two new accommodation providers add Geopark information to their booking materials	Pete	Ambassador program resources 0.5 hours	April 2022	Number of published study papers referencing the Geopark increases	
	Continue Geoheritage festival	Events planned and advertised	Pete	Geotour income?	March 2022	Number of Geotour participants increases	
		Events delivered as per plan	Pete	Geotour income?	Ongoing		
	Participate in 'Geoparks as Nature Based Climate Solutions' working group	At least one paper in prep mentions Geopark	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 1 day	January 2023	Number of published study papers referencing the Geopark increases	
	Organise branded uniforms	Rock Stop staff have branded uniforms	Alison	Hero Grant	March 2022	Over 50% of visitors are aware that they are in a Global Geopark	
	Rock Stop staff induction	Rock Stop staff able to talk confidently about the exhibition	Laura	Unrestricted Reserves 1 day (online video)	April 2022	Over 5% of visitors to the Geopark visit the exhibition	
Geopark ambassadors' induction	Geopark ambassadors able to talk confidently about the exhibition						
Evaluate	Ask Inchnadamp Lodge to share booking numbers	Receive numbers at the end of the season	Laura	Ambassadors Program resources	August 2022	Number of study groups visiting the	

Aims	Activity / Output	Milestones / Targets	Team member	Resource	Timescale / Deadline	Link to business plan metrics	Link to strategic objective
	Evaluation report on metrics	Baseline estimate produced based on past years Survey visitors	Engagement officer	ACT Geopark program resources	1 hour September 2022	Geopark increases	
Get a better understanding of economic development requirements	Facilitate the Business Network	Forum meeting	Pete	Ambassador program resources	October 2022	At least 20 businesses regularly attend the Business Network meetings	Develop
		Training / accreditation session	Pete	Ambassador program resources	January 2023		
	Research economic benefits	Meet David Bell (University of Stirling) to encourage MSc research	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 1 hour	April 2022		
Continue strengthening support systems	Provide secretarial support for Board and working group meetings	Attend meetings & take minutes	Alison	Hero Grant	Ongoing	Implementation of an appropriate system of governance and management	Manage
		Submit reports to Board meetings	Laura / Alison	Unrestricted reserves 4 days	Ongoing		
	Ensure new staff and volunteers are aware of relevant policies	Induct new staff/ volunteers	Laura	Covered by any new project funding	Ongoing		
	Prepare operational plans to ensure Board members are knowledgeable about the work of the operations team	Submit operational plan to Board	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 1.5 days	February 2022		

Aims	Activity / Output	Milestones / Targets	Team member	Resource	Timescale / Deadline	Link to business plan metrics	Link to strategic objective
	Support and develop staff and ops volunteers	1-2-1 weekly support meetings and monthly review meetings	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 0.25 days per week Adapt & Thrive grant 0.25 days per week	Ongoing		
Celebrate success	Scan for award opportunities	Appropriate award opportunity identified	Matthew	Adapt & thrive grant	May 2022	Achievement of an appropriate award recognising the organisation	
		Geopark nominated for an award	Matthew	Adapt & thrive grant	Oct 2022		
Use UGG framework as a planning ref	Plan and evaluate activities with reference to the Global Geopark Framework		Laura	Unrestricted reserves	Ongoing	Revalidation of UNESCO accreditation in 2023	
	Update business plan	Draft plan ready for AGM	Iain	Unrestricted reserves	October 2022		
	Encourage stakeholders to engage in the management of the North West Highlands as a UNESCO Global Geopark	Visit Scotland become an ambassador	Pete	Unrestricted reserves	March 2022		
		Highland Council agree to participate in the 2023 revalidation	Laura	Unrestricted reserves	December 2022		
		NatureScot agree to include the Geopark in their planning	Laura	Unrestricted reserves	December 2022		
Participate in GGN meetings (Holland, Dudley & Spain)	Identify representatives to participate in GGN meetings	Laura	Unrestricted reserves	Urgent			

Aims	Activity / Output	Milestones / Targets	Team member	Resource	Timescale / Deadline	Link to business plan metrics	Link to strategic objective
Complete 2019 revalidation recommendations	Demonstrate adequate funding is in place	Fundraising plan & cashflow summary in place for 2023-2027	Matthew & Crawford	Adapt & Thrive grant	November 2022		
	Improve UGG brand identity at Knockan crag & Smoo cave	Plan in place with NatureScot	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 1 day	November 2022		
		Add logos to Bike Racks	Engagement officer	ACT Geopark program funding	October 2022		
		Evaluation of interpretation at Smoo Cave	Engagement Officer		August 2022		
		Discuss upgraded interpretation with Smoo Cave manager	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 2 hours	October 2022		
		Develop interpretation plan for Smoo Cave	Laura	Identify grant funding	December 2022		
	Upgrade self-guided trails network	Target resource for KLB Geotrail	Matthew	Adapt and thrive grant	December 2022		
		Target resource for Kyle of Tongue Walker's Guide	Matthew	Adapt and thrive grant	December 2022		
	Consider strengthening UGG geotourism by creating package offers using the UGG brand	Present concept at Ambassadors training	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 0.5 days	January 2022		
	Strengthen UGG role in standardizing strategies for local development agency engagement	Attend North West 2045 meetings	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 2 days	Ongoing		

Aims	Activity / Output	Milestones / Targets	Team member	Resource	Timescale / Deadline	Link to business plan metrics	Link to strategic objective
	Review Geopark Boundary	Draft options report available for Board August meeting	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 1 day	July 2022		
		Options report presented at AGM			October 2022		
	Compilation of progress review, and self-evaluation documentation	Dossier submitted	Laura	Unrestricted reserves 5 days	December 2022		
Resource the future	See activities from the fundraising strategy (in prep)	See actions for the Fundraising strategy (in prep)	Matthew			Funds raised increases year-on-year	Finance
						Self-funding is above 50%	
						Over 10% of approached <i>ad hoc</i> funders make donations	
						Establishment of a fundraising strategy with quantified goals and plans.	
		A working cash balance equivalent to not less than fifteen months' budgeted					

Aims	Activity / Output	Milestones / Targets	Team member	Resource	Timescale / Deadline	Link to business plan metrics	Link to strategic objective
						unrestricted expenditure.	

Staffing resource summary

Unrestricted reserves: 43 days of Geopark manager time across the year (approx. £5762) and 57 days of Geopark administrator time not covered by grant funding (approx. £4617)

Ambassador programme: 6 days of Geopark geologist time across the year (approx. £800)

Everything else should be self funding, covered by grant funding already identified or is highlighted as a target for fundraising.

Projects

Within the scope of this plan, the following projects are live or scheduled. Detailed project plans are available separately.

Project title	Activities	Status	Completion date
Soil fertility research	Ranger hut exhibition	Complete	May 2022
	Video production	Complete	May 2022
Clachtoll Ranger Hut	Construction	Complete	March 2022
Sense of Place	Tutorial video	Complete	March 2022
	Local Guide App	Complete	March 2022
Rock Route Podcasts	Record and publish	Complete	March 2022
Adapt & Thrive	Improvements to the Rock Stop	Live	May 2022
Blue Corridor	Stakeholder interviews	Completed	April 2022
	Community consultation	Completed	May 2022
	First draft report	Completed	May 2022
	Workshop	Completed	May 2022
	Second draft report	Completed	June 2022
ACT Geopark Program	Complete initial funding package	Complete	May 2022
	Develop full programme delivery plan	Complete	May 2022
	Begin programme activities (see separate programme plan)	Live	July 2022
	Recruit engagement officer	Live	July 2022
Geopark Ranger	Submit funding Bid	Live	April 2022
	Recruitment	N/A	June 2022
	Induction	N/A	July 2022
Gaelic Language project	Initial stakeholder consultation	Complete	April 2022
	Consult Burren Geopark	Completed	May 2022
	Develop ideas	Live	September 2022
	Submit funding bid	Scheduled	November 2022

Premises and equipment

The Rock Stop is the Charity's main premises and a second site, the Clachtoll Ranger Hut is currently under construction.

The Rock Stop contains an exhibition, operated by the Charity and facilities for a shop and café currently managed by the charity's trading arm. For operations to function across the Charity and it's Trading arm it is essential that tenure of the current building is secure. The Board are aware of this and negotiations with Assynt Community Council (the landlord) are underway. It is expected

that an agreement will be settled in early 2022 but if not then this will pose a threat to the operational plan.

Staff currently supply most of the necessary home office equipment, except for a laptop used by the Geopark manager. Work station self risk assessments are carried out by staff and volunteers and so it is important to identify resources to mitigate any risks and to replace equipment such as laptops, printers and mobile phones.

ITEMS FOR CLARIFICATION FROM BOARD DURING 2022

- Estates network
- Membership targets
- Overnight stays