

INCREASED CAMPERVAN AND MOTORHOME TOURISM

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The COVID-19 pandemic has driven an increased demand for domestic travel and outdoor activity across Scotland as and when travel restrictions allow. This has led to an increasing prevalence of informal camping activity in both motorhomes and tents, something that is expected to continue in 2021, as and when restrictions ease. This report provides the OLI Area Committee members with the latest position, following the setting up of a short life working group with a wide range of partners drawn from the public, third and private sectors.
- 1.2 Tourism is exceptionally important to Argyll and Bute's local economy and also our way of life, bringing in over £500m to the economy in 2019 (Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor).
- 1.3 The council wishes to welcome as many visitors as safely and as sustainably as possible, to enjoy the local attractions and outstanding environment we have to offer. Tourism supports many services and facilities we currently rely on and also supports many jobs and an extensive supply chain that our local residents also rely on. Some useful information on the motorhome and campervan market can be found [here](#).
- 1.4 Recommendations:
- 1.4.1 That the committee consider the content of this report.
 - 1.4.2 That the committee consider the opportunities and challenges by informal camping and informal motorhome visits and how these can be best managed within the OLI administrative area.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Over recent years people have been holidaying differently. Most notably, we have seen a steady increase in the number of people camping informally (in tents and campervans) in many parts of Argyll and Bute. This situation was exacerbated in some places last summer following the easing of lockdown restrictions in July across the UK, with many places and local communities experiencing an increase in visitors informally camping most of which caused little impact on our environment or local community. The primary drivers for this increase was the encouragement by the Government to holiday locally, the inability to travel outwith the UK and many local tourism businesses not opening, or only opening partially for business.
- 2.2 Tourism is exceptionally important to Argyll and Bute's local economy and also our way of life, bringing in over £500m to the economy in 2019 (Scottish Tourism Economic Activity Monitor). The council wishes to welcome as many visitors as safely and sustainably possible, to enjoy the local places we are fortunate to call home. This custom supports many essential services and facilities we currently rely on as residents of Argyll and Bute. Some useful information on the motorhome and campervan market can be found [here](#).
- 2.3 The situation across 2020 due to COVID-19 and the initial level of restrictions, which visitors and businesses had to work through, was in many ways unique. However it is already continuing into 2021 with some elements of travel predicted to continue to be severely restricted. It is also recognised that motorhome usage/rental and ownership continues to rise, whilst some areas have also seen an increase in informal camping activity. It is expected, and reasonable to assume, that some of these visitor trends/patterns will continue in 2021 and beyond. Some further high level information can be found in **Appendix 1**.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 That the committee consider the content of this report.
- 3.2 That the committee consider the opportunities and challenges presented by informal camping and motorhome visits and how these can be best managed within the OLI administrative area.

4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 The vast majority of visitors to Argyll and Bute respect the people and places they visit. However, in certain circumstances, challenges can occur and will sometimes result in complaints to various public agencies (Littering, inappropriate disposal of toilet waste, inconsiderate parking, antisocial behaviour, etc.). Sometimes the main issue can simply be the volume and frequency of people using a particular area, week after week.
- 4.2 Visitors are also more readily sharing locations through social media on where to camp informally. Some of these Facebook groups have tens of thousands of users. Even if only a very small number of these actually visit certain locations it could present unintended cumulative effects and issues.
- 4.3 Common complaints made regarding motorhome users are those that undertake informal camping. This can take place in a substantial number of differing types of locations (car parks, laybys, road ends, verges and privately owned land).
- 4.4 **Overnight Parking** - Different legislation can apply to different circumstances, the act of parking overnight is not in itself necessarily illegal but it can often be a complex issue. In addition, different legislation can apply to different parking locations, some laybys will be treated as part of the road network while others are dedicated car parks with Traffic Regulation Orders in place, that control how they can be used, including whether overnight parking is permitted. A significant number of locations where people may be stopping and parking are found on private land, and may require the owner's permission to park. There are many examples of regulated and unregulated car parking sites across Argyll and Bute, which are used to varying degrees. A motorhome falls within the definition of a caravan in the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 and the Caravan Sites Act 1968. Any individual or organisation offering overnight stops for motorhomes in the UK must do so in compliance with the Caravan and Control of Development Act 1960. Without a license or exemption, individuals and organisations technically may be breaking the law.
- 4.5 **Waste Disposal** - Many modern motorhomes are self-contained with toilet facilities incorporated, which store "black waste" and then additionally a tank storing "grey waste" from washing up type activities. These tanks require

periodic emptying and many campsites provide facilities to dispose of this waste. Irresponsible disposal of this waste is one issue sometimes reported and occasions where this waste is inappropriately disposed of in public toilets. It has also become more prevalent that people are adapting vehicles either fully or partially and sleeping informally in them, sometimes these may not have toilet facilities at all.

- 4.6 **Refuse and recycling** - Commercial campsites provide such facilities. Those who spend extended periods of time without staying on commercial sites are likely to collect refuse which could then be distributed in roadside and private bins. Although such disposal could be regarded as legitimate, typically, these bins aren't designed to take large volumes of waste from multiple users.
- 4.7 **Lack of suitable parking facilities** -There are occasional reported issues from residents about overnight parking related issues. There is also an appetite from motorhome users and organisations for greater facilities. For motorhome users there can be different user markets, those short stops rather than some after longer stays, who might more readily use commercial sites.
- 4.8 The council, working with a wide range of partners/stakeholders (public, third and private sector) has been considering how best it can respond to some of the challenges presented by the evident surge of demand brought on by the pandemic (within the significant resource constraints faced).
- 4.9 Some of the actions identified by the council in collaboration with partners, which are being progressed at the moment, and are at various stages of development, are -
- finalising a reporting form/consultation questionnaire which will be promoted to communities, landowners, etc. to document community experience of informal camping.
 - identifying clearer guidance and collated resources for businesses/landowners/community organisations that could help them better consider increasing overnight motorhome parking provision
 - pull together better provision of information on the regulatory aspects and the installation of facilities, which will help interested parties respond to the opportunity that the increase in motorhomes presents.
 - investigating the practicalities and regulatory aspects to see if it might be appropriate for motorhomes to stay overnight in some suitably identified council car parks, similar to the Forestry and Land Scotland's "Stay the Night Scheme" which took place in 2020. With input and detailed feedback being sourced from the Council's Roads and Infrastructure Service, Planning Service, Fire Scotland and Environmental Health Service.
 - creation of new dedicated infrastructure has longer lead in times. Upkeep, management and ongoing running costs of anything created needs to be sustainable. For the past three years officers have been working with community organisations across Argyll and Bute, where possible, to access funding from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF), to help in the

creation and improvement of parking and motorhome facilities where visitor pressures can be demonstrated.

Projects which secured RTIF funding within the OLI area were –

Capital Funded Projects -

- Roads Department upgrade to Fionnphort Car Park (Iona Ferry 2 Car Park) resurfaced and lined for light vehicles and to accommodate day parking of motorhomes (completed as part of Round 1).
- Working in partnership with Mull and Iona Community Trust investment was secured for a new car park, motorhome waste disposal point and a small number of overnight parking stances at Ulva Ferry.

Design Grant Funded projects RTIF (Round 3) -

- Funding secured in partnership with Friends of St Conan's Kirk for design work to provide new public toilet facilities and adjustments to improve visitor parking.
- Funding secured in partnership with the Roads Department to complete design work for a new car park/car park expansion at Baliscate, Tobermory, to provide increased provision of light vehicle and motorhome spaces.
- Funding was secured in partnership with Mull and Iona Community Trust to complete design work for a new phase of visitor facilities at Ulva Ferry.

The three projects where design work was completed were submitted to stage 2 of RTIF Round 3 to try and secure capital funding but were unfortunately unsuccessful (the third round of the fund was significantly oversubscribed). The Scottish Government has recently announced significant increased funding allocated to RTIF in its latest budget announcement.

- review the promotion of locations and existing facilities in Argyll and Bute. With an ambition to better promote the network of existing facilities, for example, encourage existing motorhome waste disposal points to promote their facilities through CaMPA's (Campervan and Motorhome Professional Association) new guide.
- better promotion of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code more generally, which is a national priority, to encourage responsible behavior. Officers are also aware of National interventions led by VisitScotland, SNH and others. A key area being the education of people to undertake tourism responsibly.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Argyll and Bute Council officers will continue to work with partners to respond to the opportunities and challenges presented by informal camping that results in anti-social behaviour, seeking solutions that will benefit our communities and reduce negative impacts where possible, at the same time

promoting the economic opportunities for communities and individual businesses that may arise from this.

- 5.2 Officers will continue to work with partners and promote and apply for appropriate funding through the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, to help in the creation and improvement of parking and motorhome facilities where visitor pressures can be demonstrated.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

6.1 **Policy** - none

6.2 **Financial** - none arising from this report

6.3 **Legal** - none

6.4 **HR** - none

6.5 **Fairer Scotland Duty:**

6.5.1 **Equalities - protected characteristics** - none

6.5.2 **Socio-economic Duty** - none

6.5.3 **Islands** - the islands are likely to be put under the most pressure from informal overnight stays

6.6. **Risk** - Increased littering and Health and safety issues arising from informal toilet waste disposal

6.7 **Customer Service** - none

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

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Google Trend graphs below, illustrate interest in relevant online search terms over time, within the UK as a whole.

