

Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust and Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs

Update to Helensburgh and Lomond Area Community Planning Group – 18/11/21

Visitor Management Project to Make a Difference for Visitors and the Local Community in Arrochar & Tarbet through the Summer 2021

As part of the £90,000 Two Lochs Visitor Management Project, led by the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs with support of Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust and a small working group of local businesses, an impressive package of 'quick win' visitor management actions was delivered in the two lochside communities this summer.

As ACPG members will be aware we've been concerned about the decline of the Arrochar and Tarbet area over several years and the growing adverse impacts of A83 regular road closures and Covid 19, which raised issues for the villages to be able to cope with additional staycation visitor pressures anticipated this summer. A small Working Group involving local businesses, the Development Trust, the National Park and the Friends of Loch Lomond was set up late last year. The group focused on some of the challenges facing the villages which helped shape priorities to address shortcomings for visitors and the local community, in a way that would help to strengthen the communities in sustainable and environmentally friendly ways.

Early actions were identified to improve the situation on the ground and the Friends were able to secure substantial funding for a range of practical measures including the provision of temporary toilets at the main Arrochar car park and also at the start of the busy Cobbler mountain path, the employment of 3 seasonal visitor wardens, the production of more than 30 information map panels for display locally and new information signage at several village locations.

Ambitious Programme

With early groundwork the working partnership were able to roll out an ambitious summer programme in full within a few weeks following confirmation of substantial grant aid, secured by the Friends in early May from NatureScot's Better Places Green Recovery award scheme. This was supplemented by a generous grant from the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust and other sources, and by the middle of May three wardens were recruited locally and the first batch of toilets were in place and operational at Arrochar car park at the head of Loch Long.

This coincided with the transfer of responsibility for the Car Park from Argyll & Bute Council to the owners, Luss Estates Company and by the May Bank Holiday weekend all the waterproof information and orientation maps were in place on bus shelters and at other key locations throughout the area with new information directional signs installed at the Railway Station and the head of Loch Long. Additional Temporary Toilets were then installed at the entrance to the Cobbler mountain path, with approval coming from Forest and Land Scotland for this too.

The provision of toilets, backed up by friendly and knowledgeable visitor wardens, made a huge difference locally and as soon as the toilets were opened in mid-May a queue formed and it was interesting to see climbers and walkers regularly sprinting from the Cobbler car park to use them before toilets were installed there. The 7 temporary toilet units provided across the two sites were heavily used throughout the 22 week placement by an estimated 30,000 visitors. Their availability and overall cleanliness levels were regularly complemented on by

appreciative visitors and locals to become a regular stop off by those travelling into and from Argyll & Bute locations.

The wardens, with the support of the Luss Estates Company, helped manage the busy Arrochar car park and lochhead area with regular checks and cleaning the toilets at both sites in the Car Park and at the foot of the Cobbler climber's path. They also kept on top of litter problems and spent time providing advice and guidance to thousands of visitors to both car parks at the head of Loch Long. During the quieter spells in the Autumn the wardens carried out other tasks around the village including patrolling and clearing overgrown paths and public areas. They assisted with work around our 3 Villages Community Hall, the Village's War Memorial and children's Play Areas and main village pavements they were regularly visiting.

The early action programme has been a great success and is reflected in the high level of positive feedback received on the ground and via various social media channels used by visitors and the local public.

Alongside this we've had messages of support from the Landowner, Luss Estates, Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park Ranger Service, Police Scotland Community Policing Officers and Forest & Land Scotland.

We received the following from Local Argyll & Bute Cllr Shonny Paterson: *"I congratulate you and the team in what you have achieved, you have showed what can be done when the will is there. The toilets and level of maintenance of the car park, paths and amenity areas in my Community of Arrochar & Tarbet that were provided by the Friends in Arrochar has been a unmitigated success. I also have to mention that the wardens should all get a 10-10 for their work and dedication, going above and beyond what was asked of them, Thanks to all involved"*.

I would add that this programme of works has provided some welcome relief for villagers and local businesses which has been a great morale booster as well as serving the basic needs of visitors and those travelling through Arrochar. We hope we'll be able to build on this success in future years with the provision of permanent toilets and the retention of 'boots on the ground' via the excellent visitor warden scheme which has made a real difference locally.

Duncan MacLachlan
Chair
Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust

Trustee
Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs
Argyll & the Isles Coast & Countryside Trust

Appendix 1: Feedback Examples

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A number of comments were received that appear to support community efforts in the Arrochar Car Park during the peak summer period for visitors coming to the area.

The following examples are provided from Park 4 Night – These are website comments from motorhomes and Campervan members using the Car Park for an overnight stay during Summer 2021 with Temp Toilets and local Visitor Warden service:

TwoGoWild - 5 Stars - on 26 09 2021

Great open location with lovely views. Variety of local amenities & toilets a bonus. Well worth £10 for the night.

MagicBoxer21 – 5 Stars- on 11 09 2021

Pulled up in the evening, guy came over for recommended £10 donation and gave a ticket for the night. Lovely views and small cafe for bacon sandwiches in the morning (if you don't want to cook).

AFowler - 5 Stars - on 8 09 2021

Great car park, amazing views, excellent.

KatyMac221 - 3 Stars - on 6 09 2021

It's a car park, what can we say? But views of the loch and near a chippy, a hotel and a pub so you won't go hungry/thirsty. £10 honesty donation seems fair. Bit of a low tide smell from the loch. Didn't use the portaloos so can't report.

MrBillyLove – 4 Stars - on 5 09 2021

Didn't expect too much but this was a gem as we didn't get a permit for Loch Lomond. Warden kept the car park and portaloos very tidy and the £10 suggested donation seemed fair. Not the most scenic of spots but the view across the bay was great. Agree with previous post that this is a great example of how the camping and local community can work in unison.

Simes303 – 5 Stars- on 15 08 2021

This is a perfect example of how local residents and motorhomers can exist together. The car park warden is a lovely man and he and his wife are doing what they can to help. Take your litter away and pay the ten pound overnight fee. It's really cheap and they even provide five portaloos.

Carl-Jones – 4 Stars - on 10 08 2021

Really nice free park up on a sea loch. I slept well, but others might be bothered by the busy road, this is a logging road. Toilets & bins. Warden came around during the evening suggesting a donation (£10). 90% of car park traffic are regular motorists who use facilities for free. He mentioned future installation of APNR cameras! I would stay again & pay.

Skjeldmaer – 5 Stars - on 24 07 2021

Absolutely cracking spot, no restrictions, level, shaded areas fab views, daytime loos and fuel and shop opposite. Couldn't find water though. Just to say, yes it's free but please make a donation as suggested, to support this great initiative!

SpudBC – 5 Stars - on 25 06 2021

Stunning views of Loch long that cannot be beaten! used to camp at Ardgartan but the site now has lodges only. Good for campervans to park up for the night and wake up to the lovely views. Very helpful gentleman works there keeping the place spick & span.

AdventureVanErica – 4 Stars - on 24 06 2021

Great spot and probably the cleanest portaloos I've ever seen. There was an occasional rotten smell from the head of the Loch but nothing to bother us. Midges we're rampant

Owen Morgan – 5 Stars - on 21 06 2021

Lovely view, fish and chip shop and another food place (Ben Arthur's Bothy) a couple of minutes walk away, fuel station opposite. Spoke to a nice guy who was cleaning the toilets (they are locked overnight from 7pm to 8am) and he said it's free but the friends of Loch Lomond group appreciate it if you text a number to donate £2 which I thought was more than fair

RsBoden – 4 Stars - on 19 06 2021

Quiet at night, busy during the day. Toilets and hand wash on site. Petrol station next door and a café. Strong smell of rotten sea. Standard car park though, not a "free motorhome aire".

The following examples are further comments received from a survey over a busy weekend for visitors and a Walking group visiting the Arrochar Alps:

On Sun, 5 Sept 2021 at 20:43, Nickie Cowan <> wrote:
Hi!

I just wanted to pass on that these toilets are a great asset. I used them on a Saturday morning at the beginning of august. They were clean, almost luxurious for a portaloos! And the provision of loads of sanitiser and clear signage was great Given the popularity of the Arrochar Alps and the area in general there is, in my mind, a need for toilets for people to use to avoid the issues we are seeing elsewhere. I hope people are paying for them to help support their availability! The area was clean and tidy and set a very positive impression! A great initiative and I hope you get funding to continue!

Nicola

On Sun, 5 Sept 2021 at 10:37, mandy bryan <> wrote:

Dear Friends of Loch Lomond

Just to say thank you for the temporary toilets at Arrochar. Scotland needs more public facilities to stop all the white tissue spoils and worse within the countryside. Most folk would use a public loo if it was available and clean.

Regards
Mandy

On Sun, 5 Sept 2021 at 09:35, Gillian Hewison <> wrote:
To the friends of Loch Lomond

Hi,

I am a member of the **Scottish Womens Walking Group**. I just wanted to write to express my thanks for the provision of the temporary toilets at the Arrochar car park. I'm guessing most folk travel a bit to reach Arrochar, a lot of hill walkers arrive early in the morning before cafes are open to buy breakfast and use the toilets before the walk.

You have resolved a potential issue with the temporary toilets, thank you for providing these. I think if you tried crowdfunding with some of the other walkers groups as well you might find some contribution to the possibility of a more permanent solution.

Best wishes,
Gillian Hewison

Menie Fishing Station
Balmedie,
Aberdeen
AB23 8YE

On Sun, 5 Sept 2021 at 09:05, elainewaudby <> wrote:

The temporary loos are immensely helpful to people heading up the hills and walks nearby, please let them continue.

They must surely prevent a lot of potential mess from some people, and gives peace of mind to people heading off on a long day of hiking.

On Sat, 4 Sept 2021 at 17:28, Elizabeth Bilson <> wrote:

Hi

It appears there are temporary toilets at the Arrochar car parks ! I cannot comment as I hadn't noticed the provision. However I have always thought there should be some there considering the amount of people passing through Arrochar or there for a day's walking. It would be a great asset if there could be some permanent provision of toilets as people are visiting all year round.

Hope this can be taken forward.

Best wishes

Liz Bilson

On Sat, 4 Sept 2021 at 16:47, mary.bavin <> wrote:

I'd just like to say how much tidier and cleaner the Arrochar car parks have been this summer and the toilets a boon for travellers on a long journey. I hope they will continue at this standard.

Mary Bavin

Isle of Islay

On Sat, 4 Sept 2021 at 16:30, anne marie bannon <> wrote:

Thanks so much for all the work around toilet provision in the Arrochar Car Park. They were spotless and absolutely essential to prevent random toileting outside. Hopefully funding can be continued to keep such a worthwhile project going.

Cheers!

On Sat, 4 Sept 2021 at 15:57, Diane Wilson <> wrote:

Hi

I visited Arrochar a few times during the period of 10th/11th July 2021 and used the carpark at the head of Loch Long. On all occasions the carpark was almost full and the toilets were being used.

To ensure visitors are attracted to stop, comfortably visit and lift the economy of the area, these resources are necessity and I hope they become a more permanent fixture.

Regards

Diane Wilson

On Sat, 4 Sept 2021 at 15:39, Christine MacCallum <> wrote:

These toilets are much appreciated by tourists and regular users of the A83. Spotless every time we've stopped and I hope they have been respected by the public.

Christine MacCallum
