

Note of meeting
West Loch Lomond Visitor Management Group
11th January 2022 2pm



Attendees

- Julian Farrar (Ironsides Farrar), Janet Pope (Ironsides Farrar), Duncan McLachlan (Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust), Andy McClay (Luss Community Council), David Scott (Ironsides Farrar), Neil MacFarlane (Transport Scotland), Stuart Cordiner (Cruise Loch Lomond), Hugh O'Neill (Argyll & Bute Council), Andrew Clark (Forestry & Land Scotland), Zalina Dzhatieva (Argyll & Bute Council), Jane Ireland (Arrochar Alps Destination Group), Simon Miller (Luss Estates), James Fraser (Friends of Loch Lomond and Trossachs), Matt Buckland (LLTNPA), Jamie Proudfoot (LLTNPA), Guy Keating (LLTNPA), Deborah Sandals (LLTNPA), Ross Pollok (LLTNPA), Annie Fitzpatrick (LLTNPA - Notes)

Apologies

- Kenny Auld, Fergus Murray, Tom Murphy

A welcome to everyone remotely attending the first special meeting of this visitor management group, focusing on the first draft of the strategic tourism infrastructure development study. Hoping to start looking at this area more strategically and start seeing progress in improving infrastructure.

- Welcome and apologies, introductions from around the group.
- Update from Julian at Ironsides Farrar (JF) with presentation. Discussion with individual slides as the presentation goes.
- JF - Purpose of this is to get thoughts from the group. What's the framework? To develop closer integration from the tourism, visitors, residents, third sector, businesses and try to draw it together into a strategy or framework. Looking at assets currently available and looking to develop through funding schemes to try to relieve some of the high visitor pressure points and manage the area better, with a long-term plan for destination development.
- Comment/Question from Andy – haven't spoken to the communities about this, or is this the start of that process and they will be spoken with? – We are looking at what we can achieve and at development opportunities and the next step in the process will be to share that with the communities in those areas. Community consultation is the next step. Not only the park that has had input into this as information has been taken from documents produced about these areas over the years that have come from various sources. We will be moving at a pace.
- JF - We are in the early stage mapping - after looking at what exists, what are the visitor pressures, where were the locations and what were the issues arising, looking at what meets the criteria from the Scottish government, identify the sites of significant pressure, how are they being managed? Early work has identified the starting point.

- Comment/question from Simon – for Luss, anti-social behaviour should be added.
- Comment/Question from Stuart – Tarbet isn't marked on the map to say it has visitor pressures, would like this added so it's not forgotten in the bigger picture.
- Comment/Question from Andy – A lot of the problems for Luss also came from the Lochside, not just land based.
- Comment/Question from James – Map is lacking detail, not highlighted Duck Bay as well as Tarbet. Also the A82 corridor is under massive pressure, laybys used for outdoor toileting, poor quality signing, issues with bins. Map is high level understandably however it's missing some key areas. The communities when consulted will colour this and bring to life.
- JF - Local understanding will be invaluable. Started to summarise some of the problems, opportunities, issues and challenges. How do we protect and ensure visitor experiences aren't devalued as a result of the level of demand?
- Comment/Question from Simon – from the Luss summit and parliamentary questions that an MP posed, it's come out that half the problem is the behaviour of people on the loch. This process is in danger of not working unless the National Park accepts that one of the problems is the water and lack of jurisdiction that the park have on the water, including Scottish government. Putting aside people drinking on the beach, the problem is the jet skis behaviour and the number of them. Unable to restrict numbers, unable to do due diligence on those registering and unable to adequately police peoples' behaviour as the framework isn't there.
- JF - We need to understand better the challenges so it important that we are identifying the big issues.
- Comment/Question from Neil – looking for clarification on the signage of the A82 being poor. James – when the park was set up originally he chaired a group and secured funding for strategic signing around the national park and localised signing. It was identified last year during another project that there needs to be more information for people visiting the area eg 'toilets in 3 miles' so outdoor toileting can be minimised. So a review of more visitor signing as part of this exercise would be beneficial. Please also don't forget about the piers when it comes to shelter in areas to enhance the visitor experience with water buses.
- Comment/Question from Andy – Residents and communities should be at the core of this strategy and they are missing. There needs to be a statement put in for the protection of and sustainability of these communities.
- Comment/Question from Simon – Part of the vision has to be getting control of what happens on the water.
- JF - These points perhaps need to come in more forcibly in the strategy than we were thinking. These have been noted.
- Comment/Question from Andy – residents realise that this is a national park and it's open to all but we need to find a middle ground and with the strategies that are being presented, there needs to be a baseline of sustainability and protection of existing communities.

- Comment/Question from James – Agreed there should be a simple statement written in quite strongly which could be ‘improving the quality of life for local residents’.
- Comment from Matt – this was one of the key reasons for putting these studies together from the national park’s perspective so if this needs reiterated more firmly then we can certainly 100% do this. We will ensure this is reflected.
- Comment from Deborah – We perhaps need to be more explicit in our language.
- JF - Looked at what are or will be the primary ‘hubs’, points of arrival, strategic accesses to the site, what are primary destinations and secondary and what facilities should be available, how do we cope with high levels of tourist demands. Discussion on ‘hubs’ identified. Arrochar, Tarbet and Balloch identified as more primary.
- Comment/Question from Simon – Even if it is a tertiary destination, some should definitely have a toilet as for example, Firkin Point - this is too busy not to have a toilet provided. If it has a park, play area or picnic area it needs to have toilet facilities. We need to be careful at the start if we are making a decision based on funds that we shouldn’t dismiss putting toilets in tertiary sites. By definition, if a site is big enough for families to spend time there playing or having picnics then it needs a toilet.
- Comment from Jan – Agreed. Firkin is more a secondary destination. Tertiary should be more of a layby or off the beaten track site. It will become more clear when we start to look at the sites and discuss that some will be more secondary than tertiary.
- Comment/Question from Duncan – Reiterating the point about identifying the facilities and making people aware of where they can be found, toilets, waste disposal etc. Perhaps not putting them at every site but making people aware by signage, on maps where they are and opening times.
- JF - Signage will certainly need to be looked at as we develop these sites.
- Comment/Question from James – We are looking at Inveruglas, does this include Ardlui? Some laybys are in very poor condition and this is a significant corridor. One of the strategic columns should be a corridor movement issue.
- Comment/Question from Stuart – Primary hubs – transport providers should be on board as early as possible. When we were looking at the Arrochar and Tarbet train station, we really struggled to get anywhere with the transport provider in terms of points of arrival, notices, signage and it was really disappointing. So buy-in from them as early as possible is important.
- JF - Agreed. Needs to become a long term partnership of interest.
- Comment/Question from Hugh – Raised the need for ‘truck stops’ on A82/83. Due to the increase in commercial activity, this needs to be given consideration.
- JF - Need to ensure the hubs work well in terms of supporting infrastructure as well as the destinations that most of the visitors are going to. We are thinking of this as almost like a partnership plan with land owners and communities. A large part of the infrastructure necessary to support sustainable tourism in the national park is going to have to come via public funding sources.

- JF - Then we started to look at what the existing facilities were in the National Park. Followed by looking at individual sites and what that site can potentially do. No consultation with stakeholders at this point but this is the start of setting the possibilities.
- Comment from Jan – Discussed Inveruglas and the multi-functionality of this small site including shuttle-bus and sustainable transport links.
- Comment/Question from Simon – Commented on ‘improve water sport facilities’ as part of the plan. Doesn’t think anyone should be improving access to the loch until the national park have obtained legal control of the water if this means it makes it easier for access. This would encourage the problem.
- JF - Looking at land and water being managed. We started to look at what Inveruglas could start to look like if you were to enhance the facilities in this location.
- Comment from Jan – The key moves that we were looking at were opportunities to provide additional car parking close to the visitor centre, providing a sustainable transport plan which will take the pressure off the level of traffic, improvements to laybys for drop-offs by buses, general improvement to cycling infrastructure, extending cycling routes to include Inveruglas.
- Comment from Guy – The National Park has been working with Transport Scotland and another set of consultants on a major project on upgrading the A82 between Tarbet and Beinglas Farm. So when this is being done, there will be a new cycle path so Inveruglas will be linked into this.
- Comment/Question from Duncan – The current plans for the A82 upgrade don’t include bus stops at Inveruglas and they are suggesting it stops on request as required. Far more practical to have space for the buses to stop in order to not hold up traffic.
- Comment/Question from Guy - Arrochar cobbler car park doesn’t have capacity for the visitors at the moment. 40,000 visitors a year – huge demand. The car park is poor, could be managed better and it doesn’t seem to be featured on any National Park management plans or this study. Could this be taken into account?
- JF - Very keen to encourage the enterprise model within communities to allow opportunities to develop for them. Discussion can take place with communities.
- Comment/Question from Stuart – Inveruglas & Tarbet – can see up to 40/50 coaches a day. Just to give an idea of the volume in terms of capacity but this maybe hasn’t been seen over the last 2 years with Covid so this should be highlighted.
- Comment/Question from Simon – Need to look at what is already there in terms of the 2 car parks owned by 2 different land owners. For instance there is a good coffee shop already close to one of the sites so there would not be a need to build another.
- Comment/Question from James – Plans so far are heading in the right direction. Camping is an issue, lost 1000 camping and touring caravan spaces between West Loch Lomond and Ardgarten over the last 13 years.
- Comment from Jane – Commented on high car park numbers and seeing more motorhomes on the road.

- JF - Today was about sharing the process with the group, these are not proposals. Ran through a few of the key sites including Tarbet, Arrochar, Ardgarten and some initial ideas around them. Also looked at Luss on request and discussed the initial ideas.
- JF - This is the first stage and we want to share this with the group and ask for feedback on how we should take this out for the next stage of consultation. These aren't conclusions, these are ideas that have been put forward.
- Comment/Question from James – Requested Ardlui be put on the map. Need to get the balance right on motorhome provision. Water sports and piers shelters not to get lost.
- Comment from Matt – Requested that the group look at the drawings and form opinions and feedback. Also, if there are any other areas or pockets of land that you would like to highlight, even for future thoughts that could be used and incorporated into plans, please let us know.