

Two Lochs Visitor Management Project

Final Report



November 2021

1. Project Summary

The **Two Lochs Visitor Management Project** was developed on a partnership basis with local community and tourism business groups and with the support of landowners and agencies to help address problems of excessive toileting and littering and to promote more responsible tourism at the busy hotspot locations on West Loch Lomondside and at the Head of Loch in the Arrochar area where there were gaps in visitor management and visitor infrastructure provision.

The project was aimed at complementing the wider efforts of public agencies who struggled to cope last year with the large surges of visitors to the National Park when the post-lockdown restrictions were lifted. The area was even busier this year after travel restrictions were lifted in the spring with significant growth in both day visitors and UK tourists throughout the May to October period. The introduction of additional measures as part of this project were therefore timely in helping to address the impact of visitor pressures.

A project budget of £90,000 was assembled with the main funding contributions coming from the NatureScot Better Places Green Recovery Fund and the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust Fund to support all strands of the 'quick delivery' visitor management programme for the summer period. Smaller contributions of £3,500 each from Argyll & Bute Council and Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park were secured to help fund temporary toilets at Duck Bay while the Cawley Group provided sponsorship in kind taking on day-to-day responsibility for regular cleaning of the Duck Bay toilets and providing hygiene and toiletry supplies for this busy facility. The Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust contributed £1,000 to the project budget too.

Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs provided substantial project management and delivery support through a combination of a member of staff and the equivalent of 120 volunteer days of input by some Trustees and other volunteers. The Arrochar & Tarbet Development Trust and Destination Arrochar Alps also helped with some practical aspects of project delivery in the Arrochar and Tarbet area and were active participants in a small working group with several local business representatives and the Friends who helped shape the programme.

The programme of activity included the following:

(i) Duck Bay Picnic Area, Loch Lomond (Toilets)- Provision of 5 temporary toilets at the main Duck Bay car park (April-October)-the first functioning public toilets at this busy picnic area in 25 years where there are over 300,000 visitors per annum. Consent for the toilet siting was provided by Argyll & Bute Council who also funded the provision of some advance signing along the lengthy Duck Bay loop road. This is the busiest picnic area in the National Park outwith Balloch and following horrendous outdoor toileting problems last year providing temporary toilets was a high priority. Regular daily cleaning was undertaken by the Cawley Group with sponsorship in kind for cleaning staff and hygiene and toiletry supplies.

(ii) Arrochar, Head of Loch Long (Toilets & Wardens)- Provision of 7 temporary toilets near 2 very busy car parks (May-October) beside the A83 and below the popular Arrochar Alps and Cobbler which are heavily used by climbers and visitors passing through the area. In previous years there were problems of excessive toileting and

litter accumulations at the head of the loch. Originally it was planned to locate some temporary toilets beside the Three Villages Hall but it made more sense to locate 2 of them at the start of the busy Cobbler mountain path where there was previous evidence of extensive outdoor toileting. Consent for the siting here was readily provided by Forestry & Land Scotland. The other 5 toilets were sited next to the main village car park (Glen Loin No 1) with the permission of the Luss Estates Company.

A total of 3 Visitor Services Wardens were recruited locally to provide 'boots on the ground' to regularly clean the toilets, help with litter clearance efforts and to liaise with visitors on the ground to promote responsible tourism and provide advice on outdoor recreation. In the quieter periods towards the end of the project the wardens cleared several paths and amenity sites in and around the village which had become overgrown and fallen into a state of disrepair. The wardens played an invaluable role and in addition to their core duties they also monitored the level of usage of the toilets and feedback from visitors. A by-product of their work was the improved management of the main Arrochar car park where there was a change in the management arrangements due to the transfer of roles and responsibilities from Argyll & Bute Council to car park owners, Luss Estates Company. Had the wardens not been on site regularly car park management and related problems would have been significant. A voluntary car park payment scheme was introduced in the latter half of the season and included payments for campervans parking overnight and this proved to be very successful.

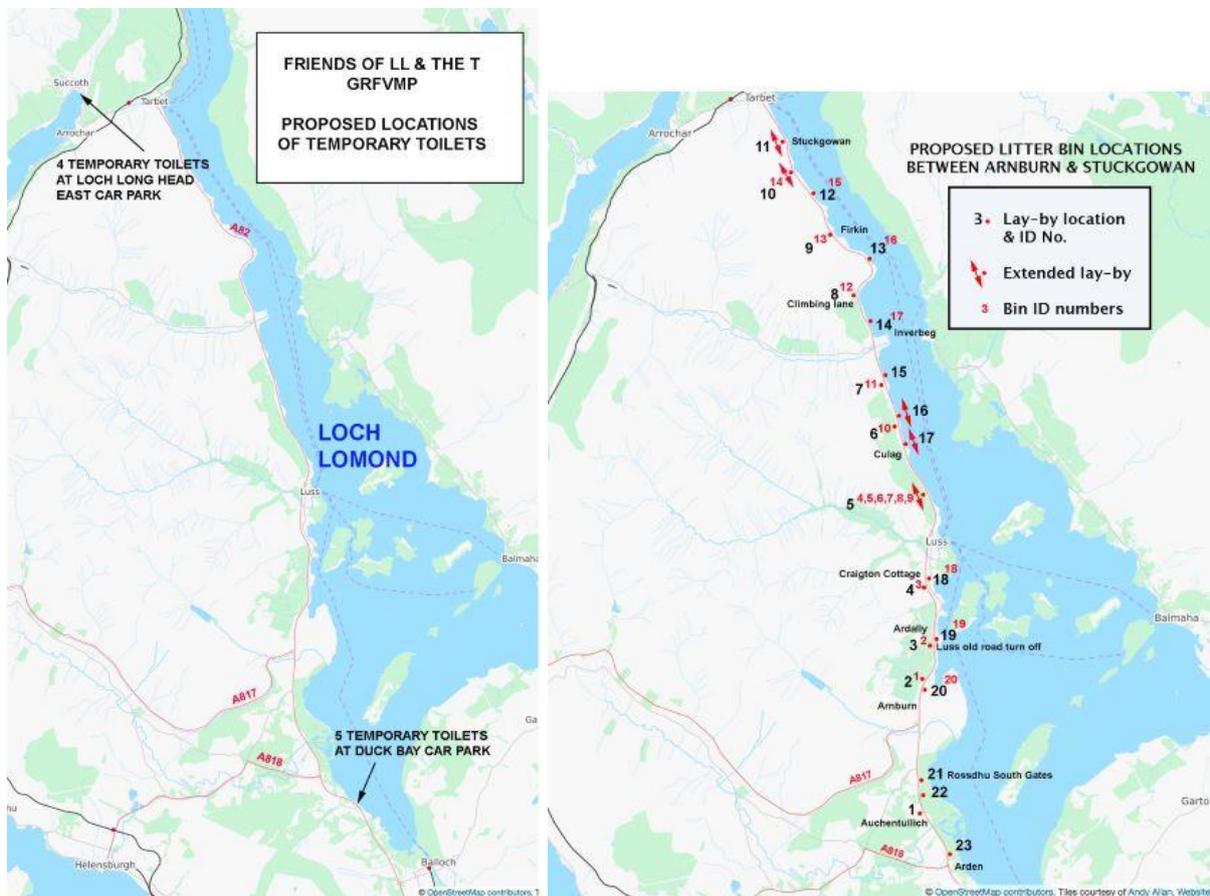
(iii) Arrochar/Tarbet/Ardgartan Corridor (Information Panels)- Design and installation of 30 information and orientation map panels at key public transport hubs such as Tarbet Rail Station, bus shelters and other busy outlets, including tourism premises and community buildings to help visitors make the most of the area in responsible ways. The panels produced were based on a modified and updated version of the existing Arrochar and Tarbet walks leaflet and map which was funded by the Friends and produced by the local Community Development Trust several years ago. The panels were designed and installed by the end of May and promote local walks and trails linked with responsible tourism messaging and feature the Outdoor Access Code. Some new directional information signing was also introduced at the Railway Station and advance signing for the temporary toilets was provided in Arrochar to raise awareness of their availability.

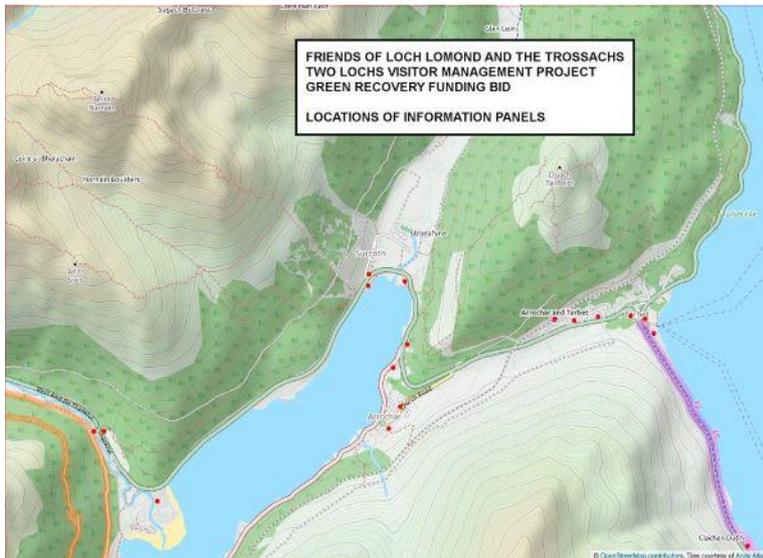
(iv) The A82, Loch Lomondside (Pilot Litter Bin Scheme)- To tackle the problem of excessive littering alongside the busy A82 tourist route a pilot layby litter bin initiative was introduced with the approval of Argyll & Bute Council and Transport Scotland to test the impact of installing and regularly emptying 20 high quality bins at some of the busier roadside laybys and scenic lookouts between Arden and Tarbet. This was a potential forerunner to an 'adopt a bin' scheme in future years when local businesses have recovered from prolonged COVID 19 lockdowns. There has been great interest in, and support for, this pilot scheme which included bin emptying twice a week during busy holiday periods and once a week at quieter times. Responsible visitor messaging on littering tying in with the national 'bin it or take it home campaign' was displayed prominently on attractive posters inserted on two poster panels on the bins while another panel on each bin was used to promote awareness of where the nearest public toilets were as part of an effort to try and reduce the scale of extensive outdoor toileting close to lay-bys. A good partnership was established with the ENVA recycling company based in Linwood who successfully managed to recycle 97% of the 15 tonnes (4,000 bags) of rubbish collected throughout the 4-month trial period between

late June and the end of October. A weekly monitoring system was introduced to carefully track the levels of litter in and around lay-bys for a period prior to the introduction of bins and during the trial period. A fuller review of the pilot scheme is covered in a separate detailed evaluation report.

There was strong support locally for this much needed visitor management project and there has been extensive positive feedback from visitors, businesses, and residents on the resounding success of different elements of the programme and a sample of some of the comments received are covered in other sections of this report along with an overview of the key outputs.

The sites where temporary toilets, bins and some of the information panels are sited are shown in the maps below. The bins are still on location and the pilot scheme has been extended for a further 6 months with funding from the Friends to allow time to explore a more sustainable funding model for developing an 'Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin' scheme with public and private sector partners.





The waterproof map and orientation panels are located at more sites in Tarbet and Arrochar and this map simply shows the outdoor sites. Tourist accommodation outlets, pubs and restaurants and other outlets have the panel on display in their foyer areas. The outdoor ones remain in place with the notable exception of those at bus shelters due to the shelters either being removed or replaced with new ones recently and discussions are ongoing to try and secure consent to install some in the new shelters. A total of 30 panels were produced for indoor and outdoor use with back up replacements and it is envisaged they will be in place at most sites for at least a 3-year period.

1. Project Outputs and Evaluation

The Two Lochs Visitor Management Project was successfully implemented with the temporary toilets in place and operational at Duck Bay and Arrochar car parks before the end of May and the 3 seasonal visitor services wardens were recruited and on the ground working in time for the end of May holiday weekend. The 30 information and orientation panels were designed, printed and installed at key locations in Arrochar & Tarbet before the end of May while the 20 bins were not in place and in use in Loch Lomondside lay-bys until the last weekend in June due to the lead time required to purchase, deliver and install them along with litter and toilet posters.

All elements of the project remained on location and were operational right through until the end of October as planned. With some of the funds raised from voluntary donations and other sources it has been possible to retain the services of the wardens for a few extra weeks in November to undertake additional amenity works in Arrochar and on Loch Lomondside. The Friends have also stepped in with additional funding to retain to extend the pilot bin scheme through to April 2022 while longer term funding solutions to retain the bins and the regular collection scheme are explored.

The overall aims as set out in the original funding application have been achieved with a range of new and practical visitor management measures in place and operational throughout summer 2021 at visitor hotspots on West Loch Lomondside and at the Head of Loch Long in Arrochar. There was strong community involvement in some elements of the project particularly in the Arrochar and Tarbet area and positive feedback was received on the actions taken as part of the project to address visitor

management issues which led to marked improvements in local resident and visitor experiences along the A82 corridor and at Duck Bay, Tarbet and Arrochar.

The project was well received by local landowners and businesses with the Destination Arrochar Alps Group and Luss Estates both being active partners. Luss Estates gave consent for a donation scheme to be introduced at Arrochar and this raised £6,000 to support some additional activity this year and next year. Many businesses also participated in the successful 'Make a Difference Day' at the end of the project period which saw a record turnout of 42 volunteers to assist with the removal of litter from undergrowth beside lay-bys and to help open up some views of Loch Lomond as part of the Friends ongoing 'Windows on the Loch' project.

Outdoor toileting at key locations such as Duck Bay picnic area and the Head of Loch Long at Arrochar and on the lower section of the Cobbler Mountain path were satisfactorily tackled with high temporary toilet usage levels throughout the end of May to end of October period. The toilets were open from dawn to dusk at Arrochar and from 9.00am until 6pm or later on busy days at Duck Bay. The high level of complaints normally received at Duck Bay Hotel due to the lack of public toilets disappeared and transformed the visitor experience at this busy site. The toilets at all three sites were maintained to a very high standard by Duck Bay Hotel staff and the Visitor Wardens and this was much appreciated by many thousands of visitors who used them.

Based on observation including periodic counts, the volume of toilet rolls used, and the amount of waste removed by Honeywagon, the toilet contractors, it is estimated that the toilets at Duck Bay were used by an average of 450 people on busy days at weekends and during holiday periods and this dropped to around 120 on quieter days (circa 40,000 over a 6-month period). The toilets at the two sites in Arrochar were used by an average of 280 on busy days and 80 on quieter days (circa 28,000).

From the feedback and interaction with those using the car parks and toilets in Arrochar the services were very much appreciated and many commented on the improvements that the wardens had provided. This related to the cleanliness and upkeep of the toilets, litter management and the peripheral activities of those using the car parks and grass spaces around the head of the Loch for barbeques, occasional wild camping and fishing activities. Whilst without any formal powers the wardens were able to advise and suggest that the Scottish Access Code should be followed, and guidance was offered on alternatives available to enjoy the area and the good outdoor weather over the entire summer.

It was helpful that the National Park Ranger Service and Police Scotland's Community Officers all provided encouragement and support for the efforts of the wardens and there were very few incidents of disrespectful behaviour and conduct throughout the summer that needed their attention.

The introduction of a visitor warden service on 7 days a week basis with extended hours of cover at busy periods proved to be invaluable and there is no substitute for having knowledgeable local people on the ground to assist visitors, manage and maintain toilets to a high standard and to stay on top of issues such litter and other aspects of visitor management at heavily used areas such as the Head of Loch Long.

The lay-bys and road verges along the A82 on Loch Lomondside were the cleanest they have been for years through a combination of litter bin provision with frequent collections tailored to the fluctuations in visitor numbers, regular monitoring, more

coordinated support services through the local authority and the Park Authority with supplementary litter and fly tipping rubbish removal at certain hotspots such as camping zones and the adjacent lay-bys. Particularly welcome was the involvement and assistance of the Community Services Team in the latter half of the project period when they undertook weekly litter picks although their team leader commented the amount of litter collected was limited due to the effectiveness of the bin installations which were well used by travellers using the A82 on the lochside.

The information and map panels were well used by visitors based on feedback from the visitor services wardens and local businesses. The wide availability of the attractive and informative panels helped to orientate visitors who were unfamiliar with the area and were looking for details of local walks. The directional signs near the exit to the railway station were also invaluable and greatly assisted visitors looking for lochside cruises and popular paths such as the Cobbler and the Three Lochs Way.

Litter recycling partners reported that during the four-month period of the A82 pilot layby litter bin scheme the amount of waste collected from the 20 litter bins was an impressive 15 tonnes with most bins being full or half full when they were emptied. Encouragingly, 97% of the litter collected was recycled. This equates to 4,000 x 30 litre bags of litter collected overall (120,000 litres) with 3,880 bags of litter being recycled (116,400 litres).

The pilot project has proved that if you provide bins and keep a place litter free, most people will treat the area with more respect and will respond to this and with a substantial drop in incidents of thoughtless littering.

Some very clear messages emerged from this pilot project: (i) provision of litter bins that are regularly emptied are a very effective way of managing and controlling litter in areas where there are high levels of visitor pressure; (ii) bins and related collection services are not entirely sufficient on their own and there also needs to be some additional activity including a rigorous and regular inspection regime; (iii) tackling litter in an area with high volumes of visitors on a well-planned and coordinated partnership basis can make a real difference and is preferable to adopting a 'do nothing or minimalist strategy' which is not commensurate with the scenic and touristic importance of the destination.

Some useful additional benefits and lessons from the project include:- (i) increased awareness amongst public sector partners that voluntary bodies such as the Friends, Community Development Trusts and local business groups can play a useful role in the delivery of local solutions to visitor management problems as they can react quickly and in cost effective ways; (ii) recognition that having 'feet on the ground' through a warden service is invaluable; (iii) the importance of providing well managed basic infrastructure such as toilets and bins as they can transform the overall visitor experience and presentation of heavily visited areas; and (iv) the pilot bin scheme has generated strong support and interest amongst local business and a number have expressed a willingness to be involved as sponsors in an 'Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin' scheme in future years.

2. Feedback

To demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the Two Lochs Visitor Management Project a sample of the feedback received via social media and conversations with visitors, business and residents who met wardens and volunteers follows below. Feedback at Duck Bay is more limited as the main contact there was with Duck Bay Hotel staff and owner who managed the temporary toilets there on our behalf.

(i) Duck Bay (Temporary Toilets)

Alan Cawley, owner of Duck Bay Hotel and toilet cleaning sponsor: *I think to say they have been a great success is the understatement of the year as they have been an absolute game changer for the public and we have had fantastic feedback from visitors not to mention that complaints have been non-existent. If I had to hazard a guess, I'd say complaints were down 99%. My family and my staff have had a much easier Summer because of the provision, and we are indebted to the Friends, the funding partners and Jackie Baillie MSP.*

We would have received hundreds of complaints on a busy day or even a moderately busy day. Previously the public, understandably, could never believe there were no provision of toilets at such a popular lochside picnic area!!

I'd say on a busy week the toilets would have been used by up to 3,000 people per week and like I said previously, they were an absolute game changer !!!

(ii) Arrochar (Temporary Toilets, Visitor Wardens Service & Information Signage)

*I congratulate you and your team in what has been achieved. You have showed what can be done when the will is there. The toilets and condition of the car park in my Community of Arrochar & Tarbet provided by the Friends in Arrochar have been an unmitigated success. I also have to mention the wardens that were employed - they all should get a 10-10 for their work and dedication going above and beyond what was asked of them, I see and talk with them on a regular basis, and report their concerns that are council-related. **Cllr Shonny Paterson***

*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. The area was clean and tidy and set a very positive impression! A great initiative and I hope you get funding to continue! **Nicola***

*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. **Mandy Bryan***

*I am a member of the **Scottish Women's 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. **Gillian Hewison, Balmedie**.*

*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 mess from some people and gives peace of mind to people heading off on a long day of hiking. **Elizabeth Bilson***

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

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! **Anne Marie Bannon**

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 a necessity and I hope they become a more permanent fixture.
Diane Wilson

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**

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 loos very tidy. This is a great example of how the camping and local community can work in unison. **Billy Love – 4 Stars**

This is a perfect example of how local residents and motorhomes can exist together. The car park warden is a lovely man and he is doing what they can to help. **Simes303 – 5 Stars**

Absolutely cracking spot, no restrictions, level, shaded areas fab views, daytime loos and fuel and shop opposite. **Skjeldmaer – 5 Stars**

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 and span. **Spud BC – 5 Stars**

Great spot and the cleanest portaloos I have ever seen. **AdventureVanErica – 4 Stars –**

(iii) A82 Corridor (Lay-by Litter Bin Pilot Scheme)

Fiona Baker, a local resident and trustee of Helensburgh and Lomond Cultural Centre Ltd trading as Destination Helensburgh: *I just wanted to write to congratulate the Friends and your partners on the positive improvements your Better Places initiative has made. I have been working in Luss on and off over the summer and the lay-bys I pass on my way there and back are noticeably much cleaner with much less litter. Providing bins has clearly made a very positive difference to littering on the loch side. Well-done for taking action and improving the environment for locals and visitors.*

Rob Trevis-Smith, National Park Ranger: *I have never seen the A82 Loch Lomondside lay-bys and road verges looking so clean during the summer months.*

Ishbel Campbell, the operator of the Auchentullich Farm Shop next to lay-by number 1: *I have noticed a marked improvement in the cleanliness of lay-bys and verges this summer.*

Alan Nimmo, a local High Firkin resident who regularly cycles along the West Loch Lomond cycleway: *I can vouch for the positive difference the bins have made.*

Simon Miller, Chief Executive of the Luss Estates Company: *We have noticed a significant improvement in the litter problem in the A82 lay-bys where the Friends stepped in with the installation of 20 new bins and their regular emptying. This is an important project as part of the battle to get on top of the litter problem.*

Jane Ireland, Slanj Restaurant, Tarbet and Chair of Destination Arrochar Alps: *The addition of bins along the west side of the Loch Lomond has made a huge difference to the lay-bys. The difference was almost immediate. Comments and feedback from residents and returning visitors to the Arrochar Alps has been very positive. Rubbish needn't be complicated. It just needs a receptacle, as has now been proved.*

Stuart Cordner, Director, Cruise Loch Lomond who operate out of Tarbet, Luss and Inveruglas on West Loch Lomondside: *As a daily commuter on the A82 for the last 25 years I have recently noticed a huge improvement with litter on the A82. The installation of lay-by bins has been instrumental in alleviating the blight of litter. I have received positive feedback from many of our customers this summer, both day trippers and staycation visitors, commenting on the new bins.*

Raymond Anderson, Proprietor, Stuckgowan Estates, Self-Catering Accommodation provider: *I am so glad that at last someone is doing something effective about the litter problem along the Loch Lomond stretch of A82. This is an area which is extremely important to our self-catering business there.*

Duncan MacLachlan, Chair of Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust *The impact of the A82 lay-bys litter collection bins has been significant, and the improvement is clearly obvious to all road users. Other family members, neighbours, community residents and business owners, bed and breakfast guests and other visitors have all commented on the improvement that has been seen since their introduction.*

Andy & Avril Macleod, owners of self-catering holiday cottages at Arden: *The litter bins are being well used. Our local lay-by, near the Arden roundabout and without a bin, continues to be an eyesore. Our conclusion from a recent trip up the A82 was that the bins are doing their job and helping to keep the lay-bys and the road looking great.*

Nick Kempe, well known "Park Watch" blogger on Scottish National Parks: *On a Wednesday in mid-September I drove to Luss, the first time I had been along the A82 since May, and was amazed by the transformation. Instead of the usual litter strewn verges and lay-bys, I had to look quite carefully to spot any litter. There are now litter bins in 20 lay-bys and guess what? Those lay-bys were at the time of my visit almost entirely litter free. There are two key points here. The first is that the pilot confirms that provision of bins is the single most effective thing public authorities can do to stop litter. The second is that if you provide bins and keep a place litter free, the vast majority of the population will respond and stop littering.*

3. The Next Steps and Funding

The lessons and feedback from what has been quite an ambitious, but very successful, programme for a small charity are still under consideration and input will be provided to the National Park visitor management annual review and the deliberations of local working groups.

The National Park Authority has secured funds from the VisitScotland RTIF scheme to develop costed 5-year visitor infrastructure programmes for the Loch Lomond area including the head of Loch Long at Arrochar. They are due to be developed in consultation with local visitor stakeholder groups which the Friends are involved with which should hopefully ensure the benefits of the provision of temporary toilets at Duck Bay and Arrochar and the rollout of the pilot A82 layby litter bin scheme will be taken account of as part of future plans. However, the timescale for working up permanent infrastructure projects, costing them and applying for and securing funds will take at least a year so the question is what happens in the interim period? What funding options are likely to be in place to deliver a broadly similar programme next year? Can other partners take on more of the workload and costs of ensuring the gaps in provision covered by this project can be met for a further year and possibly in the longer term?

Constructive discussions have been held with both Luss Estates and Argyll & Bute Council about visitor management issues including future toilet provision and the continuance of a seasonal visitor warden service at the Head of Loch Long where they both now are responsible for large car parks. With the Luss Estates Company recently introducing charges at Arrochar car park they plan to step up visitor management activities and the scope to re-introduce temporary toilets and a seasonal warden service is being actively explored. Argyll & Bute Council has recently purchased the large car park opposite the start of the popular Cobbler Mountain path and this opens up the potential for further visitor infrastructure investment here too.

A more detailed report on the A82 Loch Lomondside layby litter bin pilot scheme has been prepared and distributed widely. This includes a detailed evaluation of the pilot with some clear recommendations to build on the success of the pilot including the introduction of an 'Adopt a Bonnie Banks' Bin scheme with potential funding contributions from the public and private sectors. There is strong interest in supporting the scheme amongst local businesses and private sector partners, but it is unrealistic to ask them for more than half the costs of the existing 20 bin scheme or a slightly expanded scheme with up to 30 bins and a regular year-round collection service reflecting the trends in demand linked to visitor numbers. The challenge is to persuade public sector partners and in particular Argyll & Bute Council and the Park Authority to become funding partners.

In the interim while the option of a blended public and private sector 'Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin Scheme' is explored further with partners, the Friends have stepped in with funding to extend the pilot project through until April 2022 and this allows for weekly collections to ensure the considerable gains in the fight against litter this summer are maintained on a year-round basis. If public sector partners don't help fund the proposed blended model to continue with the scheme, then the future of what has proved to be a very successful pilot will be in doubt.

At Duck Bay, in the longer term, a more radical approach is required to strengthen visitor infrastructure at this 'tired', but heavily used, picnic area which is characterised by a poorly maintained car park with limited capacity, derelict toilets and run-down picnic tables, bins and signing. There is potential to provide a larger and upgraded car park, purpose-built toilets, some overnight campervan facilities and more generally to improve the picnic area which is strategically located at the southern end of Loch Lomond. This is likely to feature in the RTIF study being led by the National Park Authority but there is also a serious offer on the table from the Cawley Group, who own and operate Duck Bay Hotel, to provide and operate state of the art toilets, expand and upgrade the car park and take on the maintenance and improvements at the picnic area at no cost to the public sector and with no charges for parking or use of the toilets.

Discussions are also underway with the Park Authority to try and build some capacity in the Arrochar & Tarbet Community Development Trust so they are in a position to assist with community led visitor management activities in future years, including the possible management of a much needed temporary campervan park.

Due to the success of the **Two Lochs Visitor Management Project** local and community interests are starting to ask what the plans are for next year and the Friends and other partners are keen to build on this with a range of discussions on the options for the future underway. Hopefully, some of the gains achieved with the help of NatureScot's Better Places Green Recovery grant scheme and other funders, and the enthusiastic band of local volunteers, will lead to further investment in basic visitor facilities such toilets, litter bins with regular collection services and 'feet on the ground' with community-based visitor wardens in 2022 and beyond in an area that should be an exemplar in visitor management for Scotland.

The substantial funding support from NatureScot has been extensively acknowledged by the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs in publicity material including a series of news releases which achieved good coverage nationally and locally (sample news releases attached at the end of this report); articles in the Friends Voice magazine (5,000 plus readers) and website; 60 posters on the A82 lay-by litter bins; 60 map panels in the Arrochar and Tarbet area and; on stickers prominently displayed on 12 temporary toilets and sanitiser stands at three sites.

Appendix 1

Photographs of The Two Lochs Visitor Management Project

Temporary Toilets at Duck Bay Picnic Area Car Park



Appendix 1

Temporary Toilets at Arrochar Car Park and Cobbler Path



Appendix 1

Wardens taking care of toilets and clearing litter and vegetation in and around Arrochar



Appendix 1

Wardens undertaking work around Arrochar area



Figure 2 Path before



Figure 1 Path after



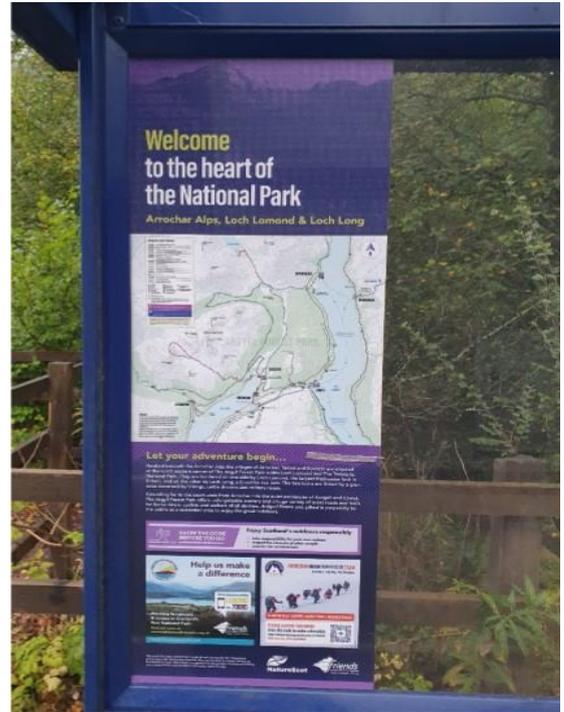
Appendix 1

Arrochar & Tarbet Information Panels and Signage



Appendix 1

Arrochar & Tarbet Information Panels and Signage



Appendix 1

Pilot Layby Litter Bin Scheme



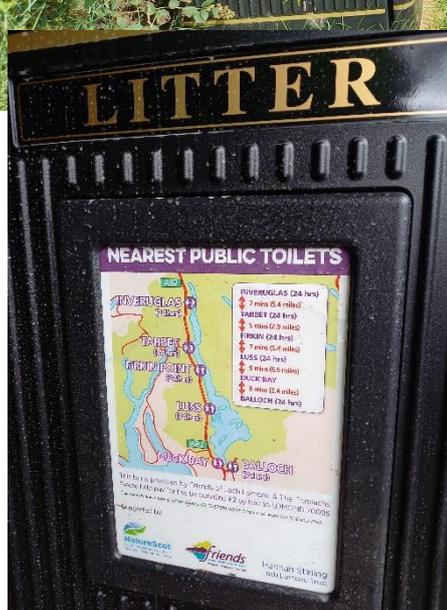
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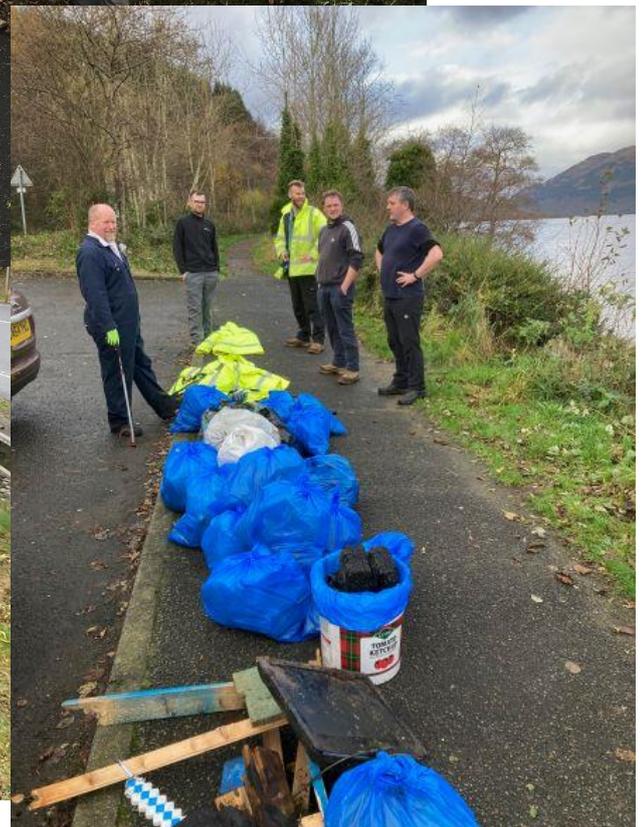
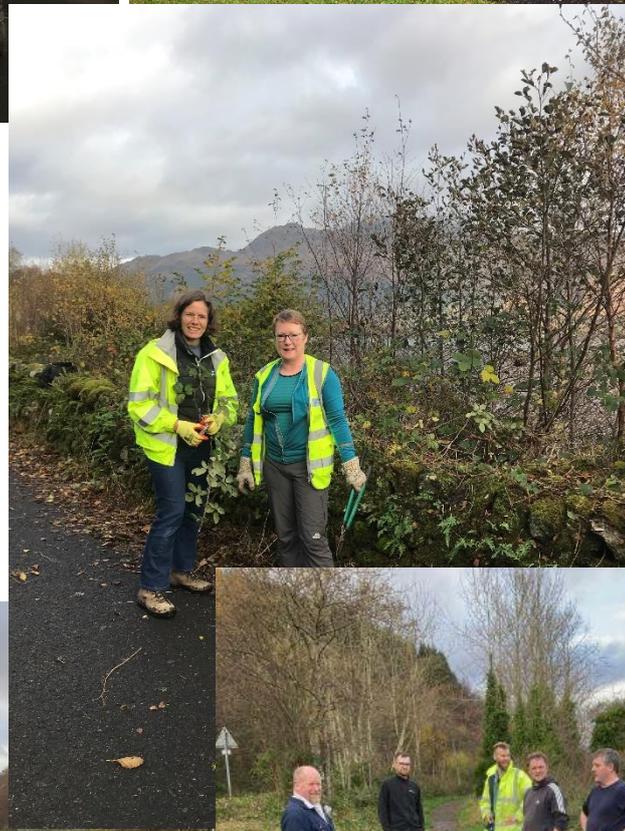
Appendix 1

Pilot Layby Litter Bin Scheme



Appendix 1

Volunteers Making a Difference



Appendix 2

News Release Samples



31.5.2021

Arrochar & Tarbet Visitor Welcome Initiative Launched

As part of a bold initiative to try and turn around the fortunes of the lochside villages of Arrochar and Tarbet a new visitor welcome initiative was launched (today) by local MSP Jackie Baillie and villagers. This includes the deployment of Village Visitor Wardens, the opening of temporary public toilets and the roll out of information maps at dozens of sites throughout the villages.

The plight of the popular tourist villages of Arrochar and Tarbet has been highlighted regularly during the past year with them suffering from the double blow of extensive A83 road closures due to landslides at the nearby Rest and Be Thankful and the devastating impact of COVID 19 lockdowns which decimated the local tourist industry.

Earlier this year a working group of local tourism businesses, the local Development Trust, the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, Luss Estates and the National Park came together to develop a fightback plan for the villages with a series of priority actions identified including some quick win actions for delivery in time for this summer season.

Early Action

With funding support from the NatureScot *Better Places Green Recovery* grants scheme, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust and the Friends of OUR park visitor giving scheme it has been possible for the local Tourism Action Group to work swiftly to deliver a package of early action improvements for the May holiday weekend.

This includes the provision of temporary toilets at Arrochar Car Park with the permission of car park owners Luss Estates. They are due to be augmented with additional toilets shortly at the start of the popular Cobbler mountain path. Other measures include the employment of three seasonal Visitor Wardens to provide a range of services to help visitors and improve the appearance of the village; and the design, production and installation of information and orientation map panels at key locations such as bus stops, the railway station and other busy tourist outlets in the area.

Impressed

At the launch event local MSP Jackie Baillie said: "I am really impressed with what has been achieved by a small band of local volunteers working in close partnership with the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs in such a short time. It is refreshing to see what can be achieved by adopting a determined and positive attitude in times of adversity.

The provision of much needed toilets and information map panels backed up by three locally recruited Visitor Services Wardens- Robert McEwan, Walter Dey and Martin Semple- should ensure the area caters more effectively for the needs of visitors as we ease out of lockdown restrictions and with a rapid increase in the number of people who simply want to enjoy the great outdoors in the Arrochar & Tarbet area.”

Friends Trustee and Chair of the local Development Trust Duncan Macglachlan said:” It has been a busy period preparing for the launch of this visitor welcome initiative but it marks the start of what will hopefully be a productive period of regeneration in both villages as we begin the long journey on the road to recovery after some unprecedented events outwith our control.

I am grateful to local businesses and colleagues at the conservation charity, Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, and Luss Estates who have really stepped up to the plate in our time of need.”

Jane Ireland of local business group Destination Arrochar Alps added:” This has been an exciting period with a real focus on making a difference in a remarkably short timescale and all the hard work has paid off with tangible improvements on the ground which will improve the overall quality of visitor welcome we are able to provide this summer. I am confident we can build further on this as we try to position the area as one of Scotland’s top tourist destinations.”

James Fraser, Chair of the Friends: “ We were delighted to pull together funding for this visitor welcome initiative and the response from the local community to getting their sleeves rolled up and helping to deliver improvements in the villages has been great to see. It demonstrates what can be achieved quickly with the right encouragement and pump priming financial support.”



16/08/2021

Bonnie Banks of Loch Lomond Litter Battle Success

National Park charity's A82 pilot layby bin scheme making a real difference

In a concerted move to tackle Loch Lomond's litter shame the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs have successfully introduced a pilot litter bin scheme in twenty laybys beside the A82 on Loch Lomondside over the summer months. The installation and regular emptying of the bins is making a big improvement along what was, until recently, regularly a litter strewn corridor in one of the world's great beauty spots.

This initiative is part of a wider £90,000 Two Lochs Visitor Management Project being led by the Friends with funding support from a variety of sources including the NatureScot Green Recovery Fund, the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust and environmental waste recycling company ENVA.

It is an initiative with a focus on taking practical actions to address serious littering and outdoor toileting issues which have become much worse following the easing of Covid 19 travel restrictions with increased visitor numbers in an already heavily visited tourist destination. It also aims to add to the efforts of other agencies and volunteers working to make Loch Lomond a better place for visitors and residents to enjoy responsibly.

John Urquhart, Vice Chair of the Friends said:" For many years now we have asked public agencies for litter bins to be installed in laybys alongside the busy Loch Lomond stretch of the A82 as part of a wider litter action plan but sadly this never happened other than beside the very short southern length covered by West Dunbartonshire Council.

"We therefore decided to take direct action ourselves and raised sufficient funds to run with this seasonal pilot scheme which is working well and making a real difference on the ground backed up with regular emptying and impact monitoring.

"We are pleased our actions are being complemented by others with the recent involvement of the Community Service team operating out of Helensburgh who are undertaking regular litter picks. The National Park Authority have also undertaken litter clearing work in laybys near camping permit zones beside the loch which are being intensively used over the busy summer months."

Jackie Baillie MSP has praised the Friends for stepping in and providing much needed bins and she said: "This is a welcome and very practical pilot project and I am delighted to support the Friends impressive efforts to tackle what has been a long running problem which deserves to be resourced better and become part of the main stream services provided by local public agencies."

She added” I am aware there are great inconsistencies in approaches to tackling litter in the Loch Lomond area by public agencies and it is interesting that along the entire length of the A9 in Scotland’s only other National Park-the Cairngorms National Park- bins have been provided and emptied regularly by public bodies for many years and they have proved to work well as part of the battle to improve the litter situation there.

“It should not be left to a local charity to provide bins in laybys along the busy A82 on Loch Lomondside and I plan to make it a priority to get a longer-term solution in place involving public agencies as it would be a retrograde step to remove the bins after the pilot period comes to an end in October.”

Sir Malcolm Colquhoun, Chairman of the Luss Estates Company as well as Honorary President of the Friends said: “I greatly admire the determination of the Friends Trustees all of whom are all volunteers in helping to address the pressing litter situation on Loch Lomondside which, in recent years, has sadly deteriorated greatly with a sea of discarded human waste on roadsides, in laybys, on the loch shore and the bushes. This is utterly unacceptable in such an iconic scenic location where we should be a showcase for all the best Scotland has to offer.

“This latest initiative is a welcome step forward but much more needs to be done as litter affects us all in an age when environmental concerns are to the fore. We should deal with this by confronting the culture that encourages and tolerates litter and particularly by ensuring the tax-funded public agencies whose job it is to look after the public infrastructure and the special Loch Lomond environment do so to a far higher standard with priority being given to tackling the basics such as litter in a much more effective and comprehensive way.”

Action Plan Call

Building on the success of the pilot layby litter bin project the Friends have called for a five-point inter-agency action plan to be taken forward to urgently address the serious littering and outdoor toileting problems along the A82 corridor on Loch Lomondside which they consider should include:

- financial support for the continuation of an expanded version of the current pilot litter bin scheme
- erecting appropriate fencing close to northbound laybys to reduce the incidence of fly tipping and outdoor toileting over wide areas
- removal of scrub vegetation in the vicinity of southbound laybys and viewpoints to make it easier for litter picking and to reduce outdoor toileting
- introducing advance services signing along the A82 at regular intervals to highlight where public toilets are, along with an indication if they are open 24 hrs and
- improving the overall quality of laybys with better levels of verge maintenance and design upgrades where necessary.



News Release

8/11/2021

Bonnie Banks Lay-by Litter Bin Scheme a Runaway Success

In a move to tackle Loch Lomond's chronic litter problems following the easing of COVID 19 travel restrictions, independent conservation charity the Friends of Loch Lomond and the Trossachs, introduced a pilot litter bin scheme in laybys beside the busy 13 mile stretch of the A82 on Loch Lomondside between Arden and Tarbet over the summer months

This has proved to be a great success with 15 tonnes of litter collected and an impressive 97% of this waste being recycled instead of strewn along road verges and in laybys on the lochside as it would have been in previous years. This equates to a staggering 4,000 bags of litter collected overall (120,000 litres) with 3,880 bags of litter being recycled (116,400 litres).

This litter initiative was part of a larger £90,000 Two Lochs Visitor Management Project, led by the Friends with considerable volunteer input, that also included providing temporary toilets at the busy Duck Bay and Arrochar visitor hotspots as well as introducing seasonal village visitor wardens. The funding for the litter pilot scheme was provided by NatureScot from their Green Recovery Fund and the Hannah Stirling Loch Lomond Trust with some additional sponsorship from waste recycling company ENVA.

The installation of 20 bins in lay-bys and twice weekly litter collections over the busy summer months has been truly transformative and additional litter and fly-tipping clearing work by volunteers, the local Community Service team, Argyll & Bute Council and the Park Authority have also helped improve the litter situation along what continues to be one of the busiest tourist routes in Scotland with over 6 million vehicle movements annually.

Adopt a Bin Scheme Plans

Following the success of the pilot scheme, the Friends have allocated funds to extend the litter bin initiative over the winter months while longer term plans are developed for an innovative year-round '*Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin*' scheme with support from potential private and public sector partners.

John Urquhart, Vice Chair of the Friends said: "There is a substantial body of evidence from our regular monitoring activity that, despite the considerable volumes of traffic and pressure on the A82 along West Loch Lomondside, not only were the lay-bys mostly clear of litter, but so also were the road verges between the lay-bys. This is also reflected in the very positive feedback we have received from appreciative residents, businesses, and visitors.

The pilot project has proved that if you provide bins and keep a place litter free, most people will treat the area with more respect and will respond to this and with a substantial drop in incidents of thoughtless littering."

A comprehensive evaluation report has been prepared for the pilot layby litter bin scheme and is being widely circulated. This report also aims to build on the success of the pilot scheme and outlines proposals for a blended funding solution to continue with the existing scheme and to possibly expand it further.

A series of other practical recommendations are made in the report including the urgent need to prepare and adopt a coordinated A82 litter action plan involving various agencies and other stakeholders such as the Friends and local communities so that further progress can be made in tackling litter problems along the busy A82 Loch Lomondside corridor in future years.

Strong Supporter

Jackie Baillie MSP, a strong supporter of the pilot scheme, has welcomed the publication of the report and she said: "The Friends have delivered a very practical litter initiative which has made a real difference. The findings of the report, the positive feedback received locally and the evidence on the ground has clearly demonstrated that the provision of litter bins in lochside lay-bys, that are regularly emptied, are a very effective way of helping to manage and control litter in areas where there are high levels of visitor pressure."

She added: "It is encouraging some local businesses are willing to step in and help fund the roll out of an '**Adopt a Bonnie Banks Bin**' scheme next year. However, it is important that public agencies also contribute funds to ensure a truly sustainable scheme is in place and I will be asking them to help as it is essential further steps are taken to continue improving litter situation along the A82 on Loch Lomondside and it should not be left to a local charity to step in to do this on an ongoing basis."

Along the stretch of the A82 in West Dunbartonshire, the Council currently funds the provision of litter bins in lay-bys and regular collections, and this has been successful over many years while neighbouring Argyll & Bute Council has not provided bins in lay-bys along their section of the A82 on the lochside. This led to serious litter problems before the Friends stepped in with the pilot project this summer to show what a difference providing bins and regular collection services can make.