

LATEST UPDATE ON STAYCATION PROPOSALS

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The council has allocated two funding pots to support staycations in Argyll and Bute. £500,000 was allocated from the 2021/2022 budget and supplemented by a further £100,000 from the 2022/2023 budget to support the delivery of a range of facilities across Argyll and Bute necessary to support camping and motorhome staycations.
- 1.2 The majority of the staycation facilities approved at a previous Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee for 2022 have been set up and running. For instance, the Staycation Graduate Project Officer was employed in April 2022, until the end of March 2023, to help administer the council's investment. Council wardens were appointed for the period April to October 2022 to raise awareness in respect of visiting responsibly. In addition to this, £20,000 has been set aside from the Staycation budget to support four community groups/trusts to employ temporary wardens.
- 1.3 There is an ongoing process of developing new waste disposal points and supporting local business/community groups in upgrading and developing existing and new campsites.
- 1.4 Officers have developed a new approach and are working in partnership with private organisations/communities to create Motorcaravan Overnight Parking sites throughout Argyll and Bute to support Motorcaravan management and road safety issues.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members of the Environment, Development and Infrastructure Committee are asked to:-

- Consider and approve Officer recommendations that
 - Funding for Gateway and passing place signage is approved.
 - Funds are set aside for Portaloos in hot spots for 2023 as with 2021 and 2022.
 - The Staycation Officer contract is extended by 6 months (to end of September 2023) to allow for the development and completion of projects

- Review of Public Toilet upgrades with VisitScotland funding.
- Completion of the Motorcaravan Overnight Parking Project with an additional £30,000 allocated from the staycation budget.
- Completion of the Glenmorag project.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 The council has allocated two funding pots to support staycations in Argyll and Bute. £500,000 was allocated from the 2021/2022 budget and supplemented by a further £100,000 from the 2022/2023 budget to support the delivery of a range of facilities across Argyll and Bute necessary to support camping and motorhome staycations.
- 2.2 The majority of the staycation facilities approved via the Environment, Development and Infrastructure (EDI) Committee for 2022 have been set up and running. For instance, the Staycation Graduate Project Officer was employed in April 2022, until the end of March 2023, to help administer the council's investment. Council wardens were appointed for the period April to October 2022 to raise awareness in respect of visiting responsibly. In addition to this, £20,000 has been set aside from the Staycation budget to support four community groups/trusts to employ temporary wardens.
- 2.3 There is an ongoing process of developing new waste disposal points and supporting local business/community groups in upgrading and developing existing and new campsites.
- 2.4 Officers have developed a new approach and are working in partnership with private organisations/communities to create Motorcaravan Overnight Parking sites throughout Argyll and Bute to support Motorcaravan management and road safety issues.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

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 - Funding for Gateway and passing place signage is approved.
 - Funds are set aside for Portaloos in hot spots for 2023 as with 2021 and 2022.
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4.0 DETAIL

- 4.1 Council officers are continuing to work closely with a number of agencies, including the National Park, Police Scotland, Transport Scotland and Argyll and the Isles Tourism Cooperative (AITC) to name a few, to help mitigate against the surge in domestic visitor numbers. Officers continue to work with these agencies to build on the successes of interventions set up in 2021 and to develop and set up new initiatives in 2022/2023 and beyond.
- 4.2 It is worth pointing out that whilst there were 16,608 new motorhomes registered between July 2020 and June 2021, an 8.25% increase on the previous pre-COVID record of 15,342 (National Caravan Council, 2021). The vast majority of these were responsible and respectful to our environment and communities. This was likely a result of the extensive communication and physical interventions put in place in 2021 and the fact that the vast majority of tourist facilities are now fully operational albeit still hampered by staff shortages. It was therefore imperative that we revisited these interventions for 2022/23.
- 4.3 It has been noted that overall staycation pressures were fewer in 2022 as other tourism markets opened up. That said, the tourism infrastructure has not fully recovered from the impact of COVID-19 with a number of facilities still closed or operating with fewer staff and services for visitors. With international visitors still not back to pre-COVID-19 levels the overall visitor number are down 33.6% when compared to pre COVID-19. This figure is under further downward pressure by the cost of living crisis and the current economic climate.

Staycation Interventions

- 4.4 The current Staycation Project officer was recruited and started on 4th April 2022 until the end of March 2023. The officer is managing a variety of projects, engaging with communities, public sector partners and businesses on littering, signage, provision of toilets, parking for motorhomes, and waste disposal development funding applications.
- 4.5 The Economic Growth team, working closely with Environmental Health, Planning and Roads and Infrastructure colleagues, delivered a number of new activities mitigating negative effects on our countryside and tourism sector. **Appendix 1** gives an overview of the interventions/actions in 2022/23.
- 4.6 **Waste disposal facilities for camping/campervans.** Officers are continuing to engage with campsite providers across Argyll and Bute in an attempt to encourage better usage of existing waste disposal facilities by non-resident

campervans and motorhomes. Officers continue to engage with local businesses through providing an expression of Interest form and regular communication.

- 4.7 **Temporary Toilets.** Through funding from the staycation budget, **twelve temporary toilets** have been deployed by a contractor at five locations (Westport, Bridge of Orchy, Glen Orchy, Kilchurn Castle and Victoria Bridge). This included maintenance checks on a weekly basis. The toilet units were removed on 14/10/2022 after discussion with site owners.

Throughout the season officers received constant feedback from the temporary toilet provider. The feedback showed a high level of usage on all sites with some units needing to be maintained more frequently than others. With the feedback from the supplier, we added an extra unit at Bridge of Orchy which helped cope with the demand. Please see examples of the feedback below;

“They are still being used well, all toilet rolls are empty and sanitiser is going down fast too. They’re definitely still being required from the public which is good news. I believe that the Westport ones are still the busiest” (Honeywagon) 09/09/2022

“There is no doubt that without your toilets we would have to consider closing the car park as the area was becoming a health hazard” (Kilchurn Castle) 20/09/2022

- 4.8 **General Waste.** To promote responsible behaviour about 200 bin stickers have been put up on council bins at some hot spots by wardens and due to their durability they will remain throughout 2022. Analysis of data collected by Roads & Amenity Services, during 2022 in the Cowal and Helensburgh area there were a total of 901 inspections where wardens allocated their time dealing with litter, fly tipping, leaflet distribution along with dealing with other staycation issues.
- 4.9 **Additional Warden Posts** Four warden posts were advertised to cover each administrative area. There were initial recruitment issues in certain areas, resulting in only two wardens remaining in post for the term of contract.
- 4.10 **Community Wardens** £20,000 of the Staycation budget was set aside to support four community wardens in 2022/23. Two lots of £5,000 of funding were granted to support community wardens on Bute and Appin. Throughout the season we have approached other community groups to offer funding and support for community wardens.

Appendix 3 shows feedback provided by Appin Community Development Trust (ACDT).

- 4.11 **Web pages and Social media posts.** An information web page was developed in 2021 with an interactive map of locations of PC and caravan touring sites with information about waste disposal facilities available across

Argyll and Bute - [Touring sites and filling stations \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk). These pages are reviewed by the Communications team and Staycation Officer on a regular basis.

Staycation leaflet ([Staycation leaflet \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk)) was updated in partnership with the Communications team and uploaded to the staycation webpage ([Have a great time. Be a great visitor. \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk)) as a downloadable PDF. The leaflets have been distributed throughout Argyll and Bute Staycation Project Officer and Staycation Wardens.

5.0 New initiatives for 2023

5.1 Motorcaravan Overnight Parking

Council Officers have developed a new Motorcaravan Overnight Parking scheme and are working in partnership with private organisations/communities to create sites throughout Argyll and Bute. This scheme is funded with an initial **£20,000** from the Staycation Budget and a possible additional **£30,000** increase to bring the total to **£50,000** dependent on approval by Committee and the uptake of the grant. It will provide management support for new businesses, through Business Gateway, and Roads and Infrastructure services for road safety issues. Council Officers have worked with the Council's Website Team to create a Motorcaravan Overnight Parking web page (to be released shortly) for all relevant information including an information brochure ([Motorcaravan overnight parking \(Aires\) guidance Sept 22 \(argyll-bute.gov.uk\)](http://argyll-bute.gov.uk)) created by the Economic Growth Team with design support from the Communications team. Through the Economic Growth Team, the Council has also partnered with the Argyll and the Isles Tourism Co-operative Ltd to conduct marketing for this new scheme for up to 10 registered sites on a first come first served basis according to budget.

5.2 Glenmorag Car Park

The Staycation Officer will work with Roads and Infrastructure on developing options for the potential upgrading of the Glenmorag car park and public toilets. **£100,000** of funding has been agreed from Place Based Investment towards a Aires style Motorcaravan site. This site has the potential to include upgraded toilets, electric hook up points, potable water, and waste water disposal points as a pilot project for the area.

5.3 Potential Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Grant (STID)

As the majority of our Public Toilets are now open it gives an opportunity to improve services to the general public and staycationers by reviewing which Public Toilets are used more frequently and which require a considerable upgrade. This funding application will be in addition to the funding of public toilet charging infrastructure allocated from the Crown Estate funding. If the STID project is approved by Committee consultants could be engaged to do this with a view to "thinking out of the box". This could include, but not be limited to, working towards Net Zero (this is one of the fund objectives), enhancing the design and making them fit for the future and perhaps installing waste disposal

points for Motorcaravans and other infrastructure to make it a multipurpose intervention.

If STID funding is obtained and the consultants make proposals, the Council is not obliged to carry any or all of the proposals out. A small list of our most high profile and high use toilets could then be considered as part of a next stage application for RTIF funding which could provide a significant amount of match funding for any project. If the Council is granted this next step RTIF funding then it would need to provide match funding which will depend on the amount sought from VisitScotland.

- 5.4 The staycation officer has been crucial in moving forward the staycation interventions and it is proposed that the contract is extended by 6 months (approximately **£20,000**) to the end of September 2023 to allow for successful completion of the Motorcaravan Overnight Parking scheme and to lead on the application for STID funding and to lead the project if funding is obtained.
- 5.5 Welcome to Argyll and Bute signage and signs with information on passing pace etiquette to be designed and installed as appropriate with an approximate cost of **£20,000**.
- 5.6 Reintroduction of portaloos at the same locations of 2022 with an approximate cost of **£42,500**.

6.0 FINANCE

- 6.1 The total for actual and committed spend to date is **£496,649**. If the additional spend of **£92,500** is approved, this leaves a balance of **£10,852** of remaining budget that can be used for other interventions as and when identified. **Appendix 2** provides further information on the expenditure.

7.0 CONCLUSION

- 7.1 The staycation fund has been welcomed by local communities and has greatly helped in addressing a surge in staycationers due to the reopening of the visitor economy. Officers have received positive feedback from Appin community from a programme of interventions from communities, businesses and individuals and this is being collated and analysed by the Staycation Officer (**Appendix 3**).
- 7.2 It is recommended that the Motorcaravan Overnight Parking and Glenmorag projects are to be developed to their full potential it would be advantageous to extend the Staycation Officer contract by 6 months (end of September 2023).
- 7.3 Council Officers continue to hold staycation meetings to address current enquires with a wide range of partners some of whom have taken forward their own initiatives. Officers will continue to work with partners to respond to the challenges and opportunities that have arisen.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 Policy – The Council supports a strong economy with tourism identified as a priority sector.
- 8.2 Financial – The council has an approved budget for staycation activities to be spent over a number of financial years.
- 8.3 Legal – All appropriate legal implications will be taken into consideration.
- 8.4 HR – The council has approved the temporary employment of four additional wardens and one staycation officer.
- 8.5 Fairer Scotland Duty – The Fairer Scotland Duty, Part 1 of the Equality Act 2010, came into force in April 2018. The duty places a legal responsibility on particular public bodies in Scotland, such as Argyll and Bute Council, to pay due regard to (actively consider) how they can reduce inequalities of outcome, caused by socio-economic disadvantage, when making strategic decisions and how this has been implemented.
 - 8.5.1 Socio-economic Duty – Council services focus on removing socio-economic disadvantage for vulnerable residents across Argyll and Bute.
 - 8.5.2 Equalities – All activities will comply with all Equal Opportunities/Fairer Scotland Duty policies and obligations.
 - 8.5.3 Islands - Staycation interventions are being delivered across the whole of Argyll and Bute, including the island communities.
- 8.6 Climate Change – All activities will comply with the Decarbonisation Plan with the intention to minimise litter, pollution and support the vitality of our town centres.
- 8.7 Risk – Littering and Health and Safety issues arising from informal toilet waste disposal. Any staycation activity has potential to impact our ability to meet Climate Change target obligations.
- 8.8 Customer Services – Information is being communicated in different formats to our customers.

**Executive Director with responsibility for Development and Economic Growth:
Kirsty Flanagan**

Policy Lead for Economy and Rural Growth: Councillor Robin Currie

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1 – List of actions being taken forward

Appendix 2 – Staycation Expenditure 2021/22

Appendix 3 - Appin Community Development Trust (ACDT) Report

APPENDIX 1: 2022/2023 INTERVENTIONS/ACTIONS

Action Point	Date of Implementation and activity	Responsible Officer	Action to date – 4 th April 2022	Action to date – 3 rd November 2022
Web pages; social media posts and communication plan	Content is continually reviewed and is now available	Jane Jarvie	Ongoing	Updated literature for 2022 focused on making the material accessible.
Identification of private waste water disposal sites	Sites identified in Appin; Tarbet; Holy Loch Marina; Lochgilphead Caravan Site; Portavadie	Fergus Murray	All potential sites contacted with a mixed response– some facilities are on-site and but communication continues with others around possibilities.	Once sites have been made aware to officers they contact the relevant source.
Identification of Portaloo site (confirmed not needing planning consent).	Sites already identified Duck Bay; Arrochar car park; Bridge of Orchy, Victoria Bridge, West Port, Kilchurn Castle	Jim Smith/Fergus Murray	On site from 14 th April until mid-October	The toilet units were removed on 14/10/2022 after discussion with site owners.
Community Hotspots identified via community councils/individuals and members	Continued contact	Jim Paterson	Action so far – portaloo in place, review of activities	Please see section 4.0
Recruitment of wardens	Underway and advertised hoping to get in post asap. Operational plans being pulled together to ensure supervision and support is in place for out of hours and weekends. In addition we will look to carry out joint patrols with Police Scotland and council wardens where it is considered necessary and police have available resource to commit to this.	Jim Smith/Tom Murphy	As of 14 th April 2022 two wardens are now in place - Bute and Cowal and Helensburgh and Loch Lomond.	There were initial recruitment issues in certain areas, resulting in only two wardens remaining in post for the term of contract.

LGE 9 post to assist Economic Growth Tourism Officer	Staycation project Officer is in post since 4th April 22	Jim Paterson	No further update	Staycation Officer continues to work on staycation interventions.
Community Wardens	4 grants of £5,000 allocated for Community Wardens	Jim Paterson	Funding granted to the Mount Stuart Trust; grant to Appin Community Development Trust	They are currently two remaining Community Warden grants available.
There are a number of larger scale interventions planned at Tobermory, Arrochar Car Park; Duck Bay etc.	Completed for 2023	Jim Paterson, Hugh O'Neill	Completed for 2023	The Glen Loin car park is part of an RTIF design grant from VisitScotland. RTIF offer of funding for Tobermory has been withdrawn and the project will not go ahead.
Motorcaravan Overnight Parking	Working in partnership with private organisations/communities to create sites throughout Argyll and Bute	Nathan Gallogley	N/A	Working in partnership with AITC to help develop sites. Officers have been in contact with multiple proposed sites and have provided funding for an initial site on Islay.
Glenmorag car park and toilet development 2022/23	To develop a Motorcaravan Overnight Parking site and upgrade Public Toilets	Nathan Gallogley	N/A – new project	Working in partnership with RIS to help develop the site.
Road signage advising of no parking in passing places	To reduce congestion	RIS/Nathan Gallogley	N/A – new project	Working in partnership with RIS to help develop the site.
Argyll and Bute welcome signs	Entrance signs to Argyll and Bute	RIS/Nathan Gallogley	N/A – new project	Working in partnership with RIS to help develop options.
Potential Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Grant (STID)	To develop options for upgrades to Public toilets	RIS/Nathan Gallogley	N/A – new project	Working in partnership with RIS to help develop options.

APPENDIX 2 – STAYCATION EXPENDITURE 2021/22 AND OPTIONS FOR 2023/24

Headline	Detail	Spent or Committed	Agreed Spend 2021/22/23	Further spend for approval	Comments
Staycation Officer 2021/22	Temporary post for 1 year to progress Staycation proposals. recruited	Spent	£14,741		Only part year
Staycation Officer 2022/23	Temporary post for 1 year to progress Staycation proposals. recruited	Committed To be decided	£38,382	£20,000	If post is to be extended a further £20k will be required from the Staycation budget
Additional Staycation Wardens 2021	Four additional Wardens for a period of 5/6 months to October	Spent	£41,386		
Additional Staycation Wardens 2022	Four additional Wardens for a period of 5/6 months to October	Spent	£56,000		Ledger run August 22 is for £50,748.24 but £18,895.01 of this is for car parking which is not accounted for in the 22/23 budget therefore only £31,853.23 has been spent as per budget outline.
Additional street sweeping/uplifts etc 2021	Extra street sweeping and uplifts, includes car park maintenance	Spent	£19,816		
Grab Trust 2021	Anti-littering campaign staffing	Spent	£18,830		
Grab Trust 2022	Anti-littering campaign staffing	Spent	£17,000		

Additional Police 2021	To provide additional Police Services to assist in promoting responsible camping – across Argyll and Bute, for a 12 week Period.	Spent	£23,040		
Additional Police 2022	To provide additional Police Services to assist in promoting responsible camping – across Argyll and Bute, for a 12 week Period.	Spent	£3,492		£23,040 committed but £19,548 of these funds have not been spent by Police Scotland and have been reclaimed
Waste Water disposal points Grants 2021	Holy Loch Marina, Bunessan, Lochabie, Kilbride Farm, Pucks Glen, Gigha, South Islay Development, Portavadie, South Kintyre Development Trust	Spent	£57,393		
Waste Water disposal points Grants 2022	Secret Glen, Dunoon Sunny Tiree campsite	Spent	£15,438.50		
Portaloos 2021	Installing 11 portable toilet facilities in places including Westport, Bridge of Orchy, Glen Orchy and Victoria Bridge plus support to Friends of Loch Lomond (£3,500)	Spent	£5,833		Actual is low as this was part funded by NatureScot
Portaloos 2022	Installing 11 portable toilet facilities in places including Westport, Bridge	Spent			

	of Orchy, Glen Orchy, Kilchurn castle and Victoria Bridge plus support to Friends of Loch Lomond (£12,500)		£42,500		
Portaloos 2023	Installing 11 portable toilet facilities in places including Westport, Bridge of Orchy, Glen Orchy, Kilchurn castle and Victoria Bridge plus support to Friends of Loch Lomond (£12,500)	To be decided		£42,500	
Temporary Campsite 2021	Colonsay - contribution to overall project costs	Committed	£4,778		
Publicity 2021	Information - leaflets etc	Spent	£13,131		
Publicity 2022	Information - leaflets etc	Spent	£578		
Staycation car park improvements (17 locations) 2021	Lining and information	Spent	£24,310		This was paid out of the Staycation account in 2022
Community Staycation Wardens 2022	To support local communities and inform visitors	Spent	£10,000		
Motorcaravan Overnight parking scheme 2022/23	To support local communities to develop new business opportunities	Committed To be decided	£20,000	£30,000	£30,000 subject to approval by Committee

Glenmorag car park and toilet development 2022/23	To develop a Motorcaravan Overnight Parking site and upgrade Public Toilets	Committed			This has a separate budget of £100,000
South Islay Development	To help set up Motorhome development	Committed	£20,000		RTIF Project
Road signage advising of no parking in passing places	To reduce congestion	To be decided	£20,000		
Argyll and Bute welcome signs	Entrance signs to Argyll and Bute	To be decided	£30,000		Possible support from the Gaelic budget
Total			£496,649	£92,500	
Overall total				£589,148	
Budget				£600,000	
Remaining				£10,852	

APPENDIX 3 - APPIN COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRUST (ACDT) REPORT

Introduction in Spring 2022 Appin Community Development Trust (ACDT) was awarded grants by Argyll & Bute Council (£5,000) and NatureScot (£8,163) to support implementation of the Appin community ranger initiative. A further £1,000 was committed by ACDT to provide a budget contingency.

The grants enabled ACDT to appoint a part time Community Ranger for 21 hours a week over the period June to October 2021 and covered the cost of associated expenses such as travel costs, publicity materials and waste supplies.

Due to our Ranger relocating at the end of September the 2022 project was drawn to an early close. Given the limited time remaining and the downturn in levels of visitor activity it was both impractical and inappropriate to seek a replacement ranger for the remainder of the season.

Outcomes

The key objective has been to manage and deliver a community-led initiative that helps sustain a clean and attractive outdoor environment across the Appin area over the summer months when visitor numbers are particularly high. Beneficiaries include both visitors and the local community.

Ranger Role

The role of the Community Ranger is to:

- make daily checks of agreed routes to identify where wild camping and off-site campervan parking is taking place overnight;
- welcome visitors to the area and explain their responsibilities in terms of complying with the Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC);
- distribution of information leaflet;
- provide information and guidance on accessing waste disposal facilities; and
- clean up and dispose of any litter left in camping places, recording and photographing significant problems for reference.