

**Highland wide Local Development Plan - Main Issues Report
Consultation Summary and Actions Sheet**

Reference Number:	HWLDP-MIR-169
Organisation/Individual:	Halcrow Group Limited (Mr Stefano Smith)

Action:

Immediate Response Required	x
Meeting required with Respondent	
Issue for Area Local Development Plan	x
Further Information Required	
Other (Please Specify)	

If no box ticked - issues raised will be dealt with in preparation of the Proposed Plan.

Issues Raised in Response:

Purpose of Main Issues Report		Previously used Land	
NPF2 for Scotland		Wild Land	
Vision for the Highlands		Water Environment	
Inverness and A96		Renewable Energy	
The A96 Corridor		Flooding	
Phasing of Development		Waste Management	
Developer Contributions		Air Quality	
East Inverness		Sustainable Design	
Nairn		Business and Industrial Land	x
Tornagrain		Accessibility and Transport	
Smaller Settlements in A96		Agricultural Land	
Caithness and North Sutherland		Subdivision of Existing Crofts	
Easter Ross and Nigg		Allocation of Inbye Land	
Development of Local Centres		New Crofting Township	
Wider Countryside and Fragile Areas		Small Scale New Crofts	
Population and Housing		Coastal Development	
Housing in the Countryside		Forestry and Woodland	
Affordable Housing		Minerals	
Planning for an Ageing Population		Open Space and Physical Activity	
Gypsies/Travellers		Access to the Outdoors	
Retailing		Comments on Consultation Process (+ve)	
Developer Contributions		Comments on Consultation Process (-ve)	
Natural, Built and Cultural Heritage			

Key:

Background	Spatial Strategy	Policy Options	Consultation
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Notes:

Promotes site at Brackla Harbour, Drumnadrochit for business land: Issue for IMF LDP – response to notify addition to IMF database

Action Sheet Completed by:	GW
Date:	09/12/09

Dawn Sutherland

From: Wetzel, Amanda [REDACTED]
Sent: 06 November 2009 14:05
To: devplans
Cc: Smith, Stefano
Subject: Brackla Harbour - Highland wide Local Development Plan Main Issues Report representations on behalf of Loch Ness Centre

Halcrow is pleased to attach representations on the Highland wide Local Development Plan Main Issues Report on behalf of the Loch Ness Centre.

The representations comment upon the Council's preferred option for business and industrial land (specifically with regard to tourism proposals) in the section on 'A Competitive, Sustainable & Adaptable Highland Economy'. The representations identify Brackla Harbour as an appropriate location to support high quality tourism and seek to ensure that the emerging plan explicitly recognises this, both as an allocation, as well as appropriate text within the local development plan.

On the basis of these representations, prepared on behalf of the Loch Ness Centre, we are currently preparing, in association with hri - architects, development options to show how improved access and parking can be achieved with ancillary facilities at Brackla Harbour. The Loch Ness Centre wishes to work in collaboration with the Council and relevant stakeholders, in order to enhance the existing tourism facilities in the area. This would seek to ensure the allocation and support of a high quality tourism facility in the appropriate location of Brackla Harbour and its environs. Such a tourist facility will positively contribute to the sustainable and adaptable Highland economy. Such a proposal is fully aligned with national, strategic and local tourism policies and guidance.

We look forward to receiving an acknowledgement of receipt of our representations on the Main Issues Report and we look forward to working with the Council in further developing the tourism proposals at Brackla Harbour. Should you wish to discuss matters further, please do not hesitate to contact Stefano Smith on [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

Regards,

Amanda Wetzel

Sent on behalf of

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09/11/2009

**Highland wide Local Development Plan
Main Issues Report**

Loch Ness 2000

**Brackla Harbour, Drumnadrochit,
Loch Ness**

November 2009

Halcrow Group Limited
in association with
hri - architects

Halcrow

Highland wide Local Development Plan Main Issues Report

The Loch Ness Centre

**Brackla Harbour, Drumnadrochit,
Loch Ness**

November 2009

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The Loch Ness Centre

Brackla Harbour, Drumnadrochit,
Loch Ness

Highland wide Local Development Plan
Main Issues Report

Contents Amendment Record

This report has been issued and amended as follows:

Issue	Revision	Description	Date	Approved by
1		Final Draft	05.11.09	SS

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Appendix A *Topographical Survey*

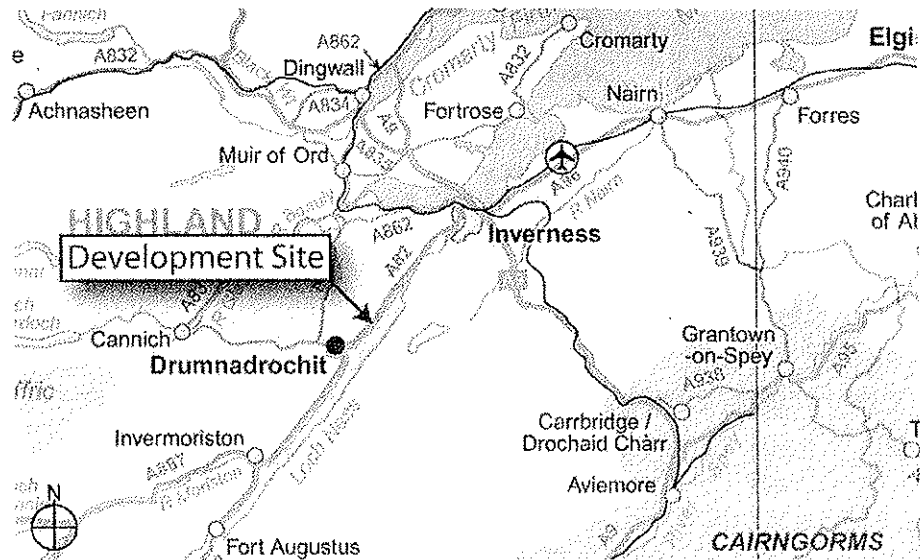
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Figure 1	<i>Location Plan</i>
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1 Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Halcrow Group Ltd (Halcrow) in association with hri – architects have been instructed by The Loch Ness Centre to assess the feasibility of enhancing the existing tourism facility at Brackla Harbour on Loch Ness. See Figure 1.



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Figure 1: Site Location

This is within the context of supporting and enabling further growth of the existing high quality tourism facilities currently on offer in the area.

There is now the opportunity through the emerging Highland wide Local Development Plan Main Issues Report, to comment on the The Highland Council's (THC's) preferred option for dealing with business and industrial land, including tourism proposals, which seeks to,

'...support high quality tourism proposals in appropriate locations.'

This report outlines the Loch Ness Centre's support for this option and identifies Brackla Harbour as an appropriate location to support an existing high quality tourism facility. This report sets out their vision for consolidating and enhancing the existing tourism facility at Brackla Harbour over the next ten to twenty years, within the context of the emerging Highland wide Local Development Plan.

1.2 Background

Tourism is one of the key sectors in the Highlands, and therefore the area should be receptive and welcoming to high quality tourism related development in appropriate locations.

Brackla Harbour, in association with the cruise boats that use the harbour, and the nearby Clansman Hotel, is an existing tourism facility in the area. One of the

constraints to sustainable economic growth of this high quality tourism facility in this location, is the limited amount of appropriate parking and drop-off provision for coaches and cars, as well as the substandard vehicular access along this section of the A82. Any future investment in the Brackla Harbour to enhance the existing tourism facility in this location would need to 'future proof' future demand and commensurately the amount of car parking and coach facilities required in the area.

The Loch Ness Centre's vision for the area is to enable the tourism facility at Brackla Harbour to flourish and grow and contribute to a competitive, sustainable and adaptable Highland economy. To achieve this vision will require to:

- a) firstly, demonstrate the need for expansion and growth in high quality tourism, and to show how this is aligned with national, strategic and local tourism strategies; and
- b) secondly, to demonstrate that Brackla Harbour is an appropriate location to invest in high quality tourism related development.

1.3 **Vision**

The Loch Ness Centre's vision for Brackla Harbour is,

'To support high quality tourism at Brackla Harbour to enable it to continue to grow and flourish, and importantly to enable it to contribute to a competitive, sustainable and adaptable Highland economy.'

The primary objective is to secure the future of the harbour operations, and as far as possible, to 'future proof' the facility in handling growth in visitor and user numbers. This is to be achieved by means of improving access and parking arrangements, and enabling ancillary development complimentary to the existing tourism facilities in the area. This will have the commensurate benefit of enabling the local area to effectively contribute in the long term to the Highland economy, in an increasingly competitive global tourism market.

1.4 **Structure**

The objective of this representation upon the Highland wide Local Development Plan Main issues Report is twofold:

- firstly, to support the preferred option of supporting high quality tourism proposals in appropriate locations, and
- secondly, to outline the appropriateness of the location at Brackla Harbour for continued investment and support, to enable the existing high quality tourism facilities in the locality to flourish and grow. This will enable continued positive contribution to a competitive, sustainable and adaptable Highland economy.

The Loch Ness Centre wishes to work in collaboration with THC and relevant stakeholders in developing a sustainable, viable and deliverable high quality tourism facility at Brackla.

This report is based upon a desk-top study, preliminary site inspections and topographical information.

This report is structured as follows:

- Section 1 **Introduction** – this section outlines the purpose, background, vision and structure of this report
- Section 2 **The Tourism Need** - an outline of the tourism need at the national, strategic and local levels
- Section 3 **The Site** - a brief description of the Brackla site in its local and strategic context
- Section 4 **Site Appraisal** - a preliminary site analysis (including consideration of traffic management, a strategy for the formation of an improved access from the A82 trunk road and provision of public car and coach parking and service access)
- Section 5 **Vision & Concept** - a vision and concept (assessing the development potential for ancillary and complimentary built development at the site, related to visitor and tourist markets)

2 The Tourism Need

2.1 Introduction

This section outlines the importance of the tourism sector nationally, strategically and locally and its contribution to a competitive, sustainable and adaptable economy. It briefly outlines the importance of the need for the Highlands to be receptive and welcoming to high quality tourism related development in appropriate locations.

2.2 Background

Tourism is one of the key sectors in the Highlands. Tourism accounts for over 13% of employment in the Highlands, excluding the self employed. As such it is a key economic driver which has the capacity to benefit even the most remote and peripheral areas. The Highlands is one of the most important destinations in Scotland, especially for overseas visitors. Its attractions are firmly rooted in the landscape, environment and culture.

It is therefore important that the Highlands is receptive and welcoming to high quality tourism related development in appropriate locations. It is essential that enough land is identified in the right places to provide for sustainable economic growth.

2.3 The Brackla Tourism Offer

The tourism facility at Brackla, comprising the Brackla Harbour, boat cruises (provided by Jacobite Cruises) and a nearby hotel (the Clansman Hotel), currently forms a critical mass of high quality tourism in the area. These separate components currently come together to provide tourism facilities and activities as follows:

- The Brackla Harbour provides a convenient staging post and safe haven on Loch Ness for the Jacobite Cruises. It also provides the opportunity to stop close to the waters edge and enjoy the stunning views across Loch Ness;
- The Jacobite Cruises provides the necessary custom, patronage and footfall for the Clansman Hotel; and
- The Clansman Hotel provides the necessary parking and drop-off facilities, as well as a refreshment stop for cruise passengers, for the Harbour and the Jacobite Cruises

Jacobite Cruise boats sail from the Loch Ness Clansman harbour throughout the year. Situated between Inverness (9 miles) and Drumnadrochit (4 miles) on the main A82 the harbour was built by the Loch Ness Clansman Hotel. Jacobite customers arriving by car at the harbour, will park in the Clansman Hotel car park or disembark from Jacobite coaches which bring them out from Inverness before boarding for a cruise on the Loch Ness. The harbour is 100m from the Clansman car park via an underpass under the main road. Jacobite Cruises have been operating cruises and tours for over 30 years on loch Ness. The cruises and tours last between one hour and six and a half hours and can include cruise only, cruise and visits, cruise and coach trip

Jacobite Cruises carried 95,000 visitors in 2005, making it one of the top five tourist attractions in the Highlands. The company's reputation for giving tourists a rewarding experience has resulted in a clutch of awards, including Tourism Business of the Year in the National Business Awards and a five star rating as a tourist attraction. They have recently won a Thistle Award at the Scottish Tourism Awards. However, this has not happened in isolation, but rather with the benefit of access to associated facilities, such as the Brackla Harbour and the Hotel.

2.4 Tourism Development aligned with Tourism Strategies

This section considers the need for tourism related development at the national, strategic and local levels. A preliminary review of existing and developing planning policy relative to the site is undertaken.

International/National

At the international/national level the key tourism-related policies and guidance includes the following:

- Scottish Tourism: the next decade
- A Smart Successful Scotland
- LEADER

'Scottish Tourism: the next decade' is the national strategy for Scottish tourism and sets out an action plan and a suite of 14 strategic targets that will guide the tourism industry towards the aims of increasing tourism sustainably to achieve 50% revenue growth by 2015. The strategy emphasises the importance of the natural environment and the culture in promoting Scotland.

A Smart Successful Scotland is the enterprise network strategy for the Highlands, where it is recognised that the Highlands has one of the most attractive environments in the world, such as Loch Ness and the Great Glen, but it is necessary to do more to enhance and capitalise on these assets. Its aim is "to enable people living in the Highlands and Islands to realise their full potential on a long term sustainable basis". Four strategic objectives are set to achieve this aim, each of them to be approached through the concept of sustainable development.

The strategic objectives and underlying themes are:

- strengthening communities; creating community assets; building capacity and leadership; enhancing natural and cultural heritage
- developing skills; improving the operation of the labour market; best start for all our young people; developing people who are in work; narrowing the gap in employment and reducing economic inactivity
- growing businesses; a culture of enterprise and more businesses of scale; increased innovation and commercialisation of research; success in key sectors; use of e-business to create business advantage
- making global connections; increased involvement in global markets; the Highlands and Islands to be a globally attractive location; connecting to the rest of the world; more people choosing to live, work and study in the Highlands

LEADER is a European Union Community Initiative aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. The Highland LEADER 2007–2013 programme is now open for applications. The Rural Inverness LEADER Local Action Group (LAG) has a Local Development Plan to deliver relevant projects during the lifetime of the Highland LEADER Programme. The overall aim is to enable people in Rural Inverness to realise their ambitions to live in communities where they can fulfil their personal, social and economic potential. The main objectives are:

- To stabilise and grow population levels and the balance between age groups, particularly focusing on the retention and attraction of young adults;
- To increase the benefits communities can derive from their natural, built and cultural heritage;
- To maximise the benefits of community assets;
- To improve access to services in the community, particularly focusing on the needs of young people and those over 65;
- To assist communities to create, update and implement development plans;
- To increase the scope and range of training and learning opportunities available locally;
- To support the development of social enterprise and micro-businesses

Project proposals that fall within the following categories will be accepted for funding consideration by the Local Action Group:

- Local Development Plans and Partnership Working
- Culture and Heritage
- Training and learning opportunities
- Access to activities, facilities and services
- Land, environment and access to the countryside
- Renewables
- Tourism
- Social enterprise and micro-businesses

There are challenges, though, in factors such as low pay and the seasonality of employment. Visitor patterns are also changing, with a move towards shorter breaks and growth is being driven by activities and events and improvements to access. Across the Highland LAG area communities are focusing on their own particular strengths to stimulate tourism growth. For example, while Lochaber is promoting itself as the outdoor capital, Caithness has potential for archaeology and cultural tourism. Crofting communities (where there has been a land buy out and elsewhere) are exploring how they can diversify and create tourism products. Events and activities based on the various strengths of the Highland LAG area, such as music and culture, food, genealogy, heritage, walking, mountain biking, golf and fishing are important to tourism growth. Infrastructure and training to support these growth areas is also needed and projects are anticipated, for example, to develop mountain bike trails and create wildlife viewing facilities.

The types of project likely to come forward in this field will include:

- sectoral and community based marketing initiatives
- development of niche tourism products
- development of tourism infrastructure
- promotion of web based customer interfaces

Supporting high quality tourism proposals at Brackla Harbour will therefore respond to the following aspects of the national tourism strategy:

- recognition of the importance of the natural environment and the culture in promoting Scotland;
- recognition that the Highlands has one of the most attractive environments in the world, such as Loch Ness and the Great Glen;
- responding to the necessity to do more to enhance and capitalise on these assets;
- by enabling the tourism business to grow, compete and flourish in an increasingly competitive tourism market and therefore positively contribute to a sustainable and adaptable economy;
- to increase the benefits communities can derive from their natural, built and cultural heritage and assets. For example, Brackla Harbour is one of the few places along Loch Ness where the public can stop and get close to the waters edge and enjoy views up and down the Loch;
- allows for the development of tourism infrastructure.

Regional

At the regional level the key tourism-related policies and guidance includes the following:

- Highland Area Tourism Partnership Plan
- Aird and Loch Ness Ward
- Partnership for Rural Inverness

The current Highland Area Tourism Partnership Plan (HATP) covers the period between 2006 to 2015. The Plan describes some of the key issues that need to be addressed in order to grow tourism in the Highlands, and to contribute to the national vision and aspiration outlined in the national tourism strategy, „A Tourism Framework for Change. (March 2006), of making Scotland one of the world’s foremost visitor destinations by 2015 and growing tourism revenues by 50%. This can only be achieved by good partnership working between industry, agencies and communities, in delivering agreed actions and acting as ambassadors to spread the message that Tourism is Everyone’s Business.

The vision is of a vibrant, growing and sustainable tourism industry in the Scottish Highlands that has responded well to the changing expectations of customers and is renowned for its quality of service and facilities and solid value for money.

In 2015 for example, access into and around the Highlands will have improved significantly, and there will be upgraded routes into the area and fully integrated options available on all routes, with clear comprehensive travel information readily accessible to all travellers. The road journey experience will have improved, with good roads, plenty of spaces to stop and enjoy views, well sign-posted facilities and visitor attractions and easily accessible information on things to do en-route. Visitors will be able to enjoy a variety of transport options throughout the Highlands, including services operated by community and social enterprises, and the journey will be recognised as an enjoyable part of the holiday experience. The coach tour market will also continue to do well, taking advantage of the wide range of attractions across the Highlands, such as the Loch Ness experience and the opportunities to get onto the water or to stop on the waters edge and enjoy views.

The HATP sets out a series of key objectives including the following:

- Exceeding visitors expectations – although many aspects of the Highland experience make it a world class destination, attention also needs to be paid to providing and improving basic facilities such as car and coach parking, public toilets etc
- Innovation and product development – there is a great deal of potential to develop facilities and attractions. As part of this development, providing the necessary infrastructure to support improved access will be necessary. There are various examples of product development across the Highlands e.g. the Loch Ness experience (the Loch Ness Centre and exhibition experience; Loch Ness cruises and tours with sailings available year round) which is a significant draw and is available year round, thereby helping to extend the visitor season. By increasing demand there is a commensurate need to ensure that the accompanying infrastructure (e.g. coach and car parking, roadside amenities etc) has sufficient capacity to meet this growth i.e. it is 'future proofed'.
- Access and transport – transport into and within the Highlands is a key issue for all visitors to the area. It is necessary to address the perceptions of the inaccessibility of the area, improve the experience on all types of journey, and promote the journey as part of the holiday experience, by improving infrastructure (e.g. coach and car parking) and signage. Due to the geography, topography and rural nature of the Highlands, many visitors will continue to travel by car and it will be necessary to ensure that their journey is of the highest quality and that opportunities to enhance their experience are taken. Roads maintenance and upgrades, well signposted facilities and services and plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the views should all be priorities. Opportunities to increase and improve direct access to the area and appropriate locations (e.g. Loch Ness waters edge) should be taken
- Natural Environment – the environment and natural heritage is central to the visitor appeal of the Highlands (e.g. Loch Ness) and therefore it underpins the tourism industry. Every opportunity should be taken to protect and enhance the high quality of these valuable assets, through sensitive siting and design of new developments in appropriate locations.

Aird and Loch Ness is one of 22 wards within the Highland area. It has a population of 9,842 with the main centres being Fort Augustus, Drumnadrochit, Beaulieu and Kirkhill. The Aird & Loch Ness Ward is one of the largest Wards in Highland (2,453 sq.kms.), including all of the area around Loch Ness and the hinterland of Glen Urquhart and Glen Moriston. Aird and Loch Ness is Highland's

fifth largest Ward with a lower than average population density. The overall population profile is similar to the Highland average but with a higher proportion in the 50 to 64 age group. The total population grew by 10% between 2001 and 2005, the second highest growth rate of all Highland Wards. 22% of workers in Aird and Loch Ness are self-employed (Census 2001) - one of the highest proportions in Highland, with a high dependency on part-time jobs. As a commuter belt for Inverness, the area has a relatively low number of jobs with a low proportion in the public sector.

The Partnership for Rural Inverness area comprises the Aird & Loch Ness Ward, part of the Inverness South Ward outwith the City Development area (the rural areas south of Inverness through Farr, Daviot & Tomatin to the boundary with Badenoch & Strathspey at the Slochd summit), and the rural part of the Culloden and Ardersier Ward (running East of the City and including Ardersier, Cawdor, Piperhill and south to the boundary of Badeboch and Strathspey). Tourism initiatives include:

- Provide safe tourist viewpoints
- Improve facilities for local tourism
- Access to water from a pier or harbour
- Development of new and improvement/refurbishment of existing tourist attractions
- More imaginative linking of well known tourist landmarks to their immediate vicinity and communities
- Development of tourist information areas e.g. history of village and the people

Supporting high quality tourism proposals at Brackla Harbour will therefore respond to the following aspects of the regional tourism strategy by:

- improving access into the local area and enhancing opportunities to get onto the water or to stop on the waters edge and enjoy views;
- Brackla Harbour is the only point anywhere on the west side of the loch (ie on the A82 main tourist route) where direct access to the waters edge is easily possible;
- exceeding visitors expectations and enhancing a world class destination, but also providing and improving basic facilities, such as car and coach parking, public toilets etc;
- increasing demand in the existing high quality tourism facilities at Brackla there is a commensurate need to ensure that the accompanying infrastructure (e.g. coach and car parking, roadside amenities etc) has sufficient capacity to meet this growth i.e. it is 'future proofed'; and
- by improving infrastructure (e.g. coach and car parking) and signage - roads maintenance and upgrades, well signposted facilities and services and plenty of opportunities to stop and enjoy the views should all be priorities. Opportunities to increase and improve direct access to the area and appropriate locations (e.g. Loch Ness waters edge) should be taken.

Local

At the local level the key tourism-related policies and guidance includes the following:

- Local Plan
- Destination Loch Ness

The relevant adopted local plan for the site is the Inverness Local Plan (2006). It recognises the value of tourism as an economic driver to the Highland economy and the importance of preserving and enhancing those tourism assets.

The emerging local development plan is the Highland wide Local Development Plan. The Local Development Plan (LDP) sets out a clear vision of how the City, towns, villages and countryside of the Highlands should develop over the next ten to twenty years. They are also the main documents against which planning applications will be assessed. The Highland wide LDP will set out some of the main growth areas for the Highlands, and put in place guidance on how these specific areas should be developed over the next ten to twenty years.

The first stage in preparing the new Plan is the Main Issues Report (MIR). This sets out general proposals for development in the area and in particular proposals as to where development should or should not occur.

The MIR recognises the importance of a competitive, sustainable and adaptable Highland economy. It recognises that it is essential that enough land is identified in the right places to provide for sustainable economic growth. A pro-active approach to proposals needs to be adopted. A planning approach which allows inward investment projects to be promoted in acceptable locations is an important step in building competitive advantage. Tourism is one of the key sectors in the Highlands, and the emerging LDP must be receptive and welcoming of high quality tourism related development in appropriate locations. The MIR's current preferred option for dealing with this issue is to support high quality tourism proposals in appropriate locations.

Destination Loch Ness Ltd (DLN) is a not for profit, private sector lead organisation which aims to work in partnership with the public sector for the benefit of tourism, tourism businesses and the communities around Loch Ness, an area of not only outstanding natural beauty but with a rich social and cultural heritage.

The organisation was established in May 2006 by a small number of the key businesses operating on and around the loch, including Loch Ness Centre and Jacobite Cruises, who felt very strongly that the visitor experience of Loch Ness could be, and needed to be, much improved if Loch Ness was to retain its iconic position in Scottish tourism. In order to achieve this DLN believe that it is necessary to create a product that is strong enough to effectively compete in global tourism markets. The philosophy is to strive for excellence in all areas of a business and to seek a high degree of cross- promotion of businesses in an area.

In order to achieve this DLN believe that it is necessary to:

- a) Improve the viewpoints and lay bys around Loch Ness making them not only more accessible but more interesting for visitors;
- b) Improve the piers and jetties around the loch providing new and enhanced visitor ways of seeing and exploring Loch Ness;
- c) Increase the provision of art and specialist retail;
- d) Increase the provision of outdoor activities and leisure attractions, especially important are water sports and walking, cycling and wildlife activities;
- e) Improve gateway signage and local signage which informs the visitor;
- f) Enhance visitor information at key points around the loch. The area has a rich social, cultural, and industrial past;
- g) Promote skills development of businesses and their employees as well as promoting a greater understanding of the industry to the local economy;
- h) In partnership with the key public agencies, build a tourism support structure for the area

If ultimately these objectives are to be achieved and Loch Ness is to be a better place for all visitors to enjoy, it requires that all interested parties work together for the benefit of Loch Ness.

Supporting high quality tourism proposals at Brackla Harbour will therefore respond to the following aspects of the local tourism strategy by:

- recognising the value of tourism as an economic driver to the Highland economy and the importance of preserving and enhancing those tourism assets, such as Brackla Harbour;
- responding to the preferred strategy of the emerging Highland wide Local Development Plan of supporting high quality tourism in appropriate locations;
- responding to the objectives of Destination Loch Ness; and
- Brackla Harbour is the only point anywhere on the west side of the loch (ie on the A82 main tourist route) where direct access to the waters edge is easily possible.

2.5 Key Issues

In summary, the key issues emerging from this preliminary appraisal of tourism related policy and guidance, which has informed the vision of Brackla Harbour, include the following:

- There is recognition at the national, strategic and local levels as to the importance of tourism as an economic driver.
- Tourism is one of the key sectors in the Highlands and is a key economic driver.
- High quality tourism related development in appropriate locations is supported in the Highlands.

- The Brackla Harbour is a critical component in providing a high quality tourism facility in the area.

An appropriate location for high quality tourism related development can be defined as a location where:

- there is an already established tourism facility;
- there is capacity to enable future growth of the tourism facility;
- investment may allow for the improvement of an established site e.g. improved vehicular access arrangements, improved pedestrian access/disabled compliant etc;
- there is the opportunity to preserve and enhance access to water from a pier or harbour;
- safe tourist viewpoints can be provided by preserving and enhancing spaces to stop and enjoy views, developing well sign-posted facilities and visitor attractions with easily accessible information on things to do en-route. E.g. the Loch Ness experience and the opportunities to get onto the water or to stop on the waters edge and enjoy stunning views;
- Brackla is the only point anywhere on the west side of the loch (ie on the A82 main tourist route) where direct access to the waters edge is easily possible; and
- there is the opportunity to improve facilities for local tourism e.g. to develop new and improved/refurbished existing tourist attractions.

The opportunity now exists through the emerging Highland Wide Local Development Plan, to explicitly identify Brackla Harbour and its environs as an appropriate location to support, protect and enhance this high quality tourism facility.

3 Site & Surroundings

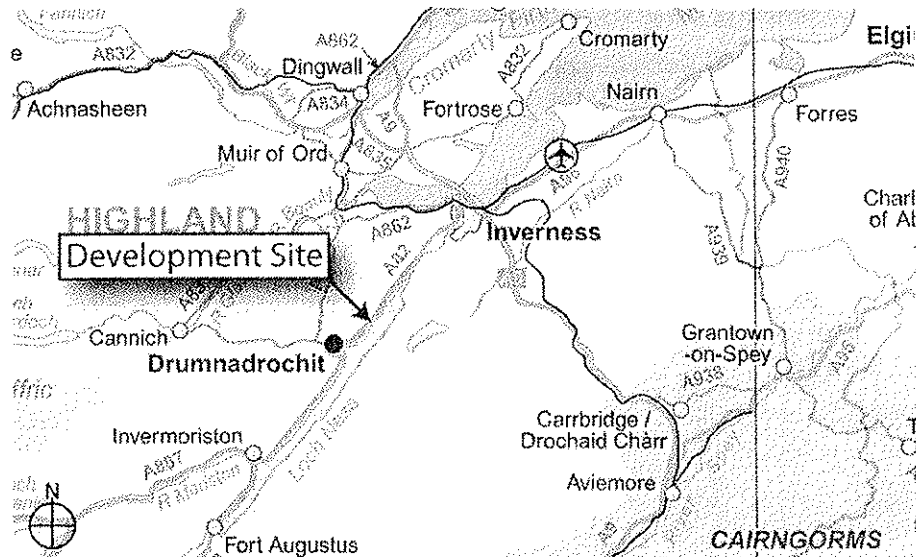
3.1 Introduction

This section outlines the site and surroundings of Brackla Harbour. Preliminary consideration is given to the constraints and opportunities of the site, particularly with regard to access and parking.

3.2 Site Context

Brackla Harbour is situated on the north shore of Loch Ness. The site is located opposite the Clansman Hotel, Drumnadrochit and is bounded by the A82 trunk road to the north, by Loch Ness to the south and by private land holdings to the east and west.

The site location and aerial photograph are illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 below.



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Figure 2: Site Location

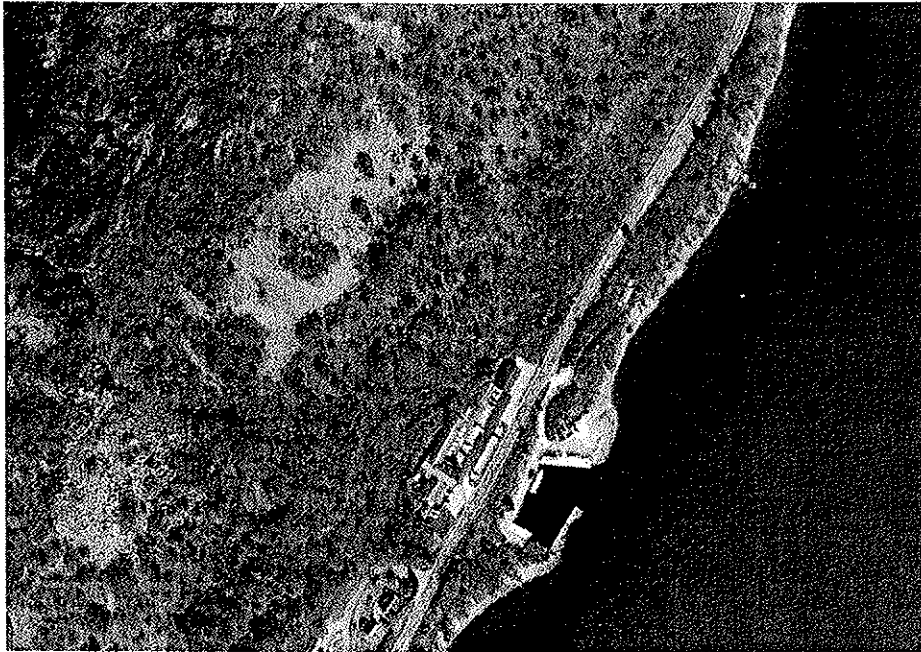


Image taken from Bing Maps, www.bing.com/maps

Figure 3: Site Aerial

The site is in a rural location and suffers from a lack of local public transport nodes.

The wider site is generally described as wooded with sections of made up ground and natural steep shore sides. A topographical survey has been undertaken and is illustrated in Appendix A.

3.3 Site Details

Brackla Harbour currently has a Perspex shelter at the harbour edge with space for approximately 10 people to shelter and a small wooden ticket office.

The harbour currently caters for Loch Ness cruise vessels and can accommodate up to two boats. Current cruises are operated by Jacobite Cruises, with an hourly tour of the Loch departing from Brackla to Urquhart Castle six times a day during the summer and four times during winter.

Access to the current site is limited, with a service junction being provided onto the A82. No vehicular public access at this junction is permitted and pedestrian traffic is discouraged through the use of road signage.

The current parking area for the site is located within the confines of the Clansman Hotel, where parking for approximately fifty cars and two coaches are available. A pedestrian underpass is provided from the Clansman Hotel, under the A82, through to the harbour.

Photos 1, 2 and 3 illustrate the current layout of the harbour site.



Photo 1: Brackla Harbour waiting shelter and access road

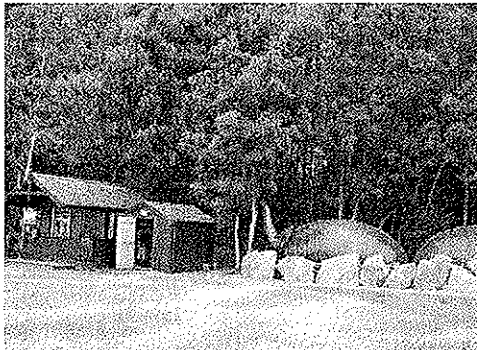


Photo 2: Brackla Harbour ticket office



Photo 3: Current access to Brackla Harbour from A82 southbound

4 Site Appraisal

4.1 Introduction

This section briefly appraises the access arrangements of the site and the potential enhancement of Brackla Harbour near Drumnadrochit. The aim is to improve access to the harbour area and enhance the facilities provided for visitors using the various tour boats operating on Loch Ness.

This section outlines the transport and access issues associated with improving access to the site and briefly considers an indicative access strategy for potential enhancements to the site.

4.2 Pedestrian and Public Transport Access

Access to the site for pedestrians, cyclists and users of public transport is constrained due to the rural location of the site.

A footpath is currently provided along the frontage of the Clansman Hotel and crosses under the A82 by means of an underpass. The underpass is illustrated in Photos 4, 5 and 6.

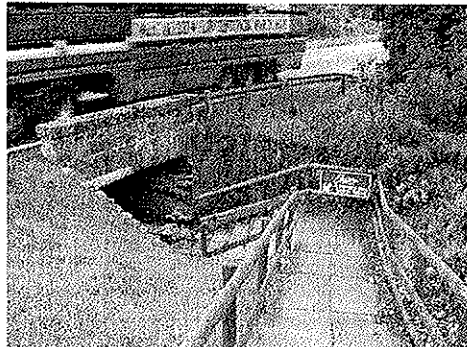


Photo 4: Pedestrian underpass under the A82 viewed from Clansman Hotel

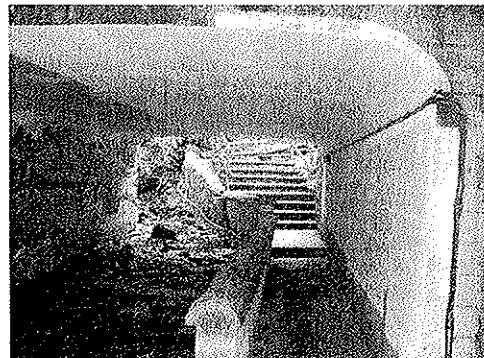


Photo 5: Pedestrian underpass under A82 looking towards the hotel



Photo 6: Pedestrian link from underpass to harbour

The links to the underpass on the hotel side are via a narrow set of steps and by a ramp. On the harbour side, a narrow path provides access to the west end of the harbour.

The underpass is a shared pedestrian footway and watercourse. The pedestrian section of the underpass is narrow and is approximately one metre in width.

The underpass has restricted height and together with the associated footways, is not considered to be Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant due to the number of steps, the step height, and that the footway is less than one metre in width.

The underpass and footpaths in the area are not lit and whilst are used by large numbers of tourists and visitors, could be enhanced to improve access.

A review of the Sustrans cycle map indicates that the nearest cycle route in the area is the Great Glen Mountain Bike track. Whilst the track is a recognised off-road access track, it is not conveniently located for the development site.

The nearest bus stops are located outside the Clansman Hotel on opposite sides of the A82. They are within easy walking distance of the proposed site. The main services that use these stops are Stagecoach Inverness and Scottish Citylink. Destinations that are served by buses using these stops include; Inverness, Fort William, Isle of Skye, Glasgow and a number of local area destinations.

4.3 Existing Traffic Conditions

Halcrow has obtained Automatic Traffic Count (ATC) flow data from Transport Scotland. Table 4-1 below shows weekday average hourly flows northbound and southbound during a summer month (August) and a neutral month (April).

Table 1: ATC Weekday / Weekend average hourly flows

	Northbound	Southbound
<u>April 2008</u>		
Weekday Average	206	200
Weekend Average	174	172
<u>August 2008</u>		
Weekday Average	268	268
Weekend Average	232	233

Table 1 shows low northbound and southbound flows when compared to NESAs Volume 15 which states that a single 6m rural 60 mph carriageway has a capacity of 900 vehicles per hour per direction.

Road traffic accident data obtained from The Highlands Council shows that there has been one slight accident recorded within 400m of the proposed site. On further investigation this was found to have been caused by an overtaking vehicle on the main carriageway and is not in any way related to the site or hotel access.

4.4 Access Strategy

The owners of the site, the Loch Ness Centre Limited, wish to enhance the harbour site, to build upon the existing facilities and to secure the visitor experience in this area.

In order to facilitate this, the owners wish to enhance access to the site, especially those with mobility issues.

There are limited opportunities to expand or improve the parking and access facilities on the Clansman Hotel side of the A82, due to adverse topography and land ownership constraints. The only opportunity to improve access for those with mobility issues would be to form a new access into the Brackla Harbour site.

Halcrow have undertaken a detailed site visit to ascertain an appropriate form of access to the development site.

The existing site access is not considered appropriate for use to improve access to the site. The gradient of the access from the A82 level down to the harbour level is not appropriate for those with mobility issues and the current access junction is located close to the existing access and egress points for the Clansman Hotel.

In order to form an appropriate access point to the harbour, Halcrow consider that the existing junction can be relocated to a point to the east of the existing Brackla junction. The proposed relocated junction will be approximately 80 metres from the existing access junction. It will be designed to incorporate enhanced visibility splays of 4.5 metres by 200 metres which will enhance road safety for traffic using the junction.

By relocating the junction to the east of its current location, the potential for vehicular interaction between the Brackla junction and the Clansman Hotel access points would be greatly reduced, improving the potential for road safety.

By providing parking on the harbour site, the potential for people crossing the A82 from Clansman Hotel to the harbour by uncontrolled surface crossings would be greatly reduced, improving over-all road safety. In addition, the number of vehicles using the sub-standard designed hotel access would be reduced, with vehicles relocated to a more modern, safer, purpose built access junction.

To further enhance road safety in the area, the speed limit on the A82 from the west of the Clansman Hotel access through to the lay-by to the east of the site could be reduced to 50mph from 60mph.

Proposed indicative junctions and site layouts are to be further developed in consultation with Transport Scotland and relevant stakeholders. Common to the development of future layouts would be the provision of parking within the site, with access from the parking area to the harbour being DDA compliant. There is also the potential to integrate ancillary new building into the pedestrian access routes from the car park.

The access and parking strategy would assist in reducing traffic from the current sub-standard access points. No significant additional traffic is anticipated as part of the redevelopment of the Brackla Harbour, as the development content is proposed to enhance the quality of the existing facilities.

Further access enhancements within the client's land holding would include the widening and revision to DDA standards of the pathway from the subway to the harbour. Co-operation of the Clansman Hotel could also affect a similar upgrade to their side of the access path to improve accessibility for customers of both establishments.

4.5 Summary

The current access arrangements have been examined. An opportunity to enhance access to the harbour site exists whilst also addressing a number of road safety issues at the same time.

Halcrow consider that an access to the harbour is feasible. Options for relocating the existing access junction are to be further developed and that a preferred option is submitted to Transport Scotland for approval in principle.

5 Summary & Way Forward

5.1 Introduction

This section summarises the key issues in support of the Highland wide Local Development Plan preferred strategy in supporting high quality tourism proposals in appropriate locations. It outlines the case in support of identifying Brackla harbour as an appropriate location for continuing support of an existing high quality tourism facility. This will enable the area to continue to contribute to a competitive, sustainable and adaptable Highland economy.

5.2 Summary

Preliminary assessment by Halcrow and hri-architects indicates that:

- Tourism is clearly a key sector in the Highlands, and a critical economic driver of a competitive, sustainable and adaptable Highland economy
- The Highlands must be receptive and welcoming to high quality tourism related development in appropriate locations
- Brackla Harbour and the associated tourism facilities provides an existing critical mass of high quality tourism
- Brackla Harbour is an appropriate location for continued support
- The Loch Ness Centre's vision for Brackla Harbour is aligned with national, strategic and local tourism policies and guidance, including the preferred option of the emerging Highland wide Local Development Plan
- The current and potential access and usage of the harbour, traffic management arrangements and onshore facilities are inadequate, and do not/cannot adequately address future requirements;
- Existing access arrangements are DDA noncompliant.
- Formation of a new compliant shoreside access to the harbour may be permissible off the A82 trunk road.
- Parking for cars and coaches is achievable within Brackla Harbour and adjacent land
- Retention and enhancement of the harbour – and related onshore visitor facilities – is considered practical and achievable; and
- Brackla is the only point anywhere on the west side of the loch (ie on the A82 main tourist route) where direct access to the waters edge is easily possible.

5.3 Way Forward

The Loch Ness Centre wishes to continue to work in collaboration with The Highland Council and relevant stakeholders through the emerging Highland wide Local Development Plan, to recognise and identify Brackla Harbour and its

environs as an appropriate location to support, protect and enhance this high quality tourism facility.

Appendix A: Topographic Plan

