



THE NEVIS FOREST & MOUNTAIN RESORT DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK

March 2015

 **Forestry Commission Scotland**
Coimisean na Coilltearachd Alba

 **Highlands and Islands Enterprise**
Iomairt na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean





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Acknowledgements

The Design Team worked closely with both Forestry Commission Scotland and with Highlands and Islands Enterprise throughout the evolution of this Development Framework.

The FCS team contributed their experience of forest management, conservation, visitor experience and interpretation. HIE contributed their extensive knowledge of the economic and strategic aspects of regeneration and development.

The images contained in this Framework were contributed by Highland Wildlife Photography, Forestry Commission Scotland, Nevis Range and Smith Scott Mullan Associates.

Prepared for Forestry Commission Scotland
and
Highlands and Islands Enterprise

THE NEVIS FOREST & MOUNTAIN RESORT

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Purpose

This Development Framework relates directly to the Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort Masterplan and provides support information on the briefing and consultation process, along with detail on the development of the design. Produced in tandem with the Masterplan, this Framework is a flexible working document which can evolve to guide the delivery phase of the project.

In creating this document, the design team deliberately tried to create as broad a view as possible of the issues pertinent to the Masterplan. As a result, the information is formulated from a range of initial assessments and a number of more focussed and detailed studies will now be required to be undertaken in order to take the process forward.

Delivering this new vision for Leanachan Forest is a large and complex task which will involve many people and organisations. There are a range of ways in which this Masterplan project could go forward and many possibilities will certainly emerge throughout this process.

We hope that this study has given both a core vision and a structure to the delivery of this vital and exciting project.

Future Branding and Identity

Leanachan Forest has served as an important backdrop and venue for Lochaber's Outdoor Capital. Leanachan is host to a range of visitor brands but lacks a genuinely recognisable visitor destination identity for the whole offer.

Creating a strong destination brand envelope for the whole will benefit all current and future partner businesses and provider brands operating within it. All successful visitor destinations have a strong identity, well marketed and with a definite sense of arrival. This Development Framework provides the opportunity to establish just such an identity.

A new destination and its brand, would need to be inclusive, welcoming to skiers, mountaineers and mountain bikers, but also appealing to a broad range of visitors, offering a wide range of activities at all levels and united by quality of provision and design. It would build upon and work with existing and future partner brands by adding value and identity to the whole, as a unique mountain and forest visitor destination.

As a next step in delivering this vision, existing and future commercial partners would work with FCS in delivering this new approach. It is envisaged that as site landlord, FCS would be the principle owner of the brand. The concept of a resort is just one possibility that may help develop in discussion with partners.

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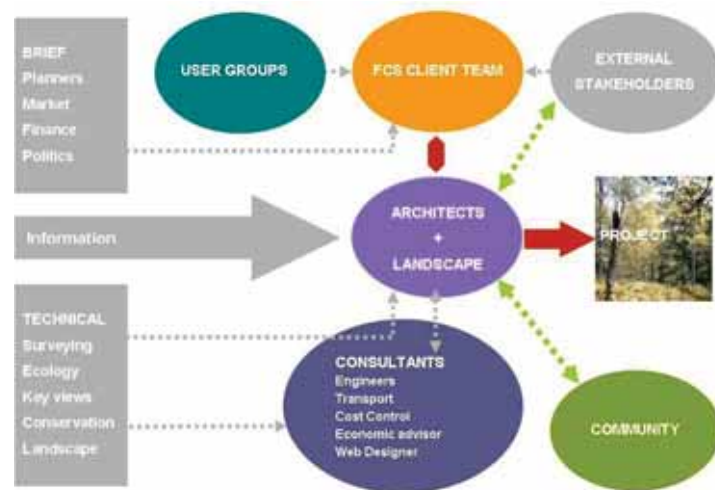
1.0 STRATEGY

ESTABLISHED IN CONSULTATION WITH CLIENT AT OUTSET OF PROJECT

1.1 Key Objectives

These 6 key objectives were established in discussion with the Client group at the outset of the project and will evolve during the design process .

1. Provide a clear strategy for the future land use of the area for the next 20 years. Building on the work contained in the Feasibility Report by Rick Finc Associates of 2010.
2. Ensure that the most suitable areas are identified for the most appropriate land use.
3. Ensure that a sustainable strategy is in place, which will support recreation, education, tourism, business and economic development, whilst safeguarding the role of the forest as a sustainably managed asset.
4. Conduct the associated Stakeholder and Community Consultations, working closely with the local forest district staff.
5. Ensure that there is a planned approach to infrastructure and access.
6. Provide a strategy which will enhance Leanachan Forest as a first class visitor destination



1.2 Key Issues

It is essential that the Masterplan be **viable and deliverable**. In order to achieve this, the Masterplan should support other projects being undertaken by Forestry Commission Scotland, and so the following key issues have been identified:

1. Create a visitor experience which is authentic and enduring and reflects Forestry Commission Scotland's brand, values and philosophy of a forest setting.
2. The Masterplan design will require to link to landscape character, 'Sense of Place' and the FCS brand, philosophy and strategy over a minimum of 20 years.
3. Design and safety considerations for multiple site users with good access provision and the need to separate vehicles, cyclists and pedestrians wherever possible is vital.
4. Equality and diversity considerations including the improvement of easy access facilities and to ensure that Leanachan Forest can offer something for everyone.
5. Engage with a wide spectrum of use to include entry level mountain bike trails and easy walking routes.
6. Establish car parking locations and management, including redesign of existing facilities and overflow provision.
7. Visitor flow around the site should provide a high quality and safe visitor experience.
8. Investigate commercial development opportunities including sustaining and enhancing the existing businesses and making provision for both quality and overnight accommodation.
9. Ensure the protection of the natural and built heritage of the location and where appropriate make it more accessible.
10. The design of the existing forest must be of an exemplar standard, both compatible with and enhancing the visitor experience.
11. Engage with the Local Planning Authority, developers, potential investors, and the local community to ensure that the Masterplan is acceptable.
12. The Masterplan must be flexible in order to accommodate future developments.

1.3 Methodology

The project has been developed under five clearly defined project stages, which related to milestones defined in the Client Brief.

Stage 1 – Brief:

The Project Brief documented the core requirements of the project.

Stage 2 – Baseline Analysis:

The Design Team developed a robust base of reference information, including drawings, charts, visual analysis of key views, transport impacts and ground condition studies. An economic review of the previous Feasibility Study was carried out to examine available reports and data and consult directly with a range of Stakeholders. This has enabled the Design Team to test the assumptions that underpin the project.

Stage 3 – Design: This Framework and Masterplan turns the aspirations of the previous Feasibility Study into a definitive proposal that has been discussed with Stakeholders and relevant organisations and generally supported by the Community. It is a complex process and the methodology for addressing this is to separate the process into distinct components:

Principles: The principles behind the design we wish to create.

Comparisons: A range of similar relevant projects were studied.

Concept Design: This identified the context, constraints and areas of maximum potential.

Design Development: During this period, liaison with planners and a range of technical organisations was carried out.

Stakeholder and Community Consultations: This focused on a two day event in May 2013, attended by Stakeholders and relevant Community groups and was developed by on going consultation.

Stage 4 – Presentation:

Input from a wide range of organisations was collated and final decisions made by the Project Team.

Stage 5 – Final Report:

The Masterplan and Development Framework documents were initially presented in draft, then developed into their final format.



2.0 BASELINE ANALYSIS

In order to develop a purposeful Masterplan, numerous forms of analysis have been carried out by the Design Team.

There is a large amount of knowledge already gathered about this project, including background drawings, plans, charts, reports and a previous Feasibility Study all of which have been collated and studied by the Design Team. An Information Schedule has been prepared to record all this information and documents gathered and this is included as Appendix 5 to this document.

In addition to the related documents and studies referred to in the Client Brief and referenced at Client Meetings, various other analyses have been carried out by the Design Team and are detailed in the following sections.



Network and it is possible to walk from Fort William to Milngavie in Glasgow via the West Highland Way to Fort William and Leanachan.



Although relatively remote, Leanachan serves a wide market within the UK and currently attracts many international visitors, taking advantage of Lochaber's status as the 'Outdoor Capital UK'. Nevis Range Ski Centre, complete with its year-round mountain cable car, provides skiing, snowboarding, mountaineering and related outdoor activities. The Mountain Biking World Championships are held in Leanachan Forest attracting annually over 10,000 competitors and spectators. The Forest's proximity to the iconic Ben Nevis, makes it an important and established tourist destination for Lochaber and the West Highlands.

Several visitor facilities are catered for with café and commercial activities at both the Nevis Range Ski Centre and The Rural Complex. There is considerable potential to build on these assets and to provide other forms of development to enhance the visitor experience and contribute to the wider local economy.

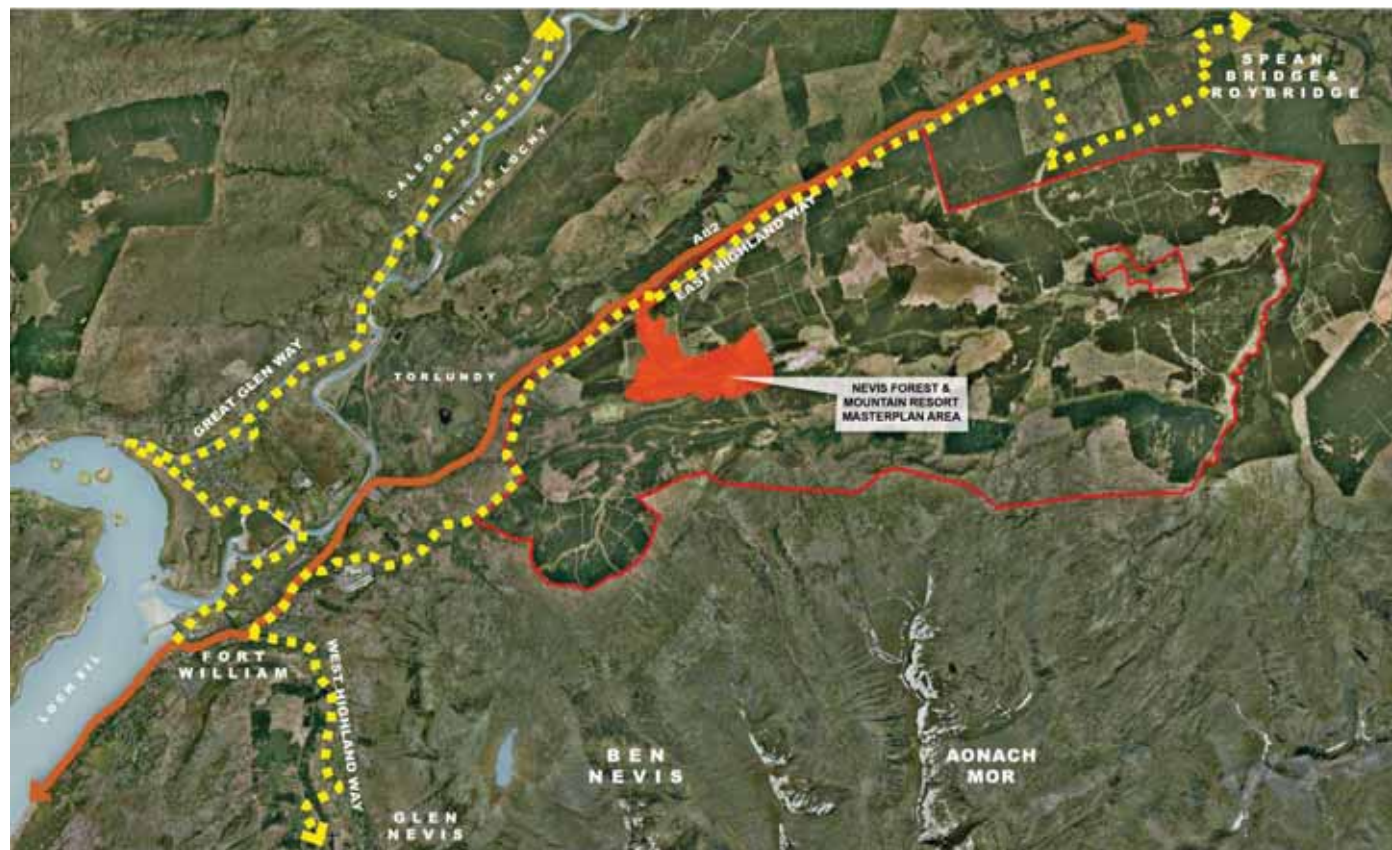


2.1 Location and Context

Leanachan Forest is part of Scotland's National Forest Estate. The forest is located within the Lochaber Forest District 4 miles from Fort William and 5 miles from Spean Bridge. It is situated adjacent to the A82 National Tourist Route, the Glasgow, Crianlarich, Fort William to Inverness trunk road, with direct road access to the forest. It is easily accessible from key settlements:

- Edinburgh: 143 miles 3 hours 10 minutes by car
- Glasgow : 108 miles 2 hours 30 minutes by car
- Aberdeen : 152 miles 3 hours 30 minutes by car
- Dundee : 126 miles 2 hours 40 minutes by car,
- Inverness: 63 miles 1 hours 30 minutes by car,
- London : 516 miles 9 hours by car

Leanachan and the Nevis Range Ski Centre is served by a regular bus service from Fort William to Spean Bridge and you can cycle or walk from Fort William along a pathway which follows the A82. The local train station in Fort William has daily services to and from Inverness and Glasgow connecting with Edinburgh, Dundee and Aberdeen and all major UK cities. National Express and Scottish Citylink operate a national bus service to Fort William. Leanachan is also directly linked to Scotland's National Cycle



Local Context

Showing Forest Boundary Local Routes and Connections.

2.2 Historical Context

People have been living in the locality since the Iron Age and there is still evidence of their existence to be found today. One of the earliest maps of Scotland, produced in 1654 by Joan Blaes, 'Atlas of Scotland' and updated by Robert Moreden in 1703, refers to a place by the name of 'Lenathan' close to the River Spean. By 1875 the first edition of the one inch maps, describe the place as Lianachan and Lianachain, from which, the Leanachan Forest clearly derives its name.

The location of the site on these old maps makes reference to the 'Leanachan Motte' an Ancient Scheduled Monument described as 'an irregular mound rising 5m above the flood plain of the Allt an Loin a tributary of the Spean. It is surrounded by an earthen bank or ringwork 30m in diameter and 1m in height, with a spread of 2m.' The Motte was a medieval Clan Castle, constructed on a mound, surrounded by a moat and reputedly demolished in 1663. The surrounding area was the site of several documented Clan battles.

The Lochaber area was the heartland of the 1745 Jacobite rebellion where several skirmishes occurred. Leanachan Forest, lies adjacent to the main commercial route, the A82 from Fort William to Inverness. This route was the line of earlier drove roads and largely follows the original Highland Military Road, designed by General George Wade, constructed between 1725 and 1733. Built partly to counter the threat of the Jacobite uprisings it comprised over 400km of road and about 40 bridges, linking the four barracks at Fort William, Fort Augustus, Inverness and Ruthven. Part of this old military road runs through the northern section of the Nevis Forest close to the A82 and the main railway line. It is a hugely important historical artifact and an astonishing feat of engineering for its time. Many walkers still use the road today and it is vitally important that it is preserved for future generations to use and appreciate.

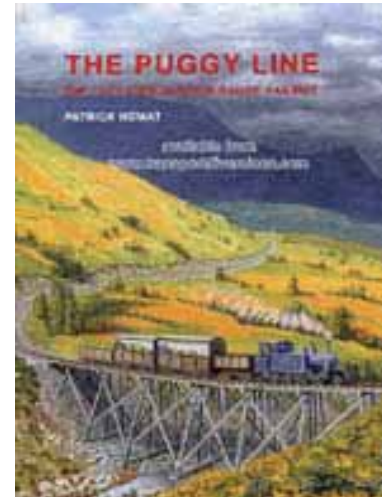
Historically the area known as Leanachan Forest was upland moorland with pockets of native broadleaved woodland, the largest called Coille Lianachan, located to the south of the River Lundy. By the end of the 1930's this area began to be planted with commercial timber and is clearly marked as Leanachan Forest on the Ordnance Survey Maps by 1962. By 1963, the Leanachan Forest had been formerly acquired by the Forestry Commission for Scotland and by 2014 developed to its current area of 3,000 hectares.

The development of the Aluminium Smelter in Fort William had an impact on the local landscape, with the development in the late 1920's of the hydro-electric power generation scheme and the construction of a water pipeline running from Lochs Treig and Laggan to power the smelter. This facilitated the 'Puggy Line' a tramway built to service the construction of the water pipeline. The derelict line, a section of which, runs through the southern portion of Leanachan Forest, is currently being restored in part, as a walking and mountain biking route.

An area of Leanachan Forest is leased to Nevis Range, established in the 1970's, with the aim of developing Aonach Mor as a ski resort. In December 1991 a new access road was opened linking the A82 with the Nevis Range ski gondola and facilities. This provides good access for winter sports visitors, downhill mountain biking activities, sightseeing and for hiking in the summer season. In 2002 the Outdoor Capital UK Marketing initiative was launched and by 2005 a network of bike trails was developed for the World Mountain Bike Championships, which were first held at Leanachan in 2007. By 2011 the Nevis Range had enhanced its visitor facilities with the building of a new café and High Rope course and an extended parking provision.



Aonach Mor Access Road plaque



Puggy Line Book by Patrick Hewat



'Atlas of Scotland' 1703

The current population of Lochaber District is around 18,000 people, of whom 9,000 are located in the Fort William area, of these 2,500 local people speak Gaelic. For many traditional art and music still remain a thriving part of the local culture and with the areas rich history, it is still a focal point for Highland identity.

2.3 Climate Soils and Wildlife

The climate at Leanachan could generally be described as 'Oceanic'. There are strong, south westerly prevailing winds, with rainfall levels which are the highest in the British Isles. Approximately 1850mm of rain falls per annum in Fort William, to around 3000mm per annum around Ben Nevis, with on average 220 days of rain per year. On the higher ground precipitation as snow is significant and snow generally lies above 800metres on Ben Nevis and Aonach Mor for 6 months of the year.

Several of the Development Areas proposed within the Masterplan site are south or southwest facing which allows the maximum amount of sun to be exploited. These areas, together with the lower valley bottoms along the River Lundy and around the Nevis Range car park are relatively sheltered by the existing expanse of forest, making them ideal for further future development.

Wet, cooler conditions, generally suppress decomposition and together with the acidic underlying geology, give rise to peaty surface soils. These soils tend to support some tree growth and lower plants such as mosses, liverworts, molinia grass, juncus, calluna and ericas. The soil type within the Masterplan area is predominantly a Podzol, much of which has a local ironpan within the soil profile making it generally of a lower fertility. These peaty, acid areas for the main part upland wet heath, support calluna and erica species with deer grass, (*Scirpus cespitosus*) and purple moor-grass (*Molinia caerulea*). In localised areas *Empetrum-Vaccinium* (Crowberry-Bilberry) heath with bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-urni*) are present and where the peat is deeper you can find *Calluna-Eriophorum* (heather and cotton grass) with black bog rush (*Schoenus nigricans*).

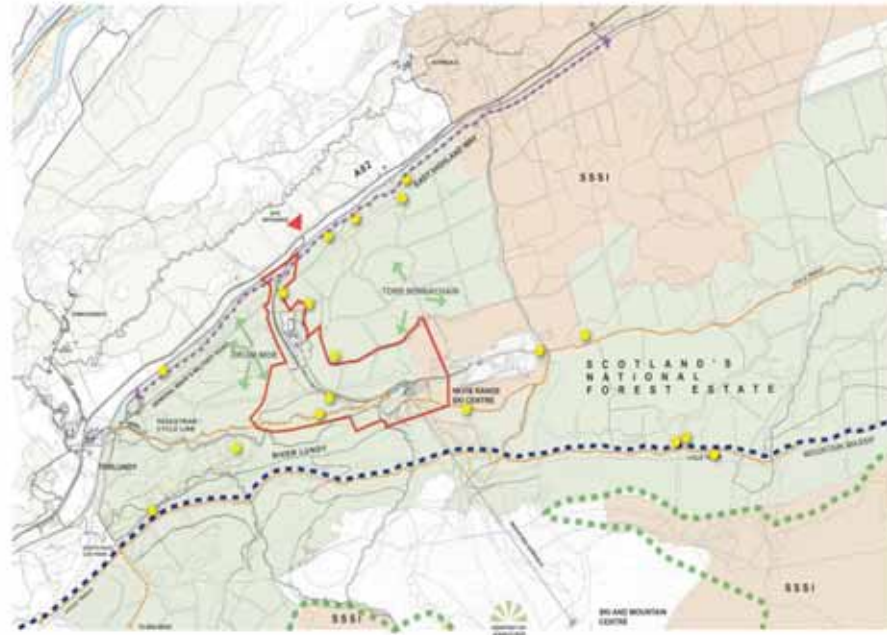
There are small pockets of Basic Brown Earths, particularly around the proposed resort development site, which are much more fertile and productive to a wider range of plants. Both Surface Water Gleys and Ground Water Gleys are found along the River Lundy and whilst they have poor drainage and are low in nutrient status, they support good tree populations and plants which like a range of damp to waterlogged soils particularly molinia, bog myrtle, willows, birch and alders.

The climate and soil conditions generally restrict the tree species and silvicultural management choices, resulting in the majority of trees being Sitka Spruce on higher ground, with more species-diverse woodlands growing at lower elevations.

This range of vegetation allows Leanachan Forest to support a variety of interesting wildlife habitats which adds to the attractiveness of the forest for visitors, pursuing recreational activities and learning opportunities. The main habitats found in the forest are small sections of Atlantic Oakwood, some limited upland Birch wood, small areas of Scots Pine, lowland blanket bog, lowland fen and upland wet heath. These habitats, several of which are fragile, support protected species such as black grouse, red squirrel particularly along the River Lundy corridor, chequered skipper butterflies (one of the largest colonies in the UK) and nationally and regionally scarce lichens. Other important and enigmatic Highland species such as osprey, golden eagles, red deer, pine martens, otters, and the common scoter can on occasions be seen in the locality.

The future changes anticipated in our climate are always a cause for concern, and coupled with the requirement to reduce carbon emissions will have an effect on the local environment and on forestry practice. Weather changes will mean periods of heavier rain and of more frequent high winds with hotter, wetter summers. This is likely to result in more localised erosion and washouts a decline away from alpine habitats and an expansion of wet heath land. In coniferous forests there may be a general move away from planting tree species which prefer drier conditions such as Scots Pine in preference to Sitka and Norway Spruce which, prefer wetter conditions. However, both tree species are an important supply for the local sawmill in Corpach, the close location of which will allow a reduction in haulage fuel costs and also carbon emissions.

2.4 Landscape Character and Designations



Lochaber is famous for its spectacular scenery and wealth of Earth Heritage. Many geological features across the region are of national and international importance. This was recognised in 2007 when Lochaber was awarded European and Global Geopark status. A strategy is now being developed to promote this heritage for the benefit of local communities in part through Geotourism.

Leanachan Forest is broadly classified by Scottish Natural Heritage within their 'Lochaber- Landscape Character Assessment' as 'Broad Forested Strath'. A narrow southern section of the forest at the base of Ben Nevis and Aonach Mor, lies within the SNH 'Mountain Massif', landscape classification and is characterised by "Grey craggy peaks of vast and imposing scale with sweeping concave slopes of steep, smooth rock faces which plummet into glaciated valleys". This description indicates the very strong visual force which the mountains have on the adjacent landscapes and whilst they are borrowed views for the forest and Masterplan area they are a dynamic influence on the scale and visual interpretation of the local landscape, setting it apart from many other similar locations in Scotland. This landscape type includes, Ben Nevis, the most prominent and highest peak in the British Isles and is composed of granite, smoothed by ice and weathering, to create some of Scotland's most spectacular scenery.

The adjacent landscape in which the Masterplan area is located is part of an extensive broad, lower lying, 'Forested Strath', with undulating relief and sculptural glacial landforms. This landscape character is created a result of surface erosion by ice (Spean Glacier) from the last ice age and the subsequent effects of water, frost and wind. Localised ridges and mounds indicate the deposition of vast amounts of rock debris by melt water streams which flowed beneath the glaciers as they moved across the land. The Masterplan site is flanked by two such areas of high ground, Torr Sonnachain and Druim Mor. The latter of which lies within the proposed western extension of the Masterplan area. It is a whaleback shaped moraine, rising up from the main A82 and sloping down towards the River Lundy which, carves into its shape, as it flows westward to Torlundy. Druim Mor has a trig point at its highest point with excellent south facing slopes which create a natural amphitheatre sheltered from northeasterly winds and there are magnificent views towards Ben Nevis and the Nevis Range.

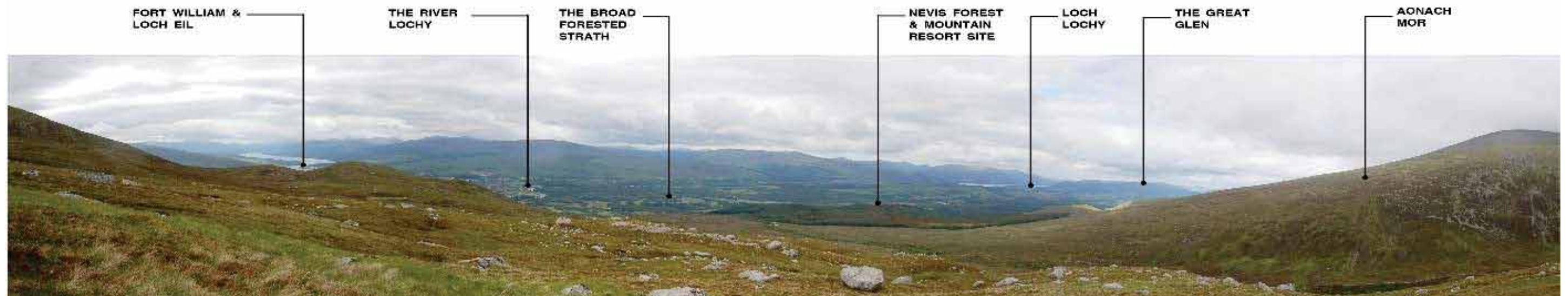
The landscape is dominated visually by commercial forestry with a make-up largely of spruce, larch, scots pine and mixed conifers predominantly firs.

There is a zone of mixed, native broadleaved trees running along the Gleann Domhnaidh and River Lundy and around the three main burns, which flow down from Aonach Mor; the Allt na Caillich, Allt an Sneachda and Allt Daim. The latter two burns feed directly into the Lundy. A small amount of Ancient Woodland can be found along General Wades Military Road, (as indicated on Roys Map of Scotland 1750), which lies adjacent to the A82 trunk road, and railway line.

Because of the rich glacial deposits, Highland landscapes such as these are often scarred by quarries extracting surface rock and gravel deposited by the glacial activity. There is a commercial quarry within Leanachan Forest at Creag Aoil (Dornie Lime Quarry), which extracts lime stone and gravel. It is well screened by forest and localised earth mounding and is only visible when seen from the Nevis Range, particularly from Aonach Mor and the mountain gondola.

There are no specific landscape designations within the Masterplan study area. However, The Ben Nevis and Glen Coe 'National Scenic Area' surrounds Leanachan Forest on its southern boundary and has an important influence across the area. The Ben Nevis SSSI and SAC largely corresponds with the boundary of the NSA and The Leanachan Moss SSSI, a Low Altitude Blanket Bog, lies immediately to the east of the Masterplan area.

There are 18 Archaeological, Ancient Monument Sites noted across the Forest, some dating back to the Iron Age and seen by evidence of 'Cup Markings', whilst the most significant is General Wades Military Road, crossed by three fords, several ancient enclosures, field drainage systems, a battle site and the old railway line, the 'Puggy Line' part of which, runs thorough Leanachan Forest en route to Loch Trieg. None of these monuments are affected by any development proposals and all of them add to the rich history of the local area and to the possibilities of local community and tourist interpretation concepts. The Puggy Line is currently undergoing renovation in certain sections.



2.5 Transport Assessment

The Design Team carried out an initial assessment of the road and parking infrastructure, with particular emphasis on the impact of the large visitor numbers attracted to major events and days with good ski-ing conditions

In general, the road infrastructure is sufficient for current use/envisaged development and more beyond. The access road was discussed and the possibility of trying to make it more attractive. In terms of events, these are really down to management and the infrastructure is capable of carrying capacity without improvement.

With anticipated forest operations, they do not present any major capacity issues although re-routing some of the trucks would probably be helpful from a tourist perception issue. A full version of SKM's report is included in Appendix 1



2.6 Ground Conditions

Structural and Civil Engineers Will Rudd Davidson carried out an initial assessment of the ground conditions with particular emphasis on the development potential of the area.

The ground conditions seem generally acceptable and not unusual for this type of site and location. There is a layer of peat from between 400mm to 1800mm with some localised deeper areas over reasonable bearing sub-soils. This is quite common for Highland forest conditions and the likely dispersed nature of future developments should allow the avoidance of the worst constraints.

In designing within such a wide area we need to identify possible development locations prior to carrying out more extensive ground investigations. In most cases the exact location of the built elements can only be established after further physical survey and in some cases carrying out exploratory cutting to identify exact ground profiles.

Because of the presence of the organic soils there will be methane in the ground and there is some evidence of Radon, which occurs in peat based soils. More comprehensive investigations will now be required, involving intrusive survey, in order to create a more accurate analysis.

There are no areas of flooding identified by SEPA. The only area with any chance of flooding risk would be the Ski Centre and this is not thought to be any more serious than the current

situation, where there was no recorded history of flooding, however, flow routes should be designed round any new buildings as a standard precaution.

2.7 Drainage

The proposed development options are obviously in a remote location at some distance from the nearest public services, which would be the preferred form of treatment. The issues associated with the drainage have therefore been investigated to a level whereby it can be assumed that the sites will be able to be serviced and are therefore developable.

See Section 8.0

2.8 Services

Services Engineers EDP carried out an initial assessment of the utilities infrastructure with particular emphasis on the creation of accommodation and its associated services.

See Section 8.0



Nevis Range Ski Centre



Pylon Line serving Nevis Centre

2.9 Other Forest Users

The Masterplan will have an influence not only on the immediate vicinity but on the wider area of Fort William and Lochaber. One early task was to identify other forest uses and activities in the vicinity which would have a direct relationship with the Masterplan area and to make some assessment of both their impact on the Masterplan and their potential for future collaboration.

Lochaber Rural Complex: An immediate neighbour and have long term plans for expansion.

Nevis Ski Range: The major external organisation influencing the Masterplan. They have long term intentions to improve and expand their leisure facilities.

Dornie Lime Quarry: An immediate neighbour with planning permission for long term expansion, mainly towards the east of the area.

Forest Improvements: There are various projects within Forestry Commission Scotland aimed at improving both the visual amenity and the environmental benefits of the forest.

Cycling and Walking Connections: There are a number of organisations concerned with long term development of cycling and walking in the area and developing further local and national connections is important.



Kronehof Spa Switzerland

2.10 Precedents

During the design stage, the Project Team identified a range of local, national and international reference projects relevant to the Masterplan. These have been sourced from the Project Team's own knowledge and experience, internet searches, journal searches and through UK and overseas visitor organisations. The Design Team looked at some ambitious projects which could be included in the Masterplan in order to raise aspirations and act a models from design ideas could be drawn of very high quality international examples. These projects have not all been visited or studied in depth, but are used to impart a "flavour" of the range of possibilities and of the level of quality which might be achievable.

Key examples of these as follows:

- Inverlochy Castle
- Loch Tay Highland Lodges
- Ben Nevis Bunkhouse
- Argyll Forest Holidays (Ardgarten)
- Ben Arthur Resort
- Crieff Hydro
- Stobo Castle
- The Inn at John O'Groats
- Centre Parks
- Craigendarroch
- Colyumbridge, Aviemore
- The Auchrannie, Arran
- Copper Hill, Sweden
- The Tree Hotel, Sweden
- Ion Hotel Iceland
- Whistler Conference Centre, Canada.
- Kronehof Spa Switzerland

These related projects were collated in the related projects matrix which is included in **Appendix 6**.



Ion Hotel Iceland



Camping Pods, Breacon Beacons



Copper Hill Sweden



Whistler, Canada

2.11 The Visitor Experience

Impressions of the visitor experience offered by the project area is a very subjective issue, it can range from the appearance of buildings, roadscapes, to the friendliness of staff. The Masterplan is predominantly concerned with physical issues, so this analysis is therefore limited to the built and landscape environment.

The visitor experience at Leanachan Forest is generally very good, however, it does vary according to the time of year and degree of visitor usage.

A number of themes and opportunities were identified which relate to the improvement of the visitor experience, some of which are included as proposals in the Masterplan.

1) Any visitor's experience has to be high quality, delivered to a standard which respects the Outdoor Capital of the UK ethos and brand promoting an inclusive outdoor experience. It has to be promoted within a sustainable forest environment where access is for all and not just one group of enthusiasts. Activities should be provide for all ages and stages of ability. There are under-represented groups within the visitor makeup particularly, families and children, older people, disabled people, ethnic minorities, sightseers and local, repeat visitors. These groups need to be engaged as new users of the forest.

2) The Forest setting is a crucial part of the visitor's experience, FCS is the largest provider of informal outdoor recreation in Scotland and Leanachan Forest has the iconic backdrop of Ben Nevis which provides a catalyst for opportunities to create a forest adventure experience which respects the location and 'Sense of Place'.

3) Wildlife is an important attractor for many visitors. For bird watchers and wildlife enthusiasts, Leanachan Forest has some of the most important Scottish species living within the forest. Working closely with wildlife organisations could help to create opportunities to view and appreciate wildlife in its native setting and to offer a learning experience through different forms of visitor interpretation. A partnership with other organisations can promote sustainable facilities for the visitor and avoid duplication of resources.

4) The natural environment has also created one of the most important geological areas in Europe and Leanachan Forest lies at the heart of the Lochaber Geopark. Interpretation of the areas landform provides further opportunity to establish a new visitor audience and offer a learning experience as well as a mix of recreational facilities and accommodation types.

5) The forest itself provides a wealth of opportunity to show case the vital work of the Forestry Commission as stewards of the Scottish environment. The forest is a learning and educational resource and a unique destination. The key message to the visitor is that Leanachan Forest is a place for fun and activity, but also a wild place of beauty and tranquillity.

Providing a high quality destination and visitor experience must be linked to the good and sustainable design of new buildings and landscape improvements particularly to access roads and routes into the area.

In a wider remit, the visitor experience has to be about engagement, not only with a new audience but with existing local communities to improve health and well-being and to provide new economic benefits to support fragile areas of the Highlands thereby enhancing Scotland as a visitor destination.



2.12 The Forest Environment

Like many of Scotland's forests in prominent visitor areas, Leanachan is in transition from its original main purpose as a working forest, to one which accepts a wider range of uses, tourist attractions and visual improvements. This work is currently underway and the benefit of the Masterplan will be to focus attention on a new forest design plan to take this work forward. This is a woodland landscape environment within which it is proposed to integrate new developments. Leanachan Forest is managed under sustainable forest systems and which delivers multiple benefits including the economic, social and environmental outputs listed below:

1. A range of semi-natural and other habitats supporting a range of species.
2. Timber production comprising saw logs and small round wood.
3. Informal recreation including walking and cycling trails along with other activities.
4. Major sports and leisure infrastructure to support snow sports and other related mountain activities.
5. Adventure sports, particularly on the northern slopes of Aonach Mor.
6. A working quarry yielding sand, gravel and crushed stone.
7. An Auction Mart and Rural Complex, with café, a wood fuel business and associated rural activities.

The Masterplan area is covered by the FES Land Management Plan, which is soon to be revised. The Design Team have worked with the FCS District Office to ensure a mesh between their emerging plan and the Masterplan proposals. The forest is an ever changing environment and the Land Management Plan will also change to recognise and to take advantage of the developments proposed by the Masterplan. Within this context we have identified a number of areas of distinct character.

Nevis Range Ski Centre: Since its opening the Ski Centre has made constant efforts to enhance its visitor experience. From the Masterplan perspective, the two major issues are to establish where any new buildings would be located and to look at the possibility for environmental improvements to the large car park surrounding the centre. One of the main challenges is the car park's use pattern, when on most days it is only occupied to a limited degree, however, on popular ski days it can be full. Added to this, is the important requirement for it to be essentially a large open and flexible space, in order to accommodate major events such as the mountain bike world cup.

The Dornie Lime Quarry: Located in the forest to the east of the ski centre the Quarry generally has minimal local impact on the visitor experience. There is limited blasting, other than its visibility from Aonach Mor and a number of trucks using the main access road, it has little major impact on the visitor experience.

The Larch Forest: There is an area to the north of Nevis Range carpark which is predominantly Larch forest and which poses a constraint. As a large area of mature trees, which have grown and been left unthinned this makes them difficult to fell incrementally. This provides an "all-or-nothing" situation with regards to developing this zone. Our current strategy is to retain it as a mature backdrop to Nevis Range while other areas of the forest mature. It is envisaged that development in this area would take place at a later date in the delivery programme, probably 10 years hence.

2.13 Analysis Summary

The analysis process gave the Design Team a structured basis from which to develop initial design proposals. Overall, the impression of the site was of a unique, iconic and highly attractive location with huge potential for future development.

The site has a strong physical identity which could be developed through sensitive management, improved forestry practices and by exploiting the unique and amazing views towards Ben Nevis.

The Masterplan area is conveniently located within a wider transport system and with a good internal road network, both the result of substantial recent investment. They have the capacity to take further development traffic in the future. However at present the area with the best potential for development which could fit into this network is not within the Masterplan area lying to the west of the site boundary.

The presence of Nevis Ski Range and its access to the mountain is an exceptional facility providing for both skiing and other adventure sports. The use of the site for major outdoor events is also an outstanding attribute which could be further developed. Overall, the site has huge potential for positive long term change and could accommodate a wide range of activities and developments.



3.0 PLANNING POLICY CONTEXT

3.1 National Planning Policy

The Planning Etc (Scotland) Act 2006 reformed and modernized the Scottish Planning System, setting out a new legal and administrative framework. The new act introduced a hierarchy into the system with the key change being the introduction of a National Planning Framework and Scottish Planning Policy document and for a much greater emphasis on regularly updated Development Plans. These Plans now fall into two categories, A Strategic Development Plan within the 4 city-regions and a Local Development Plan.

National Planning Framework 3 and Scottish Planning Policy

At a National level, The National Planning Framework 3 (June 2014) sets out the Scottish Government's land use development priorities over the next 20-30 years and is a spatial interpretation of the Government Economic Strategy. NPF3 outlines a vision of how Scotland can become a successful, sustainable place; a low carbon place; a natural and resilient place; and well connected. Sixteen national developments across Scotland are proposed to help deliver this strategy.

The key aspects of NPF3 which relate to the Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort development :

NPF3 highlights Fort William as an important 'Tourism Town' and recognises the area as a prominent hub for outdoor sport. *'Fort William provides important services to an extensive rural area. Given the town's location and its role as a gateway to some of Scotland's most iconic and scenic coastal and mountain areas, tourism forms a key part of the local economy. Lochaber has become known as a nationally important centre for outdoor activities like sailing, climbing and mountain biking, and there are further opportunities for regeneration.'*

One of the National Developments within NPF3 is the creation of a national long distance walking and cycling network to link key outdoor tourism locations across the country. *'Along the length of the network of routes there will be opportunities to develop shared infrastructure to further enhance the tourism offering'*. Added benefits for rural communities can also be secured through connections with local core path networks to support recreation and active travel.

The National Planning Framework also endorses the programmed improvements to the A82 transport corridor and supports the key elements of Visit Scotland's Tourism Development Plan and the wider ambitions of the Scottish tourism industry set out in the Scottish Tourism Alliance's 'Tourism 2020 Strategy'.

The tandem document **Scottish Planning Policy (2014)**, sets out Scottish Government policy on how nationally important land use planning matters should be addressed across the country and consolidates national planning policy by replacing SPP's and NPPG's. This document provides a guide for all Local Authorities on the preparation of development plans; the design of development and the determination of planning applications and appeals. It is a material consideration for all planning decisions and will be an important policy basis for determining planning applications in the Masterplan area. It contains a number of subject specific policies, of particular relevance is, the support for sustainable development and growth in rural areas of Scotland by taking a positive approach to new development, SPP also promotes economic activity and diversification, including development linked to tourism, forestry and farm diversification, while ensuring that the distinctive character of the area, the service function

of small towns and natural and cultural heritage are protected and enhanced. One important aspect of the SPP is the that it highlights use of Masterplans as a 'Design Tool' within the planning process which can be adopted by Local Authorities as part of the Supplementary Planning Guidance within an adopted Local Plan.

3.2 Local Development Planning

Within the Lochaber area, two specific Development Plan documents govern land-use planning at a local level. The Highland-wide Local Plan adopted in April 2012, is currently utilised as the equivalent of a Strategic Development Plan for the Highland Council area. The more localised West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan, continued in force from April 2012, covers Lochaber, Skye and Lochalsh and part of Badenoch. Both these Plans support tourist based developments.

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan: This Strategic Development Plan equivalent establishes an overarching vision statement, spatial strategy and general planning policies for the whole of the Highland Council area. The basic approach of this Highland-wide Plan is:

To create a sustainable Highlands, to safeguard the environment and to produce a competitive and adaptive Highland economy with the focus on creating new employment in key sectors such as tourism. This can be done by *'Promoting the development of tourism in terms of additional accommodation and new facilities'* Coupled with this, is the vision to 'achieve a healthier Highlands by providing for the development of places which contribute to increasing healthy lifestyles and access to enjoy the outdoors.'

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan, reinforces Government strategy by committing to an improvement and upgrading of the A82 Trunk Road and by promoting Lochaber as an all year round tourist destination associated with the Outdoor Capital of the UK. In short Lochaber is an *'internationally renowned "outdoor" destination and event/trail outdoor activity location with a wide range of activities including skiing mountain biking etc. based draw for tourists attracted by the area's outstanding natural and cultural heritage.'*

The West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan Adopted in September 2010 and continued in force in April 2012, this Plan replaces the former Lochaber Local Plan and takes a detailed approach to the land use development in the local region. The vision for the area conforms with all other planning documents, concentrating on the Fort William area as a focal growth point, in particular transforming its appeal as a visitor centre.

There is considerable importance given to public access for walkers and cyclists and the creation of new linkages between places within the region, especially with Fort William to the River Lochy and Lundy corridor and the potential cycle linkages in local areas with the 'National Cycle Route' across Scotland. The A82 Trunk Route Improvements form part of the communications upgrade proposals for Lochaber.

The Local Plan recognises the partnership based Nevis Range Management Strategy, as 'A positive enduring framework', further endorsing the fact that "Lochaber has cemented its position as Outdoor Capital UK, maximising local development opportunities."

There is considerable emphasis on the importance of the local landscape and scenery as some of the most dramatic in Europe and protection will continue to be given to these environments, the diversity of wildlife habitats, species and cultural heritage. The Plan also acknowledges the restoration of Lochaber's industrial heritage with the Lochybridge, Aonach Mor /Torlundy 'Puggy Line' and its possibilities for interpretation and recreation.

3.3 The Masterplan Boundary

The boundary of the Masterplan area which encompasses 81.4 hectares is referred to as Leanachan Forest 'Settlement Boundary' in the WHI Local Development Plan. In planning policy terms this area is allocated for Mixed Use, with the most acceptable use being:

" Those associated with tourism and recreation and which are compatible with the principle role of Aonach Mor as a skiing and outdoor activities centre."

There are a number of Developer Requirements associated with this site which must be addressed before taking proposals forward :

A Transport Assessment,
A Protected Species Survey and
Approval of a Masterplan.

An extension to this boundary to cover a site of 28 hectares was proposed during the course of this study, located to the west of the main Aonach Mor Access Road.

The principle of the development is already established in the WHILP with the potential hotel resort complex site outwith the allocated site boundary at present, until a future review of the area's planning policy is complete.

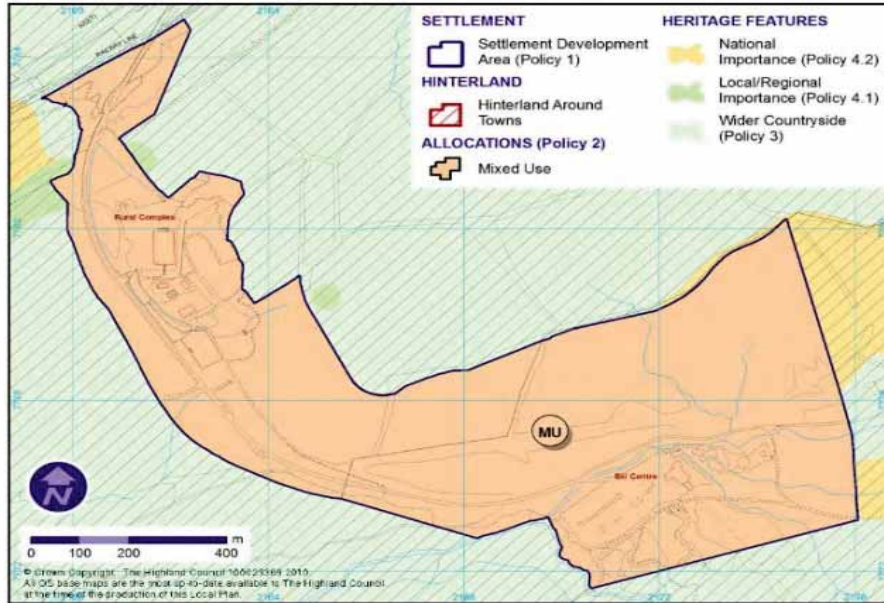
This developer-led Masterplan is intended to inform and accompany future development proposals including applications for planning permission in principle. Formal Council endorsement of the Masterplan will need to take on the new style of Planning Legislation (2006) advocated in the WHILDP. It is expected to start a Plan Review of the WHILDP at the end of 2014.

It is important that an extension to an existing 'Settlement Boundary' can be justified, as this proposal represents a departure from the accepted planning boundary.

The site chosen to locate a high quality resort hotel development met all the architectural, landscape and developer requirements desired of the forest location.

- A landscape character and topographical analysis concluded that this was the best site in the area because of its location, below a prominent ridge line, sheltered, south facing, shallow valley slope towards the River Lundy, with the best local views towards Ben Nevis and located within a mature and secluded part of the forest.
- The site is easily accessible from the main Access Road to Nevis Range, which is of a standard to cope with increased traffic. The site entrance is taken from an existing lay-by and connects with an existing forest road.
- The site is in close proximity to the main A82 Trunk route, accessible by local transport, private car, and is connected to local bicycle and walking routes.
- Based on Stakeholder and Public Consultation, there was general agreement that a proposed luxury resort hotel was a good idea and not in competition with existing facilities locally or in Fort William where the offer was different. The resort would be complementary to existing accommodation facilities.
- A hotel resort complex of the type proposed could not be located elsewhere within the existing Masterplan area and cannot be located elsewhere in the immediate locality, because of the proximity of the Nevis Range Ski Centre facilities, mountain biking and walking opportunities.

INSET 29 : LEANACHAN FOREST
Inset 29 : Coille Leanachain



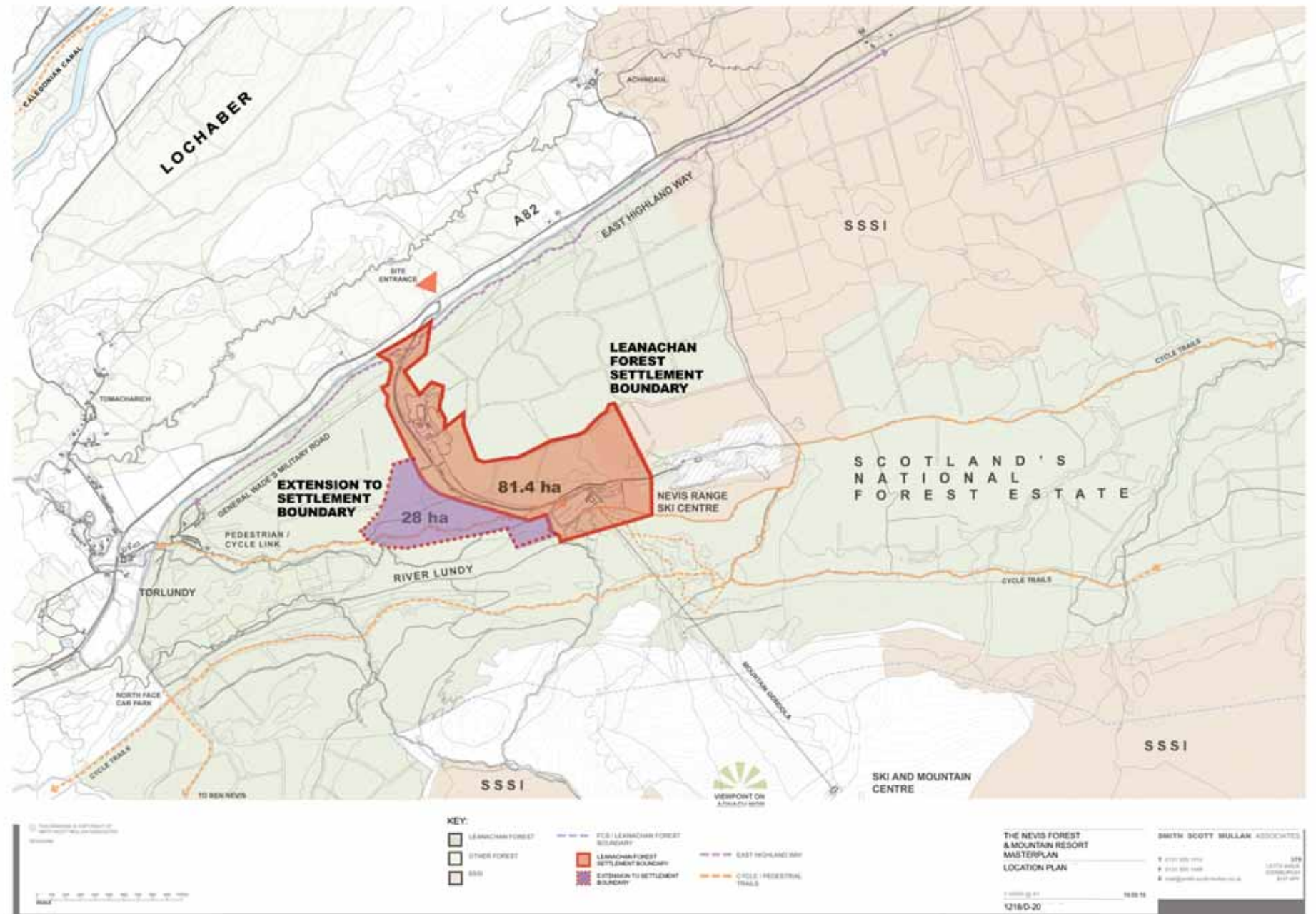
Objectives

- To protect the SSSI within the settlement.

Leanachan Forest Site Allocation

Site Ref.	Site Area	Location	Indicative Capacity	Developer Requirements
MU	81.4 ha	Leanachan Forest	-	Acceptable Uses : those associated with tourism and recreation and which are compatible with the principal role of Aonach Mor as a skiing and outdoor activities centre. Development dependent upon: a transport assessment; a protected species survey; and the approval of a masterplan addressing site layout, the distribution of uses, access arrangements, natural heritage safeguards and mitigation, and a landscape strategy. To retain and integrate watercourses as natural features within the development.

WEST HIGHLAND & ISLANDS LOCAL PLAN
PLANA IONADAL NA GAIDHEALTACHD AN IAR IS NAN EILEAN
Adopted Plan September 2010
Plean Rìs an Deach Dàbhal An t-Sìobhain 2010



Existing LDP Leanachan Allocation and Proposed Extension



3.4 Forestry Policy Context

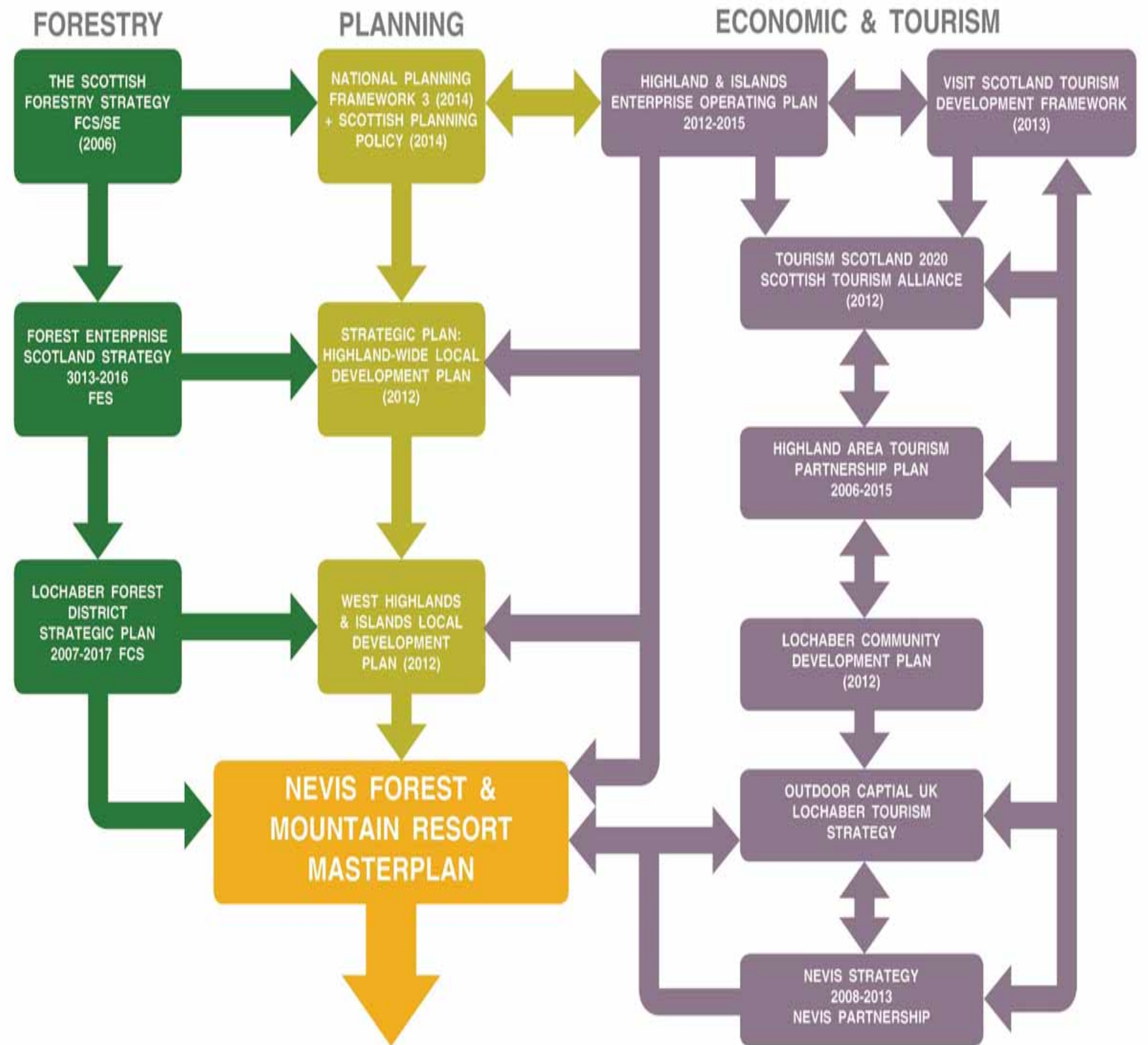
The Scottish Forestry Strategy (SFS) produced in 2006 is the forest policy of the Scottish Government. Its two over-arching principles are sustainability and social inclusion. Scottish forestry must contribute positively to sustainable development, and meet internationally agreed standards of sustainable forest management, as set out in the UK Forestry Standard.

Forest Enterprise Scotland is the part of Forestry Commission Scotland and is responsible for managing all of Scotland's National Forest Estate. Its Strategy 'The Role of Scotland's National Forest Estate and Strategic Directions' sets out priorities and actions for 2013 to 2016. These commitments are described as six aspirations in the Strategic Directions :

- **Treasured** : Scotland's forests should be treasured by the nation as a multi-purpose resource which sustains livelihoods, improves the environment and is a place of enjoyment and involvement.
- **Healthy** : Healthy ecosystems which are sustainably managed to provide ecosystem services in a changing climate.
- **Productive** : Forests managed to sustain and utilise the productive potential of the land.
- **Cared For** ; Well looked after countryside with natural and cultural heritage in good condition.
- **Good value** ; Using the income-generating potential of the forest estate to minimise the net cost of delivering public benefits.

This Strategy is complemented by a set of Forest District Strategic Plans, one for each of the ten Scottish Forest Districts. Together they detail how Forest Enterprise Scotland is implementing their Strategy. Leanachan Forest is one of the 25 Forest Blocks within the Lochaber Forest District. The aim of the Lochaber Forest District Strategic Plan 2007-2017 is to show how the forest district will deliver its part of the Scottish Forestry Strategy and realise the aspirations of the FES Strategy. In short by contributing to stable timber production, tourism, health and well-being, education, biodiversity, soil and water protection and by adapting to climate change.

A resort hotel development in the Leanachan Forest would support the Forestry Commission Scotland's forest strategy by encouraging and developing visitor tourism, the multi-purpose use of the forest and by strengthening FCS and Nevis Range brand and Lochaber's outdoor Capital of the UK status.



4.0 ECONOMIC CONTEXT

4.1 Introduction

Consultants Yellow Book carried out an appraisal of the **strategic and business case** for the proposed developments at Leanachan Forest. This section of the report focuses primarily on the resort complex element of the Masterplan for the **Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort** (Development Area 1).

The masterplan also includes complementary proposals to

- enhance the area around the Nevis Range Ski Centre (DA2)
- provide low-impact camping, cabin and bunkhouse accommodation (DA3)
- upgrade and extend the Lochaber Rural Complex (DA4).

The proposals for Development Area 1 correspond closely to the mixed use leisure tourism resort which was the subject of a feasibility study by Rick Finc Associates in 2010.¹ The **Finc report** examined the strategic and business case for a resort development at Leanachan, on sites approximating to – but not coterminous with – the Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort (NFMR) Masterplan.

The Finc report examined the feasibility of an indicative Phase 1 development, comprising:

- an 80-bed 4-star hotel
- 50 luxury lodges
- 20 bunkhouses (80 beds) at Nevis Range

The NFMR Masterplan sets out **3 options for DA1**, which is previously undeveloped forest land on the west side of the access road:

- Option A: an 80-bed spa-type hotel
- Option B: a development of 50 luxury chalets with a resort hub
- Option C: a hybrid scheme comprising a 50-bed spa hotel and 15 luxury chalets.

Bunkhouses and other low impact accommodation are provided for in DA3.

This section of the report comprises **three key elements**:

- a review of the developing policy context (4.2)
- a summary of the results of consultations with partners and stakeholders (4.3), and
- a commentary on the Finc report three years on (4.4).

4.2 The Policy Context

Context for the first feasibility study

The Finc report includes an extensive policy review. It highlights **tourism strategies and plans** including:

- Highlands of Scotland Tourism Action Plan
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) Tourism Review (2006)
- Highland Area Tourism Partnership Plan 2006-2015
- Nevis Strategy 2008-2013.

Viewed in conjunction with Forestry Commission Scotland's Corporate Plan and broader planning and economic development policies, Finc concluded that:

- a resort at Leanachan would support the **FCS strategy** of “balancing visitor tourism and optimising the use of the forest” and give an impetus to the Nevis brand and Lochaber's reputation for outdoor tourism
- the scheme would be complementary to **HIE's aspirations** for tourism in Lochaber, with the potential to be “a transformational project”
- the case for **regeneration and investment in Fort William** is “particularly compelling”.

Recent policy documents

The policy context continues to develop. We have reviewed some of the key sources, starting with the new national strategy, **Tourism Scotland 2020**, published by the Scottish Tourism Alliance in 2012.² The strategy is predicated on a model of “growth via quality, authentic visitor experiences” and on capitalising on Scotland's “special appeal”, including its “nature, heritage and activities”. No specific locations are discussed, but the document identifies growth markets including adventure and activity holidays (including mountain biking) which are central to the Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort proposition.

The **Highland Area Tourism Partnership Plan** for 2006-15 was cited by Finc and is still extant, although a review is planned³ The partners' vision for 2015 focused on improved accommodation and higher visitor satisfaction: quality will be higher than a decade before, as will the occupancy rates.

The Scottish Government's Economic Strategy identifies sustainable tourism as one of seven sectors with particular growth potential. In its response to the GES, **Highlands and Islands Enterprise** (HIE) noted that tourism underpins a broad range of economic activity in communities across the region.⁴ Global awareness of the landscape of the Highlands is creating opportunities in adventure tourism and other areas. HIE plans to target regionally significant investments, and it will work with SDI to attract inward investment.

VisitScotland's **Tourism Development Framework** examined the role of planning in the visitor economy.⁵ The document identifies the opportunity to attract “high-end luxury resorts” which will “provide a complete visitor experience on site”. It notes that FCS and other agencies may be able to use the resort model to promote forest tourism, and Leanachan is specifically cited as a potential site. The report warns that “new resorts need to be sensitively and sustainably located...and avoid damaging the character of the asset”. The report also notes gaps in the accommodation offer in the Fort William area, which is described as “a honey-pot location”.

The most comprehensive recent appraisal of the local (Lochaber) tourism market was contained in a 2012 report commissioned by the destination marketing organisation **Outdoor Capital UK**.⁶ Produced by Stevens & Associates, the report concludes that OCUK is already a strong brand that commands high levels of market awareness, and notes that the area has a track record of hosting successful international events. But more needs to be done, and the report sets out 5-year goals including:

- establishing OCUK as a best-in-class destination
- offering an integrated range of high quality, accessible visitor experiences and activities
- establishing a destination-wide investment portfolio: a “terrier” of sites, incentives and opportunities.

The report called for “investment in at least three major **signature projects of international status** involving iconic places or locations”, including Nevis Range. Specifically, it proposes the development of “Europe's first all-wood forest resort and wellness spa, with architect designed cabins and tree houses linked to a wide range of unique Outdoor Capital experiences”.

The **Lochaber Community Development Plan** detailed the key objectives of the Lochaber LEADER programme, including “strengthen[ing] the image of Lochaber as a tourist destination of choice, and improv[ing] the quality of the tourism offering”.⁷ This and other economic development objectives are balanced by a strong focus on sustainable development, including a commitment to:

- conserve and enhance Lochaber's natural heritage, landscape, biodiversity and geodiversity, and
- promote Lochaber's environment as a driver of sustainable economic activity.

The **Highland-wide Local Development Plan** highlighted tourism development as a priority, and sets out guidance on visitor accommodation in the open countryside.⁸ Development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that there is demand; that it can be achieved without adversely affecting the landscape

¹ Feasibility Study for a Potential Mixed Use Leisure Tourism Resort at Leanachan Forest, Torlundy by Fort William, report by Rick Finc Associates et al for Forestry Commission Scotland, May 2010.

² Scottish Tourism Alliance, *Tourism Scotland 2020 - the future of our industry in our hands: a strategy for leadership and growth*, 2012

³ Highland Area Tourism Partnership, *Highland Area Tourism Partnership Plan 2006-2015*

⁴ Highlands & Islands Enterprise, *Corporate Plan 2012-15*

⁵ Visit Scotland, *Tourism Development Framework for Scotland...role of the planning system in delivering the visitor economy*, July 2013.

⁶ *Tourism Development in the Outdoor Capital of the UK: a vision and strategy*, report by Stevens & Associates for OCUK, 2012.

⁷ Lochaber Partnership, *Lochaber Community Development Plan*, 2012

⁸ Highland Council, *Highland-wide Local Development Plan*, 2012

character or the natural, built and cultural heritage; and it is consistent with the other guidance on siting and design.

Conclusion

The policy context has evolved since the Finc report was published, and it continues to provide **broad support** – at national, regional and local level – for the concept of a resort development at Leanachan. For the most part, the policy context is not place-specific, but the Visit Scotland Tourism Development Framework specifically cites Leanachan as a possible location for a “high end luxury resort”.



4.3 Consultation with Partners and Stakeholders

We interviewed 12 **key stakeholders** in the spring of 2013. Interviews were conducted face-to-face and by phone, including a number of small group discussions. Key messages from the interviews are summarised in the following paragraphs; responses have been anonymised.

Engagement

Most respondents reported that they were **aware of FCS's aspirations at Leanachan**, although only HIE/SDI had been directly involved in the previous study. FCS's “activism” in economic development and tourism was acknowledged and welcomed, and people were aware of its enthusiasm for the Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort concept. There was a broad welcome for the present study and for the opportunity to comment and influence the outcome.

The need to **engage effectively with local businesses** was a consistent theme. Several people suggested that a major investment at Leanachan might be seen as a threat rather than an opportunity by some tourism operators. Effective communications should help to sell the project to the local business community and demonstrate the mutual benefits.

Recent developments

Market conditions have been challenging in recent years. In the immediate aftermath of the financial crash, visits to Scotland were buoyed up by the “staycation” phenomenon, but that effect has faded. 2012 was a difficult year, with a decline in visitor numbers largely attributable to the bad weather (although, ironically, not in

the West Highlands). Despite this, there was general agreement that, for Scotland, the effects of recession and stagnation “could have been worse”. In any event, several people said that we shouldn't focus too much on short-term trends: Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort should be treated as a “game-changing” project.

Several people noted that **low confidence and difficulties in obtaining finance** had choked off investment by tourism businesses in Lochaber, and some thought that the quality of the product had declined as a result. It was suggested that a mature, well-established market had made some business complacent. For example, some coach tour operators were reported to have expressed concerns about the quality of accommodation in and around Fort William. This has created an opportunities for chain budget hotels (Premier Inn and Travelodge) to enter the market: it was suggested that the accommodation provided by the chains was more reliable in terms of quality, and more up-to-date in terms of facilities than a number of local independent establishments.

There was a widespread perception that there has been a decline in the competitiveness of the Lochaber visitor offer compared with other parts of the Highlands. Inverloch Castle Hotel was cited regularly as a beacon of excellence, as were the Lime Tree Hotel and Restaurant. Nevertheless, the consensus was that the all-round visitor experience is dated and needs a lift- the tourism industry needs to match the quality of the natural setting. That means putting the emphasis on better accommodation, self-catering, better food, shopping and service standards, as well as wet weather facilities. A number of people flagged up what they considered to be benchmark facilities in the Highlands, including the Auchrannie resort, Brodick and the Natural Retreats at John O'Groats.

There was enthusiastic support for the Outdoor Capital brand, which was thought to have been a real success, reflecting and capitalising on opportunities in adventure and outdoor tourism. New products, events and experiences are energising the market place.

In the policy domain, the recent publication by VisitScotland of the **Tourism Development Framework** (see Section 2 above) was seen as a significant moment. The draft version highlighted Fort William as a priority area where the offer needs to be improved. There is a case for investment at all price points, including the top end of the market where resort developments are identified as a priority.

HIE has been working on its **Sustainable Tourism Route Map**, which aims to establish development priorities in the sector. The work highlights opportunities and gaps in the product range at every level, and it identifies Lochaber as a priority. The publication by OCUK of the Lochaber Tourism Strategy was seen as an important local development, and all the key local/regional stakeholders were involved in its development.

Demand

There was a broad consensus that a **mountain resort development** would be welcome, and would fill a gap in the local offer. Several people said that there was clear evidence of demand for budget, bunkhouse accommodation linked to the Nevis Range offer, but the demand for high-end luxury accommodation was thought to be less certain, although most respondents were confident that it would do well.

From a supply side perspective a **flagship resort development** is an attractive idea but it is difficult to assess demand. Only a small minority of visitors want to participate in extreme/adrenaline activities, but many more enjoy being close to them and, in effect, experiencing them second-hand. Several people stressed that “this place isn't just for the young and adventurous”, who in any event might not be much interested in the proposed resort. There is a broad consensus that there is demand for a quality offer: Inverloch Castle and the Lime Tree were mentioned as local success stories – the former with a more traditional appeal, the latter more contemporary.

There was broad agreement that **the next stage of the project should include market testing** to determine the demand for a range of range of options, for example:

- a 5-star/5-star+ luxury hotel
- a 3-4-star family-friendly hotel
- a family-friendly Center Parcs-type offer
- leisure/spa facilities
- conference facilities.

Some people stressed that the market in Lochaber is traditional, focused on **coach tours and an older demographic**. These sectors are doing reasonably well, despite concerns about quality. The adrenaline experiences marketed by OCUK are at the other end of the spectrum: they represent a growing but much smaller market. There may also be demand for genuine luxury experiences and good quality family resorts/lodges.

Business/Conference market

Business tourism is a big market in Scotland, but it is concentrated in Edinburgh, Glasgow and Aberdeen. In the Highlands, Inverness is the principal destination, although the volume of business is modest. Aviemore (and some other hydro resorts) also attract conference trade. People recognised that **conferences and business events** could play an important part in developing a year-round offer at Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort and in establishing a profitable business model.

The issue for Lochaber is accessibility and the perception that Fort William is a remote location, a long way from airports and major cities. The feeling was that organisations would be reluctant to bring large events to Lochaber, but that this did not preclude the development of a high quality **niche offer**, catering for national and international clients and generating high capita spend on accommodation, food and facilities.

Implications for Fort William/Lochaber

All our consultees thought that a high quality resort development in the Leanachan forest could be highly **beneficial to the visitor economy**. Lochaber has its competitive strengths, and the OCUK brand is gaining traction. The landscape setting is outstanding, and the outdoor/adventure/activity offer is excellent, but there is some concern that these attributes are not matched by the Fort William offer. There is a perceived opportunity for a “game-changing” development to address these issues and set a quality standard for others to aspire to. The Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort must offer something new and inspirational.

Several people suggested that the resort development would have a **catalytic effect** and encourage local operators to raise their game. This was reported to have happened in Arran following the development at Auchrannie. Lochaber is rich in resources: skills, knowledge, enterprise and energy and a lot of local businesses and individuals would respond positively to an innovative new development.

Comparator projects/locations

The “local competition” is in **Aviemore**, which generates mixed emotions. Aviemore is seen as a child of its time – “we wouldn’t do it like that now” – and the consensus of opinion is that it’s still not good enough. But several people noted that recent investments by Macdonald and Hilton hotels had refreshed the offer and shored up visitor numbers, although it is still not the showcase for Scotland that we might wish it to be.

The **Auchrannie** resort on Arran was cited as a relevant comparison. Comprising an upgraded hotel, luxury lodges, spa/pools and an adventure sports programme, the development has achieved very high levels of occupancy in the off-season months, and is reported to have had a catalytic effect on other local operators.

Other comparators mentioned included:

- The Natural Retreats (NR) development at **John O’Groats** offers 20-25 high-end luxury lodges. There was a broad consensus that this project should help to test the proposition that, if you set your sights high enough, people will come. Most people felt that the wider Lochaber area offered a much richer and more diverse visitor experience than John O’Groats. It was suggested that NR might be in the market for other opportunities in the Highlands.
- The Ben Arthur resort development at **Arrochar** has just secured planning consent from the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park. It is differentiated by its focus on the water/sailing rather than mountains/adventure sports but the project should help to demonstrate likely demand for NFMR.
- It was suggested that there are important lessons to learn from **Knoydart** where, despite an extremely remote location, demand for holiday lets is strong precisely because the whole

experience is thought to be special, distinctive and authentic.

It was suggested that we should look at **Sweden, Norway, Iceland, Canada and New Zealand** as possible models/sources of inspiration. At the top end of the market, the ultra-luxurious/exotic Francis Ford Coppola resorts in Belize, Argentina and Italy were cited as exemplars. In the mid-market/family segment Center Parcs is a well-established brand, although the Finc report ruled this operator out on the grounds that it “would not meet the aspirations of the client” or attract the desired market.

Conclusion

The concept of a development on the lines set out in the Finc report was welcomed. Some people warned against **optimism bias**, arguing that we should be sceptical about an “if we build it, they will come” approach. Saying that the development would fill a gap in the market and improve the quality of the local offer is not the same as demonstrating robust evidence of demand, or of developer/investor appetite.

It will be important to bring forward a proposition that is predicated on **year-round trade**, not just “stretching the season”. Resort hotels are expensive to build and to operate so they must offer a really compelling experience for visitors and conference/event organisers.

It was acknowledged that the project is still loosely defined and could go in different directions. But there was a strong consensus that – whatever markets the new development(s) decide to address – **quality is the key**. The new resort would have to offer a distinctive, innovative “wilderness experience in the forest”, giving visitors access to a “richly textured” experience based on nature, wildlife, culture and walking as well as adventure sports.

There was some discussion about the role of **brands**. The big UK and international resort operators have a reputation for quality and reliability and might be best placed to deliver investment, but there was some concern that they might deliver a standardised, placeless product. Several people said that Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort called for something unique, distinctive and bespoke. The developers should establish their own brand by having the courage of their convictions, working in this special place, being serious about sustainability etc. That’s what high-end consumers want and expect.

The interviewees were also asked whether, even if the project is a good idea, Leanachan is **the right site**. On balance the response was positive, although there were some concerns about the quality of the built environment at Nevis Range and the rural complex – and about the forest “monoculture”. But others cited strengths including the presumed positive attitudes of planners, site infrastructure, the opportunities created by the mountain biking World Cup and other successful events, the OCUK brand and – especially – the ownership and known commitment of FCS.

It will be important to build **strong support for the project**. That

will mean getting the public sector bodies all pulling in the same direction, but also – critically – getting the local business community to see NFMR as a win-win for the operator and Lochaber. Several noted that there was a lot of local pride in the Nevis Range, which is a private enterprise it has strong community ties. It will be important to build the same sort of feeling around Leanachan. That means tackling fears about displacement and demonstrating that a really high quality Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort development would confer benefits on the whole of Lochaber.

4.4 Revisiting the Strategic and Business Case

The Finc report

A full appraisal of the business case for the proposed resort development is beyond the scope of the present study. However, we have **revisited the Finc report** in the light of (a) the evolving policy context (Section 4.2) and (b) our consultations with key stakeholders (Section 4.3). The Finc report is a comprehensive and authoritative survey from a respected source. We have carried out a critical appraisal of the report, taking account of changes in market conditions since it was researched in 2009-10 and the evolution of the masterplan.

Comparisons with the NFMR Masterplan

There are obvious correspondences between the concept tested by Finc and the NFMR Masterplan, but we are not comparing like with like:

- in terms of **location**, the NFMR Masterplan locates the hotel/lodge complex in Development Area 1 (DA1), which has an area of approximately 25 ha, of which 5 ha are earmarked for “concentrated development” (Zone C); the Finc report envisages development of the “Plateau” site which is about the same size, but is situated further to the north
- in terms of **density**, the Finc report assumes much more intensive development than the NFMR Masterplan; as Figure 4-1 shows, Finc’s financial projections are based on 600 bedspaces, while the NFMR Masterplan options range from 200 to 380 bedspaces.⁹

Figure 4-1: The options compared

Development	Finc report	Nevis Forest & Mountain Resort Masterplan		
		Option A	Option B	Option C
Hotel	80-bedroom 4-star 270 bedspaces	80-bedroom 4/5-star spa 200 bedspaces		50-bedroom 4/5-star spa 125 bedspaces
Lodges	50 lodges 330 bedspaces		50 lodges 330 bedspaces	15 lodges 100 bedspaces
Bedspaces*	600	200	380	225

* Note: Finc assumed a high proportion (55/80) of family rooms in the hotel; the Masterplan is predicated on a lower proportion of 25%. Finc assumed

⁹ Finc also identifies a site on the Plateau for a future office headquarters building, although that proposition is not being actively considered.

that the lodges would comprise 5 x 4-bed, 25 x 6-bed and 20 x 8-bed units; we have assumed similar ratios.

We recognise that the Finc report only intended to establish the capacity of the Leanachan site and an indicative distribution of development. From an architectural design perspective, we have concluded that **DA1 is the best site for the resort development**, but we have also shown that development of the intensity envisaged in the Finc report could not be achieved without compromising the integrity of the landscape setting and the experience of the discerning, high-spending visitors targeted by these proposals. The experience of “being in the forest”, albeit with different levels of luxury and service, is fundamental to the concept of the destination resort.

Conclusions and recommendations

Finc concluded that Leanachan had the potential to become a “world-class” destination, and that the resort development would deliver “significant benefits, assist in strategic change and establish a transformational projects than can benefit Lochaber and the Western Highlands”. Our policy review and the consultations suggest that there is still a powerful strategic case for a resort development which would introduce both hotel and self-catering accommodation of a type and quality currently not available in Lochaber. Combined with luxury spa and other leisure facilities, the resort has the potential to be a game-changing development, which will attract new markets to the West Highlands.

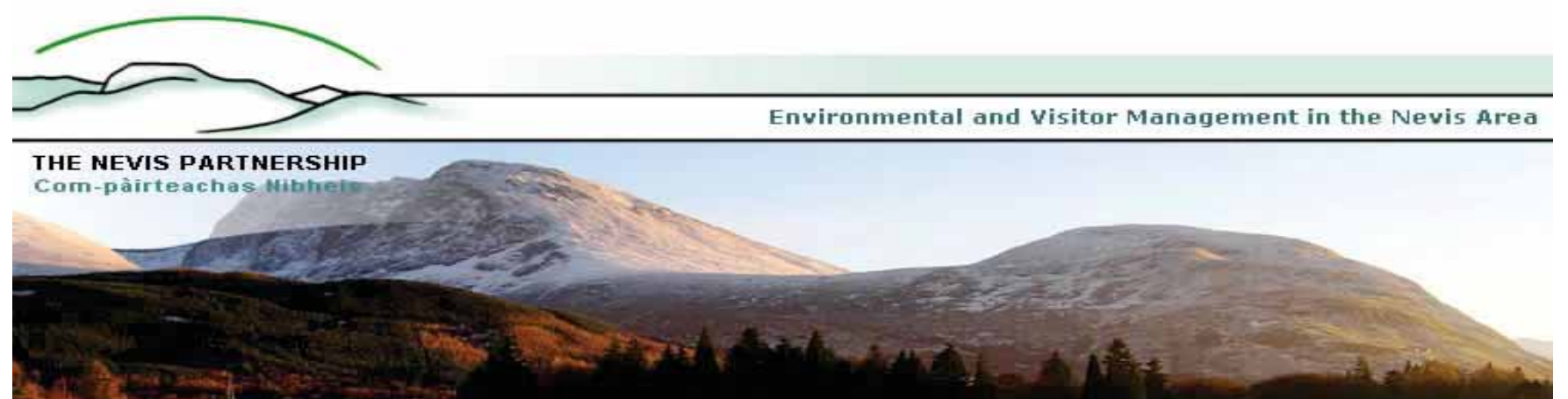
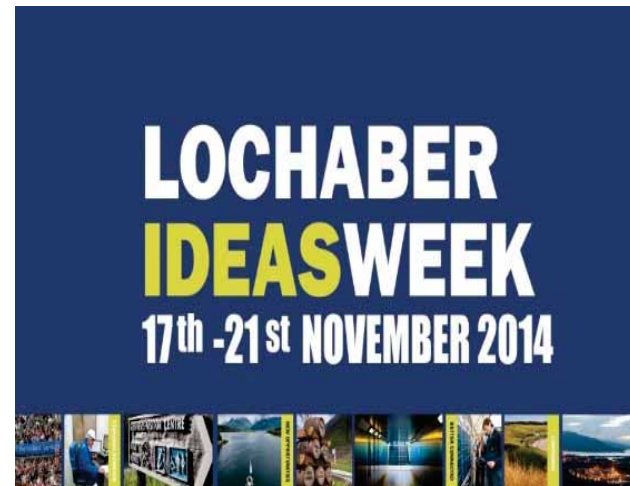
Based on the consultations and the analysis underpinning the NFMR Masterplan, there is a broad consensus that the resort development is most likely to succeed if it is positioned at the **luxury end of the market**. The quality of the visitor experience, whether in the spa hotel or a luxury lodge, is all important. This is a highly sensitive site, and discerning visitors will expect the development to respect its special location; the architecture and landscape design must be of high quality and the visual impact of the resort must be minimised. However, there is also some support for a more family-orientated offer on the lines of Center Parcs, although this was specifically ruled out by the Finc report.

The Finc report contained a “preliminary” analysis of the **financial viability** of the resort development, which concluded that “the project is capable of trading profitably *based on the assumptions which have been used*” (our emphasis). The conclusion (also provisional) that the risks attached to the project are “low” was challenged, directly or indirectly, by some of our consultees. Some people wanted to see the project defined more clearly: the Masterplan addresses this, and market testing will be undertaken at the next stage. Others stressed that a gap in the supply side is not necessarily evidence of demand or latent demand.

The NFMR Masterplan for DA1 marks a shift towards lower density (but still substantial) development. As a consequence, **the financial viability appraisal needs to be revisited**, based on revised assumptions about capital values, development costs¹⁰, room/unit rates and visitor expenditure on food, drink and leisure.

There is unanimous agreement (at least among the public sector/third sector stakeholders) that a quality resort development at Leanachan is *desirable*, but no hard evidence that developers and operators would invest in the proposition. We **recommend** that FCS, HIE and SDI should design and implement a **market testing exercise**, targeting businesses already active in Scotland as well as relevant UK and international brands to test the three options described in the Masterplan. A sensitively designed, carefully considered development is achievable at Leanachan, and it has

the potential to offer a memorable visitor experience. This masterplan scopes out the offer, in terms of both content, design and deliverability. Now that offer needs to be tested in the market place, to refine the proposition and test the appetite of investors and operators.



5.0 ENGAGEMENT

5.1 Strategy

Engagement with the local Community and other key stakeholders has been a vital aspect of the Masterplan process. It was important that the consultation process was carried out in a manner that gained support from everyone consulted and a sense of 'buy-in' to the proposals from communities and key stakeholders.

The previous Feasibility Study in 2010 by Rick Finc Associates had carried out a consultation exercise, particularly with key Stakeholders, so there was already a degree of local knowledge about the general aspirations. Although this previous study provided a comprehensive assessment of the issues, time had elapsed and it was decided to start the process again almost from the beginning.

The strategy was to carry out a consultation process on two levels. Firstly a diffuse spreading of information and gathering feedback on an individual organisation level and secondly a focused Community Event with an open invitation. This process involved most of the Project Team of Forestry Commission Scotland, Smith Scott Mullan Associates and Yellow Book, in contacting organisations and delivering structured feedback. Smith Scott Mullan took the role of organising the key consultation events and the recording process which involved:

1. The development of a detailed list of possible Stakeholders and relevant organisations and individuals.
2. A Project Team member contacted each of the Stakeholders by telephone or email and established whether they required to be involved in this process.
3. Arranging meetings with the relevant Stakeholders in Fort William, Torlundy, Nevis Range Centre or Edinburgh
4. Organising the Community Event with local community groups and Stakeholders.
5. Recording the output of meetings and translating these outputs into a design options.
6. Interim presentation of emerging designs and developments.
7. Preparation and presentation of the final design proposals.

5.2 Project Team Meetings

A Project Inception Meeting was held on 07 March 2013. This formed the introduction to Leanachan Forest and set out the aims and objectives for the project.

A meeting was held on 12 March 2013, together with Highlands and Islands Enterprise, when the vision for the project in relation to regional strategic investment in leisure and recreation was formulated. The list of primary Stakeholders was also established at this meeting.

From this point a regular series of meetings was carried out as the project progressed and design proposals emerged.

Separate from the stakeholder meetings, regular meetings of the Project Team have taken place to discuss progress of the project and design ideas as they develop.



5.3 Stakeholder Engagement

Consultation with the key stakeholders, such as Government bodies, relevant national and local organisations and the client group were generally carried out on a face to face or telephone basis and could be divided into the two distinct groupings of local stakeholders and other influencers, for example:

Nevis Range Ski Centre: As an important local stakeholder who is most directly involved with the Masterplan, a comprehensive process of engagement was carried out. The aspiration is to continue to develop a range of activities, including ski-ing and mountain biking and to keep trying to raise the diversity and quality of what they are offering their visitors. One of the facts that came from discussions was the growing importance of mountain access for general visitors and in particular for bus parties. This process culminated in outline proposals for the ski centre and car park currently leased from FCS. This will inevitably help Nevis Range with their strategic thinking.

Rare Events: Although not a stakeholder in an ownership sense, they are responsible for organising the World Cup Downhill, the largest event held on the mountain, which can attract up to 18,000 people over the weekend of the event. There was a good deal of discussion with them, primarily on the type of facilities which the area needs to provide to both secure the future of this event in a constantly more competitive international market and to be able to attract similar events. One of the key aspects of such events is the requirement for large areas of hard standing on which to erect stands and to park vehicles, giving adequate pedestrian circulation.

Lochaber Rural Complex: The aspirations of the rural complex are to continue to run the Auction Mart and other rural activities on the site. There is a long term plan to develop land to the east of the site, probably with the same building types as currently used. Their activities would gain from the creation of a new access, in order to avoid conflict with the Auction Mart traffic. Other than the noise of the Mart on the few days a year when it functions, the complex does not really impinge on creating new developments with the FCS site. However, the buildings are very visible from the access road and the mountains, so any further development of the site should be carefully integrated with the landscape and existing entrances screened from the access road. Small businesses have unrestricted advertising notices along the access road which are unattractive and cluttered, this could be vastly improved with better coordinated signage.

Dornie Lime Quarry: Operating to the east of the Ski Centre, the quarry extracts a range of aggregates and operates under a planning permission which apparently is valid until 2045. This arrangement includes landscape remediation as the Quarry gradually moves east. Other than the occasional controlled blast, the major impact on the Masterplan area is the transport requirement for approximately 25 heavy lorries and some cars and vans each day, which the road system is capable of dealing with. There is also the issue of its visual impact from Aonach Mor, but this only occurs well above the tree line. Although not an ideal neighbour for a visitor area, the quarry must be regarded as a fixed point in the Masterplan. Its impact is fairly minimal, although within any plans to expand around the Ski Centre, this issue of increased interaction between lorries and other users of the narrow access road should be addressed.

Forest Operations: Discussions were held with the FCS District Team on how the forest would develop over the Masterplan period. Leanachan Forest has reached a point where timber will be felled on a sustainable basis for the foreseeable future. This will be carried out under the guidance of FCS but will require a substantial increase in transport, for which they are currently formulating a management plan. This process of felling will also provide the opportunity to substantially re-model the forest in line with contemporary forestry practice.

Other organisations consulted as part of the Masterplan consultation process include:

- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Highland Council
- Visit Scotland
- Scottish Enterprise
- Fortwilliam Chamber of Commerce
- The Nevis Partnership
- The University of the Highlands and Islands
- OutdoorCapital UK

5.4 Public Consultation

Consultation was an important theme running throughout the project, with a large degree of interaction between the Project Team and a range of organisations, businesses and individuals. The public aspect of this process culminated in a two day event held at Nevis Range Ski Centre on 21 and 22 May 2013. This was organised by Smith Scott Mullan and was aimed at presenting a range of outline design ideas by means of concept boards and a physical model of the site. A PowerPoint presentation was made on four separate occasions and discussion groups naturally formed around presentation boards with local people keen to share their knowledge of the area. Comment sheets were left out for people to note down ideas.

This was an open event promoted and advertised by the Forestry Commission Scotland, which sought to gather as wide a range of opinions and viewpoints as possible. 36 attendees signed the visitor's book, with a range of people representing major organisations like SEPA, to local businesses, local residents and interested neighbours of the forest such as a Quarry employee and local holiday lodges owners. Some groups who popped into the exhibition did not all sign in, there were the café staff, several children who had come with parents, the local jogging group and local cycling group, to the Board of Trustees of the Nevis Ski Range, who all attended a private PowerPoint presentation.

The event brought to light some very useful information gained from experienced local knowledge and several ideas were mooted by local residents:

- A ski/ice centre was suggested as a way of attracting visitors particularly from Fort William, by creating an ice rink which would be good for families and promote skating and curling. Useful recreation when weather is bad and the ski lift is closed because of high winds. This could be part of a wider ski village concept so popular in Europe. Some suggested a facility like Coylumbridge to attract families.
- A high end resort could be very beneficial to the area, bringing spa, swimming, and other activities and could be used by local people. Having a high quality hotel with restaurants would help the local bed and breakfast industry, particularly at Christmas and New Year, when visitors could make use of the resort facilities.
- The area could be promoted as a wedding venue for those who want a wedding with a difference, this would complement Spean Bridge as a current wedding destination.
- Hotel residents are generally disappointed by Fort William and there is a need for further activities to promote the tourist industry in the town.
- Many local residents talked about the 'Puggy Line' and its restoration as an important local landmark and potential tourist attraction as a walking route into the Nevis Range.
- There was considerable discussion around the Nevis Range Centre and car park and it was felt that it in part it should be pedestrian, with shelters provided within the parking areas. The Mountain Bike trail heads should be 'tidied up' reorganized and the footpath network extended. Some people thought there should be an intermediate station on the gondola which would allow much better access to the intermediate walks and bike trails and allow use of the mountain when weather is poor.
- One family had several ideas about increasing the mountain sports with a summer luge for families, a sledging course the 'Leanchan Cresta

Run', creation of a dry ski slope for the summer months to help skiers learn to ski and snow board. A summer Alpine gondola on rails was also suggested as a family activity.

- Some thought a climbing centre would be a good proposal for attracting a different group of visitors.

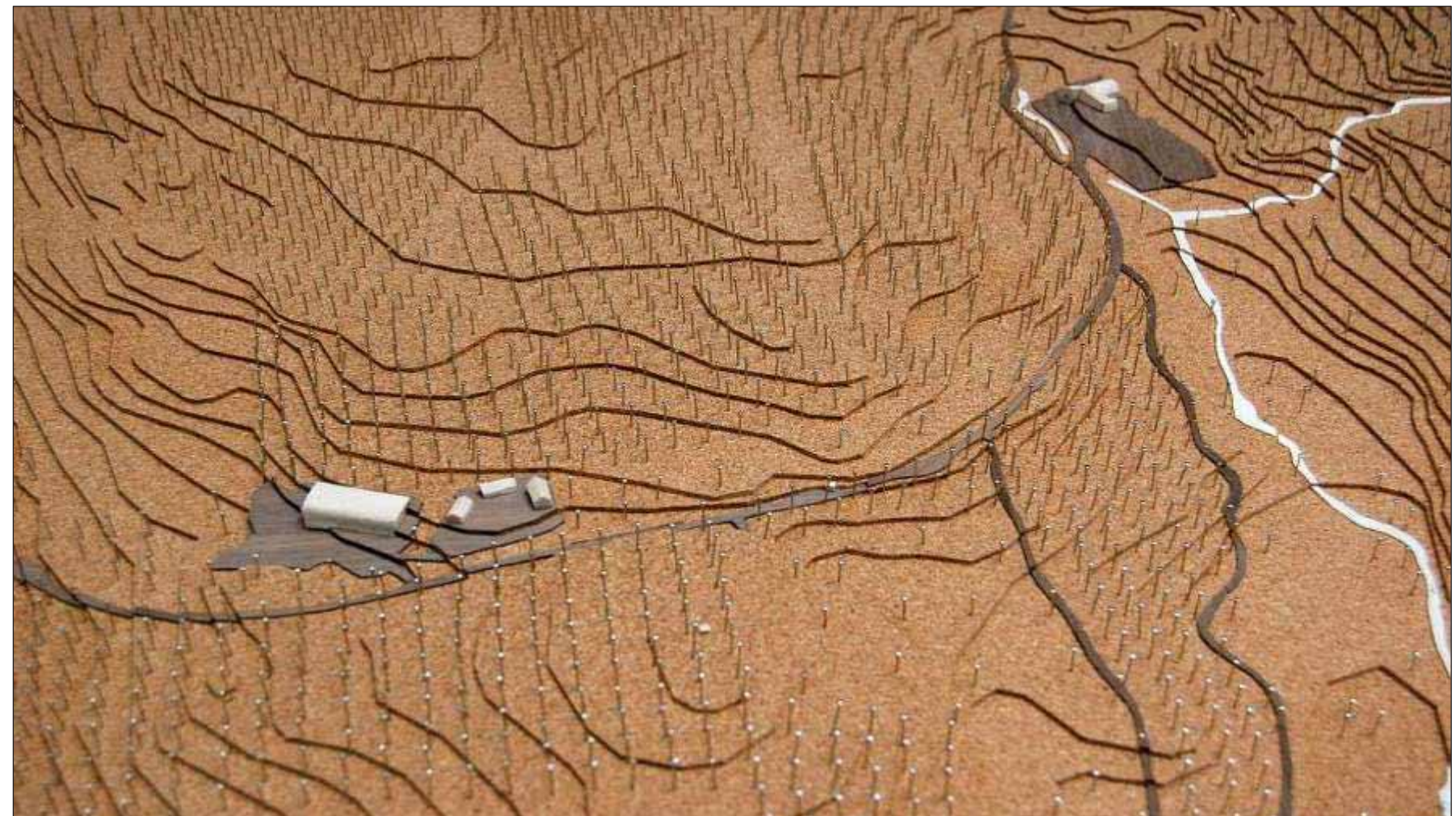
In general all the comments gathered were interesting and very positive and the public consultation was a very worthwhile exercise.



World Cup Downhill



Concept Board used at public consultation



Site model used at public consultation

5.5 Conclusions

This was a wide ranging consultation exercise and gathered a broad range of opinions and ideas. And from which some strong themes emerged.

It is fair to say that there is a good degree of support for the project, particularly from the larger organisations and unaffected parties. There is however, some degree of concern from people who own small businesses which may regard new development as direct competition.

There was a general view that the standard of facilities in the Fort William area had declined during the recession and that the area was in danger of losing business to other locations in Scotland.

There is perceived to be a need for further development at this location. This mainly focussed on accommodation, although other uses were mentioned, including small shops, visitor centre and even a previous proposal for an Ice Rink.

The prime role of development should be aimed at supporting and building on the existing uses and in particular the adventure sports market centred on the Nevis Ski Range.

The idea of creating a 'Resort' development seemed to be generally supported, particularly if its market position did not conflict with other local hotel and B&B businesses and that it drew visitors from a wide catchment. This issue of possible economic displacement will be an important theme as the project goes forward.

One of the prime issues which the project must address is that of the facilities which have to be provided for the major events such as the Mountain Bike World Cup Downhill and the various hill run events. While the facilities have been appropriate in the past, this is a rapidly developing international market in which the events keep increasing in size. These events are vital to both Lochaber's economy and to its marketing pitch as the country's major outdoor sports location. This is particularly challenging as the facilities such as car parking, are only used to capacity on a few days in the year.

There was no desire expressed for either mainstream housing or for any kind of major commercial development.

Thank you for coming to see our ideas for Leanachan Forest.

We have spoken to a range of people and ideas presented today are a result of these conversations.

They are only early thoughts and absolutely nothing has been finalised.

Please help us to develop our thinking by contributing your own thoughts, ideas and comments.



LEANACHAN MASTERPLAN SMITH SCOTT MULLAN ASSOCIATES



YOUR IDEAS

This drawing shows our understanding of the area. However, there are probably things which you know about that we don't.

If you can help us, take one of the sticky labels, write some notes on it and stick it around the drawing.

Things of interest might be a walking trail, an ancient monument, a viewpoint or a historical feature.

DO YOUR BEST TO HELP US!

LEANACHAN MASTERPLAN SMITH SCOTT MULLAN ASSOCIATES

SMITH SCOTT MULLAN ASSOCIATES LEANACHAN MASTERPLAN COMMENT SHEET

We are preparing a Masterplan, which will look at the future growth and development of Leanachan Forest.

We would like you to comment on our emerging ideas.

If you wish to make comments on the proposals, please complete this form and:

- Drop the form in the box, or
- Send the form to us, Smith Scott Mullan Associates, 378 Leith Walk, Edinburgh EH7 4PF, or
- E-mail the form to us at mail@smith-scott-mullan.co.uk

Name: _____

Relationship to Leanachan (e.g. neighbour, regular visitor, business interest etc.): _____

Address/e-mail: _____

Some key points we would like to know your thoughts on:

- Are there any local or historical features that we have not indicated on the drawings?
- Would you support development in the forest in general?
- Are there uses that you think would be successful?
- Is there anything you think should be avoided?

Comments: _____



6.0 STAGE 3 DESIGN

6.1 Project Principles

In addition to the key aims of the project brief previously mentioned (1.1 Key Objectives) the Design Team established the following **7 Principles** to guide the development of the Masterplan proposals, aimed at specific site or local issues rather than the wider objectives of the range of organisations contributing to the study:

1. To create a well-considered strategy aimed at gaining wide acceptance by Stakeholders and the Local Community over a 5 -15 year period.
2. Propose a “transformational project” which will be beneficial to both Fort William and the wider Lochaber area, creating opportunities rather than threats for the wider Community and create social and economic benefits.
3. Form a unique and distinctive series of “places” which enhance the forest environment. **“In the forest, of the forest and for the forest”**
4. Provide a diverse range of new facilities to support expansion within the Masterplan area
5. Work closely with the forest operations and the aspirations of the immediate neighbours.
6. Promote the highest environmental standards throughout all aspect of the project with a sustainable design approach to materials and energy
7. Proposals should recognise the four distinctive character types which structure the visitor’s forest experience as indicated below.

6.2 Design Concept

The Masterplan concept of 4 distinct character areas provides a structure for the improvement of the forest and the developments within it. This concept allows developments to engage with both the demands for visitor experience and for the requirements of the working forest.

Character Area - Welcome Zone

The visitor arrival zone areas, such as the entrance route from the A82 to the Ski Range and also the network of cycling and walking trails from Torlundy along the riparian zone of the Water of Lundy. These are areas of “high impact” and include car parking, access roads, footpaths and trail heads.

Character Area – Development

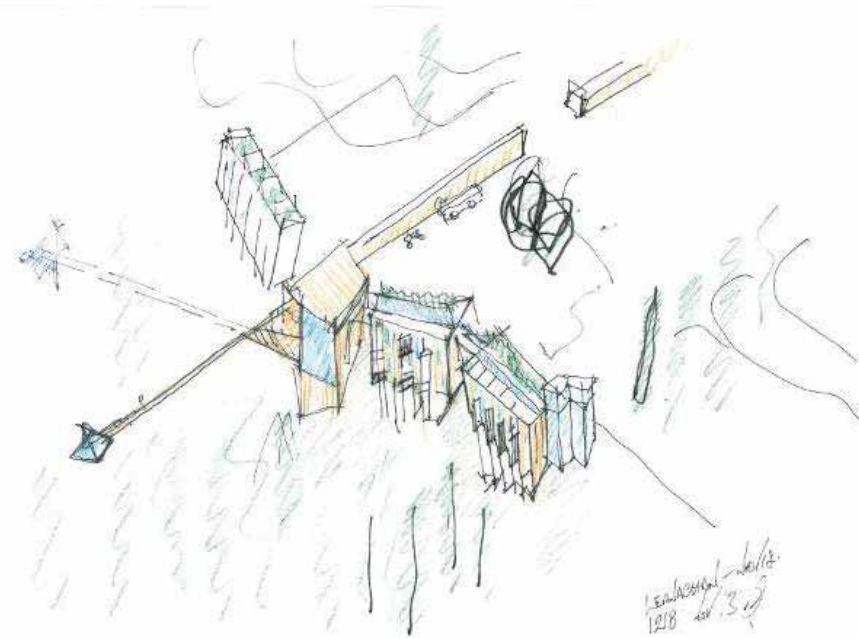
This is where major development occurs, in the form of buildings, large areas of car parking or recreational infrastructure. This would include the Nevis Range Ski Centre, the Lochaber Rural Centre, the Reorts site and Low impact accommodation site.

Character Area - Interactive

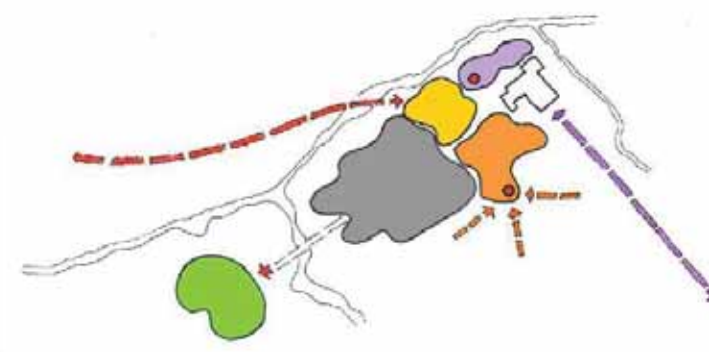
This represents the areas surrounding recreational and development zones, where visitors have a direct experience of their surroundings. These areas of forest would be managed to enhance their ecological and visual characteristics and will also present opportunities for developments integrated with the woodland environment. This will involve structures dispersed within development clusters making use of natural features.

Character Area - Passive

This represents the general forest and landscape surrounding the Interactive areas and includes surrounding communities and distant landscapes which are viewed from the interactive areas.



Concept sketch of hotel



Concept sketch of ski centre

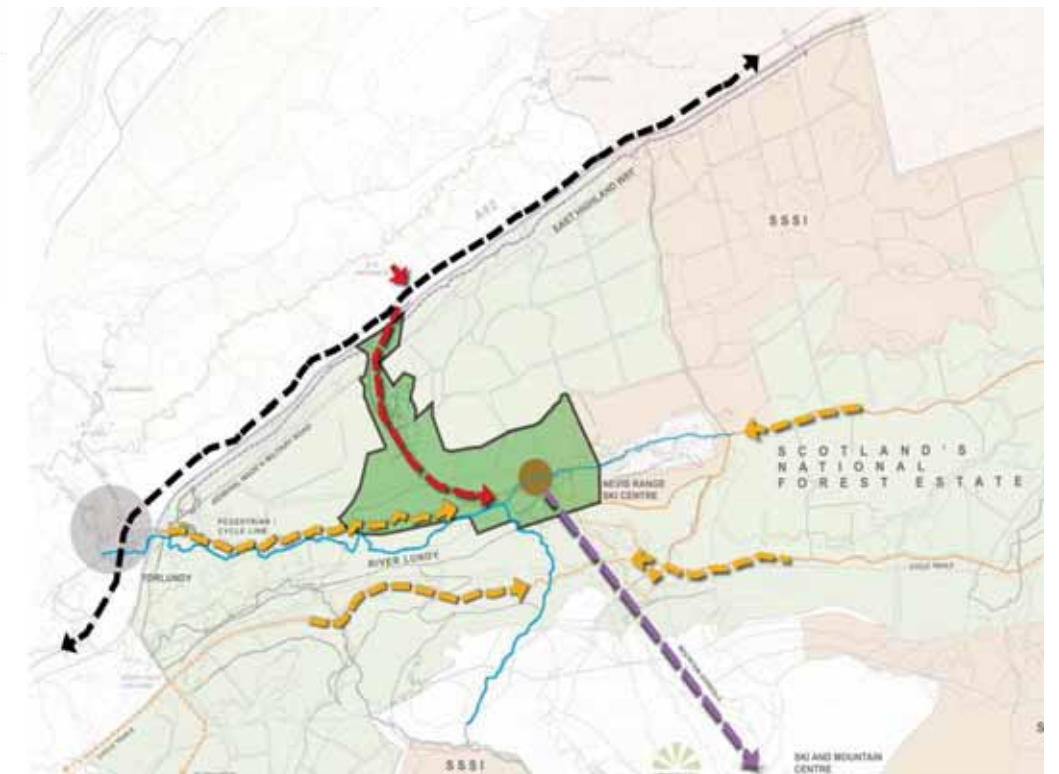
6.3 Design Development

From this concept a number of development zones emerged. One of the key definitions in this process was the general acceptance that the slopes to the south of the Masterplan area would essentially be developed as recreational infrastructure such as cycle trails, with areas to the north being more suited to other types of development.

A range of scenarios were explored and these zones were investigated in more detail to formulate a series of proposals. Sketch drawings were produced which could then be used for stakeholder discussions and eventually for community consultation. A number of issues, such as expansion of the Rural Complex were reasonably obvious and much of the design development focused on improvements to the environment around The Ski Centre and potential development within the forest itself.

The key issue was that of creating a high quality Resort Hotel and possible chalet development of the type indicated in the 2010 Feasibility Study. From the Economic Appraisal, it appeared that this was still a valid aspiration. This can only be tested out with a substantial marketing campaign which would identify the exact nature of the demand for this type of development. As a result it was vital that the Masterplan offered maximum flexibility to accommodate several design options.

During this design development phase, most of the Stakeholder and Community Consultation was carried out.



Connections and Routes

7.0 THE MASTERPLAN

Based on the concept of the previously described character areas, the Masterplan was developed to bring together the various agendas highlighted by the analysis process and the stakeholder and community engagement.

Areas were identified as having the best potential for development or for significant change. These proposals are based on the following basic positions and assumptions:

Welcome Zone: This Arrival Zone comprises the main access road and the routes from Torlundy. These routes would be regarded as prime environmental zones with proposals which enhance them both visually and in terms of their contribution to a natural and diverse forest environment. The road system within the Masterplan area is sufficient for all current and anticipated future requirements given good management procedures for events. Some minor redesign might be carried out depending on the engagement of the transport authorities. The other major access is the pedestrian and cycle routes from Torlundy to the Ski Range which will also be subject to a range of improvements.

Forest Environment: The forest surrounding the development areas has the potential to change dramatically within the 20 year timeframe of the Masterplan. These changes will produce a forest of greater diversity of species and planting patterns and more focused towards environmental and visitor issues. The next Forest Management Plan will build on the foundations of the Masterplan and provide a blueprint for this change.

Forest operations: The forest is now in a position where considerable timber felling is planned over the next few years and this will lead to an increase in timber movement with a substantial number of lorries using the main access road. However, this is a situation which occurs throughout much of rural Scotland and the access road is technically designed to accommodate this traffic. Visitor perception could be improved by limiting some of this traffic and FCS are currently developing management plans to address this issue.

The Resort: The vision for a high quality Hotel Resort development has been a central aspiration for the area for some time. The major shift from the previous Feasibility Study by Rick Finc Associates is in the scope and location of this development.

The area proposed for The Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort development lies to the immediate west of the access road, but avoids the prominent Druim Mor ridge following the natural landform in favour of a position in a small "amphitheatre" to the south of the ridge which has less visual impact on the landscape and offers a more sheltered micro-climate.

In terms of accommodation the current proposal is to promote a flexible position, with proposals ranging from a 80 bed spa hotel as a single building, to a low density 50 chalet development. A range of permutations are possible within this format which allows for future market engagement.

The area selected for the resort development is outwith the currently designated area for development as indicated in West Highland and Island's Local Plan although early discussions with planning seem favourable, there is a significant permission process to be undertaken.

Nevis Range Ski Centre: Major development, will encourage a series of environmental improvements and new buildings to be located here. There is also acceptance of the principle to improve and expand car parking provision, to address the possible future demands of major events.

The Lochaber Rural Complex: Will gain from a new entrance road to the

Southern edge of the site which facilitate future development in this location. Better signage and landscaping to screen the main buildings from the access road is also proposed.

The Quarry: There will be minimum impact from the Masterplan proposals on the working of the quarry which is well screened in its present location. The owners of the quarry could be useful partners in certain issues, particularly traffic management and the control of the numbers of lorries using the main Aonach Mor access road.

Recreational Infrastructure: This represents the working infrastructure of the recreational development, the gondola, the cycle trails, the walking paths and the information points. Although important, other than the issue of event car parking, these are generally flexible and would emerge to follow the phasing of the Masterplan.

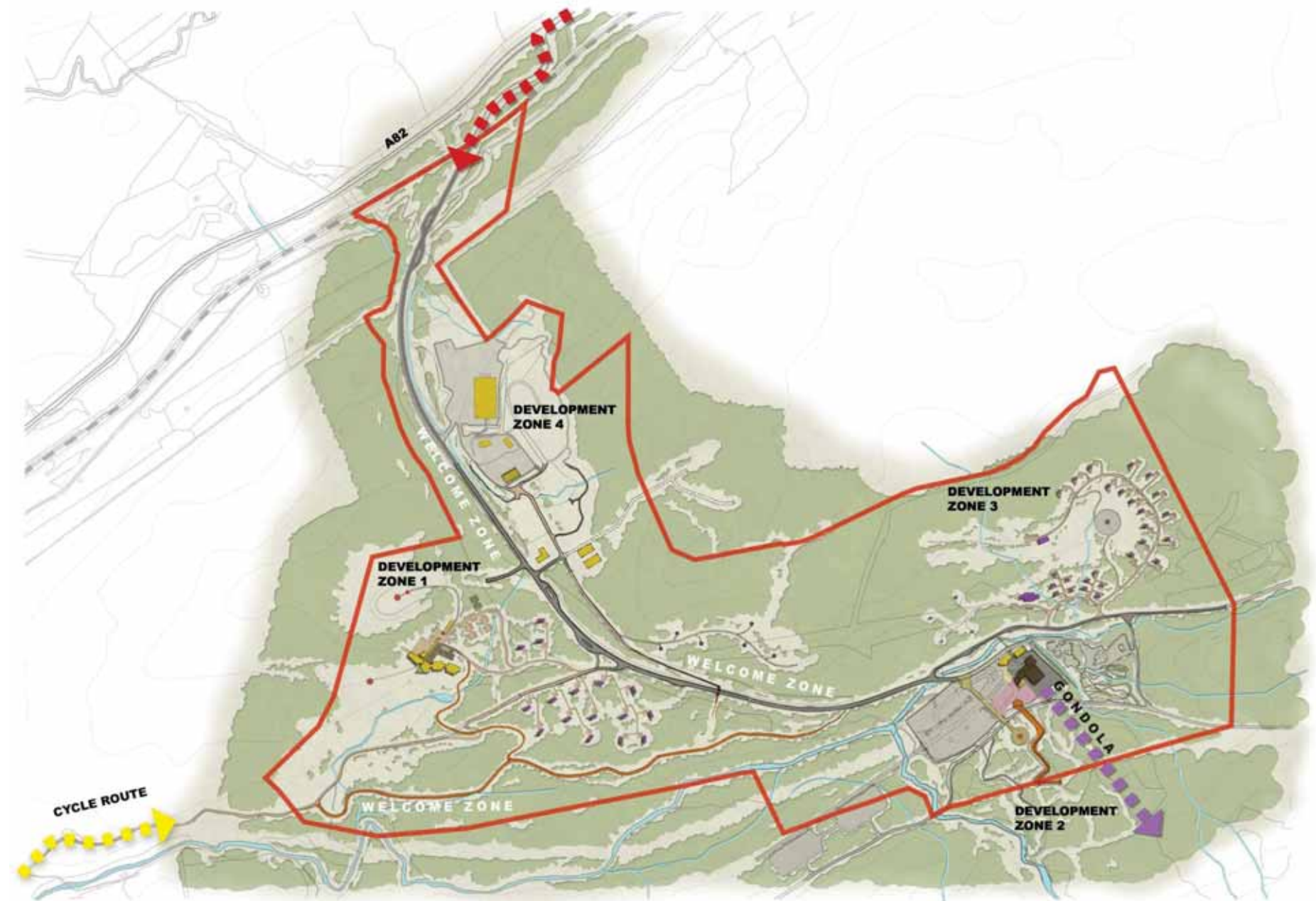
Sustainable Development: There must be a recognition of the wider visual and environmental impacts, of any development by all stakeholders, not only on their own businesses, but on the future planning possibilities for

not only on their own businesses, but on the future planning possibilities for development elsewhere in the forest.

Ground Conditions: An initial desktop survey shows rock covered with peat deposits, which is a fairly common condition in a Highland forest location. The dispersed nature of the development proposals, together with the careful siting of structures, should allow avoidance of the worst conditions.

Peat management will be an issue and we will follow two principles. Firstly to integrate the development in a way which would cause as little disturbance as possible and secondly, where peat does have to be moved it will be re-used as a landscape feature, in close proximity to its original location..

Services Infra-structure: The scale of development is such that a new system of servicing and support infra-structure will be required for the proposed new developments. This will include power, communications, and both foul and surface water drainage.



7.1 Welcome Zone

The Welcome Character Area is the most diverse and arguably the most complex of the four character zones. It is about the point of 'Arrival' for Leanachan Forest as a destination and therefore largely concerned with "impressions" and the "first experience of any visitor". It is concerned with a visual interpretation for the visitor. The Welcome Zone covers a large swath of the forest centred around three main arrival points.

- 1) The main Aonach Mor Access Road. Provides the car based experience of driving into the forest with a sequence of arriving at stop off points along the route, the Auction Mart, the potential resort development and primarily for most visitors the Nevis Range car park and ski gondola station and associated witches car park. This arrival point is also the major trail head focus for mountain biking, where the numerous biking trails and routes of various ability including the famous world cup downhill, start and terminate .
- 2) The Torlundy Village entrance to the west of the forest is less well used by visitors and connects into the walks and cycle route along the River Lundy offering a very different visitor experience. Running through the most attractive part of the forest with stretches of native woodland, potential wildlife sightings and spectacular well framed views of the Nevis Range, the route culminates in the Nevis Range car park with connections to the development areas. The experience is much more rural and immediately one of a woodland and forest experience. The Leanachan Road at Torlundy is a single track road with passing places and travels under a low railway bridge with traffic lights and limited visibility. This is a limiting factor for visitor numbers and vehicular access.

The North Face car park accessed from Torlundy along the Leanachan Road leads visitors up to Ben Nevis or east along the base of the Nevis Range and the Allt na Caillich and connecting the [Grab your reader's attention with a great quote from the document or use this space to emphasize a key point. To place this text box anywhere on the page, just drag it.]

- 1) main cycle trails and walking routes. It provides the visitor with a similar experience, coupled with open upland moorland views to the more exposed sections of the forest and Ben Nevis.

Each of the three Arrival Points provides a different experience for the Leanachan Forest Visit, based on the reason for the recreational pursuit involved, whether passive or active,



From the A82



There are a numbers of issues which required to be addressed in order to improve the visitor experience and visual quality of the Welcome Zone.

- The entrance into Leanachan Forest from the main A82 trunk route is cluttered with signs road markings and is urban in appearance, not the entrance to a world class resort. The access road is impaired by inappropriate signage of the wrong scale and type, unused laybys and not enough of the correct directional signage of real quality.
- The visual experience is one of an urban motorway, where speeding to reach your destination is the option rather than enjoying Scotland's spectacular views and scenery. The approach gives the viewer a sense of 'tunnel vision' through a forest of tall plantation.
- The arrival point for many is the Nevis Range car park, currently a poor and unattractive visitor arrival and drop off point. Where substantial improvements could be made. There are opportunities to redesign and improve the gondola station with further commercial facilities and the creation of a visitor centre.
- The mountain biking trail heads and some walking routes are difficult for a first time visitor to interpret and require to be reorganized along with the whole car park Welcome Zone Development Proposals



The Welcome Zone

7.2 Welcome Zone Development Proposals

Forest Management

There is considerable opportunity to recreate a more sensitive visual approach to the Aonach Mor access road, walking and cycling routes through afforested areas and car parking areas, based on the Forestry Commission's own 'Visitor Zones' Forest Design Management tool. This concept aims to redesign routes into forestry areas, through more sympathetic planting, improving the visual appearance and biodiversity of the road side forest planting. The visitor's perception of the forest will be improved as will its character and sense of place. Coupled with this is the potential to increase, in the eyes of the visitor, the Forestry Commission's 'Brand' and its philosophy and values as manager of the forest area. This landscape design tool allows for the improvement in the forest edge by reducing existing planting and regeneration, pruning trees, removing brash, strimming grassed areas and replanting with interesting natives and broadleaves to add diversity and seasonal colour. New roadside planting can also screen access roads particularly at the Auction Mart site and extension. This change in localized forest practice will make a significant improvement for the forest edges and improving visitor perception of the forest generally.

This landscape improvement is partly visual but will undoubtedly improve wildlife habitat and increase plant diversity. Such improvements are particularly relevant for users of the Aonach Mor access road. Here there is the added possible conflict of walkers and mountain bike users who wish to cross the route as part of a trail. The improvement of the road surface to slow down traffic and allow walkers and cyclist better visibility is highly desirable and coupled with the redesign of the forest edge and roadside verges a more adaptable and interesting welcome route could be created.

Signage and Interpretation

Better signage design would undoubtedly improve the welcome zones and visitor experience and this requires improvement across the area. Improved information is required along the A82 and particularly at both the junctions which start of each arrival zone. High quality signage is important in keeping with the world class resort and event destination. Indiscriminate signage such as that which can be seen on the approaches to the Auction Mart should be avoided. Co-ordinated quality signage made from natural materials and uniquely designed for this specific location an important requirement.



Proposal for a cycle crossing

Signage must be legible and well positioned for all users including walkers, cyclists and car-borne visitors with a branded theme. It is vital that a co-ordinated approach links into the walking and cycling routes in other parts of Lochaber and to national routes currently being developed.

Mountain bike signage should link with the general signage and be of a simple design to explain the various routes and access points and to avoid confusion with the type and standard of trail. This may require an upgrade of cycling and walking surfaces and review of trail head positioning particularly in the Witches Car Park area.

Interpretation is a crucial part of this signage development with opportunities to create co-ordinated information boards as part of this development, across the forest. Nevis Range Centre may be the possible site of a small visitor centre, whilst viewpoints and interpretative pause points for cyclists and walkers can be created along routes and trails.

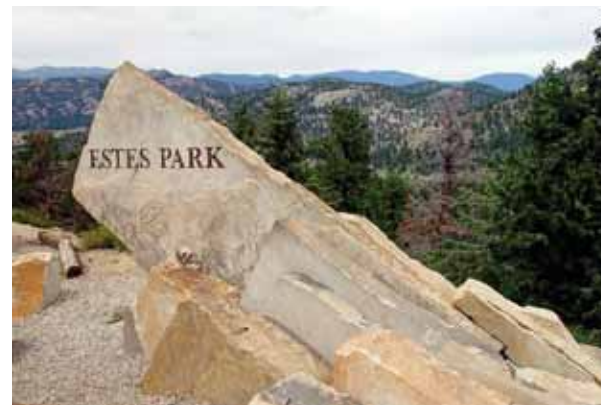
Viewpoints could be covered in some locations to make the stopping experience more comfortable. Lay-bys on the Aonach Mor access road could be used for interpretation and information stopping points. Leaflets should be made available co-ordinated with all forest partners and the use of Apps for smart phones, can increase the forest knowledge base of many smart phone users. Wildlife and adventure tourism can be increased by good interpretation.

Art in the Forest

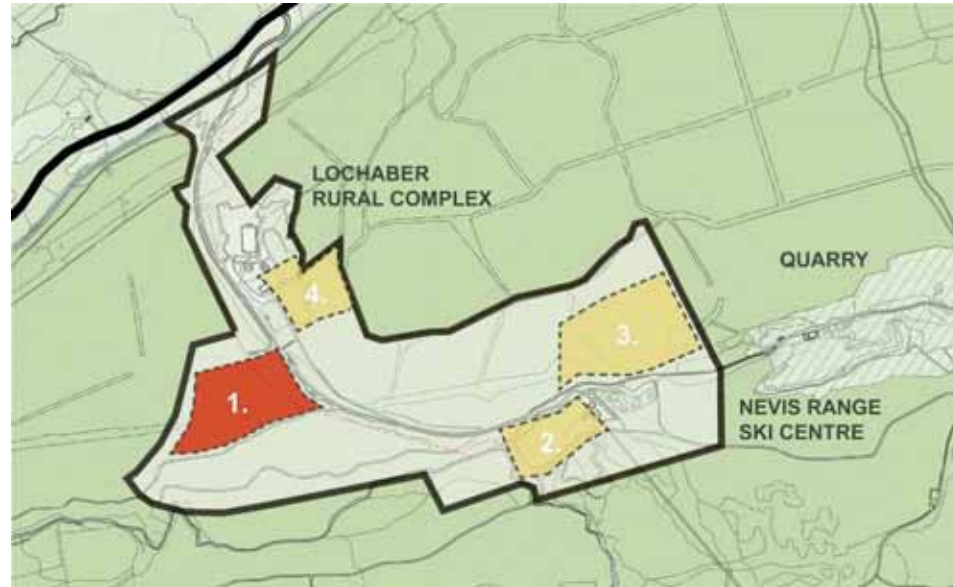
Sculptural trails and other art installations could increase the potential of the area as a visitor attraction, ensuring that Leanachan Forest can offer something for everyone. Sculpture can be incorporated in almost any situation from laybys, cycle trails to walking routes, viewpoints and focal activity areas. Some trails would benefit from benches which can be used as part of a sculpture project. A further area where sculpture and art can link with the trail routes would be to provide a children's nature play trail. In other forests across Scotland lighting the forest by night has been incredibly successful in extending the use of the forest and attracting visitors and local people to enjoy the night time spectacle.

Inclusive Activity for All

A further development of the welcome zone would be to ensure all areas are accessible to disabled visitors. Creating a dedicated trail for wheelchair users and even a special off trail course for wheelchair cyclists, such as the model at Ae Forest. This would attract many more visitors and could become a successful future event, allowing disabled people to compete in the mountain bike experience.



7.3 Development Zone 1 – Resort



One of the main objectives of the project (as in the previous Feasibility Study) is the proposal for high quality accommodation which would act as an economic regenerator for the Lochaber area. Promoting the resort concept, relies on a wide range of factors, of which the Masterplan can positively address a number.

1. Such a facility is only feasible within a context of a much improved general visitor experience within the Leanachan Forest and as such would rely on the other proposals focused upon in the Masterplan in order to create that context.
2. The key "Unique Selling Point" is the spectacular views of the mountains and particularly the views to the south west towards the northern flanks of Ben Nevis.
3. Such a facility would require to have its own distinct identity and have visually separation from the Ski Centre, the Quarry and the Rural Complex.
4. Most areas of the site, with the exception of an area to either side of the River Lundy, has the potential for the forest to be modified to suit development proposals.

Given the above issues the Project Team was of the view that the only feasible way of delivering a high class luxury resort hotel is to develop it on land to the west of the access road. Although relatively close to the area which was investigated in the previous study, our approach is different in both location and scale, avoiding the visually sensitive and environmentally exposed top of the Drium Mor ridge in favour of a development lower down the slopes thereby mitigating the effects of such a development by taking advantage of the landform and existing tree cover.

This would focus on a small "amphitheatre" to the south of the ridge, where subtle integration with the landscape would be easier, but the important views of the Nevis Range is still achievable. This location is south facing and offers the ideal balance between the important views and having a sheltered micro-climate for outdoor spaces, while allowing sunlight and summer breezes to minimise the nuisance of flying insects such as midges. This location also has its own sense of identity which is strongly related to Ben Nevis while being able to provide good connections to the Ski Range.

We are aware that what we are proposing is out with the current "settlement Boundary" in the WHILD Plan, but we believe that there are important design and economic imperatives to extend the Masterplan boundary.



Diagram 'Bird's Eye' Sketch



Potential Layouts

There are a large number of possible ways in which a development of this type could be arranged and the Masterplan investigated **three possible design options**. Due to the unique nature of the site, the architectural design of some elements was advanced well beyond general Masterplan level to help give some indication of how a final development might appear. However this is only indicative and there is a considerable degree of flexibility in the final design decisions.

Other Approaches

The two approaches above are the ends of a spectrum and there would be a wide range of combinations between. The sketch drawing left, shows an approach based on a 50 bed Hotel and up to 15 lodges close by using the hotel facilities.

At present, all three approaches could be regarded as valid from a development delivery perspective and it is possible to envisage other combinations, such as a number of larger chalet type buildings rather than a single central building. This provides a great degree of flexibility to deliver a development to the business model of interested parties and a marketing process will be required in order to develop this design concept further.

This site provides the unique opportunity to support a high investment development, but any development envisaged in this location must respond to both the potential and the sensitivities of the site. It requires design of the highest architectural standards and an ambition to embrace environmental and sustainability issues in order to act as an exemplar of sustainable tourist development and contribute significantly to the local economy.



Resort Hotel Interior



The site from the South



Architect's sketch of a possible forest hotel

Option A - Spa Hotel

This design option below, shows an 80 bed **Spa Hotel** developed on three levels as a series of four related architectural elements. It represents aspirations for a dramatic building which integrates carefully into the surrounding landform while enjoying the maximum impact of the spectacular views towards Ben Nevis.

Its access would be from an existing lay-by and the formation of a short entrance "drive" would visually and psychologically separate it from the other developments in the forest. Vehicle impact would be lessened both by new landscaping and deciduous tree planting and by the strategy of locating vehicles at the rear of the building.

The surrounding forest landscape currently has the potential to be remodelled and the proposal envisages a back drop of dense forest behind the building with a more open structure of small groups of trees in front of it. This would open up views and allow sunlight penetration.

The concept is for a building which, by its architectural form, separates the man made from the natural world. All arrival and servicing functions are located to the rear with the front face of major spaces such as restaurants and relating directly to the landscape beyond. (The visualisations give one architectural interpretation of what such a building might look like although there could be many) This would probably be built as a single development with a centralised infra- structure approach. In terms of its visibility from sensitive viewpoints, it is below the level of the ridge and would therefore not appear on the skyline and, with good design, would have minimum impact on surrounding views, other than after dark when lights from the south facing glazing would be seen. Use of natural materials, green roofspeat banking and sensitive planting are an imperative part of the design process.



The 'Old Road'



- KEY**
- CONIFEROUS TREES
 - DECIDUOUS TREES
 - PEAT BANKING
 - GROUND COVER
 - RESORT HOTEL
 - LODGES
 - PUBLIC ROAD
 - PROPOSED TRACK
 - CYCLE TRACK
 - TRIG POINT
 - PROPOSED FOOTPATHS

LEANACHAN MASTERPLAN SMITH SCOTT MULLAN ASSOCIATES

DEVELOPMENT ZONE 1
RESORT - Option A

1:2000 @A3 DT AJS 22.04.2014
 1218 SK-40

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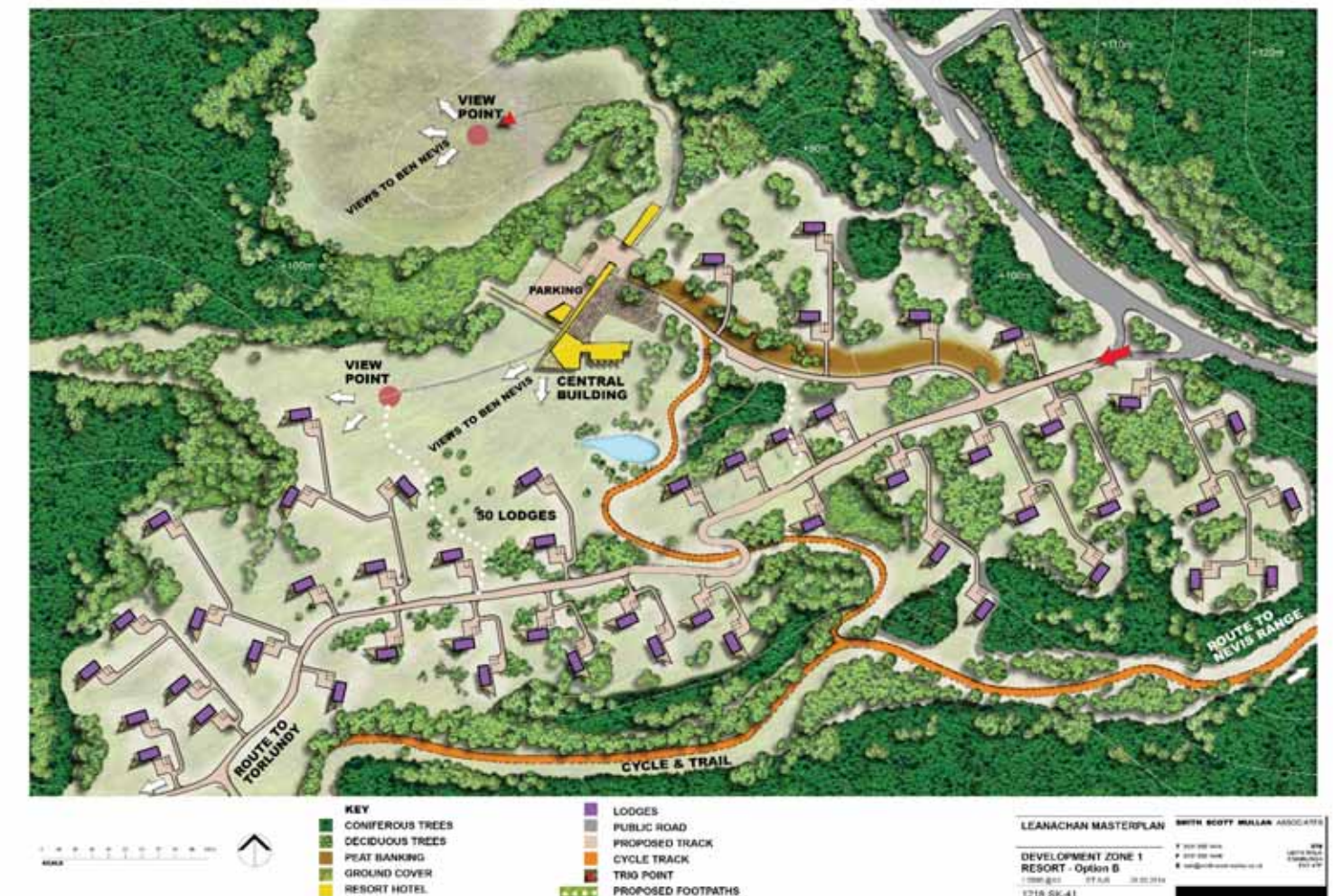
Option B Lodges:

Drawings show an alternative approach with a smaller single building providing centralised facilities for a dispersed development of **50 Luxury Lodges**. They would be serviced by a series of tracks leading from the existing road which is now closed to public use and would individually integrate into the landscape to take advantage of views and local topography. This arrangement reflects a desire for “isolation” rather than a social or architectural grouping, each cabin having around 0.5 hectares of space and isolated from its neighbours by existing or enhanced forest.

As a development type this design option is suitable for incremental building and infra-structure delivery, although the overall forest structure planting would be required to be designed and planted as a completely in the early phase of development to allow for growth prior to building..



Architect's drawing of cabin concept





Option C - Combination:

As previously stated a wide range of approaches could be valid and the drawing shows a proposal for a smaller Spa Hotel (50 Bedrooms) in conjunction with a number of Lodges.



Access road





- | | |
|------------------|--------------------|
| KEY | LODGES |
| CONIFEROUS TREES | LODGES |
| DECIDUOUS TREES | PUBLIC ROAD |
| PEAT BANKING | PROPOSED TRACK |
| GROUND COVER | CYCLE TRACK |
| RESORT HOTEL | TRIG POINT |
| | PROPOSED FOOTPATHS |

LEANACHAN MASTERPLAN SMITH SCOTT MULLAN ASSOCIATES

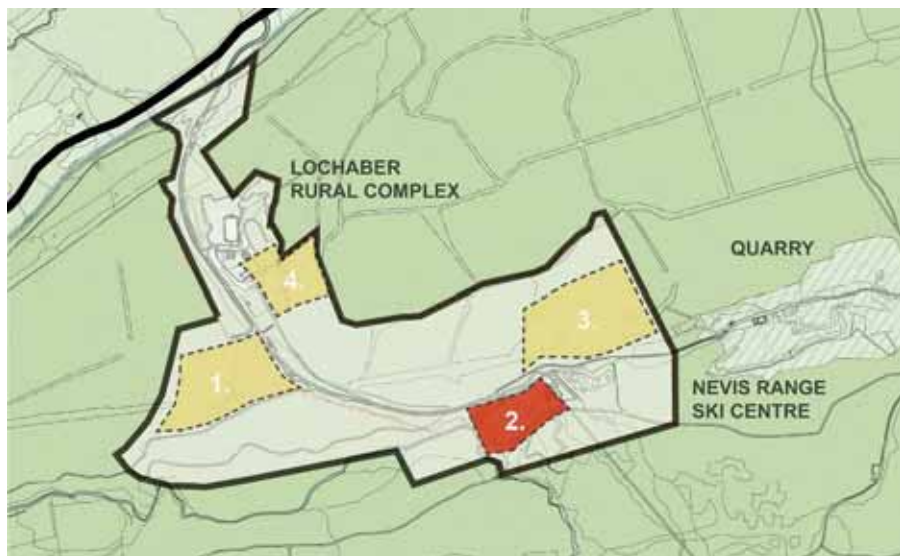
DEVELOPMENT ZONE 1
RESORT - Option C

1:2000 @A3 DT AJS 26.03.2014

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7.4 Development Zone 2 - Ski Centre

This zone forms the base for the adventure sports activities and the general mountain visitor access via the gondola to the summit of Aonach Mor. It is also the important focus of the major events held in the forest, such as the mountain Bike World Cup Downhill.

From its establishment in 1989, the Nevis Range Centre has developed incrementally enhancing facilities. The Masterplan proposals may help guide future strategy and engage with the wider agendas of the improvement of visual amenity envisaged throughout the forest. This would encourage more visitors, raise the level of visitor experience and support the development of the type of high quality accommodation which the Masterplan is proposing.

In order to explore in more detail how these proposals might be achieved, the Design Team carried out an analysis of use patterns and have suggested a direction based on the following ideas.

a) Key Issues

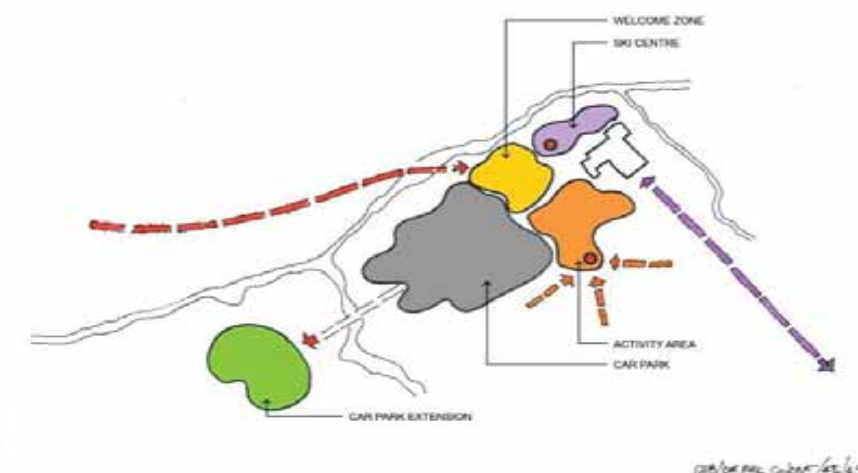
The Car Park has two major use group patterns, the nature of which are almost polar opposites.

- **General Visitors:** A mix of general skiers, mountain bikers, car borne groups and the coach parties who visit the mountain area. They come for the mountain experience but in often their vehicles do not fill the spaces available within the Car Park. Using the Car Park is a pleasant experience in comparison with locations like Aviemore or Glenshee, but could be vastly improved and the aspiration should be for somewhere which provides a high quality introduction to the mountains. For these people, somewhere more intimate, more sheltered from the wind, not having lime dust blowing around on windy days and with attractive buildings would probably be the ideal. An area or building where interpretation was offered to complete the mountain experience would be beneficial.

Major Events: This includes events such as the World Cup Downhill and busy ski days. The car park is generally full and these events create their own sense of excitement, to the point where it is difficult to see the condition of the Car Park. One major issue with the mountain biking events is that they require a very high degree of flexibility, particularly to accommodate the tented exhibition areas and trailers.



Car park during world cup



The car park

b) Concept

The concept is to develop the Car Park area as four zones, as shown on the accompanying sketch.

Arrival Zone:

Where people arrive and get their first impressions of the Centre. The general Masterplan proposals are to start this welcome sequence at the Entrance Road, but closer to Nevis Range, better signage at the Quarry junction and a new building would act as a visual focus for visitors as they cross the River Lundy. The most important improvement is to alter the coach route and to have a drop-off point for visitors at a new purpose built arrival point and then coaches could proceed to a designated Coach Park. One of the key proposals is to remove the current motorway type barriers from this area and introduce a more subtle or flexible form of vehicular control. This would also have advantages for the events as it would recreate a more flexible and usable area at this point.

Car Park:

The proposals envisage fairly minor alterations to this area. The idea of dividing it into bays though the use of landscape was initially explored, but this would have negative impact for the major events. The proposal is to alter some of the surfacing, especially creating a specific new hard surfaced spine route through the centre which would allow future connection to the proposed future new car parking areas to the west. Some physical definition between the Arrival Zone and the Car Park would be beneficial, even if only a line of movable objects. These could be rocks, logs or trees in planters, moving heavy objects is not a problem for FCS or the organisers of these events.

In terms of the actual car park surface, there is a diversity of opinion of how good it is. It seems to be functional and the event organisers like it as it is a flexible surface for erecting tents and marquees, however it is very dusty on windy days. Visually it is not ideal, and as things progress it would be advantageous to use a better finish where possible. These improvements could happen incrementally as the Car Park does not have to be one uniform surface, and in fact would be better as a combination of surfaces. Cost is also a major factor and there could be a wide range of possible approaches to this issue.

Ski Centre: The proposal is to create a small courtyard by the addition of two new buildings. These could have many uses and this would eventually be established by Nevis Range themselves, the proposal is for a simple two storey building, which could include accommodation and other uses, to the rear of the courtyard and a more dramatic building at the front of the Courtyard which would act as a focal point. These are linked to the Pine Martin Café with a pergola, which could act as a covered Drop-Off point for bus parties. It is also suggested that the Café could be extended with a glass conservatory and outdoor seating and a decorative screen which would separate this area from the Service Yard.

These proposals create a small courtyard with more enclosure and shelter, which would be pedestrian dominated, if necessary a small number of vehicles could be accommodated. In order to achieve this, new access will be provided to the Yard and a re-location of existing car parking of around 60 cars would have to be accepted. Facilities such as new buildings would require increased power and drainage and a more considered external lighting scheme would make the area more attractive after dark and extend its function.

Activity Area: At present, this zone is attractive during major events and it would be good if some of this excitement could be captured all year round. Moving the Coach Park and screening it behind a line of tree planting, gives further flexibility for this area to be developed more appropriately, while still allowing it to be used for events and for car parking on busy days. One of the main proposals is to create a central gathering point for all the Trail Heads. The current situation is confusing and as the aspiration is to attract more families and intermediate users, a unified point where all could gather and get information would be useful. This could be done on the higher ground adjacent to the base of the downhill run, at a position where it is visible from the access road. This new area would be carefully landscaped and perhaps have some kind of roofed structure where information might be available. A central Sculptural element could also be incorporated.

b) River Lundy

Currently, the river goes under the entrance road in a culvert. The design of this culvert has environmental issues, as it stops fish from migrating up the river and it is possible that this may have to be addressed at some point in the future by redesigning the flow.

c) Surrounding Forest Environment

In general, the Forest Design Plan will be aimed at improving the surrounding woodland. In many ways the issue of the negative visual impact of the Car Park from the Hill will gradually decrease as the trees to the south grow taller, but this will also have the effect of creating more shadow (and midgets) so a balance will need to be struck.

d) Delivery

Finance is currently restricted and Nevis Range are unlikely to be able to afford a raft of large scale improvements at one time. However, all of these proposals are flexible in terms of timescale and could be done incrementally as finance becomes available.

e) Future Aspirations

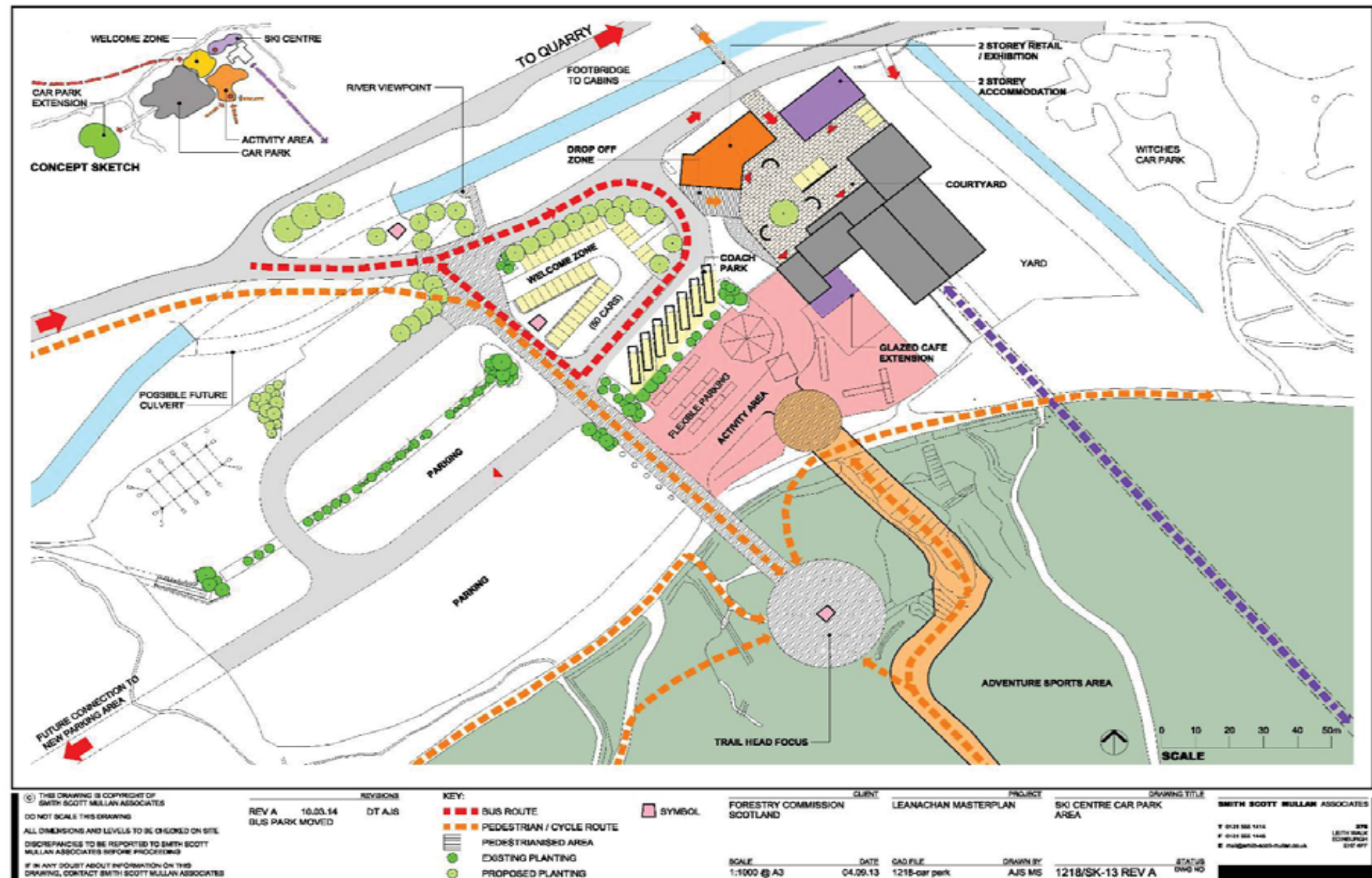
One of the main issues for Nevis Range is their view of the type of market that they wish to attract and in particular the larger scale events. There is a "world market" in mountain biking events and the standards of facilities to be provided are only going to get more onerous.

Key to this is open, flexible and preferably hard surfaced event space and this relates directly to the area of car parking space used. The most feasible way to increase this is to create further car parking to the west, in an area of forest which is programmed to be felled in the reasonably near future and which we understand is not prime forestry land. The area suggested has access by a forest track and is adjacent to the fire break which contains the route of the overhead power lines to Nevis Range. The proposals are to create two overflow parking areas within an existing area of glacial boulders, which will remain after the forest is felled.

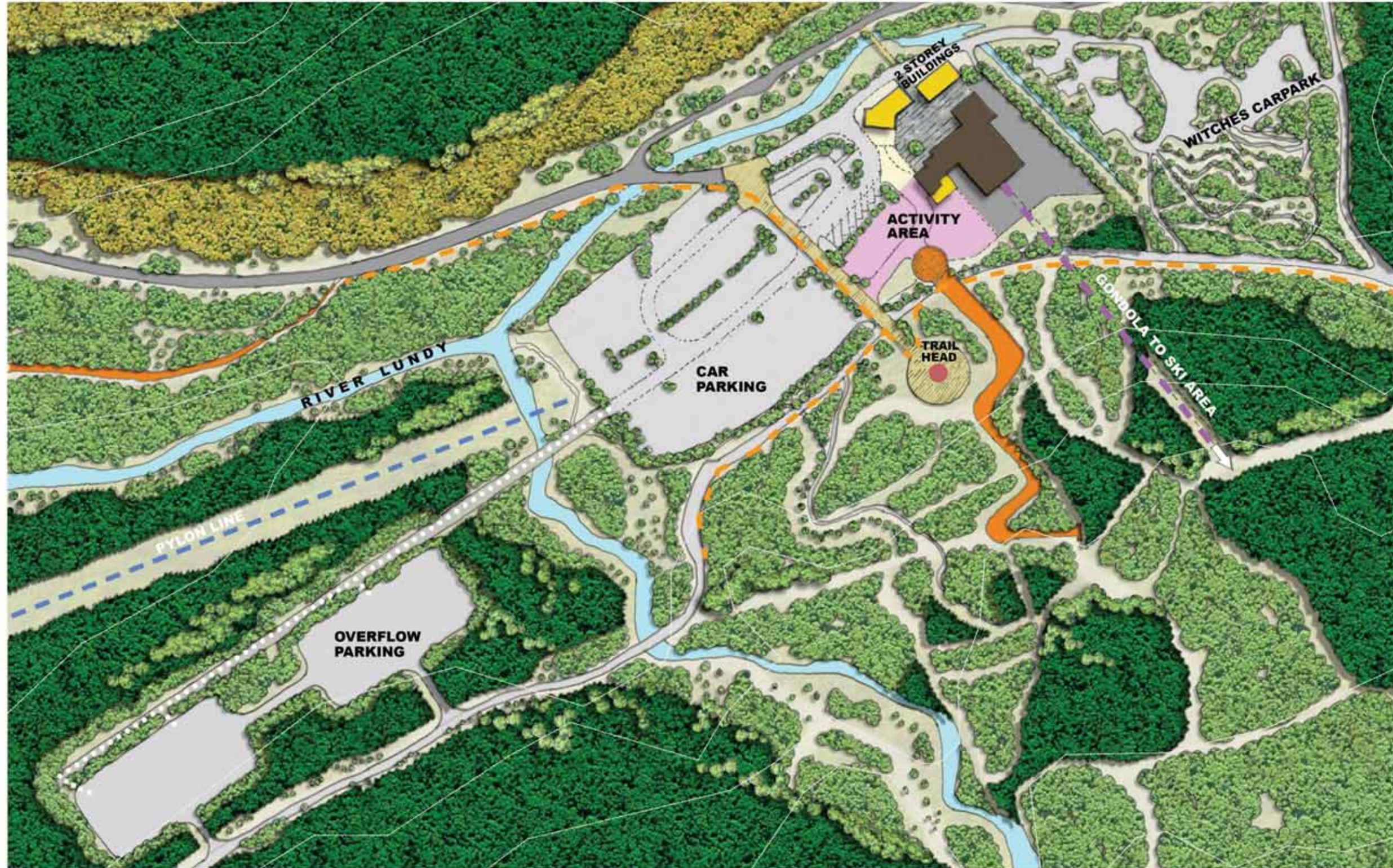
Delivering such an extension of parking provision would obviously have considerable impacts on Nevis Range, including the financial viability of creating a facility which would only be used for a few days a year. However, this a 20 year vision and such aspirations need to be discussed and challenges addressed if the area is going to continue to attract these important events.



Example of Glazed/ Covered Courtyard



Drawing used in discussions with Nevis Range



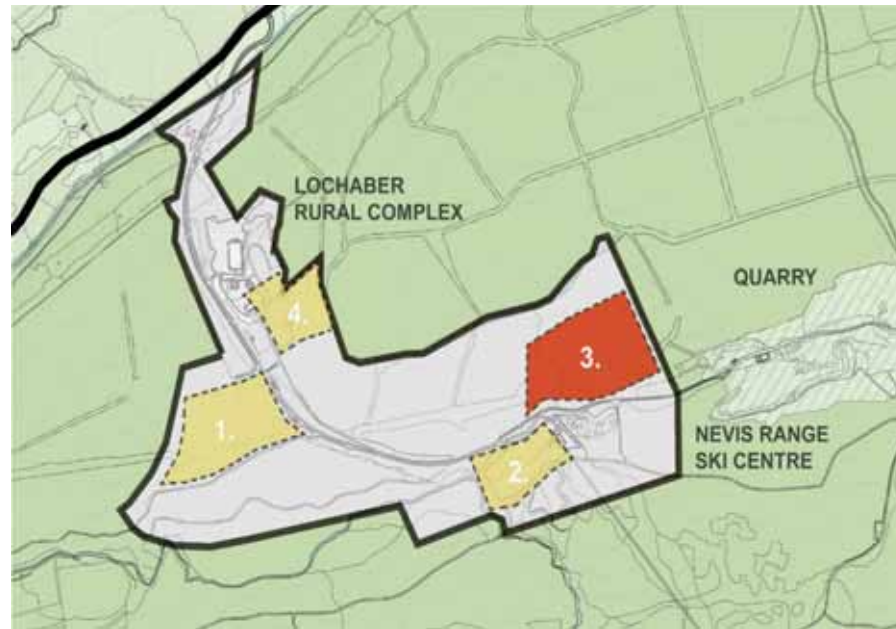
- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| KEY | PROPOSED BUILDINGS |
| CONIFEROUS TREES | PUBLIC ROAD |
| DECIDUOUS TREES | PROPOSED TRACK |
| GROUND COVER | CYCLE TRACK |
| LARCH TREES | ACTIVITY AREA |
| EXISTING BUILDINGS | PROPOSED FOOTPATHS |

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7.5 Development Zone 3 – Low Impact Accommodation



This area of woodland to the north the Nevis Ski Centre, comprises both mature trees, including a major band of mature larch, areas which have been recently replanted and areas likely to be felled in the fairly near future. It has the capacity to be developed to provide a smaller scale and more flexible type of development, which would complement the Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort Hotel in Development Zone A.

The major focus for new development is a semi-circular area of recently felled forest, at the eastern end of this zone, adjacent to Nevis Range Centre. This area is also reasonably close to the Quarry and could possibly be an appropriate location for some of the more intrusive and noisy functions. A central area could be levelled off for use as a camping area or as an events space.

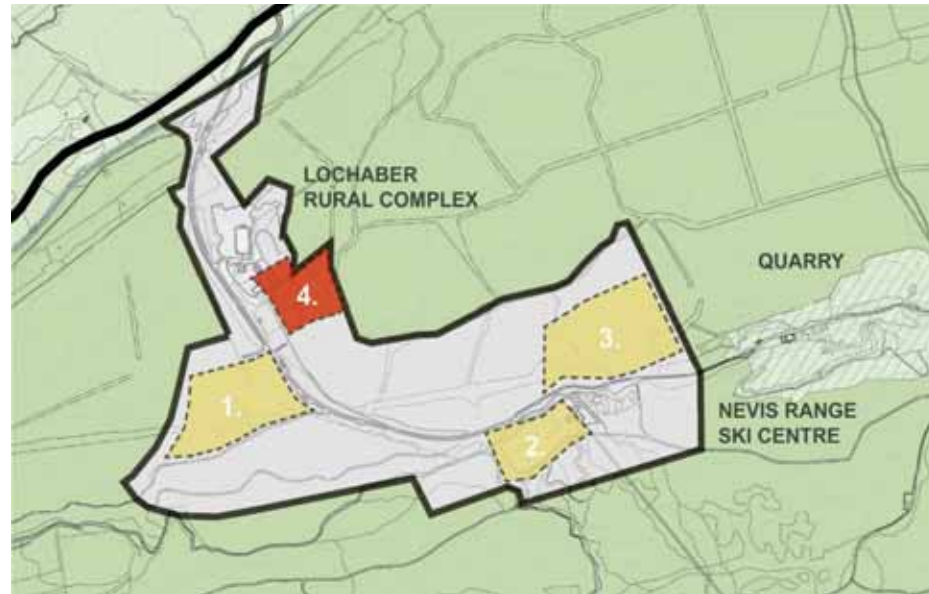
This development could take many forms but as an example the Masterplan envisages two distinct packages, which could be created as phases. Firstly a higher density area of cabins and a bunkhouse close to the entrance road and secondly lower density groups of cabins and a larger Chalet which occupies a prominent position on a small ridge with views towards Ben Nevis.

There is already an identified need for various types of self-catering accommodation in this area as this location is ideally situated close to the ski-ing, mountain biking, events and other outdoor activities carried out at Nevis Range Centre.

As shown on the developemnt sketch opposite, groups of cabins form an entrance area for a discreet series of small but linked developments which may include camping pods, wigwams, yurts or forest camping. These would be within dispersed clusters within a replanted woodland environment which would be diverse in nature. This site will link with footpath routes throught the forest and to the Nevis Range Ski Centre.



7.6 Development Zone 4 – Lochaber Rural Complex



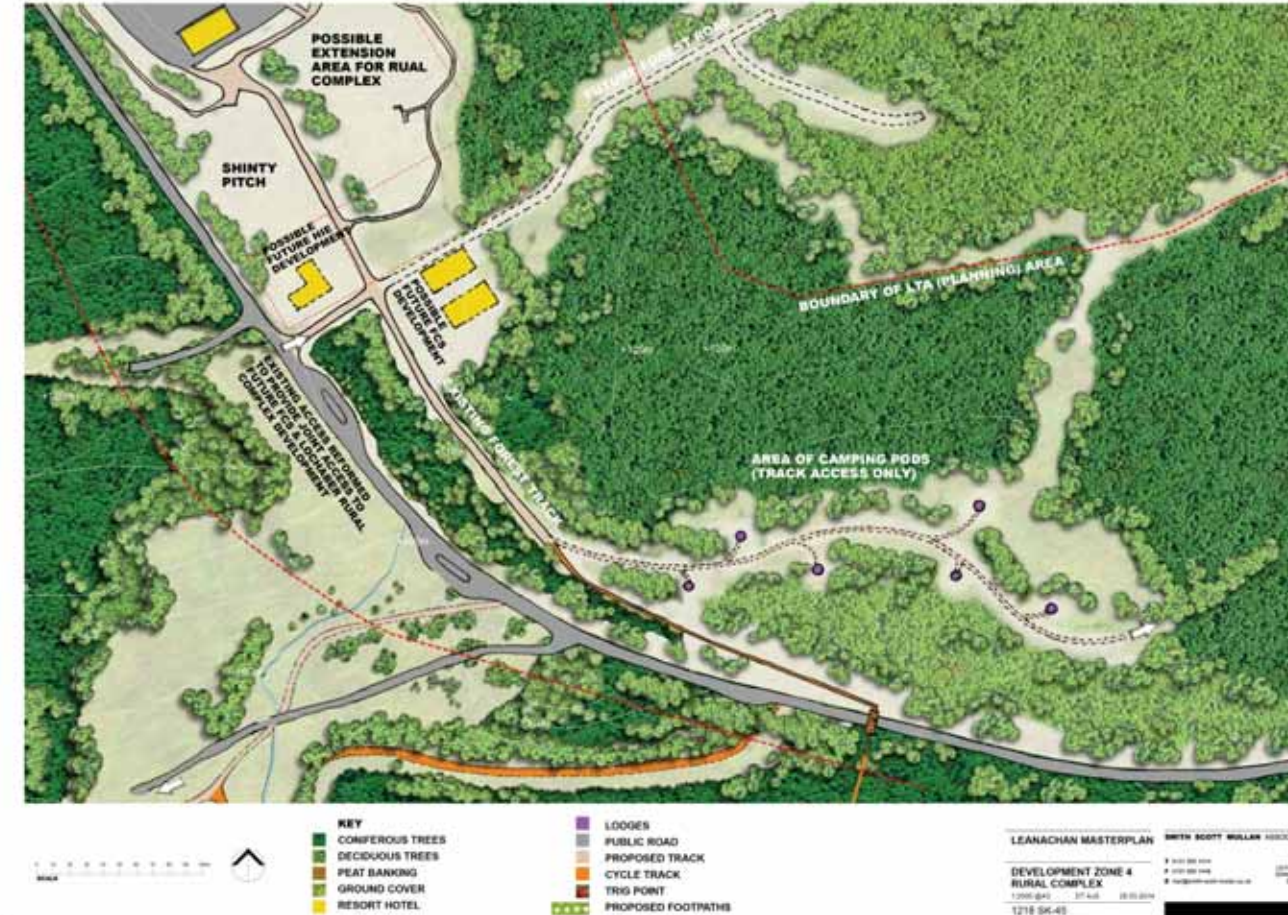
As a separate organisation, located on the edge of the Masterplan area, the Rural Complex is outwith the Masterplan but is strongly related to it. The organisation has its own aspirations to continue to expand the mix of commercial and educational rural activities for which they currently cater for. This aspiration is essentially complementary to the activities envisaged within the Masterplan area and although there is a certain degree of overlap with Nevis Range (they both run a café) this adds diversity rather than a direct challenge. There are however two key areas of consideration for the Masterplan.

The entrance area to the LRC facilities could be greatly improved. to reflect the quality aspirations of both the activities envisaged within the Masterplan and those currently being promoted by the Complex itself. In many ways, this issue is a historic one due to the Complex developing from the Auction Mart and is probably reasonably easily addressed with high quality landscape and screening works. This would be facilitated by the creation of a new access to the east of the site, which would allow LRC to have direct access to some of its more public focused functions without being compromised by having to go through the Auction Mart. The separation of these two activities and this access would be beneficial, while also providing better forest access for FCS.

LRC has aspirations to develop buildings on its eastern edge and this new access would service these. It would also facilitate possible development on the area of land known as the “Shinty Pitch” to be taken forward. A feasibility Study for this has already been carried out.

From a Masterplan perspective, one of the key issues of development in this area is the visual impact which it creates from the mountains of Ben Nevis and Aonach Mor, due to the visually prominent ridge on which the Rural Complex stands. The visual impact of development is likely to be a growing planning issue within Lochaber, particularly as new developments are brought forward and high standards of landscape integration of any new development are likely to be require.

Beyond this, the nature of such developments is really one for the rural complex and the local planning authorities.



The Shinty Pitch



Rural Complex Café.



The Auction Mart.

8.0 INFRASTRUCTURE

8.1 Utilities and Services

The new developments proposed by the Masterplan will require a comprehensive upgrade of the servicing infrastructure and strategic consideration should be given to this early in any delivery process. There are two fundamental ways in which this process could be approached.

Mains services system: this envisages supplying the various parts of the developments with a mains based system of sewerage and supply services. This is very much the conventional approach and is founded on the philosophy of services infrastructure being a communally supplied and maintained system.

The advantages of this are general reliability, predictability in terms of cost planning and effectiveness in use. Disadvantages include the inability to respond to individual situations and overall economy in some cases.

Off-grid servicing system: this envisages the various developments being approached in their own right and developing their own services infrastructure on an individual basis. Advantages of this are flexibility and response to immediate environmental issues, with disadvantages being possible reliability in use.

The Masterplan envisages that the development will be delivered using a combination of the above approaches and that an appropriate balance can be struck. This will involve further studies and investigative work, when the exact nature of developments are known. However this still requires a large degree of strategic thinking early in the process. Although there is not a definite answer at present, some of the key issues are outlined below. For the purpose of predictability figures in the Cost Plan generally assume a predominantly mains based approach at present. Some key issues are as follows:

8.2 Foul Drainage

There is a sewerage works at Torlundy. The Lochaber Rural Complex connects to this by a private sewer and Nevis Range and The Quarry have individual packaged sewerage systems. We would have two distinct options for our proposals. We could run a new private sewer to Torlundy, as the Rural Complex does, or we could work exclusively with package systems. This will need a full Drainage Impact Assessment in due course, but given the amount of land available and the nature of the development we are progressing on the view that both possibilities are feasible.

This subject requires further study and discussion with Scottish Water and SEPA but there appears to be **three potential options**:

1) Preferred Option: Provision of a **new sewer** to the Torlundy Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) either by gravity, pumped system, or a combination, depending on the route available. Obviously Torlundy is lower than the sites by nature of them being upstream but due to the undulating topography it may be uneconomic to provide a fully gravitational connection. At present there is uncertainty on the capacity of the WWTW and this requires to be the subject of discussion with Scottish Water as upgrading may be required.

2) Provision of private dedicated sewage treatment at each development area (or linked combined) which discharges into the River Lundy. (as the Ski Centre does at present) The type of treatment will be subject to approval by SEPA and may include septic tanks, mechanical /chemical package treatment plants and tertiary treatment by reed beds.

3) A private existing foul sewer is known to exist between the Auction Mart and the WWTW and is shown on the Scottish Water records, generally following General Wades road. The location is not ideal for all the proposed developments but nevertheless could be considered as a possible option as the distance to a connection point is considerably shorter than constructing a new sewer all the way to Torlundy across difficult terrain. The capacity and condition of this is not known but may be suitable to take a connection from some of the development sites if an agreement could be reached with the owners. This connection may be pumped due to the land topography.

8.3 Surface Drainage

Given the nature of the terrain, this would naturally drain into the landscape. It should be noted that this area is actually artificially underprovided with rainwater, due to water capture by Rio Tinto Alcan for hydroelectric power generation.

It will be feasible to design and construct SuDs treatment and attenuation devices to regulatory guidelines. Scottish water will not have an interest in this aspect of the developments but SEPA and the LA flood officer will have approving roles. This aspect is considered to be non- contentious and able to be achieved by standard construction approaches.

8.4 Water Supply

There is a mains water supply available at the A82 which would appear to service the developments as currently envisaged. The exact routes taken by the supply pipes would have to be designed in detail to establish the most efficient and cost effective solution. Depending on route, increases in elevation can have an impact on the water pressure available and if this proves to be an issue, one or more water booster stations would be required. These could be located in order to respond to the future phasing of the development.

If this was found inadequate then **other solutions** could be investigated. These could include private supplies taken from the surrounding hills, although we understand that the natural supply routes have been altered in the past by Rio Tinto Alcan, in order to supply water for industrial uses. Another possible solution may involve boreholes and detailed local hydrological studies would be required for both these approaches.

This whole issue would be **investigated further** when the nature of the developments were further advanced and detailed discussions held with Scottish Water in order to gain their approval for any system installed.

8.5 Electricity

There seems to be ample supply in the general area. Substations at the Ski Centre and the Lochaber Rural Complex could be upgraded to carry some further development. Major development would require a new supply from the A82 either (over or under ground) along with a new substation. Other electrical supply approaches could involve Combined Heat and Power systems and Micro-Renewables, depending on the detailed nature of future developments. Wind is unlikely to be a significant supply option because of its affect on the local visual amenity. There are possibilities for hydro generation in the area and this is being explored by Nevis Range and other parties.

8.6 Telecommunications

The current situation is a copper wire telephone line with virtually no data carrying capacity with the nearest broadband service being at Torlundy. There is a major upgrade of the current broadband services being carried out across Lochaber, which could influence this project, although a wiring system would still be required. This issue could significantly change over the early phases of the delivery of the Masterplan.



Torlundy Village



Cycle Path from Torlundy through Development Zone 1

There may also be possibilities of using some form of “off grid” satellite communication system, but these tend to be of lesser quality than fixed systems.

8.7 Gas

There is no connection to the Gas Network in the vicinity and this is not likely to change or become a possibility for future developments.

8.8 Development Zones

Given these overall positions, the four development zones would then evolve their own individual strategy in line with the detail design of their buildings.

1) Resort zone: The preferred solution would be for this zone to be serviced by a mains drainage system running to Torlundy and by mains electricity and telecommunications being run (probably over ground) from the A82. Given the forest-based location, it is possible that heating could be provided by a biomass system and a degree of micro-renewables would be used in order to reduce energy loads.

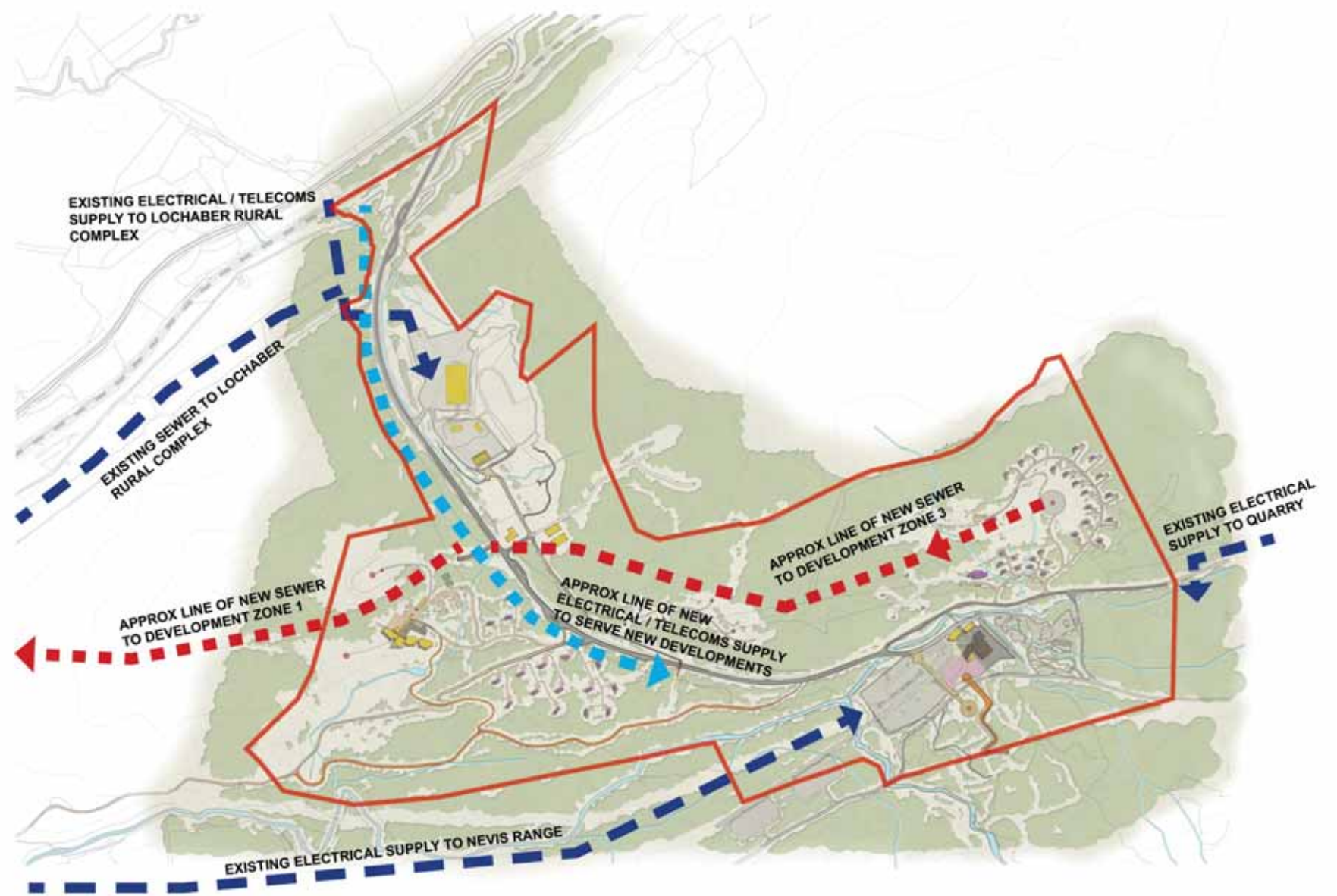
2) Ski range: It is envisaged that any development here would be of a small enough scale that the existing infrastructure could be upgraded to accommodate. One element of great benefit would be to provide telecommunications lines to the Ski Centre. This would require to come from the A82 and could be a joint project with the Resort Hotel.

3) Low Impact Accommodation: These buildings and camping pods are small scale and dispersed and it is likely that they would have their own localised wood fuelled heating systems, with mains electricity being provided from the A82. They are likely to have a package sewerage system, flowing into the river Lundy, in much the same way as the Ski Range has..

4) Lochaber Rural Complex: They have their own mains servicing system at present and it is envisaged that any future development in that area would probably connect to it, although this is a matter for future agreement with LRC.

5) Other possibilities: One of the possible opportunities is that of hydro power and this is being explored by Nevis Range at present. There has apparently also been a number of other feasibility studies of this on the north facing slopes of Anoch Mor in the past and a whole investigation of this would be valid at an early stage, as this could be influential on the infrastructure strategy

A full version of EDP’s report is included in Appendix 3



Services to Masterplan Area



9.0 COST SUMMARY

The Design Team undertook an outline assessment of the possible costs associated with the project. The costs estimated were based on the information shown in the Masterplan and were produced in the conventional format of Construction rather than total project costs. Providing a total cost picture requires a great degree of interpolation as to what items may be combined within phases and the summary below gives an overall view of approximate cost bands for areas of work. These are also construction based and do not include additional project elements such as land cost, financing, fees, investigations, tax etc.

COST APPRAISAL SUMMARY

ZONE 1 - The Resort Complex - Option 'A'	£12,204,000
ZONE 1 - The Resort Complex - Option 'B'	£12,375,000
ZONE 1 - The Resort Complex – Option 'C'	£10,813,000
ZONE 2 - Range Ski Centre Improvements	£ 7,373,000
ZONE 3 - Low Impact Accommodation	£ 3,910,000
ZONE 4 - New Entrance Road to Rural Complex	£ 104,000
INFRASTRUCTURE	£1,006,000
WATER SUPPLY	£ 320,000
TELECOMMUNICATIONS	£ 131,000

The full cost report is contained in Appendix 4

10.0 DELIVERY

The Masterplan has identified a 15 year vision which can be the foundation of future strategies. However, it is important to remember that masterplans such as this are not so much a fixed entity but more indicate a direction of travel. Over this period there will be a range of challenges and new opportunities which will adapt this thinking, but it is now vital to formulate an initial Delivery Strategy and to begin to manage the project towards the agreed vision.

10.1 Acceptance of the vision

One of the key aspects in the delivery of the Masterplan is its wide acceptance as a valid aspiration among the range of organisations and stakeholders who contributed to the study. Successful delivery will be the result of many years of joint working and a core group enthusiastically driving the process forward will be central to success. This could be based on some type of formal Concordat or could be a less structured arrangement.

10.2 Phasing

The Masterplan is promoting a group of related developments. As a result it is inherently extremely flexible and could be phased in a number of ways. Although the Resort Hotel development is important, due to the central role it plays in the business analysis of the other developments, it is very much a "stand alone" project and its time frame need not dominate the phasing strategy. One indicative phasing arrangement could be as below: Phase 1: Detailed development of the proposals:

- Establish planning/other regulatory positions

- Carry out initial exploratory cutting and drive temporary access routes into the Resort/In-Forest/Car Park Extensions areas
- Carry out more detailed site investigations of ground conditions
- Carry out more detailed services investigations.
- Discuss upgrade of access road with the Transport Authorities
- Develop the Forest Design Plan
- Explore further detailed options emanating from the marketing of the development zones

Phase 2: Carry out Landscape / Forestry works

- Carry out initial improvements to the Welcome Zone
- Create zones for infrastructure upgrade.
- Carry out works to forest design plan in order to plant areas surrounding the development zones

Phase 3: Commence development

- Commence Low Impact Accommodation.
- Environmental improvement works to Nevis Range Car Park
- Demarcate Nevis Range courtyard and perhaps produce first building
- Carry out second level of improvements to Welcome Zone, including signage and alterations to the access road

Phase 4: Resort development

- Create infrastructure
- Produce resort development

Phase 5: Continue with environmental improvements / Branding

10.3 Next Steps

Although delivering a masterplan such as this is a long and involved process which will be carried out over a number of years, the next steps are vital in order to commence the process.

Governance: Establish a delivery mechanism between the various stakeholders. Create the joint working groups and put governance structures in place for the delivery of the Masterplan.

Management: Decide how the project is going to be managed and put the necessary management structures in place, establishing the various delivery groups which will be required.

Detailed delivery plan: Create a detailed delivery plan covering all aspects of the project, including the funding and business plans which underpin it.

Planning position: establish with as much certainty as possible the principle of expanding the existing development boundary to the west in order to encompass the concept of the Resort Hotel.

Market assessment: Form a market analysis of the various components, and in particular the Resort Hotel.

Develop the Masterplan: The Masterplan and the Development Framework should be an ever evolving body of information which guides the process. They require to be frequently updated in order to always be able to produce a statement of the current position.



11.0 CONCLUSION

This Masterplan sets out a bold and exciting vision for the future of the area. It integrates a range of developments which will complement the existing recreational infrastructure, and support a programme of works to visually and environmentally improve the Leanachan Forest environment.

The aspiration is that the impact of this “Transformational Masterplan” will act as a catalyst for wider development within Lochaber District and contribute a major resort and visitor attraction for Scotland.

There has been enormous enthusiasm shown for this project by Forestry Commission Scotland, stakeholders, community and by the project team itself and we hope that this Masterplan will prove to be an important element in the successful regeneration of Leanachan Forest and the development of a Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort.



APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 Transport
- Appendix 2 Ground Conditions
- Appendix 3 Services Infra-structure
- Appendix 4 Cost Plan
- Appendix 5 Related Projects Matrix
- Appendix 6 Comparison Matrix
- Appendix 7 Consultation Attendees

Transport

By SKM Colin Buchanan

Introduction

Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort Masterplan
Access Overview.

SKM Colin Buchanan (SKM CB) was commissioned by Smith Scott Mullan Architects to provide input to a Masterplan at Leanachan Forest, to the north-east of Fort William. The proposed Masterplan aims to deliver significant improvement in terms of leisure facilities and holiday accommodation within Leanachan Forest, adjacent to the Nevis Range ski centre.

The purpose of this note is to provide an overview of access to the Masterplan area, identify any constraints in relation to potential development at Leanachan and identify opportunities to improve the sense of arrival to the Forest, particularly the attractiveness of the main access road.

Access Road

Form

Access to the Leanachan Forest will be via the existing Nevis Range access road south of the A82. This road is a two lane single carriageway approximately 8m wide and 2.1km in length between its junction with the A82 and the Nevis Range car park. The road also currently provides access to the Lochaber Rural Complex, a quarry and various Forestry Commission operations.

The junction between the A82 and the access road is a 'ghost island' priority junction, providing a separate right turn lane into Leanachan Forest. Due to the scale and form of the junction, it is not envisaged that there would ever be capacity issues at this junction, even on busy ski days.

The existing theoretical capacity of the road, based upon its geometry, will be somewhere in the region of 1,500 vehicles per hour. As this is greater than the cumulative available parking within Nevis Range the road should never experience capacity problems.

The scale of development being proposed within the Masterplan will not create any capacity issues on the access road or at its junction with the A82.

Management for events

During special events at the Nevis Range, for example the UCI mountain bike world cup, a management strategy is put in place which restricts access to the Nevis Range car park. The car park becomes an 'event village' with visitor trips made by bus from temporary Park and Rides.

During these events, the only potential capacity constraint is how quickly the management or event organiser get the vehicular demand directed to

suitable parking and car parking spaces. Any queuing should be short lived providing there is an adequate management plan in place.

Forestry and Quarrying

The level of traffic generated by Forestry operations or the quarry does not create any capacity problems on the access road.

Potential Improvements

It is acknowledged that the current form of the access road does not create a sense of place or arrival which would complement the development of a 4/5 star hotel and additional recreational accommodation. It also does not reflect its use by multiple modes of transport both for access to the Nevis Range and recreational uses which cross it at various points.

While it is unlikely that Highland Council would support or promote a reduction in the speed limit along the access road, due to the requirement for enforcement there are other measures which could improve the overall perception of the road for visitors and make it a more attractive entrance to the Nevis forest and Mountain Resort Masterplan area and Nevis Range. These may include:

- Introduction of a branded signing strategy. This would create sense of arrival at Leanachan from the A82 junction;
- Introduction of softer planting in verges and along the road side to soften the boundary between the road edge and surrounding landscape;
- A review of the location and form of crash barrier adjacent to the access road – this would be undertaken at a future design stage; and
- The formalisation of locations while cycle or walking routes cross the access road. This could simply be via coloured surfacing or additional signage.

The Masterplan

Movement Hierarchy

Within the Masterplan area, it is proposed that there will be a four tier hierarchy of internal roads and access paths as follows:

- Adoptable road to hotel from the main access road;
- New access tracks – good quality leading to lodges and camping areas;
- Cycle / footways – possibly to adoptable standard providing links between main uses within Masterplan area;
- Rough paths / tracks – leisure routes for walking and cycling throughout the Masterplan in keeping with the rural surroundings.

The movement hierarchy will cater for all relevant modes of transport and ensure that trips can be made between the various development areas within the Masterplan area by walking and cycling and will not create any barrier to movement for any visitor with any mobility issues.

Car Parking

New car parking will be provided at of the development areas within the Masterplan to comply with Highland Council development guidelines. There is also an opportunity to formalise the existing Nevis Range car park to reduce its visual impact. This could be through introducing areas of planting and alterations to the surfacing. The existing Nevis Range car park has a capacity of around 750 vehicles.

Development

In terms of traffic volumes, the scale of development proposed will have no impact on the operation of the main access road, or the junction with the A82. This includes any forestry or quarrying activity. Even on the busiest ski days during the winter, the likely time of arrivals of skiers would not conflict with the times of potential arrivals to the hotel or other residential areas.

GROUND by Will Rudd Davidson

1.0 Executive Summary

The following is a desk top study and initial engineering, drainage, flooding and strategy report for the purposes of appraising the feasibility of development of Mixed Use/Leisure Facilities at Leanachan Forest, Lochaber, West Highlands.

The feasibility study is to explore options to address the identified acceptable land uses, associated with the site, as outlined in the Forestry Commission Scotland's Adopted Plan.

The Forestry Commission Scotland's Adopted Plan identifies Acceptable uses as those associated with tourism and recreation and which are compatible with the principle role of Aonach Mor as a skiing and outdoor activities centre.

This Report compiles and summarises existing information available from public bodies, and databases, in relation to aspects such as site usage, solid and drift geology and associated below ground conditions, mining and quarrying stability hazards, environmental data relating to contaminative land use, site vulnerability, and flood risk.

Conclusions are presented with regards implications of the site conditions on proposed development, and recommendations made for further work in the stages to follow, and particular attention is raised to the following:

- Hazard of compressible soil and peaty soil at shallow depth has been identified. Consideration is required to the issue of excavation and disposal. Foundations for building structures and roads will require to be supported beyond the depth of this material.
- The potential hazard of radon gas has been identified. Buildings may require gas protection measures, to the ground floor structure/substructure.
- Suitable connection and discharge of the foul drainage from the proposed development require to be established. There is an existing private sewer to the north west end of the site, however, the capacity, condition and ownership are undisclosed at this time, and the levels require further interrogation, to establish if a new gravity fed foul sewer is feasible. A less preferable option of a private waste water treatment works may be necessary, otherwise.
- There is no recorded risk of flooding to a 1 in 100 year storm event within the site, however greater return period events and localised aspects of topography and watercourses require to be assessed.
- Surface water from roofs and hardstandings will require SUDs provisions, in accordance with SEPA requirements, to be integrated into the design.

2.0 Introduction

The Site lies within FCS land in the Leanachan Forest Lochaber.

The site covers an area of 81.4 Hectares.

The site is accessed from the existing A82 road, north east of Fort William, and follows the route of the existing access road to the Aonach Mor Ski Centre, at the foot of the Nevis Range.

This desktop study presented in the following sections has compiled information from the following sources:

- Envirocheck Reporting from Landmark Group
- British Geological Survey (BGS) Solid and Drift Edition Mapping
- Coal Authority Site Search
- Archive Borehole Logs from BGS Archives
- Scottish Water Records
- SEPA Pre-Planning Enquiry Response dated 17th May 13.

3.0 Desk Study of Soils & Environmental Information

3.1 Site History and current land use

The site currently contains an access road running south off the A82 accessing the Ski Centre. An Auction Mart building is noted, with associated outbuildings, to the east of the access road.

The access road to the Ski Centre was reconstructed in 1991 and which continues on to the Highland Lime Quarry, as part of a network of forestry tracks and roads.

The whole site slopes significantly, from north to south, from a low level of approximately 50 metres (AOD) at the A82, where it meets the access road, to approximately 150 metres to the southern boundary at the Ski Centre.

3.2 Geology

The archive borehole records identify shallow fibrous peat and peaty topsoil to depths of 0.4m to 1.8m depth below ground level.

The archive borehole records identify subsoil beneath the peaty topsoil to be silty sands and gravels. This is consistent with the BGS drift map which indicates Morainic Drift and Glacial drift consisting of silty sandy till interbedded with gravels sand and silt. Patches of basin and hill peat are shown in the proximity of the existing Auction Mart to the easterly portion of the site.

No landslips or artificial ground are identified.

3.3 Coal Mining, Land Stability, Brine Subsidence

The Coal Authority have certified that there are no known past present or proposed coal workings within the likely zone of influence of the site.

No records of subsidence have been recorded.

The Coal Authority have issued a No Search Certificate, concluding no issues anticipated.

3.4 Potential for Compressible Ground

BGS Datasheets indicate the site is within a zone of high hazard potential

with regards compressible soil.

3.5 Groundwater Vulnerability

The Hydrological Map indicates the site to be within a zone of low groundwater vulnerability.

3.6 Source Protection

The Source Protection Map indicates that the site does not lie within a source protection zone.

3.7 Sensitive Land Uses

The Sensitive Land Use Map indicates the site from the ski centre eastwards to be within a zone of special scientific interest. The remainder of the site is not identified to be of sensitive land use.

3.8 Soil Chemistry

BGS Estimated Soil Chemistry records identify anticipated levels of heavy metals such as Arsenic, Cadmium, Chromium, Lead and Nickel. The recorded levels are below the trigger levels set out in current guidelines so are not anticipated to be potential sources of contamination.

3.9 Radon Gas

British Geological Survey, National Geoscience Information Service indicates the site may be in a radon affected area, as between 1 and 3% of homes recorded in the vicinity of the site are above the action level.

3.10 Industrial Land Use

There is one Contemporary Trade Directory entry, associated with the Auction Mart.

3.11 Conclusion and Recommendations from Soils and Environmental Study

The Soils and Environmental Study identifies few significant issues and abnormal constraints impacting on the feasibility of proposed development, however the following require particular consideration in development.

High hazard of compressible soil is noted, and peaty soil is highlighted at shallow depth, impacting on the foundation solution for any new structures and roads as part of the proposed development.

The site is potentially impacted by being in a radon affected area.

A tailored intrusive Site Investigation will be necessary to further establish the presence of these or any other ground issues that may impact on the development, and an

interpretive report obtained identifying the risks, constraints and measures to be taken.

4 Drainage and Flooding Feasibility and Design Strategy

4.1 Flood Risk

SEPA have advised the following comments:

The site contains a number of small watercourse channels and the upper reaches of the River Lundy.

Any new development should be located away from areas at risk of flooding and seek to accommodate the watercourses with appropriate site layout. Avoidance of flood risk is the first principle of sustainable flood management.

The Hydrological Mapping indicates that the site lies out with recorded 1 in 100 year flood risk. SEPA state that any area with a greater than 0.5% (ie. 1 in 200 year) annual probability of flooding is considered the functional floodplain and development in any areas which may fall into that category should be avoided. A full hydrological study will require to be carried out but it is anticipated that any significant area of flood risk will be sterilised.

Watercourses should not be culverted as part of any new development.

There are some properties downstream on the River Lundy which may be at risk of flooding and any increase in flows being discharged into the river as a result of new development could increase risk to those areas. Attenuation of developed area storm water flows will likely be required.

Generally, provided development near any watercourses is avoided with a substantial buffer to the edge of the channel, SEPA will be unlikely to object. If the development encroaches onto any of the channels, involves any diversion or new crossings or culverts, SEPA would be likely to object until a detailed flood risk assessment has been carried out which demonstrates that the development can be carried out in accordance with the flooding section of Scottish Planning Policy.

4.2 Review of existing public and private drainage infrastructure

SEPA refer to a dedicated private connection to the Torlundy public sewer system from the Rural Complex. The Scottish Water GIS plan appears to show a sewer terminating to the west of the access road adjacent to the Auction Mart, which is likely to be the one to which SEPA refer. This is at a cover level of 88.5m and invert level appears to be 87.0m. The capacity and ownership of this is undisclosed at the time of writing.

4.3 Drainage Strategy for Development

4.3.1 Foul Drainage

SEPA would expect foul drainage from a development here to connect to the public sewage system, taken to the Torlundy Waste Water Treatment Works.

SEPA note that there is limited capacity for any additional loadings, in the existing system. From further review of Scottish Waters Strategic Asset Capacity and development Plan 2012 – Capacity Tables, it states that “current capacity is sufficient for identified development needs”.

A Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA) will be required to obtain further information on the capacity of the treatment works to accept the proposed development flows, should it be feasible to connect.

As the existing manhole, to which the development foul drainage might connect, is at the lower reaches of the site, it may be feasible to gravity feed a new foul sewer to this point of connection, subject to review of site levels and topography.

4.3.2 Surface Water Drainage

All surface run off from development on the site should be treated by sustainable drainage systems (SUDS), and adequate space is necessary to accommodate SUDS within the site layout.

The level of SUDS required is dependent on the nature of the proposed development, the size of development, and the environmental risk posed by the development.

Residential developments of 50 houses or less and retail/commercial/business parks with car parks of 50 spaces or less typically require one level of treatment for all hardstanding areas including roads. This level of treatment would be anticipated to be “At-Source”.

Residential developments of more than 50 houses and retail/ commercial/ business parks with car parks of more than 50 spaces require two levels of treatment for all hardstanding areas including roads. An exception is run-off from roofs which requires only one level of treatment. We recommend, as best practice, the second level of treatment to be a basin or pond designed in accordance with Sewers for Scotland Second Edition.

All roads schemes typically require two levels of treatment, except for residential developments of 50 houses or less and retail/commercial/business parks with car parks of 50 spaces or less.

4.4 Conclusions and recommendations on drainage studies.

The Drainage Study identifies issues and constraints impacting on the feasibility of proposed development, and the following require particular consideration in the development.

Indications are that there is foul drainage infrastructure available in the vicinity of the site, to serve new development. The condition and ownership of the private foul sewer required to be established, and the capacity of the public sewer and waste water treatment works, to which it connects, requires to be confirmed by Scottish Water. The option of a private treatment works discharging to the River Lundy may have to be considered due to potentially excessive distance and site levels impacting on the feasibility to connect into the existing foul sewer. This is a non-preferred option from SEPA's perspective, and will require a Licence Consent.

The development must be sensitive to the presence of local watercourses, and the impact of the volume and quality of any new storm water discharge to watercourses. A suitable SUDS design will be required, integrated into the development plan, to appropriately address storm water.

The water courses in the vicinity of the site should be unaltered where possible, and building proximity reviewed to ensure no negative impact.

Indications are from the flood mapping that there is no recorded risk of flooding in a 1 in 100 year storm event and as such flood risk is considered low across the site. However, a 1 in 200 year storm requires to be established for the site, and the localised topography assessed with various storm events to address any residual flood risk to the development. A full

Flood Risk Assessment is likely to be required.

5.0 Roads and Structures Development Constraints

5.1 Roads

Any new public roads, footways, and street lighting serving the development will require to be to adoptable standards.

Ground improvement, enhanced sub-base, and geotextile reinforcement measures may form part of the proposals where a poor subgrade is encountered, particularly the hill peat that is reported.

Disposal and reuse of excavated peat will require to be managed and agreed with SEPA, and minimising excavations would be desirable where peat is anticipated.

5.2 Building Structures

There are indications of soil of low and inadequate bearing capacity to accept any size of permanent building structure using traditional shallow foundations. Careful consideration should be placed on the foundation methods used. Deep foundations might be anticipated to achieve bearing onto deeper competent soil.

Again, disposal and reuse of excavated peat will require to be managed and agreed with SEPA, and minimising excavations would be desirable where peat is anticipated.

A tailored intrusive Site Investigation will be necessary to further establish the presence of these or any other ground issues that may impact on the development, and an interpretive report obtained identifying the risks, constraints and measures to be taken.

6.0 Recommended work to next stage

Commission Topographical Survey.

Investigate existing foul sewer – Establish ownership and permissions in principle.

Review feasibility of gravity drainage from development site.

Carry out CCTV survey to confirm condition and suitability.

Submit DIA once architectural scheme proposals have been developed.

Commission a Site Investigation. Notwithstanding the above, further exploratory works may be necessary in due course following consultation with the Statutory Authorities, and consent process.

Services by EDP Consulting Engineers

EXISTING AND PROPOSED SITE SERVICES (revised 3 March 2014)

This report forms part of an initial study and investigation into strengthening the PU Utility Networks and servicing this proposed development.

WATER:

There is water within the vicinity of the site of the proposed development, however there would be a considerable network extension required to serve the site from the Scottish Water distribution.

Option 1 – New below ground mains water distribution.

Extending the mains water supply would be the preferred option for the development as the water demand potential could be achieved more easily.

Distribution to hydrant, automatic fire suppression system with the added advantage of no requirement to have on site water treatment works.

For the estimated mains water pipework distribution comprising of:
2.6 km of 180mm diameter will equate to £263K approx. (main trunk line throughout the development).

2.0 km of 90mm diameter will equate to £200K approx. (branch supplies and service to fire hydrants).

This cost (£463K approx.) would include all below ground pipework distribution along with all trenching and back filling.

This is based on pipework material being HDPE/MDPE (not barrier pipe). A soil investigation report would need to be carried to ascertain exact pipework material selections.

Option 2 – Water Boreholes

Extensive testing would be required to ascertain the potential yield that could be delivered for a water borehole network. In addition to this, water treatment and water boosting provisions would need to be established.

Due to the requirements to have fire hydrants at specific intervals throughout the development, this option may not be the most advantageous. Further to this, an automatic fire suppression system within the hotel is likely to be required and the bore hole may fail to meet these demands. Due to these concerns, this option would not be the preferred solution to meet the water requirements.

The use of boreholes could be a possibility in serving the chalet buildings but not advantageous as the mains water network will already be extended to serve the hotel spa building.

Estimate costs for a 50m TEST bore hole only would be £15K approx.

In addition to the above, the use of a rainwater harvesting system to serve the WC's and urinals within the hotel only should be considered.

Option 3 – River Water Supply

Not a preferential option for the following reason:-

1. Water treatment works required.
2. Water will need to be boosted – large plant space will be required.
3. Drawing considerable amounts of water can be detrimental to local eco-system.
4. Salmon spawning routes in these areas can be affected by water draw off.
5. SEPA – usually require an extensive and conclusive report to the impacts and all associated consequences of the utilizing of river water supplies for commercial applications.

ELECTRICITY:

The Ski Range is currently supplied by an over ground electrical line from near Torlundy, the Rural Complex from near the road and the Quarry from their own line to the north.

There is an 11kV HV line following the A82 and branching off to serve a 500kVA substation (S/S) at the Auction Mart and a further HV line to the south serving Aonach Mor. This is a reasonable size substation but at this stage we don't know what spare capacity there is. However, in our opinion with there being HV in the area, it would be reasonable to assume this substation could be capable of being increased if required. Again, more precise information would be available following a detailed application.

Current information would suggest the Auction Mart S/S requires to be increased to 1000kVA. We would estimate this to cost to be about £70K approx. A further cost of £10K should be allowed to serve the proposed new cluster of buildings in this vicinity.

The proposals would suggest that in addition, the hotel complex would require a new sub-station and given current information we suggest this to be 1000kVA at an estimated cost of £130K. Additional costs would be incurred serving new buildings in Area 3 Zones C, D & F currently estimated at £25K.

The existing substation at Aonach Mor is 1000kVA and at this stage we consider it capable of serving the current proposals. Additional costs would be incurred for servicing the new buildings and an estimate of £15K should be allowed for Area 1 and a further £25K for Area 2.

We understand there have been various plans to introduce hydro schemes on the northern slopes of Aonach Mor by other parties.

The details of this are not available at the time of writing but it is assumed this would be a "run-of-the-river" hydroelectricity generation scheme whereby little or no water storage is provided. A plant without storage is, therefore, subject to seasonal river flows and serves as a peaking power plant while a plant with storage can regulate water flow and serve either as a peaking or base load power plant.

Run-of-river projects are generally considered to have minimal impact on the environment, but it's not zero. Roads and power lines would likely need to be built in this case and the amount of diverted water can be large enough to change the river's natural ecosystem. These are valid concerns. Also, since run-of-river projects don't build any significant storage capacity in a reservoir, they're completely reliant on natural precipitation patterns. Droughts mean blackouts therefore a grid system would require to be

provided in addition for full backup provision.

WIND TURBINE GENERATION

Currently there is no strategic planning process for wind farms in sensitive areas, so if wind turbines were to be a preferred option a planning application could be submitted and feedback awaited. Every single application has to have its own environmental impact assessment that has to look at the impact on local landscape and habitats, and that forms part of the planning application which then requires approval by the Local Authority.

In the case of the resort hotel development for example, a single 100kW wind generator would typically consist of a rotor diameter of 20m mounted on a 30m tower and these have to be located in prominent locations for wind capture.

It has to be remembered that wind power cannot be solely relied on and a landline system would still be required.

In our opinion the use of wind turbine generation would be extremely controversial and would be unlikely to gain public approval.

TELECOMS:

There is a basic copper distribution line in the area and certainly no fibre lines sufficient for the acceptable internet speeds now expected. From the checks we have carried out, the best broadband speeds available are a very low 1MB which is far below national average. We should consider the possibility of a system network upgrade that would benefit everyone.

This will require network strengthening in the form of additional copper or fibre but this would need to be discussed in depth further with BT Openreach. We have made an initial application to pursue this and we expect this to be costly.

Satellite broadband may be an alternative which generally is able to offer around 20Mbps download speeds and 6Mbps upload. This is a relatively low speed for a hotel of 80 beds and is not deemed to be feasible in practice.

Revenue gain should be considered by offering guests Wi-Fi for connecting to the hotel network. This could take the form of offering a complete Wi-Fi service throughout the rooms at the guests' expense to use as and when they please, as an optional extra or as a cost per Mb download/upload.

GAS:

Current information confirms there is no mains gas service in the region and this would mean the nearest service is too far away to be considered any further.

HEATING:

Heating to Hotel & Complex:

Option 1 – Bio-mass lead boiler with oil or LPG back up boilers. This system would utilise the available wood reserves which are available on the site, with the added advantage of an oil/gas reserve supply for adverse circumstances.

This option could be used to serve the hotel chalets with electrical only services or alternatively use of a district heating system to the chalets providing heating and domestic hot water.

The heating for the 80 bed hotel/spa (Option A) estimated boiler/heating load would be approximately 600 kW.

We would suggest the lead boiler would be served from bio-mass materials. An estimate of cost including wood store, chipper, calorifier, pumps etc would be £500K approximately. In addition, automatic controls installation would be estimated at a further £100K.

Backup/auxiliary boiler based on LPG or oil would be required in addition which would be approximately £200K.

The best option for commercial bio-mass boilers is pellets; these are an engineered fuel source with more accurate calorific value which is more suitable for a commercial installation of this nature.

The next best option is the use of wood chips produced from wood supply; these are dried, stored and used from a worm drive feed from the hopper to the bio-mass boiler.

Having consulted with several manufactures who produce bio-mass boilers, a combined Biomass/CHP plant is not currently produced or technically feasible.

Option 2 – Provide a containerised gas or oil supply to the buildings.

These could be used to serve the hotel and chalet buildings via either traditional combustion appliances in the hotel and chalets or alternatively, used to serve a Combined Heating and Power (CHP) system. However, these fuel sources would require to be checked for suitability on an individual building basis. The power generated from the CHP system would be used for lighting and other electrical provisions throughout the development.

Option 3 – geothermal energy heating and hot water system to the hotel only. An extensive geological analysis would be required, to establish the geological constraints and the output that could be yielded from the ground loop conductor before this option could be considered further. However, due to constraints of using an engineered bio-mass pellets and the back-up boiler supply, geothermal energy could be a viable solution to the heating and hot water requirements, assuming that the results from the geological report are supportive of this option.

Option 4 – Introduction of LPG to serve the hotel and chalet buildings. The fuel source to the large commercial installation could be from central fuel storage tanks with underground pipework taken to the development.

Cont/...

This generally requires a reasonable plant area positioned for the tank area and suitable access for tanker fuel deliveries. There are many constraints on clearance distances, compound enclosures and vehicle access that place large demands on the positioning to serve the proposed buildings. It is also recognised that this type of fuel supply is generally more expensive and requires a contract in place to have regular maintained deliveries to the site.

However, like natural gas, the equipment and heating plant are generally reliable in operation.

Option 5 – For further consideration, heating to the new Chalets could be any of the following depending on final site layout proposals.

- Option A - electric panel type heaters.
- Option B - district heating system via local sub-station heat interface units and central boiler plant.
- Option C - new LPG supply to combination boilers within chalet buildings.

COST APPRAISAL – AUGUST 2014 REVISION.

The costs appraisal is scheduled out into the development zones highlighting budget square metre rates for individual elements. Furthermore we have also provided further clarifications and assumptions based on the information provided to-date.

BASIS OF COST

The costs per square metre are based on the Architects Scheme, apart from peat removal.

Infra-structure works cannot really be based on m2 rates and are based on lengths or design as provided by the Engineer.

The cost per m2 rates for the buildings includes an element of car parking /landscaping etc. If the building sizes increase or decrease the rate per m2 applied will not reflect the rates within this report unless the car parking/landscaping is applied at the same proportion.

Please note that the estimated costs within this report are exclusive of the following:

- 1 - Professional fees
- 2 - Planning & Building control Fees
- 3 - VAT
- 4 - Fittings & fixtures within any of the buildings
- 5 - Tree removal
- 6 - Removal of material off site

Please further note the following in connection with the cost estimates:

- 1 - Costs based on 3rd Quarter 2014 prices.
- 2 - Costs are based on drawings issued prior to 23rd September 2013.

DEVELOPMENT ZONE 1 - The Resort Complex - Option 'A'

80 bed Spa Hotel – Estimated cost = £9,728,000

Hotel building of 4,300m2 amounting to £9,728,000 which equates to £2,262/m2.

Access Road to Complex – Estimated cost = £229,000

Based on an area of 1,496m2 amounting to £229,000 which equates to a rate of £153/m2.

Car parking and hard standing – Estimated cost = £896,000

Based on an area of 4,722m2 and including area of 1,252m2 of hard standing the rate based on area of car park amounts to £896,000 equating to a rate of £189.75/m2.

Footpath/Cycle paths – Estimated cost = £62,000

Based on an area of 2,000m2 the cost amounts to £52,000 equating to a rate of £26/m2.

The Cycle path cost of £10,000 is based on 100m of rough track 2.5m wide.

High quality soft landscaping – Estimated cost = £259,000



Based on an area of 4,000m2 a cost amounting to £259,000 equates to a rate of £64.75/m2.

Electrical connections from A82 – Estimated cost = £117,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20% and adjusted to 3Q 2014

Foul & Surface water drainage – Estimated cost = £131,000

Indicative scheme proposed. A more detailed scheme to be developed in order to firm up this element of works.

Site levelling Works – Provisional Allowance = £200,000

Removal of peat to development – Estimated cost = £582,000

We have been provided with drawings showing the delineation of the peat. Based on a dig of 1.5m and replacing with 1.5m of granular material only under areas requiring construction of 6677m2. The total cost is £582,000 which equates to £87/m2.

DEVELOPMENT ZONE 1 - The Resort Complex - Option 'B'

Central building – Estimated cost = £3,946,000

Based on 1000m2 Spa hotel including access roads and cycle tracks/car parking. This cost amounts to £3,946,000, which equates to £3,946/m2.

High Quality Chalets – Estimated cost = £7,500,000

Cost is based on 50Nr high quality chalets of 100m2 each. Cost equates to £150,000 each.

Resort drainage to main sewer connection – Estimated cost = £345,000

Updated allowance only to reflect 3Q 2014.

Site levelling Works – Provisional Allowance = £200,000

Removal of peat to Resort Complex B – Estimated cost = £322,000

We have been provided with drawings showing the delineation of the peat. Based on a dig of 1.5m and replacing with 1.5m of granular material only under areas requiring construction of 3802m2. The total cost is £322,000 which equates to £85/m2

Footpath/Cycle paths – Estimated cost = £62,000

Based on an area of 2,000m2 the cost amounts to £52,000 equating to a rate of £26/m2.

The Cycle path cost of £10,000 is based on 100m of rough track 2.5m wide.

DEVELOPMENT ZONE 1 - The Resort Complex – Option 'C'

50 bed spa hotel – Estimated cost = £6,087,000

Based on 2690m2 Spa hotel amounting to £6,087,000, which equates to £2,262/m2.

High Quality Chalets – Estimated cost = £2,250,000

Cost is based on 15Nr high quality chalets of 100m2 each. Cost equates to £150,000 each.

Access Road to Complex – Estimated cost = £229,000

Based on an area of 1,496m2 amounting to £229,000 which equates to a rate of £153/m2.

Car parking and hard standing – Estimated cost = £896,000

Based on an area of 4,722m2 and including area of 1,252m2 of hard standing the rate based on area of car park amounts to £896,000 equating to a rate of £189.75/m2.

Footpath/Cycle paths – Estimated cost = £62,000

Based on an area of 2,000m2 the cost amounts to £52,000 equating to a rate of £26/m2.

The Cycle path cost of £10,000 is based on 100m of rough track 2.5m wide.

Electrical connections from A82 – Estimated cost = £117,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20% and adjusted to 3Q 2014

Foul & Surface water drainage – Estimated cost = £131,000

Indicative scheme proposed. A more detailed scheme to be developed in order to firm up this element of works.

High quality soft landscaping – Estimated cost = £259,000

Based on an area of 4,000m2 a cost amounting to £259,000 equates to a rate of £64.75/m2.

Site levelling Works – Provisional Allowance = £200,000

Removal of peat to development – Estimated cost = £582,000

We have been provided with drawings showing the delineation of the peat. Based on a dig of 1.5m and replacing with 1.5m of granular material only under areas requiring construction of 6677m2. The total cost is £582,000 which equates to £87/m2.



DEVELOPMENT ZONE 2 - Range Ski Centre Improvements

1. New Building 1 - Estimated cost = £951,000:

Based on the Architect's requirements for a 560m2 building our cost was estimated at £951,000 which equates to £1,698/m2.

2. New Building 2 - Estimated cost = £1,522,000:

Based on Architect's requirements for 375m2 Visitor Centre and 220m2 covered Pergola, the costs are as follows:

- 375m2 Building 2 amounts to approximately £1,273,000 and equates to £3,394/m2.
- 220m2 Pergola amounts to approximately £249,000 and equates to £1,131/m2

3. Extension to Pine Martin Café including upgrading sub-station Estimated cost = £217,000:

The cost is based on a 100m2 building and upgrading sub-station as per EDP costs enhanced to include Prelims and Price & Design Risk giving an overall rate of £2,170/m2.

4. Surfacing of Courtyard – Estimated cost = £173,000

The cost is based on Architect's area of 1,300m2 and on a surface finish allocation and includes floodlighting. The overall cost of the work amounts to £173,000, which equals a rate of £133/m2.

5. Timber Footbridge including River Viewpoint – Estimated cost £59,000

An allocated cost of £59,000 is allowed.

6. Resurfacing of Activity Area – Estimated cost £2,172,000

An overall cost of £2,172,000 and based on an area of 35,000m2 amounts to a rate of £62/m2.

7. Resurfacing of General Car Park – Estimated cost = £1,300,000

Based on the total area as advised by the Architect of 16,500m2 including incidentals as per the report the total cost is £1,300,000. This equates to £78.79/m2.

8. Trailhead area – Estimated cost = £119,000

Based on areas as advised by the Architect including glazed covered area the total cost amounts to £119,000, which equates to £125.26/m2 based on an area of 950m2.

9. Extended Car Park to SW of existing car park – Estimated cost = £860,000

Based on area advised by the Architect of 6,000m2 and 400m of road the total cost amounts to £860,000 equating to £143/m2 (based on the car park area of 6,000m2). The cost of the road and bridge allowance is included within the cost per m2

DEVELOPMENT ZONE 3 - In Forest Development Cabin Area

Timber Cabin – Estimated cost per cabin = £102,000

Based on individual cabins at 75m2 each, the total cost amounts to £102,000, which equates to £1,360/m2.

Glamping pods including walkways – Estimated cost per pod = £17,000

Based on an individual pod linked by 1,200m2 of walkway the total cost amounts to £17,000 which includes a proportion of walkway per pod

Bunk House with car parking – Estimated cost = £1,946,000

Based on 1000m2 with associated car parking. The total cost amounts to £1,946,000 which equates to £1,946/m2.

Activity Area including car parking – Estimated cost = £720,000

Based on 7,500m2 the cost of this amounts which equates to £96/m2. The cost includes associated access roads and footpaths.

Electrical Substation - Nevis Range – Estimated cost = £52,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries, inflation and Price & Design risk of 20%.

Package Sewage Plant - Provisional Sum £270,000

A provisional allowance of £270,000 included meantime.

Resort drainage to main sewer connection – Estimated cost = £54,000

A provisional allowance of £54,000 included meantime.

Site levelling Works – Provisional Allowance = £50,000

Removal of peat to Chalet development – Estimated cost = £699,000

We have been provided with drawings showing the delineation of the peat. Based on a dig of 1.5m and replacing with 1.5m of granular material only under areas requiring construction of 8,000m2. The total cost is £699,000 which equates to £87.38/m2

DEVELOPMENT ZONE 4 - New entrance road to rural complex

Estimated cost = £104,000.

This is based on a 5.5m wide road 90 m long.

The cost amounting to £104,000 which equates to £210/m2.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Electrical substation upgrade at Rural complex – Estimated cost = £91,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20%.

New electrical supply from A82 to resort

- Underground – Estimated cost = £85,000
- Over ground – Estimated cost = £65,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20%.

Upgrade Substation at Nevis Range – Estimated cost = £ NIL

As per EDP comments

Extend underground supply – Estimated cost = £33,000

Extend underground supply to cabins /bunk houses from Nevis Range substation
As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20%.

Sewer from Torlundy to Resort Hotel – Estimated cost = £292,000

Costs based on 2,000m of sewer.

Sewer from Torlundy to Nevis Range – Estimated cost = £440,000

Costs based on 3,000m of sewer.

WATER SUPPLY

New water main from A82 to Resort Hotel – Estimated cost = £261,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20%.

New water main from A82 to Nevis Range – Estimated cost = £59,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20%.

TELECOMMUNICATIONS

New Broadband supply A82 to Resort Hotel – Estimated cost = £72,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20%.

New Broadband supply A82 to Nevis Range – Estimated cost = £59,000

As per EDP cost estimate and adjusted to include Preliminaries and Price & Design risk of 20%.

PROPOSALS MATRIX

Project Title: Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort Masterplan

Date and Revision: 13 May 2013

WORKING DRAFT

	Essential
	Desirable
	Undesirable
	Peripheral

This document lists possible proposed facilities for the Leanachan Masterplan site and establishes basic requirements, costs and funding, impact on existing facilities in the region and comment on the feasibility and deliverability of the proposal. The importance of each proposal may be classed as Essential, Desirable, Undesirable or Peripheral.

PROPOSAL	REQUIREMENTS	COST/ FUNDING	IMPACT	FEASIBILITY	COMMENT	IMPORTANCE
ACCOMMODATION						
Luxury Hotel	Large core building with several support buildings and separate lodges etc.	High/ private	High	Dependant on market and private investment	The addition of high quality accommodation is thought vital to attract people to Leanachan	Essential
Bunk House	Medium building or series of small buildings	Medium/ Community/ private	Medium	Dependant on market and private investment	Would support a number of objectives and be attractive to the visitors on a budget. Could be located away from core resort buildings more associated with the ski centre.	Desirable
Camping Pods and Wigwams	Series of small buildings integrated in the forest	Medium/ Community/ private	Medium	Dependant on market and private investment	Adds variety to the provision of accommodation types. Integrated into the forest and attractive to families, younger visitors and those on a budget	Essential
Private Holiday Lodges	Small buildings	Private	Medium	Depend on private investment.	There was a general community desire at consultation to avoid further holiday accommodation – although this needs to be balanced with the requirement for activity at the harbour.	Desirable
LEISURE AND RECREATION						
Retail	Incorporated as part of resort or separate facilities	Medium/ public/ private	High	Dependant on market and private investment.	Improving the existing facilities is likely to be important. Demand questionable and must be careful not to detract from existing retail facilities in Fort William.	Desirable
Café/ Restaurants	Series of smaller buildings	High/ Mixed public and private	High	Dependant on market and private investment and effect in existing facilities at the ski centre.	New buildings around the ski centre may be able to offer a wider variety of services to attract new visitors.	Desirable
Public Realm / Landscape	Landscape/ seating/ Signage etc.	Gradual/ Varied / public	High	Could be a series of projects.	Projects could range from small and easy to large and ambitious.	Essential
Path Network	Works to existing network of paths and provision of new paths	Mixed public/ private	Medium	Could be a series of projects.	Paths could become more accessible to less abled and older visitors. provision of new paths to connect new resort to ski centre and to improve the visitor experience in the forest	Essential
TRANSPORT AND PARKING						
Nevis Range Car Park Alterations	Alterations to existing provision	Medium/ private	High	Dependant on market and private investment.	Reduce visual impact of car park and allow a more integrated parking provision into the landscape	Essential
New Access Roads	Roads to serve Resort	High/ Mixed public and private	High	Dependant on market and private investment. Requires roads authority input/ permission.	Requirement for high quality resort. Landscaping required to minimise visual impact of roads and service entrances etc.	Essential
Route from main Road to Resort and Ski Centre	Signage/ Markings/ Features	Low/ Gradual/ Public	Medium	Requires roads authority input/ permission.	A gradual project which could engage a lot of people and community ideas.	Desirable

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COMPARISONS MATRIX

Project Title: Nevis Forest and Mountain Resort Masterplan

Date and Revision: 13 May 2013 Revision B

WORKING DRAFT



This document lists relevant leisure and recreational facilities and projects in the surrounding forest area, local vicinity and further afield, which have been studied to provide examples of relevant business models and inspiration for / comparison to proposals included in the Leisnahan Masterplan. Relevance may be Very Relevant, Relevant or Not Relevant.

NAME	LOCATION	FACILITY	COMMENTS	RELEVANCE
LOCAL				
Nevis Range	Leisnahan Forest / Nevis Range	Adventure Sport Centre Recreational Snow Sports, Mountain Biking and Gondola Lift	Long lease arrangement with FCS. Snow sports account for 20% of uplifts. Mountain Biking / summer uplifts major source of income. Hosts major National and International championships. Activities on offer: skiing, snowboarding, mountain biking, rock climbing, ski mountaineering, snow & ice climbing, paragliding. Web: http://www.nevisrange.co.uk/	Very Relevant
Lochaber Rural Complex	Leisnahan Forest	Recreation / education complex	Long lease arrangement with FCS. Rural Education Centre - Voluntary, community based facility. Site also includes 70 seat café, craft shop, auctioneers house, function suite and businesses.	Very Relevant
Local Walking Trails	Paths in and around Leisnahan Forest	Recreation Hill-walking	Family friendly and suitable for beginners or experienced walkers. Forest contains marked routes, wildlife hides and viewing points, ruined hill forts and cleared crafting settlements.	Very Relevant
UCI Mountain Bike World Cup	Leisnahan Forest	Event Mountain biking	Multi-award winning UCI Mountain Bike World Cup – various venues across Europe / North America. Fort William round held over two days in June. Approx 18 000 spectators. Awarded UCI Best Downhill Round on six occasions. Web: http://forwilliamworldcup.co.uk/	Very Relevant
Relentless 24	Leisnahan Forest	Event Mountain biking	Endurance race that takes place on the Witch's Trails and World Championship Courses. 400 competitors. Held in mid-October. Utilises Adventure Sport Centre facilities and offers camping for the competitors within Nevis Range car park. Web: http://www.nofusssevents.co.uk/event/Relentless-24/27/26/	Relevant
Scottish Six Day Trails	Fort William and surrounds	Event Motorbike	Annual competition involving 270 competitors. 6 different trails over 6 days in May. Web: http://www.ssdtr.org/	Relevant
Ben Nevis Race	Ben Nevis	Event Mountaineering / race	500 Competitors. One of Fort William's oldest events. Web: http://www.bennevisrace.co.uk/	Relevant
Inverlochy Castle	Torlundy	Accommodation 5-star hotel 17 en-suite rooms	Wedding, corporate and events venue. Activities on offer include: hunting, fishing, country pursuits, photography tours, scenic tours. Web: http://www.inverlochycastlehotel.com/	Very Relevant
Croft Anna Hotel	Loch Linnhe (4km S of FW)	Accommodation 2-star hotel 92 en-suite rooms	Loch side location. Budget stay - facilitates touring groups. Offers evening entertainment. Web: http://www.leisureplex.co.uk/hotels/27-Croft-Anna-Hotel-Fort-William.html	Not Relevant
Ben Nevis Hotel & Leisure Club	Fort William	Accommodation 3-star hotel 119 rooms	Sister Hotel of Alexandra Hotel. Offers spa / leisure facilities and traditional Scottish hospitality. Traditional Bar / Restaurant. Web: http://www.strathmorehotels.com/Ben-Nevis-Hotel/Home/	Relevant

Alexandra Hotel	Fort William	Accommodation 3-star hotel 93 rooms	Sister hotel of Ben Nevis Hotel. Offers spa / leisure facilities that are available at Ben Nevis Hotel along with traditional Scottish Hospitality. Traditional Bar / Restaurant. Web: http://www.strathmorehotels.com/Alexandra+Hotel/Home/	Not Relevant
Premier Inn	Fort William	Accommodation	Low-cost hotel chain. New addition to Fort William. Web: http://www.premierinn.com/en/hotel/FORLOC/fort-william	Relevant
Dontra Log Chalets	Fort William	Accommodation Self-catered chalets	Limited Provision. Sleep 4 people each. Web: http://www.dontra-logchalets.co.uk/	Relevant
Lochy Holiday Park	Fort William	Accommodation Self-catered lodges / caravans	Sleep 4-6 people each. Aimed at outdoor sport market. Outside storage for skis, bikes etc. Web: http://www.loyhy-holiday-park.co.uk/	Relevant
Great Glen Yurts	Fort William	Accommodation Self-catered Mongolian yurts	Limited provision. Also offer yoga and healing treatments. Web: http://www.greatglenyurts.com/	Relevant
Lochaber Lodges	Banavie	Accommodation Self-catered lodges	Small scale self-catered accommodation on the banks of Caledonian Canal. Offers 12 log-built lodges that sleep 2-6 people each. Web: http://www.lochaberlodges.com/	Relevant
Riverside Lodges	Invergloy, Spean Bridge	Accommodation Lodges	Small-scale accommodation. Three architecturally designed lodges. Self-catered or B&B. Set within woodland. Web: http://www.riversidelodge.org.uk/	Relevant
Yoga Retreats	Loch Awe, Argyll	Accommodation / Recreational	15 Bedrooms, environmentally friendly, yoga centre. Facilities on offer: Café Kitchen (organic food), crèche, several bathing areas. Web: http://www.ecoyoga.org/	Not Relevant
The Logs	Torlundy	Accommodation Log-house	Small scale 4-star self-catered accommodation. Detached Norwegian log house sleeping max. 10 over 6 bedrooms. Web: http://www.scotland-info.co.uk/TheLogs/	Not Relevant
Canalside Apartments	Banavie	Accommodation 5-star Apartments	Luxury self-catering 2 bedroom apartments and 3-bedroom townhouses located next to Neptune's Staircase. Web: http://www.highlandholidayapartments.co.uk/	Relevant
Highland Lodges	Loch Tay, Perthshire	Accommodation Lodges, Tepees, Woodland Cabins, Belle Tents, Wigwams & Yurts	"Glamping" – lodges, tepees, cabins, belle-tents, wigwams, yurts etc. Offers variety of self-catered accommodations and activities, including: archery, canoeing, sailing, deer stalking etc Web: http://www.lochtay-vacations.co.uk/	Very Relevant
Great Glen Lodges	Kilfinnan, Spean Bridge	Accommodation Self-catered Lodges	Small scale, high-quality self-catered accommodation. Activities on offer: angling, hill walking and cycling. Web: http://www.greatglenlodges.co.uk/index.asp	Relevant
Ben Nevis Inn & Bunkhouse	Ben Nevis	Accommodation Hostel / bunkhouse	Located at the end of the West Highland Way. Budget bunkhouse attached to Inn with live music. Web: http://www.ben-nevis-inn.co.uk/	Very Relevant
Linnhe Lochside Holidays	Fort William	Accommodation Chalet, Caravan, Camping	Self-catering 4-Star Holiday Park – alpine chalets, holiday caravans, camping and touring pitches Web: http://www.linnhe-lochside-holidays.co.uk/self-catering-holiday-park-in-fort-william	Very Relevant
Active Highs	Fort William	Leisure	Offers white water rafting and canyoning in and around Fort William and Nevis Range. Web: http://www.activehighs.co.uk/	Not Relevant
Snowgoose Mountain Centre	Fort William	Mountain and water based skills centre	Mountain & water based skills training and guiding centre. Web: http://www.highland-mountain-guides.co.uk/	Not Relevant
Lochaber Leisure Centre	Fort William	Leisure / sports centre	Offers 25m swimming pool, sauna, squash court, fitness centre and climbing wall.	Not Relevant
West Highland Wheelers	Banavie	Leisure Cycle Club	Local cycle club. Active road, mountain bike, time trial and downhill riders. Weekly events including road and off-road rides. Offers annual membership. Web: http://www.whwheelers.org	Not Relevant

Fort William Golf Club / Spean Bridge Golf Course	Fort William Spean Bridge	Golf Course	Most accessible Golf Courses from Leanachan.	Relevant
NATIONAL				
Tummell Valley	Tay Forest, Pitlochry	Holiday Park	Parkdean Holiday Park. Marketed as a "woodland retreat". Offers Lodges or Caravans. Activities include hill walking, cycling, Highland Safaris. Web: http://www.parkdeanholidays.co.uk/scotland-holidays/tummel-valley/tummel-valley-holiday-park.htm	Relevant
Kippford Forest Lodges	Kippford, Galloway	Accommodation Self-catered lodges	9 Norwegian log lodges. Activities offered: sailing, horse riding, history trails. Web: http://www.kippfordforestlodges.co.uk/	Relevant
Forest Holidays Argyll	Ardgarden, Argyll	Accommodation Lodges / Cabins	Situated within Argyll Forest Park. 40 Cabins situated in a "Forest Retreat" along with shop, café and restaurant. Web: http://www.forestholidays.co.uk/locations/scotland-holidays/argyll-holidays	Very Relevant
Forest Holidays Strathyre	Strathyre, Queen Elizabeth Forest Park	Accommodation Lodges / Cabins	Situated within Queen Elizabeth Forest Park. Cabins situated in a "Forest Retreat" along with shop, café and restaurant. Web: http://www.forestholidays.co.uk/locations/scotland-holidays/strathyre-holidays	Very Relevant
Ben Arthur Resort	Arrochar, Argyll	Accommodation / Leisure	5-star 160 bed "Destination Hotel". 250 berth- Marina. Currently under construction. Also includes residencies, spa / fitness centre etc. Web: http://benarthurreort.com/ Online brochure: http://issuu.com/archial/docs/ben_arthur?mode=embed&layout=http%3A%2F%2Fskin.issuu.com%2Fv%2Fflight%2Fflavout.xml&showFlipBtn=true	Very Relevant
Crieff Hydro	Crieff, Perthshire	Accommodation / Leisure	5-star leisure resort. Main focus is the spa and treatments. Offers and additional 60 indoor and outdoor activities and holds Weddings and corporate events. Web: http://www.crieffhydro.com/	Relevant
Airth Castle	Stirlingshire	Accommodation / Leisure	5-star 125 bed hotel. Spa and fitness centre. Venue for weddings, events and corporate events/ Web: http://www.airthcastlehotel.com/	Relevant
Stobo Castle	Stobo, Peeblesshire	Accommodation Leisure	5-star health and spa Hotel. Offers residential packages and day visits. Web: http://www.stobocastle.co.uk/	Relevant
Gleneagles	Auchterarder, Perthshire	Accommodation Leisure	Spa resort. Four restaurants (two Michelin Star). Three championship golf courses. Hosts of major golf championships, including the Ryder Cup 2014. Web: http://www.gleneagles.com/	Not Relevant
Natural Retreats	John O'Groats	Accommodation Lodges	3-Bedroom eco-lodge residencies. Web: http://www.naturalretreats.co.uk/john-o-groats/self-catering-holidays.php	Relevant
Hoseasons	Various UK	Holiday Park	Offers cottages, lodges, holiday parks and boat holidays at a range of destinations across Scotland, UK and Europe. Web: http://www.hoseasons.co.uk/	Relevant
Centre Parcs	Various UK	Holiday Park	"Village-setting" - set in 400 acres of forest, lakes and streams. Four locations across England. Facilities offered include: range of restaurants, cafes, shops, variety of accommodation and activities. Web: http://www.centerparcs.co.uk/	Relevant
Craigendarroch	Craigendarroch, Cairngorms	Accommodation Lodges	Hilton Grand Vacations Club – luxury lodges. Web: http://higvc.co.uk/resorts/scotland/craigendarroch	Very Relevant
Coylumbridge	Coylumbridge, Aviemore	Accommodation Lodges	Hilton Grand Vacations Club – luxury lodges. Builds on existing attractions in Aviemore. Web: http://higvc.co.uk/resorts/scotland/coylumbridge	Very Relevant
Dunkeld	Dunkeld, Perthshire	Accommodation Apartments	Hilton Grand Vacations Club – luxury apartments. Web: http://higvc.co.uk/resorts/scotland/dunkeld	Very Relevant

Auchrannie	Isle of Arran, Argyll	Accommodation Spa	Spa hotel offering accommodation and lodges on Isle of Arran. Marketed as a UK spa break destination. Web: http://www.auchrannie.co.uk/	Relevant
Shore Lodge - National Trust for Scotland	Bodrick Castle	Accommodation	Budget accommodation. Self-catering lodge and "pods" Web: http://www.nts.org.uk/Holidays/	Relevant
Invercoe	Glencoe, Ballachulish	Accommodation Hobbit houses, caravans, lodges, cottages	Self-catered holiday park. Offers alternative Hobbit Houses. Web: http://www.invercoe.co.uk/index.php?id=20	Relevant
Golf Courses	Traigh and Fort Augustus	Golf Course	Both offer scenic, 18-hole golf experiences. Within travelling distance from Leanachan.	Relevant
The Residence	Balado, Perthshire	Event Temporary Camping	(T in the Park) Luxury Camping - temporary structures – wig wams, yurts, tents, cabins. Web: http://www.dfconcertsandevents.com/theresidence/	Relevant
Rockness Belladrum	Inverness	Event Music Festival	Web: http://www.rockness.co.uk/ Web: http://www.tartanheartfestival.co.uk/	Relevant
INTERNATIONAL				
Copperhill	Åre, Sweden	Accommodation 5-star -112 rooms	Integrated into ski network. Spa complex, two bars and two restaurants. Web: http://www.copperhill.se/	Relevant
Treehotel	Harads, Sweden	Accommodation 8-10 Rooms	Located in tall pine forest. Suspended 4-6 metres above the ground -accessible by ramp, bridge, or electric stairs. Each room is unique and vary in size between 15-30 m², with the largest rooms accommodating 4 people. Web: http://www.treehotel.se/	Very Relevant
Ioniceland	Reykjavik, Iceland	Accommodation 5-star hotel	Spa / leisure hotel. Links into local activities and natural features such as Þingvellir National Park. Web: http://www.ioniceland.is/	Very Relevant
Hotel Therme Vals	Vals, Switzerland	Accommodation / Leisure	140 Rooms distributed over four buildings. Clustered around thermal baths. Web: http://www.therme-vals.ch/	Relevant
Uluru Voyages Ayers Rock	Ayers Rock, Australia	Accommodation / Recreation	5 hotels and campground. Offers 65 tours, local activities and attractions within the resort. Also houses the Red Ochre Spa. Web: http://www.ayersrockresort.com.au/	Relevant
Hoseasons	Various	Accommodation Leisure	Offers cottages, lodges, holiday parks and boat holidays at a range of destinations across Europe. Landal Rehrenberg, Austria – Offers Apartments, Winter Ski Resort. Manor Farm Park, Switzerland – Mobile Homes. Outdoor, countryside setting. Web: http://www.hoseasons.co.uk/	Relevant

VISITORS SHEET

We are preparing a Masterplan, which will look at the future growth and development of Leanachan Forest.

PLEASE WRITE YOUR NAME AND ADDRESS BELOW IF YOU HAVE VISITED THIS EXHIBITION

(If you wish to make comments, please use the separate Comment Sheets)

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AND HEAR Sharon Morgan Graham Macrae ROBBIE BEUSHAW Margaret Brady Amanda Macrae Murray Pius DAVE BAUM RAY MURDOCH ELMA MURDOCH JANE WATT Nancy Kennedy Elizabeth Gow Kirsten Aulie-Gilbert JEFF STANLEY A-Ewen Macrae	RAIFIELD'S GARRETT dpevor@gmail.com Chiochish Duimabin 4 Lochy Road, Inverlochy stay@trailab.com Corpach AELIA' MANILIN. Spear Br. Glasgow, Spear Bridge corpach TORTUNDY 11. NURSEY PARIL PH34 4EW 27 GERRANT OR, CASL Ornachan, Glenelg PH49 4HS Fort William Achnaphuil Bannachish, joe.stanley@bt.com Luxury @ Duachy - apartments.co.uk

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