

Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study

An Stór Gateway Site

The Proposal from Athena Solutions was to assess the potential options for the site. We note below our conclusions.

The Options Appraisal asked in essence, two questions:

- What part of the “Storr Site” should the Trust take an active interest in?; and
- What would that active interest look like in: - increased engagement; active management; leasing; or ownership?

1. The Project Vision – why is the Trust involved?

The project brief states that “this project is a fantastic opportunity to manage this gateway site, create employment, and market the wider area”. There is an opportunity to demonstrate that local communities can better manage and maintain sites of international renown, to improve the visitor experience and thereby manage and change visitor expectations; resulting in an overall benefit to the local economy. This aspiration fits with the vision for Ceumannan 1 and 11. This ambition must be tempered by the maintenance costs and obligations for the site.

The Trust have also identified an opportunity to earn income directly from the site to support its wider work in the community.

2. The Landowner – Highland Council

Stakeholders, including the Highland Council officers and Councillors, are broadly supportive of increased community involvement in the Storr site. However, they have indicated concerns that as the Storr site is a “live” site, there is a greater risk in community ownership or management. These risks appear to relate to the financial sustainability of community trusts and their longevity, and the potential for future failure on delivery of public benefits, and e.g.. traffic management or site maintenance obligations. There is also a concern that by focussing on the Storr site, or the Storr and other sites in Staffin, these sites are managed without a view of the visitor experience to North Skye as a whole.

Underlying all of these concerns is the issue that the Council is responsible for road and parking investment, maintenance and management in North Skye; that this is becoming more difficult and more expensive given the increase in visitor numbers; and that the Council has no mechanism to gain additional income directly from increased visitor numbers to invest in road and traffic infrastructure. This concern extends to management and maintenance of the Council-owned forest site at the Storr. The paper to the Asset Management Board (April 2016) states that “It is of great importance that the ability of the site to generate income is not separated from the onus of expenditure to develop, manage, and maintain the property, both in its current condition and for the delivery of much needed improvements. Only once such benefits are secured should consideration be given to utilisation of surplus revenue, if any”.

To address these stakeholder concerns, it is important to identify outcomes for the project that reflect the Scottish Government’s ambitions for community empowerment and its conditions for asset transfer. These are that that the asset owning body is to consider whether the transfer (including leasing) would promote or improve:

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- economic development;
- regeneration;
- public health;
- social wellbeing;
- environmental wellbeing; and/or
- reduce inequalities; and
- involve people experiencing disadvantage.

The Trust's view will become more informed and clarified as we move through the consultation and engagement process. We set out below our work to date and initial recommendations to be discussed with the Steering Group at our next meeting.

3. Project Outcomes

Whatever the ownership or leasing mechanism, the overall outcomes The Trust seems seeks should be clearly stated. Any decisions made about the site would then be taken with these outcomes in mind.

Our draft outcomes identified for the Staffin Trust for the project reflect the SG outcomes, and include the outcomes desired by potential key funders (Scottish Land Fund, Heritage Lottery Fund):

| Outcome | Who will benefit? |
|--|---|
| 1. (SLF) Rural communities achieve increased sustainable economic, social and environmental development through the experience of acquiring, owning and managing land and land assets; | People of working age in Staffin |
| | People of all ages in the community |
| 2. (SLF) Rural communities are more empowered and have a greater capacity to lead and control their own development so that they can generate sustainable income. | People of all ages in the community |
| 3. (HC) SCT utilise scarce resources effectively by working in partnership with other community groups and assets in North Skye | Wider community of North Skye (number / area) |
| 4. (HLF) Staffin's natural heritage will be better managed and in better condition | People of all ages in the community (number) Visitors (number) |
| 5. (HLF) With our investment, people will have learnt about heritage | Visitors (number) |
| 6. (HLF) With our investment, people will have had an enjoyable experience | Visitors (number) |

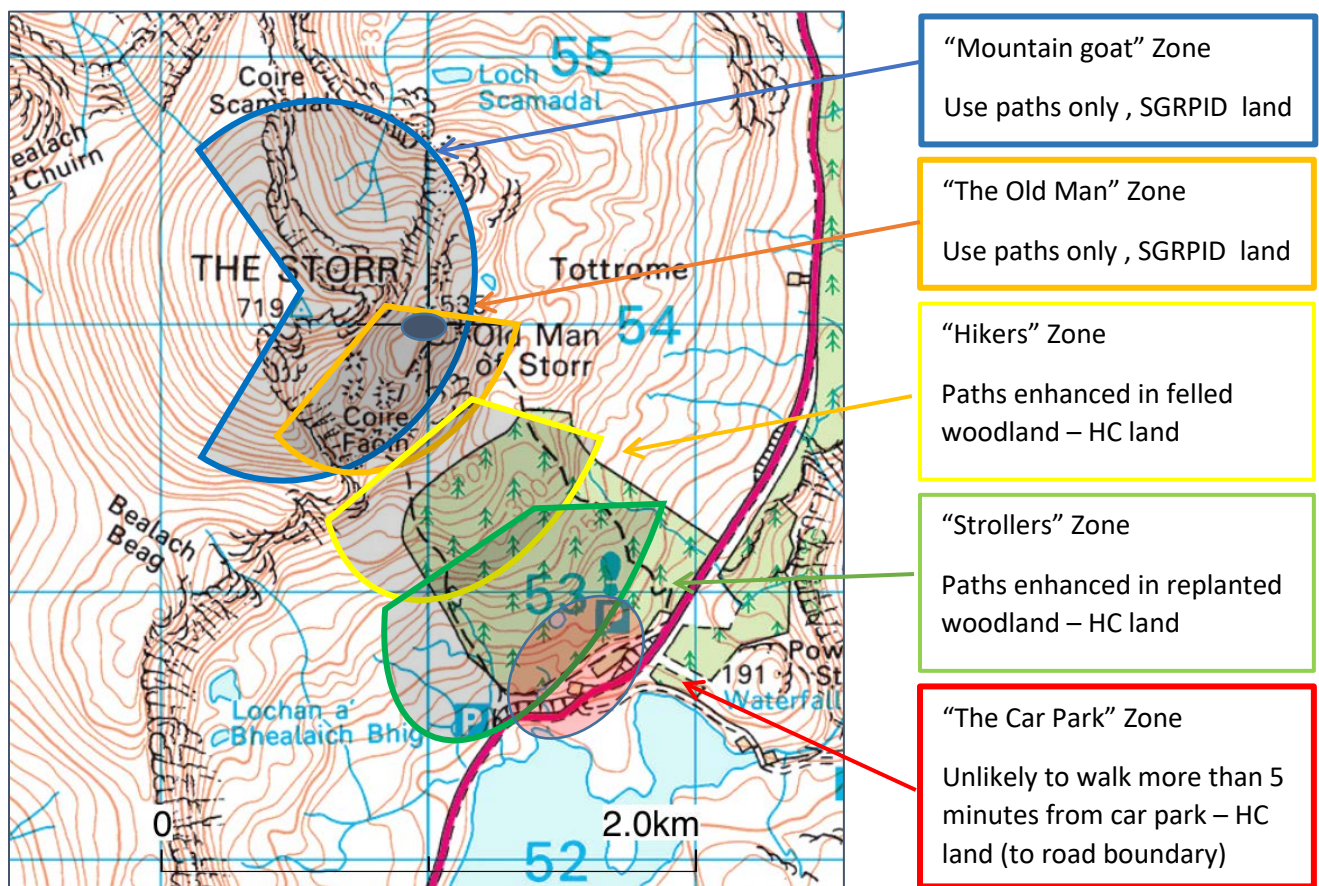
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4. The Site

Given that we understand clearly what the project aims to achieve, what parts of the Site are necessary or desirable to achieve this?

The Site at the Storr can be conveniently divided into 5 “zones”, relating to ownership and to accessibility. The land ownership and the accessibility and usage by visitors drives our considerations for each part of the site. It is important to remember that the visitor experience is a reaction to the whole site, not to any individual part of it; however in considering the Trust’s options, different parts of the site have different landownership, management issues, and experience varying levels of visitor numbers and visitor pressure.



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4.1. The Storr Summit – the “mountain goat” zone

This zone is the least visited of the Storr site. The Skye Ecomuseum Ceumannan II Audience Development Plan (Feb 2016) (“The Audience Development Plan”) noted that there are four walks that can start from the car park at the Old Man of Storr, in addition to the popular walk to the Old Man, and that 3 of these would appeal to “serious walkers”. That Report notes the priority of the SCT to increase the length of stay made by these walkers in Staffin. The Audience Development Plan proposes to promote these walks (and others) with a dedicated walks page on the Ceumannan website, with links to specific routes on the ‘walkhighlands’ website.

- **Does SCT need to be more actively involved in management of this part of the Storr site, to generate its project outcomes?**

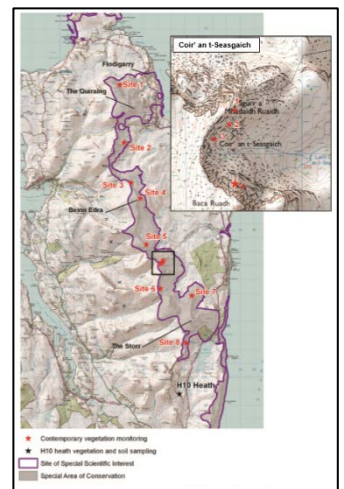
The potential community benefit from this development is clearly linked to economic benefit from increased stays in Staffin.

While there is potential for an increase in visitor numbers causing increased erosion on the Storr and damaging the Trotternish SAC, there is no evidence of significant current damage to the environment by walkers. The SNH SAC monitoring reports focus on damage from grazing pressure. Looking at visitors’ walk reports, there is no evidence of damage to the visitor experience from eroded footpaths. Interpretation for this part site will not be situated on the site itself.

There is no evidence that increased management or maintenance at the site is necessary to improve visitors’ experience. There is evidence that some form of increased management would improve the natural heritage at the site; this will be very complex to manage.

We conclude that there is no overall community benefit to be gained by the SCT in increasing management or input to this part of the site. Should this part of the site deteriorate to such an extent that there it adversely impacts the visitor experience or the designated environment, there are significant potential path maintenance expenditures, and complexities regarding the established crofting tenants.

We recommend that the Trust do not undertake additional involvement in this part of the site, other than participating in public consultation for any further work relating to this part of the Storr site.



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4.2. The Old Man

The many pictures of the Old Man are the key that encourages visitors to the Storr site, and visible damage to the site or to the Old Man himself would degrade this attraction. The Old Man is also on crofting tenanted SGRPID land.

The Options Appraisal, D&I Sites in North East Skye (2014) commissioned by Highland Council (“the 2014 report”) note that SNH have real concerns about the capacity of this part of the site, and the visitor experience. SNH and the Highland Council are concerned about the erosion and abrading of the track from the top of the Council site to and around the Old Man. This has a detrimental impact on the flora that are the basis for the SAC designation, and also on the visitor experience.

Both the Council and SNH consider major path works are required, together with interpretation asking people to stay on the paths. They have also highlighted a need for a structured maintenance programme for the site.

SNH have recently (2016) updated their [Guide to Upland Path Management](#), setting out in detail what needs to be done to deliver a successful path project. This also includes a list of potential funding sources.

- **Does SCT need to be more actively involved in management of this part of the Storr site, to generate its project outcomes?**

The Government’s obligations to maintain Natura sites are assessed on the totality of the SAC, not only on the relatively small part of it that surrounds the Old Man. As noted above, the main concern for the SAC is grazing pressure from rabbit, sheep, and deer. While SGRPID and SNH may consider path maintenance is needed, they are under no statutory pressure to take this forward. Should the Trust take on a management role for this part of this site, then any improvement in the site and the visitor experience would be driven by the Trust.

The SCT clearly have an interest in maintaining this part of the site, and initially included this as part of Ceumannann 11. Increased management of this site by the SCT would deliver on the following outcomes:

1. (SLF) Rural communities achieve increased sustainable economic, social and environmental development through the experience of acquiring, owning and managing land and land assets;
4. (HLF) Staffin’s natural heritage will be better managed and in better condition
6. (HLF) With our investment, people will have had an enjoyable experience.

As noted above, the Council have an expectation that any income derived from the Storr site is expended on management and maintenance of the infrastructure, and there may be an expectation that path maintenance at the Old Man is included in this to secure the “whole site” visitor experience.

We have investigated possible path construction and maintenance costs for this part of the site. These would be extremely high; comparisons are possible with mountain paths constructed in the Cairngorms

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National Park . Any improvements would require to be negotiated with the landowner and crofter, and would require a full funding application for pathworks, with match funding.

The community benefits to the Trust are not commensurate with the effort and risks required. The funding for this work was dropped from the An Ceumanann 2 bid as advised by the funders.

At this time, we recommend that the Trust do not proceed with an increase in activity on this part of the site. This may be reviewed depending on the future funding scenario.

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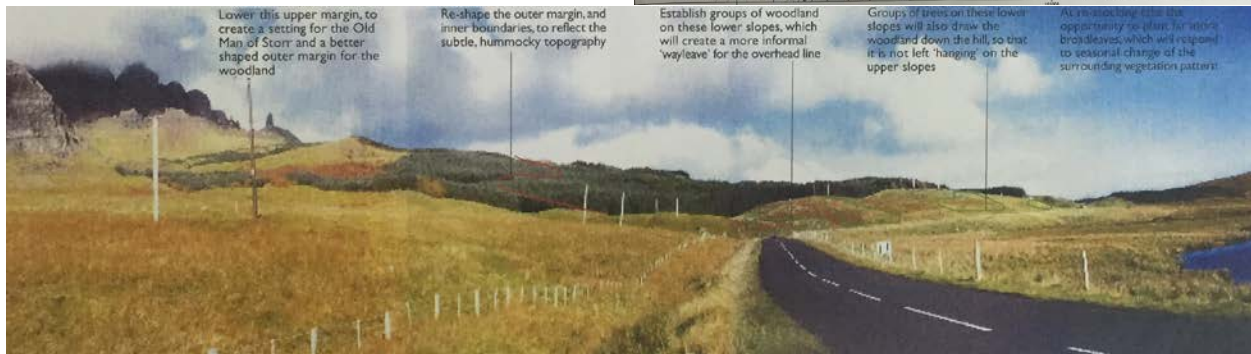
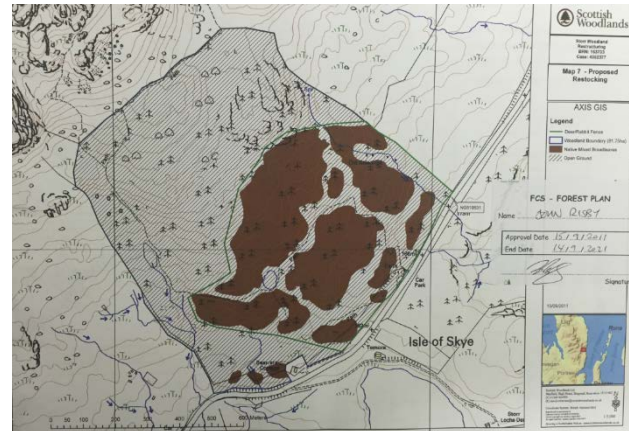
4.3. The Woodland Site

The Woodland Site is currently owned and managed by Highland Council. It is subject to a Long Term Forest Plan (2010) which was required by Forestry Commission prior to the felling and replanting work carried out in 2011/12. The site is divided into two zones for the purposes of this study: the upper part of the site (Hikers) and the lower part (Strollers). People wishing to walk to the Old Man (Hikers) will tend to walk straight through the site. People who want a short walk of varying lengths will tend to stay in the lower part (Strollers).

The two parts of the site are also reflected in the replanting scheme. The site was clearfelled and less than half has been replanted with native broadleaves (dark shading on the attached map), with the remainder of the site (hatched on the map) to be left as “open ground”.

This is supported by landscape design assessments both from the road approaching the Storr from the South, and the view from the Old Man itself.

Forest Plan: Assessment of Opportunities for Improvements



Lower this upper margin, to create a setting for the Old Man of Storr and a better shaped outer margin for the woodland

Re-shape the outer margin, and inner boundaries, to reflect the subtle, hummocky topography

Establish groups of woodland on these lower slopes, which will create a more informal 'wayleave' for the overhead line

Groups of trees on these lower slopes will also draw the woodland down the hill, so that it is not left 'hanging' on the upper slopes

As a more long term, the opportunity to plant for native broadleaves, which will respond to seasonal change of the surrounding vegetation patterns

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Forest Plan: View from the Old Man

The landscape assessment and the view provide for less intrusive woodlands in what is a mainly deforested landscape, with the forest edges softened and brought back from the Old Man itself. The forest plan complies with good practice in landscape design.

By 2025 or so the replanting scheme should provide a much improved visitor experience than the previous walk through a block of mature conifers. In the meantime, the upper part of the site in particular will continue to look, according to a visitor's blot, like "[a picture of Sebastio Selgado's "Salt Mines"](#)".

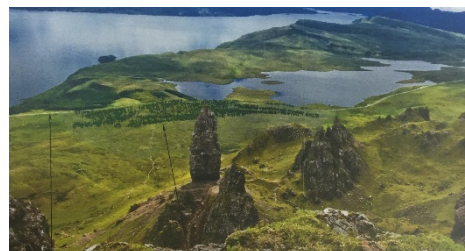
- **Does SCT need to be more actively involved in management of this part of the Storr site, to generate its project outcomes?**

The Forest Plan, while providing for an improved fit within the landscape and some improved path access, is not a community forest plan. The Highland Council [note](#) that the Plan involved "widespread consultation" but with statutory consultees and the MCoS. The Council held events inviting community input to the designs. The Council allocated £140,000 of its own and SRDP money to the work, gaining £75,000 from the sale of timber. These costs included restoration and improvement of path works, including a path to the lochan in the site. The Council will now continue to monitor the woodland to ensure that establishment conditions are met

The clear-felling at the site resulted in the usual battered and ugly appearance of the site, resulting in considerable unfavourable comments from visitors..

The woodland is still "establishing" and there is a financial requirement for establishment to the required woodland density by 2022. There are threats from rabbits and from weevils, which the Council is currently monitoring.

The work undertaken for the Forest Plan included an archaeological survey and a wildlife survey. The results of these show that there is the possibility for increased interpretation around the archaeological remains (which include a well-preserved sheiling to the South-East of the site) and wildlife, including otters who visit the lochan. Improved interpretation would fit with the Ceumannan 11 Audience Development Plan action plan, which suggested linking with others – UHI - to carry out archaeological surveys. The Audience Development Plan and Ceumannan 11 do not emphasis wildlife tourism, other than to note that there are groups of "nature/heritage enthusiasts" visiting Staffin.



An example of a pro-active approach to manage and enhance the visitor experience is at the NTS site at Ben Lawyers, where very short [interpretative walks](#) in the area around the car park accompany the more challenge ascent of the mountain itself. This approach could be applied to the woodland area to enhance the path already added, to the lochan.

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There is also the possibility for increased community involvement in the woodland. Other communities undertake a range of activities in community woodlands, including volunteering as wildlife “rangers”, assisting in the monitoring of flora and fauna, to pathworks and forest management. The Trust and the community are unlikely to have much emotional connection with this woodland as it lies outside of the settlements; this could be an area for increased involvement supporting a better visitor experience.

Increased management of this site by the SCT would deliver on the following outcomes:

1. (SLF) Rural communities achieve increased sustainable economic, social and environmental development through the experience of acquiring, owning and managing land and land assets;
4. (HLF) Staffin’s natural heritage will be better managed and in better condition
6. (HLF) With our investment, people will have had an enjoyable experience.

We investigated the possibility of increased involvement of the Trust in the woodland, including the possibility of increased interpretation, additional footpaths to provide a “loop” walk, and community attachment to the woodland. We took advice from Community Woodlands Scotland and identified communities who had taken over new planted woodland. Our findings are that:

- There is no strong community attachment to the woodlands.
- There is a 20-year risk in the establishment of the woodlands; while the Council has set some money aside for this, it has the financial strength to meet additional costs if necessary. The Trust has no financial strength to take on such a financial risk.
- While other communities have taken on new-planted woodlands, this is where there is a social attachment to the site and where volunteers are able to assist in establishment to make it affordable. This is not the case here.
- Aside from ensuring establishment, there is not likely to be significant management work on the woodland for around 20 years.
- We estimated the cost of an additional loop path at around £50,000 for an 855m path.

We recommend that the Trust do not take on the management and maintenance of the woodland; this may be reviewed once it is more strongly established. We recommend that the Trust do consider investigating funding for a new “loop” path to add to interpretation and visitor value.

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4.4. The Car Park Site

The carpark site is the catalyst for the Trust's immediate interest in the Storr. It is clear from community engagement events, from view from the community council, and from the Highland Council, that the current car parking arrangements are not adequate for the pressure of visitors at the site, increasing the risk of road accidents at the approach to the site. The lack of toilet facilities creates both a hazard to health and an unsightly experience for visitors.

The community survey carried out by the Trust, and our initial consultation work focussed very much on the car parking site and how that might be better managed. The community consultation again highlighted road safety, parking, and lack of toilets / increased pollution as the main issue. The potential to impact the "wild feel" of the site and the visual impacts were of much less concern.

The feedback and responses from other stakeholders point to the fallacy of considering the immediate car park area as part of the "wilderness experience" that visitors anticipate in Skye. The Staffin Trust's Ceumannan projects endeavour to re-interpret Staffin as a lived-in landscape, and the historic relationship of people with the land.

The community consultation indicated a recognition of the need for buildings at the site; at the very least these would be for toilets and for a bus shelter. Other buildings will depend on the aspirations for the whole of the Staffin site experience, and, as noted above, this will also link to a wider visitor management strategy for Staffin, Trotternish, and indeed North Skye.

The community consultation found:

- There is a clear preference for any new buildings to be modest in their height in order to blend into the landscape. The buildings should be well daylight and should take in vistas around the Old Man of Storr. Buildings should provide sheltered seating areas for visitors.
- Those who contributed to the consultation were very keen on the use of natural materials, such as timber and local stone;
- most said that sufficient car parking and improvements to road safety as well as adequate WC provision were key factors;
- The majority of those who contributed to the consultation prefer access to the site to be from a single junction; and most of those were keen to utilise the existing timber loading area, current used as the Mountain Rescue access point, to the north;
- There was a clear preference from participants for a number of buildings across the site rather than a single building;
- There was a clear preference from the respondents that the proposed facilities (whether in a single building or multiple buildings) should be single storey.
- Around a third of participants were keen to see at least one smaller building, such as a hut or bothy, slightly further up the hill towards the Old Man of Storr, which could act as a rest stop or viewing point.

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- Parking to the site was the main consideration for the participants with the majority in favour of a single parking zone within the site. It should be noted that this was not at its existing location.

This and earlier survey work by the Trust demonstrated that there was clear consensus on improved car parking and toilet facilities. There is also consensus on the possibility of improved information and interpretation at the car park site; people have not yet been asked to consider whether there should be more information and interpretation throughout the site although there are indications that people are aware of the need for a more interpreted, shorted, walk with improved viewpoints.

- **Does SCT need to be more actively involved in management of this part of the Storr site, to generate its project outcomes?**

It has very recently become clear that the current Council position is

- A larger car park, from current total site budget of around £400,000;
- [No charging for car parking](#), and therefore no income from the site, although this may vary in the future; and
- No budget for the Council to provide toilets (costed at £85k) with revenue costs of £11k.

The current Council position will not deliver the Trust and it's communities' desired outcomes for the Site, and for these to be realised the Trust has an opportunity to become more actively involved.

We considered 4 options for the Trust:

1. The Trust owning at least this part of the site, with full responsibility for visitor and parking management. The Trust would therefore be able to consider a range of solutions to the site's design, build, and management;
2. The Trust leasing this part of the site on a long lease, rather than owning, for the same purpose above.
3. The Trust leasing this part of the site from the Council, for an annual rate, to allow the Trust to collect parking fees. An annual or short-term lease would not allow the Trust access to funding to create toilet and interpretation facilities.
4. The Trust entering into a management agreement with the Council for this part of the site, to allow it to collect parking fees and support Council-built toilet facilities. The Trust would have some consultation input to the car park design.

We conclude that only of Options 1 or 2 would allow the Trust's outcomes for this site to be realised. A short term annual lease or management agreement would be very unlikely to allow the Trust to develop the site as a "gateway" through interpretation, or to ensure the provision of toilets.

Ownership or a long lease does have the potential for the Trust to manage the Storr site as a whole. The key question is whether the Trust wishes to pursue these options are:

- What are the costs likely to be – development and management?
- What are the risks – for example, of increased visitor numbers requiring an even larger car park in the future? How might these be managed?

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- What are the additional benefits in terms of employment and the economy, and how could these be maximised?

5. Car Park Site Feasibility

5.1. Consultation findings.

Community findings indicated that the car park site proposal should realise potential opportunities:

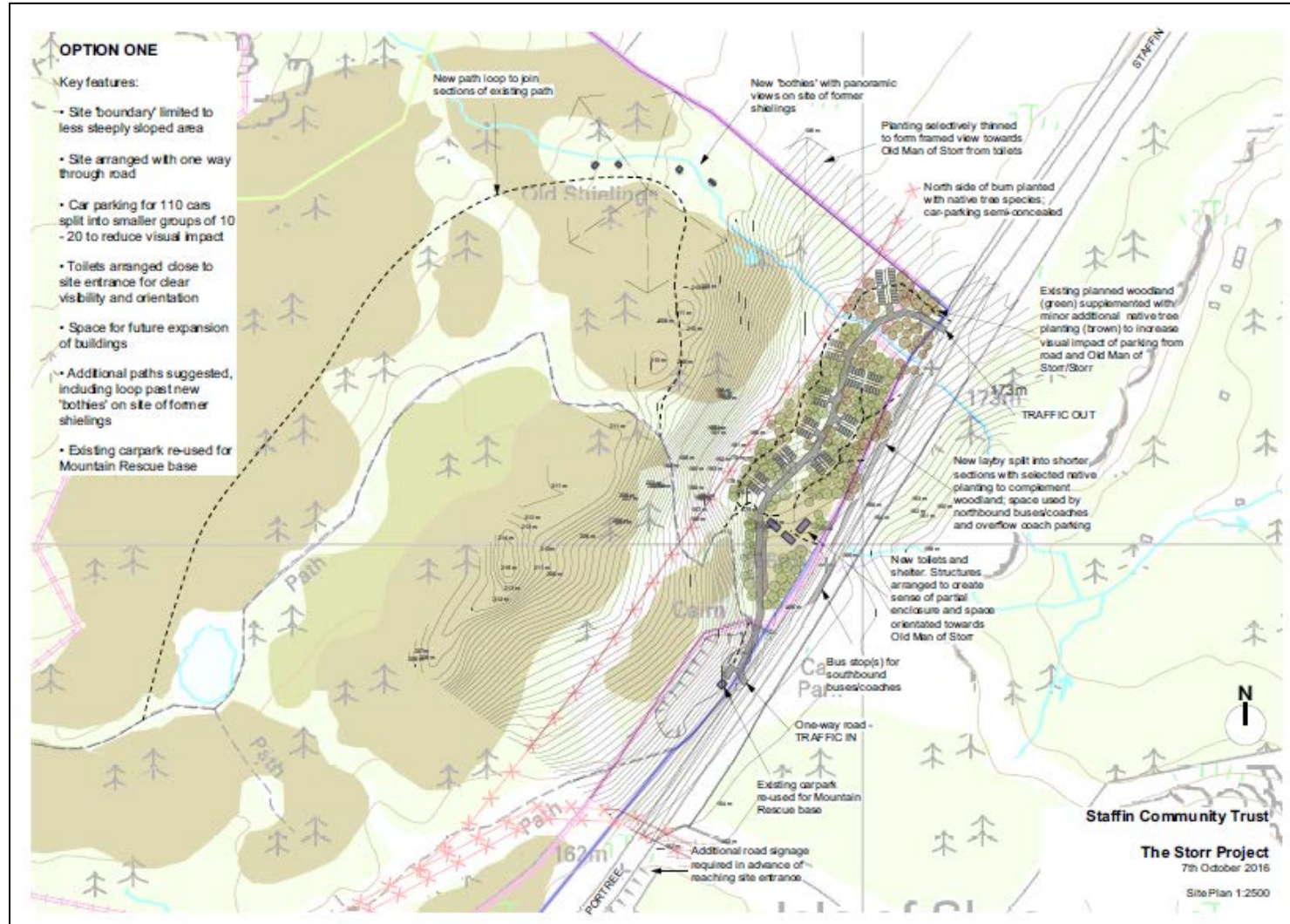
- **Capacity.** There have been over 200 cars counted at the Storr, with dangerous parking on the verges on both sides of the road as the current car park of around 40 spaces is insufficient. . This continues despite recent increase in capacity by a layby lane at the side of the road.
- **Safety.** The parking issue gives rise to a safety issue, as cars slow down to turn into the carpark, to pull out of the carpark, and moving onto and off from the verge.
- **Landscape.** The landscape of Skye and of Storr are the major draw for visitors. Any built solution must be of its place, minimising potentially adverse landscape impacts from the creation of a new hard surface area.
- **Enhanced visitor experience:** Currently the car park area provides a poor visitor experience, with two noticeboards being the total available interpretation. The Council have delayed a decision on improvements to interpretation pending the result of the Trust's An Ceumannan process There is a clear need for toilet facilities at the site. Requirements for refreshments are not clear, and potentially conflict with existing providers.
- **Income generation:** experiential evidence is that visitors expect to pay for parking; this has become an established norm in other tourist areas and for other natural site access. Evidence from elsewhere in Scotland is that people are more prepared to pay for parking when there is a notified benefit to maintaining the site, and /or to a community group; and that compliance is significantly increased by the presence of someone on site.
- **Build specification:** the build specification must be sufficiently robust to withstand the volume of traffic, particularly given the ground conditions at the site. It must also take into account use by coaches, from minibus size to full size coaches .Campervans are becoming increasingly common in the Highlands, and Skye is no exception.
- **Maintenance costs:** must be able to be met from income generated in the site, with the ability to make surpluses for future rebuild as required.

We prepared outline drawings based on the above principals for consideration by the Trust.

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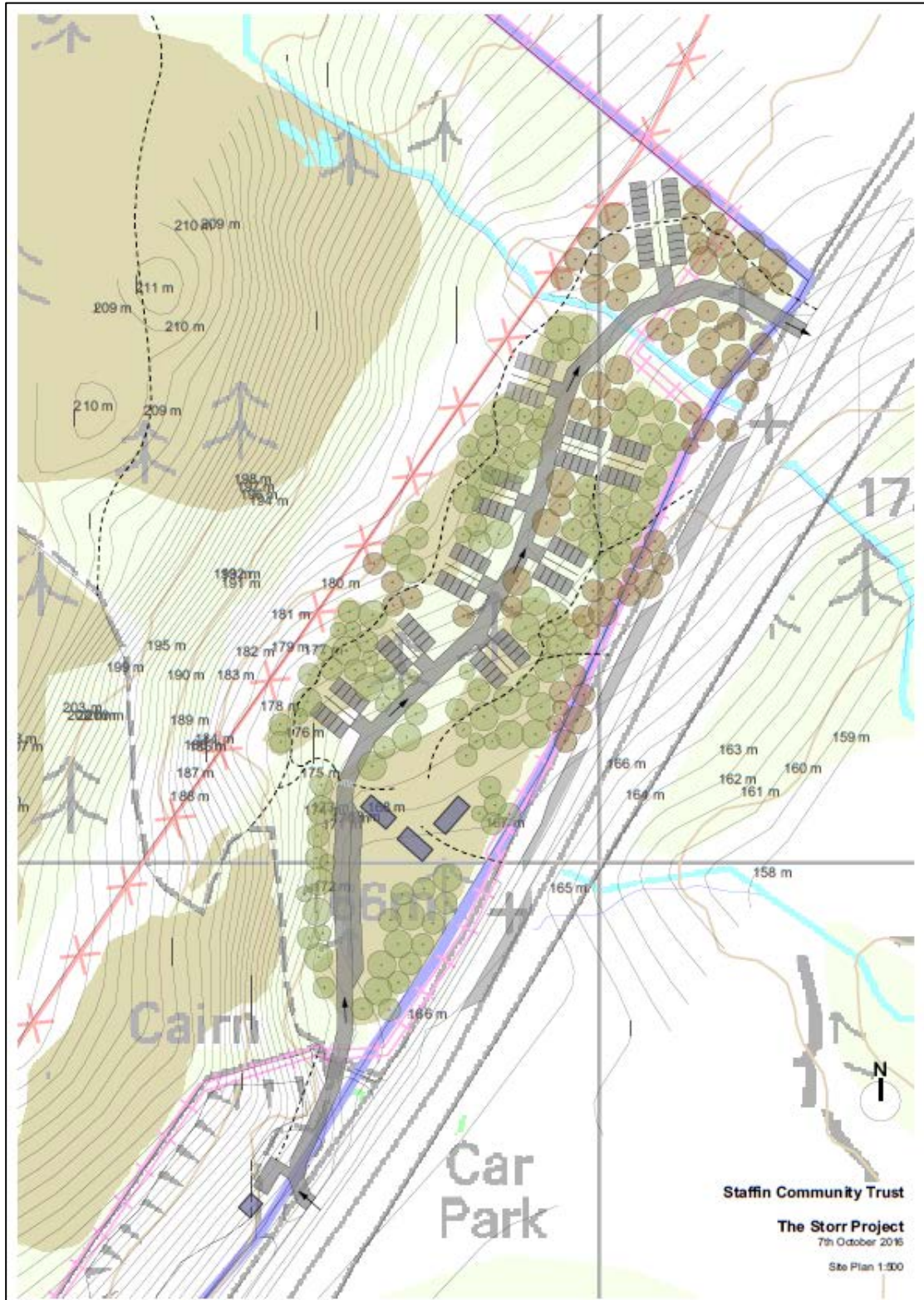
5.1.1. Site outline: showing potential new loop path, interpretation “bothies” on the hill



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5.1.2. Site outline: close up to car park showing possible layout



5.2. Key features of the outline site proposal

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- Additional parking for 110 cars, retaining the original 40 car spaces. There is space for more car-parking to be added if necessary;
- Restricting coach / campervan parking in the roadside parking, to reduce wear on the car-parking (height restrictions to operate on the entrance to the car park);
- Car-parking on verges to be discouraged by physical; but “permitted” by creating open grassy spaces in the car park sides for overflow use;
- Trees planted around the site, bringing the woodland down to the car park. The Trust plans that this would be an opportunity to interpret different trees and their uses by the crofting culture in construction, boatbuilding, foods and medicine;
- Toilets to be minimal (unheated, unlit, cold running water, sewerage managed on-site through mounding) to provide a facility but not to encourage use by “wild campers” or campervans;
- Additional, architecturally simple, small buildings at the entrance to the carpark to provide shelter for interpretation. These could be converted to other uses (additional toilet blocks, shelter for the car park warden, a base for short guided walks, a small kiosk selling a restricted range of hot and cold drinks and snacks) in the future;
- Litter: the proposal is not to have provision for litter bins, but to encourage people to take their litter home.
- The proposals show a potential loop path through the existing woodland; as noted above, this will depend on the availability of funding for pathworks. Additional paths also need to be considered in the light of existing pressures from visitor numbers on the site.

These outline proposals require to be discussed with Council departments to test e.g. whether a single-flow road is acceptable; to check whether the entrance is too close to the brow of the hill approaching the site; etc.

To minimise construction costs and maintenance, the car park and paths would be built to “forestry commission” standard. Peat to be excavated throughout, using hardcore / quarry dust for the build and surfacing. Information from estate managers and forestry managers (including Abriachan Forest Trust) is that maintenance will be minimal, and limited to scraping and refill perhaps annually. The entrance and exit would be a tarmac surface.

5.3. Capital costs

Capital costs have been estimated on a per square meter basis. Discussion with the Trust is that hardcore costs could vary significantly, depending on the source. There was initial discussion that the Trust may be able to supply this itself from another potential community asset in Staffin, which would greatly reduce the cost. A more detailed survey of the ground would also allow a better estimate of the amount of peat to be excavated. Use of the peat removed on-site, for example to build visual screens at the site edge; to create anti-parking mounds on verges; would also significantly reduce this cost.

Total capital costs are estimated initially as below, subject to further examination and investigation:

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| Budget costs - OPTION ONE | | | | Including loop path |
|---|---------------------|------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| Preliminaries (including traffic management) | 10% of overall cost | | | £ 55,035.00 |
| | Area (sq.m) | rate | cost | |
| Car parking (hardcore/quarry dust) | 2200 | £ 50.00 | £110,000.00 | |
| Track plus coach parking (hardcore/quarry dust) | 2200 | £ 50.00 | £110,000.00 | |
| Access road (20m tarmac) | 100 | £ 150.00 | £ 15,000.00 | |
| | | Sub-total | £235,000.00 | |
| Paths (inc clearance and edge swale, half tray design) | Length (m)/ea | rate | cost | |
| Short paths around immediate site | 600 | £ 30.00 | £ 18,000.00 | |
| New loop path | 855 | £ 30.00 | £ 25,650.00 | |
| Culverts | 4 | £ 300.00 | £ 1,200.00 | |
| Footbridge | 1 | £10,000.00 | £ 10,000.00 | |
| | | Sub-total | £ 54,850.00 | |
| | Volume (cu.m) | rate | cost | |
| Excavation of peat associated with above (assumed 2m average) | 9000 | £ 10.00 | £ 90,000.00 | |
| Imported fill | 9000 | £ 7.50 | £ 67,500.00 | |
| | | Sub-total | £157,500.00 | |
| | Length (m) | rate | cost | |
| Fencing | 600 | £ 25.00 | £ 15,000.00 | |
| | | Sub-total | £ 15,000.00 | |
| | Floor area (sq.m) | rate | cost | |
| Buildings (unheated toilets) 2no @ 40sq.m ea. | 80 | £ 1,100.00 | £ 88,000.00 | |
| | | Sub-total | £ 88,000.00 | |
| Power supply (inc trenching) | (Estimate) | | £ 5,000.00 | |
| Water supply (inc trenching) | (Estimate) | | £ 2,500.00 | |
| Drainage - WCs (assumed raised mound-SEPA) | (Estimate) | | £ 20,000.00 | |
| | Length (m) | rate | cost | |
| Drainage - car parking (swales) (Ref - Paths for All) | 1375 | £ 10.00 | £ 13,750.00 | |
| | | Sub-total | £ 13,750.00 | |
| Traffic signs and road marking (Ref - HC estimate) | (Estimate) | | £ 2,500.00 | |
| Landscaping and Ecology (Ref - HC estimate) | (Estimate) | | £ 13,000.00 | |
| | Total | | £662,135.00 | |
| VAT | 20% | | 132,427.00 | |
| Design team fees | 15% | | 99,320.25 | |
| Statutory consents | | | 4,000.00 | |
| | | | 897,882.25 | |

The total capital costs of around £900,000 are in excess of the Council's lowest estimate of £407,000.

Excluding the additional elements (paths, toilets, associated power, water, and drainage) and also excluding VAT (which is not included in Council costings) the comparative total is £477,500. This is for a carpark facility which is larger than the parking of the lowest Council estimate.

Note: the potential for cheaper fill to be used from a local quarry; for lower costs to leave peat on-site (as encouraged by environmental legislation); for VAT planning to reduce the substantial VAT costs; have not been taken into account in the total costing of around £900,000.

Further work and ground surveys are anticipated to reduce rather than to increase this cost.

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5.4. Site management

The proposal is that the site is manned during the peak visitor season (1st May to 30th September). This employee will:

- Direct traffic during peak times, to maximise the use of parking spaces , minimise people reversing along the one-way flow, and to put up a “car park full” sign as necessary;
- Encourage people to pay the parking charges, aimed at £2 per car / £3 per campervan. Bus and coach companies would be required to take out an annual fee. Reduced / no fees would be available to Skye residents;
- Provide change, deal with any issues with the ticketing machine, and potentially collect tickets when the machine is out of order;
- Answer questions and queries about the site, and direct people to interpretation and information about the Eco Museum and other tourism infrastructure in the Trotternish peninsula;
- Ensure the site is maintained, removing litter; checking the toilets; etc.

Experience elsewhere (e.g. Glenmuick) has shown that the presence of a community employee on site significantly increases compliance with parking fees. In this case, it would also add to the visitor experience by providing signposting and answering queries.

5.5. Site revenues and expenditure

Estimated revenue for the site is £46,000 per year, assuming a 75% compliance rate from a conservative estimate of 30,000 cars per year at £2 average per car; with an annual fee from bus companies of £500 per bus.

Costs of manning the car park for 12 hours per day, 7 days per week, for 5 months of the year are £15,500; with consumables, maintenance, and contingency at £11,500. There is no need for heat, light, or power although the collector would need some form of portable heat and light on poor weather days.

On this basis, the site could generate a net income of around £19,000 per year to help maintain this and other visitor sites in Staffin.

5.6. Site funding

Site funding is the key issue.

Funding will not be available to the SCT at all unless it has ownership or a long lease (minimum 25 years) on the site.

Funding at the level discussed is extremely unlikely to be available from purely external sources.

Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study

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5.7. A Challenge Fund Approach

The sums involved in funding this work are very significant and exceed the Council's top estimates for the work. This may be because those estimates do not include e.g. design team work.

The plans are for a far larger carpark than currently considered by the Council; in its lowest estimate price their plans are for an additional 70 cars. Counts at the carpark suggest that 70 is already insufficient on a reasonable weather day in the tourist season, and visits are not expected to reduce.

The Trust's proposal adds significant value to the concept of the car park in terms of the visitor experience and in terms of the landscape. Landscaping, visitor interpretation, visitor interaction, site management, and toilet facilities are all included in the Trust's proposals. The Trust's proposals also generate income from the car park and provide additional seasonal jobs in a fragile economic area.

There is an opportunity here to take forward the concept developed by the Council in its Challenge Fund. Although this Fund itself has now closed, the concept was that communities would demonstrate that they could deliver added value through more local management, and by accessing additional income streams, than the Council was able to. One local example of this in the area is at Kyle, where the Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust were able to expand pontoons and toilet / showing facilities for visiting boats, expanding tourism and jobs in Kyle. The principle is exactly the same here; the Staffin Trust wishes to expand the gateway facility to allow it to signpost people on to tourism facilities in Staffin, increasing the economic impact of tourism on the local economy.

The potential for partnership working to deliver social and economic benefits should be further explored. The Trust might deliver

- Reduced costs of construction by investigating fill and excavation costs
- Design of the interpretation and on-going signposting to fit with the wider An Ceumannan interpretation with added visitor interaction to ensure maximum community benefit
- Source additional funding to provide the additional tourism facilities.

The Council might deliver:

- Work with the Trust to ensure that both the Council's and the Trust's needs are met at the site, and that the carpark area can deliver the additional benefits sought by the Trust;
- The available funding held by the Council, to the project;
- Working with the Trust to determine the most VAT-efficient method for delivery of the construction project, to reduce this very significant cost.

The possible strengths of each partner, their mutual responsibilities, and the final shape of a shared solution, remain to be negotiated, while recognising the responsibilities and opportunities for each party under the Community Empowerment Act.. This report suggests a basis for that negotiation.

Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study

An Stór Gateway Site

Key Document review:

Storr Forest Plan (2010) “The Forest Plan”

Storr Woods – Scoping Study, Initial Draft (2013) (“The 2013 study”)

Options Appraisal, D&I Sites in North East Skye (2014) commissioned by Highland Council (“the 2014 report”)

Storr Carpark Engineering report, Highland Council D&I (2015) (“The carpark report”)

The Skye Ecomuseum Ceumannan Ii: Audience Profiles (December 2015) (“The Ceumannan Report”)

The Skye Ecomuseum Ceumannan II Audience Development Plan (Feb 2016) (“The Audience Development Plan”)

The Staffin Trust Community Consultation Report 2016 (“The consultation report”)

Stakeholder engagement

- Meeting and follow up with Highland Council – Emma Whitham (Development and Infrastructure) and Ann Hackett (Projects Manager)
- Meeting and follow up with Highland Council Ward Manager (Willie Mackinnon)
- Review of the Report to the Asset Management Board (April 2016)

Community engagement

- Initial community engagement meeting, July 2016

The Visitor Experience

- Reviews of the above reports. Site visits July, August 2016. Review of various user-feedback websites (e.g. Tripadvisor, WalkHighlands)

Physical Solutions

- Draft examples for the Community Engagement Events
- Review of comparable Case Study projects

Viability and Finance

- Consideration of potential income sources, ongoing liabilities.