

Operational Needs Report | South Bonar

Subject: Evidence and Reflection of Operational Demand at South Bonar, Bonar Bridge, Ardgay, Sutherland, IV24 3AQ

Project: Kyle of Sutherland Tourism Infrastructure (KoSTI)

Date: 8th October 2020

Aim: The objective of this report is to illustrate the demand and need for additional tourist accommodation (overnight serviced parking site) at South Bonar with associated evidence communicated in a timeline manner.

Timeline:

Timeframe	Operational Demand Strategy Evidence	Details
2014	Community and Business Consultation for the development of the Kyle of Sutherland Document (Part 1)	Consultation of local community and businesses completed by Scottish Business Solutions. The document highlights tourism as an 'essential and important' area. Consultees ranked tourism within the Kyle of Sutherland for highest priority (93.9%). Refer to evidence 1.1. South Bonar development addresses the feedback (refer to evidence 1.2) received in consultation by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Optimising the aesthetic by ensuring fully operated maintenance plan. • Implementing improved community tourism signage. • Installing e-Bike Charging Points and encourage sustainable cycling tourism. • Offering affordable accommodation for self-contained units. • Providing facilities for an overnight serviced parking site.
2015	NC500 Established	Kyle of Sutherland area is situated 10 miles (20 minutes) inland from the NC500 route.
2015	Heart of Sutherland Tourism Initiative Established	Local tourism organisation and initiative Heart of Sutherland Tourism (HOST) established in 2015. It has over 80 member businesses.
2018	Bonar Bridge Regeneration 'for The Future' Document	Bonar Bridge Business group developed <i>Bonar Bridge Regeneration for the Future document</i> which highlights the desire and pressure for an overnight serviced parking site. Refer to evidence 2.1 and 2.2.
2018	Creich Community Locality Plan and Appendixes	Community consultation for Creich Community Council area conducted in 2018 identified further engagement for development of the site at South Bonar. The locality plans also states that 'Work and Local' economy are major areas of concern for local people. Promoting tourism is a key way to boost economy. Refer to evidence 3.1 and 3.2.
2018	Ardgay Community Locality Plan and Appendixes	Community consultation for Ardgay & District Community Council area conducted in 2018 discovered further support for Motorhome hook ups at 'Stonehenge' (also known as South Bonar). Refer to evidence 4.1 and 4.2.
2020	User Survey	Analysis of current users on site over a week. Refer to evidence 5.1.
2020	Photographs	Photographic evidence of current demand. Refer to evidence 5.2.
2020	Community Voice (Social Media Response)	Evidence of local and wider community support. Refer to evidence 5.3.

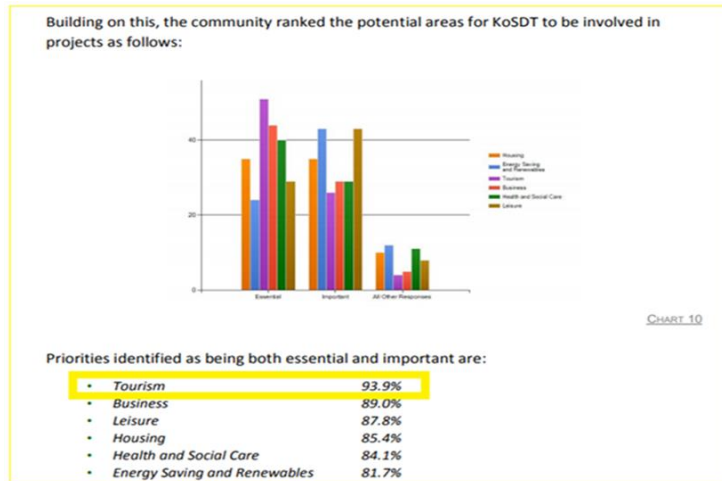
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Evidence:



Evidence 1.1 | Community and Business Consultation for the development of the Kyle of Sutherland Document (Part 1), Page 18/19

Opportunities for Tourism in Kyle of Sutherland

Tourism Comments and Feedback. This was an area which promoted much discussion and feedback, summarised as follows:

- Marketing – promote our assets; produce targeted information e.g. cyclists and promote community buy out of Carbisdale
- Visitors centre
- Develop old Migdale hospital into Bruar style/Jail of Dornoch quality shopping centre
- Area between the Bradbury Centre and Swordale Road developed
- Events
- Overall look – more inviting, looks run down and unloved; weeding and care
- A place for buses to park
- Heritage – build on the clearances; Pictish trail; re-introduce salmon netting; salmon and heritage; Telford's Bridge - Telford links and histories
- Natural history tourism
- Golf - Highland Golf Links pass; potential for working with other golf clubs; 9 hole golf courses
- Access to water so people with boats have easy access; water sports on KoS & Dornoch Firth
- KoS way link walking and cycling trails; signposting for walks/footpaths Rights of way reintroduced and clearly signposted
- Cycle routes and mountain bike routes and events
- Accommodation – quality, affordable accommodation across all price ranges
- Hostel facilities
- Caravan site including overnight parking
- Food – 7 days a week, longer opening hours including evenings
- Training support for setting up tourism and accommodation
- KoS Youth group
 - Phase 1 - Café, soft play, gym/fitness suite, multipurpose room, training kitchen, youth and children spaces
 - Phase 2 - Science discovery centre, climbing wall, observatory, games hall

Evidence 1.2 | Community and Business Consultation for the development of the Kyle of Sutherland Document (Part 1), Page 22

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SERVICES

Electricity, water and sewerage are essential for any tourist location, but also for any refurbished retail and accommodation providers.

Evidence 2.1 | Bonar Bridge Regeneration for the Future document, Page 4

SUMMARY

Bonar Bridge requires regeneration.

Within a broad, overarching and visionary plan a number of individual projects can be identified to build the infrastructure and momentum for change.

Long term, the aim is for a central 'Theme' attraction.

Short term there are a number of projects that are a target for support/finance:

Stakeholder assessment	Identify and communicate with local groups to find out what they want/need
Caledonian Hotel	Architect to consider provision of bike hostel and produce development plans
Bridge Hotel	Strip out interiors and check competence of structure so that site can be offered to developers that has been substantially de-risked technically
South of Bridge	Land developed for motor home/Campervan parking site with suitable facilities including toilets, water supply, electrical charging points and even, perhaps, en-suite campsite pods that are plug-and-play shower and toilet facilities is easily installed at camping grounds.
Shop fronts	'Branded' cosmetic facelift for centre of village and other shops.
Kyle House	Support for modernisation of heating and other facilities to maximise energy efficiency and project this aspect of the village.

Evidence 2.2| Bonar Bridge Regeneration for the Future document, Page 5

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Inequalities Workshop Exercise 6th June 2018


Participants were invited to share their thoughts on the inequalities in their community as part of a group 'brainstorming' session. A worksheet was provided for participants to note down their thoughts. "Inequalities" was defined broadly (i.e. not necessarily relating to income inequality) in order to have participants identify what types of inequality may exist in their community.

Group 1

- Employment and Local Economy:** wages in the area are low and there is a lack of training and employment opportunities locally.
- Care provision:** the provision and availability of childcare and homecare in the area is not sufficient.
- Transport:** the availability of public transport is not sufficient and there is no local petrol station.
- Tourism and Local Facilities:** there is currently a lack of accommodation for tourists and with a lack of restaurants and pubs for locals and tourists to utilise.
- Crime:** there have been instances of theft of equipment and substance abuse in the area.
- Housing:** the current availability of affordable and social housing in the area is not sufficient.
- Communications:** mobile phone signal in the area is poor and inconsistent with some areas getting no signal at all.

Group 2

- Tourism**
 - Promotion of the area will increase tourism, create jobs and ultimately reduce local inequalities.
 - Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust should drive the promotion activities.
 - Hook-up points at "Stonehenge": initiatives around outdoor activities; increased hotel space could provide services fundamental to sustaining tourism.
- Local business and services:**
 - Local produce and organic food production were seen as an opportunity to bring in new business and ultimately new jobs.
 - Generally, a lack of facilities (chip shop, pub) was highlighted as an impediment on people's ability to socially interact. However, the KoS Hub was seen as a positive in this regard.
- Communications:**
 - Varying broadband speeds in the area were highlighted as an inequality. The broadband speed is particularly slow in and around Rosehall.
 - Mobile signals also vary greatly.
 - Providers can be very expensive.
 - There is an inequality identified in the differing levels of digital connectivity.




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Evidence 3.1 | Creich Community Locality Plan, Page 24

Issue	Solutions
Not enough places to attract tourists and places to stay. No accommodation	Develop hotel/Acc. Develop 'Stonehenge' campsite to be motorhome parking with facilities and charge to stay.
Nowhere for locals and tourists to socialise and eat out.	Café/pubs/bistro to be developed and be open in the evening.
Youth opp[ortunities] for activities afterschool clubs.	Young person film nights. Gaming group club.
Childcare provision wrap-around service	Hub provide more childcare facilities and youth activities. Age related programme.
Local employment opportunities	Attract visitors who need somewhere to stay and eat. Need staffing.

The priority issues defined by this group were: Nowhere for locals and tourists to socialise and eat out, Youth opportunities for activities afterschool clubs and Childcare provision wrap-around service.



GROUP 2

Evidence 3.2 | Creich Community Locality Plan, Page 16

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Tourism was highlighted as being particularly important to the community of Ardgay and featured prominently in many of the proposed solutions for boosting the local economy in both the questionnaires and the workshop activities, with suggestions of motorhome hook-ups at "Stonehenge", along with the creation of cycle tracks and viewpoints along the Kyle of Sutherland as well as using the river for water sports being suggested.



Evidence 4.1 | Ardgay Community Locality Plan, Page 3

Summary of Findings



The writing in **blue** indicates what currently contributes to the local economy in Ardgay.

- David Mackay Removals
- Donald Munro Plant Training
- Campbell Transport
- Gledfield Estate
- Angus Ross Plant Hire
- Fisheries Trust
- The Barn
- Ardgay Garage
- Shop
- CFUK
- Anna Dog Training
- Munro Plumbing
- Ardgay Game
- Caledonian Curries
- Hub
- Bike Shop
- Migdale Transport
- Creative of great views

The writing in **green** indicates which areas could be developed or used differently to improve the local economy.

- Available for visitors
- Cycle routes and accommodation
- Off road and on road cycle routes
- Water sports
- Stonehenge hook-ups camper vans
- Create viewpoint/clear roadsides.

Evidence 4.2 | Ardgay Community Locality Plan Appendix, Page 57

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2020 Current Tourist Demand | Operational Evidence

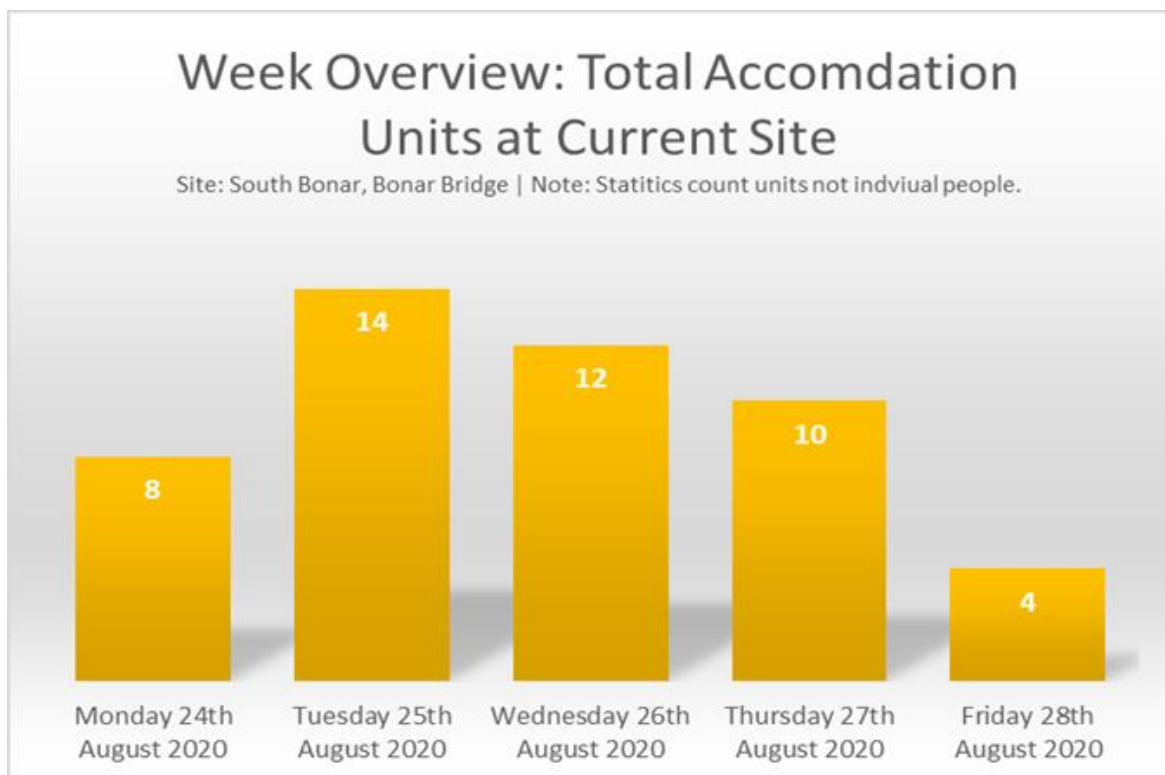
Survey | Evidence 5.1

A User Survey was carried out daily (8am each morning) for the duration of a focused period in August. The survey allowed for further understanding of the operational demand including considerations of date, day, weather conditions, type, and total of accommodation units.

The below graph illustrates the number of self-contained accommodation vehicle units parked overnight at currently un-serviced 'South Bonar' site for free of charge focusing on week beginning 24th August 2020 for five days.

The statistics show a daily break down, weekly total of 48 units and average of 9.6 units per night.

As an overview, the results demonstrate that there is a need for overnight serviced parking site within the Kyle of Sutherland and the tourist demand is evidenced.



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Photographic | Evidence 5.2



The photographic evidence conveys the continuation of the current operational demand between seasonal transition phases, the evidence above illustrates a stable demand over a 25-day period at ‘South Bonar’.

Community Voice | Evidence 5.3

Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust published a Facebook Press Release to ensure community needs are heard and convey aspirational vision for South Bonar. The Press Release was also published in Autumn/Winter 2020 community publication, named Kyle Chronicle (delivered to every household within the Kyle of Sutherland).

Link: [South Bonar, Bonar Bridge Tourism Infrastructure Development Facebook Post](#)

The below statistics (last updated 23rd September 2020) summarise the local and wider community support for the need of serviced site at South Bonar:

Emails | 7

Facebook Shares | 30

Facebook Comments | 69

Facebook Likes | 269

Facebook Post Reach (Views) | 28,424

Facebook Post Engagement | 4,598

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Highlighted Comments

- “I would just like to commend you on your forward thinking attitude. As many have said recently campervan users on the whole are responsible people who just want to enjoy the outdoors and leave overnight stop overs as they found them, sometimes even better. We do use camp sites but aren’t really fond of sitting in a field in a regimented row, looking at nothing. These sites are normally distant from the local town/village and it’s businesses so that we either have to self cater or eat at the site. We much prefer to spend our money in local cafes and pubs. This is why we travel every year to France and Germany because they cater so well with their aires but I would much rather travel in my own beautiful country and spend my money in the UK to help us recover from this disastrous year, given the same facilities available abroad.”
- “As a very responsible campervan owner, it is fantastic to see such forward thinking, & that those who want the freedom to travel around instead of staying on campsites are being catered for & welcomed! It has been gutting to witness the irresponsible minority ruin areas of our beautiful country with their mindless waste disposal whilst day-tripping or camping off-grid! I truly believe this is the way forward & I hope more areas follow your lead! I look forward to visiting & supporting the shops/eateries/visitor attractions in the area!”

Conclusion:

The evidence over the last six years (2014 – 2020) determines and illustrates the requirement and desire for overnight serviced parking site at South Bonar, as illustrated for operational need from key stakeholders: local community and tourists.