



Joanne Crosbie
Area Facilities Officer
High Life Highland
The Old Library
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Joanne.crosbie@highlifehighland.com

To whom it may concern,

Letter of Support

High Life Highland have been made aware that the Lairg & District Community Initiatives (LDCI) has recently been awarded a design grant from Visit Scotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, and from the North Highland Initiative to explore the feasibility of options to develop overnight parking infrastructure for campervans/ motorhomes in Lairg village.

HLH are aware of its proposal that this project would be developed on land close to the Highland Council owned Ferrycroft Visitor Centre, adjacent to the football pitch in Lairg, which HLH operates.

I am writing on behalf of High Life Highland in support of Lairg & District Community Initiatives application and proposal. It is apparent in the local area that there is a lack of accommodation and appropriate parking to accommodate campervans and motor homes and provision of services to dispose of waste correctly. If successful this project would bring tourists to the area but also give the right resources to cater for them, preventing unwanted toileting, random disposal of waste and unsafe parking in the area.

If you require any further information, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Kind Regards

Joanne Crosbie
Area Facilities Officer



To whom it may concern,

I am writing this letter in my role of chairman of Heart of Sutherland Tourism group to support of the Lairg & District Community Initiatives (LDCI) application for stage 2 of Visit Scotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

Over recent years we have seen a huge increase in the number of motorhomes and campers within the Highlands, increasing further with the effects of Covid -19 reducing overseas travel and encouraging Staycations. Although many are responsible motor home owners unfortunately many are not and often many inexperienced hirers do not realise, they need to empty toilet waste and fill with water during their stay. Many have the notion of wild camping and often park illegally or in inappropriate locations and even those that wish to stay in campsites find that due to the numbers of tourists they are unable to get spaces. There is a massive lack of infrastructure in the area to deal with these issues and these have caused ongoing problem for local communities and their residents including:

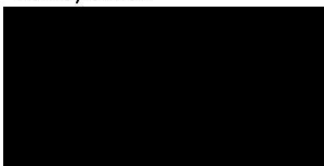
1. Toilet waste being dumped in laybys, parks, into Loch Shin itself and frequently being poured into the public toilets of both Lairg and Bonar Bridge resulting in them being closed for much of the summer.
2. Motorhomes being parked by public toilets and running hoses from taps to fill up tanks meaning members of the public being unable to use them. Motorhomes trying to access water from inappropriately places i.e., driving into cemetery to use public taps
3. Lack of parking areas which has resulted in motorhomes parking in driveways, fields, passing places or in public car parks such as Ferrycroft Visitor centre and Loch Shin, meaning that local residents are unable to park to access these facilities.
4. Lack of waste facilities. Due to the limited numbers of waste bins and open public toilets local communities are having to deal on a daily basic with rubbish including human waste thrown by the side of the road, in laybys or hidden away from sight in bushes and under rocks. This is not only offensive for those that live here by a cause for concerns on health matters.
5. Lack of infrastructure. In Lairg centre there is only one campsite: Dunroaming that does not accept touring campers. The nearest campsite that accepts waste is Woodend Caravan and Camping site which is five miles north of Lairg. Falls of Shin Visitor Attraction, which is five miles south of Lairg which currently operates an Aires style facility which is full almost every night. Pongside Campsite (also north of Lairg) is unable to accept waste from people who are not staying with them. This means that many either park or dispose of waste irresponsibly or drive through looking for more suitable facilities.

Lairg is at the centre of the narrowest part of Scotland and all areas of the Northern Highlands can be reached from the roads that generate from it. Therefore, it is the perfect location for an Aire type facility. Not only will this provide facilities that will benefit tourists but also the lives of local residents but being located within Lairg village it may encourage people to stay for longer (rather than just passing through on their way to the coast) and increase business for the shops, petrol station and restaurants.

LDCI is committed to work with the other local operators to ensure that their sites are also promoted and that visitors are aware of the other facilities available in the local area therefore also helping to boost the local economy. Therefore, Heart of Sutherland Tourism fully supports this application and feel it would be a huge benefit to not only the local community but to the Sutherland area as a whole.

Yours

Ashley Smith





***Encouraging Change
for a
Sustainable Future***
PlanetSutherland.com

Registered SCIO SC050376 www.oscr.org.uk

Planet Sutherland would like to offer our full support for the Lairg Aires Project.

We consider this proposed development to be beneficial in reducing the carbon footprint impact of tourism and aid the area's prosperity, thus helping to increase the resilience of the region. (Local resilience is a key factor in adapting to the climate crisis).

Providing additional camper van facilities in the area can promote slow tourism by encouraging visitors to stay in an area for longer. Not only will this benefit local business, but it will allow tourists to more completely enjoy the beauty and tranquillity of the area.

Indeed, this may also encourage development of further environmental improvements in the area, being developed as tourist attractions but that also benefit the local population. For instance: business or social enterprise developments that increase local food growing opportunities, further increase recycling and other crafts, bicycle rental, eco-friendly water sports and so on.

Planet Sutherland is a climate and environmental charity that helps everyone to do more to help the planet.

Contact Details:

Anna Patfield

anna@planetsutherland.com



Mrs Tracey Smith



To whom it may concern,

I am writing to you as a local B & B owner, to give my support to the Lairg & District Community Initiatives (LDCI) application for stage 2 of Visit Scotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

Over recent years we have seen a huge increase in the local area in the number of motorhomes and campers within the Highlands, increasing further with the effects of Covid -19 reducing overseas travel and encouraging Staycations. Although most are responsible, unfortunately many are not. Taking part in regular litter picks around our village we are increasingly finding litter including human waste regularly disposed of in laybys, parking areas and on local walks. Areas behind public buildings are now constantly used as toilet stops and motorhome blue waste is often disposed in the same places or even as recently reported in Loch Shin itself. Not only ruining the local landscape but a severe risk to the health of those that might stumble upon it or must clean it up.

Many of these issues arise from inexperienced hirers, who do not realise they need to empty toilet waste and fill with water during their stay. Visitors have the image of wild camping in the Highlands and often park illegally or in inappropriate locations and even those that wish to stay in campsites find that due to the numbers of tourists they are unable to get into the limited spaces available. There is a massive lack of infrastructure in the area, with no campsite in the centre of Lairg, and the others all at least 5 miles with one only allowing staying guests to use their facilities. This summer the local toilets in both Bonar Bridge and Lairg have been closed due to damage from motorhome waste being poured into them, and even when they are open often access for residents and visitors is restricted due to motorhomes fixing hoses onto the taps to fill their tanks.

Daily, you see on local tourism sites people desperately looking for places to stop for the night. Many modern campers do not want the facilities of a traditional campsite but just somewhere to empty waste, fill up with water and a low- cost spot to stay the night. Aires are popular in France for this reason, and this is the infrastructure that every village and town in Scotland should be looking to set up.

Lairg is at the centre of the narrowest part of Scotland and all areas of the Northern Highlands can be reached from the roads that generate from it. Therefore, it is the perfect location for an Aire type facility. Not only will this provide facilities that will benefit tourists but also the improve the lives of residents. Being located within Lairg village it may encourage people to stay for longer (rather than just passing through on their way to the coast) and increase business for the shops, petrol station and restaurants.

I know that LDCI is committed to work with the other local campsite operators to ensure that their sites are also promoted at this site, so that visitors are aware of the other facilities available in the local area therefore also helping to boost the local economy.

Therefore, I wish to offer my whole hearted support to this desperately needed facility.

Yours
Tracey Smith

Beth

From: Jodie Ross <projectofficer@lairinitiative.co.uk>
Sent: 27 August 2021 12:41
To: Kirstin
Subject: FW: Aire in Lairg

From: Arthur Davidson [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, August 17, 2021 5:07 PM
To: projectofficer@lairinitiative.co.uk
Subject: Aire in Lairg

Hello

I have completed the online consultation form but I feel so strongly about the lack of motorhome/campervan facilities in Scotland (though its getting better: light at the end of the tunnel?) that I thought I'd email a copy of my feedback.

Whilst my wife and I are Scots born and bred, its sad to admit, but we generally take our hard earned cash to France, Germany, Belgium, to spend it there, as they welcome us and provide facilities. Scotland is stunning. Provide facilities and we'll visit.

Arthur and Liz Davidson, Perth

"We have a campervan and we are in our early 70s. Whilst not wealthy we have the funds to comfortably tour all year round. We refuse to be corralled onto campsites which usually have facilities we don't need eg toilet/shower blocks, electric hookup, huge pitches etc. And they are generally very expensive, in summer £30/night is not unusual. We are not campsites' market, we seek value for money and if that is not forthcoming we avoid those communities. All we need is somewhere safe to park for the night and every 3 or 4 days, somewhere to empty our toilet and grey water, and fill our onboard 100l water tank. And we are happy to pay a modest fee for such facilities. When we stay overnight in a community we usually spend £30/40 in shops, cafe etc. per day. So to attract our custom a community providing Aire type facilities would be top of our "must visit" list."

23 August 2021

Lairg & District Community Initiative
Schoolhouse
Main Street
Lairg
Sutherland
IV27 4DD

To Whom It May Concern:

RE: Lairg Aires Project

I am writing to express my support for the Lairg Aires Project. Facilities for motorhomes and campervans are desperately needed throughout the area.

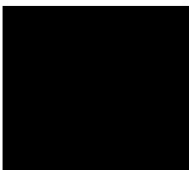
I live in Kinlochbervie on the north west corner of Sutherland. Lairg is the mid-point of my 100-mile journey to Inverness. I am 70 years old and always stop in Lairg to use the public toilets. For me, a mid-point toilet stop is essential.

The Lairg public toilets have now been closed indefinitely because of the persistent dumping of chemical waste by motorhome users. This is not a new event. Over the past few years it has been necessary for the Highland Council to close the public toilets in Lairg regularly until repairs could be made. This is disastrous for people living on the West Coast who need these facilities. Many (including me) deliberately limit their liquid intake when they have to go to Inverness. Recently I felt compelled to take a much longer alternative route home from a late dental appointment in Inverness because I feared I wouldn't be able to find a public toilet. The nearby toilets at Bonar Bridge have also been closed because of problems brought about by the dumping of chemical waste.

The proposed Lairg Aire will include a waste disposal point which will take pressure off the public toilets in the village. Hopefully one of the successful outcomes of the aire will be that the public toilets in the village will be open and available for those residents, travelling workers and tourists who rely on them.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Meek



VENTURENORTH

TOURIST INFORMATION FOR CAITHNESS & SUTHERLAND

23rd Aug 2021

To whom it may concern,

The Board of Venture North are in full support of the of the Lairg & Districts Community Initiative's application (in partnership with the Highland Council) to Stage 2 of the Visit Scotland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

The development of this project would allow visitors to Lairg and surrounding areas to park responsibly overnight, dispose of chemical waste, litter and fill up with fresh water supplies before moving to their next stop.

As the Destination Management Organisation for Caithness & Sutherland, we have recently consulted widely across the region to develop our Tourism Recovery Strategy 2021-2024. We received feedback from over 130 communities, tourism businesses and key stakeholders. It is clear, in order to better manage our communities and visitor's experience of our amazing land and seascapes, that we invest in improving our infrastructure. This project would deliver that much needed infrastructure improvement to this part of the region.

Also key to our support of an Aire located in Lairg are the potential benefits which will encourage people to stay longer and support the local economy as well as encouraging visitors to a part of our region which has the capacity for more visitors and may relieve some of the pressure from other overwhelmed, hotspot areas. This is fundamental to Venture North's strategic tourism recovery aims.

Yours faithfully



Ellie Lamont

On behalf of Venture North Cooperative Limited

c/o 46, Union Street Wick, Caithness, KW1 5ED

info@venture-north.co.uk

www.venture-north.co.uk



Visit LAIRG & ROGART

c/o Lairg Highland Hotel
Main Street
Lairg
Sutherland
IV27 4DB

E-mail: info@lairgandrogart.co.uk
www.lairgandrogart.co.uk

24th August 2021

The Directors
LDCI
The Schoolhouse
Main Street
LAIRG

Please accept this letter on behalf of Visit Lairg & Rogart Local Tourism Group in support of your application to Visitscotlands' Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund for the development of an overnight parking, fresh water outlet, waste disposal and litter facility for motor homes visiting Lairg.

A facility like this is much needed for visitors using this type of accommodation and indeed for their comfort. It will assist with keeping our village tidier and extending a more hospitable welcome to the tourists utilising the service.

Yours sincerely,

Allan

Allan Hamilton
Chair
Visit Lairg & Rogart

Beth

From: Project Officer <projectofficer@lairinitiative.co.uk>
Sent: 26 August 2021 13:33
To: Kirstin
Subject: FW: Lairg Aire Project

From: Jim MacDonald [REDACTED]
Sent: 26 August 2021 12:27
To: projectofficer@lairinitiative.co.uk
Cc: meg@campira.org.uk
Subject: Lairg Aire Project

I am writing in support of the Aire Project being proposed in the village.

Can I start by mentioning that I have a number of interests in this project. Firstly, I consider myself a local although I left my home many years ago. Your address is Schoolhouse, I went through the school between 1963 and 68 before going to Golspie High. I spent my childhood at Builnatobrach, the bungalow standing on the top of the hill which Dad built. My Mum was District Nurse and Midwife. When my parents retired they moved to Milnclarin, almost within view of the schoolhouse. I have a number of relatives still living in Lairg and usually try and visit once a year. For these reasons I would only want to promote something that was good for the village.

I have owned and toured in Motorhomes for over 13 years, both through Britain and Europe. When I visit Lairg I usually pull in overnight in the old Sutherland Transport car park by the war memorial, I like being independent and not imposing myself on people and that includes parking close to residents. I've not tried The Falls motorhome stopping area yet but with a 7.5 m long van I'm happier taking the high road from Bonar!

The last interest is that some of your passing motorhomers may have visited because I've recommended they travel through Lairg rather than the full NC500 route (and hopefully spend some money in the village). This has usually been on Facebook groups so it could have been shared a number of times.

Now that I've explained who I am I would like to offer the following points I see of benefit to the village (in no particular order) :-

If I had a house in the village I would only want an Aire if there was a direct financial benefit to the village. Travelling in Europe we use a lot of free aires but many are moving to payment so the vast majority of motorhomers will happily pay a charge for a safe and comfortable stopping area. The more that is available locally the more that will be spent. A noticeboard of local services with opening times is a must to maximise your profits, directing them to Ord Place for fuel, the village and Lochside for food and other services. If a local business can supply gas bottles, toilet chemicals etc then there is more to be made. It is better to have a lower charge where people will happily spend more than have a higher charge and not get people stopping. Local crofts could bring in supplies to sell ie. tatties and other vegetables. My point is if you want them to stay most will spend other money.

The next point is the talk that motorhomers create mess. Amongst all types of people there will always be ones that do not conform, that's life. When we travel we like to leave the place in the same or better than we arrived, we quite often pick up cans or bottles that have been left by others. A lot are like us. There are different types of motorhomes and different requirements. We only need water every 5 days, toilet every 3

or 4 days and waste water disposal could be once a week, we can live without electricity as we have solar and batteries. Other vans require a higher level of service. A strong reason we will pay for an overnight stop is for the use of services.

The social side. Many motorhomers will eat at local business but they need to be open. We often visit places in France where everything is closed and we are saddened that we cannot contribute locally. You will find that the more the community embraces the 'travelling vans' the more people will want to stay rather than just drive through. Now with the immediate reviews online good news travels fast, but bad travels faster.

Dogs. Many people buy Motorhomes because they want to travel with their dogs. This is not usually a problem but would be greatly helped by a couple of locally marked walks and bins. Nothing is worse than turning up somewhere with nowhere to walk the dog!

Many people have bought vans this year and have not travelled before. A lot are learning as they travel so I do not expect the problems experienced this year by some communities to continue, I would not be promoting an Aire if I did.

Creating an Aire will not stop motorhomers wanting to stay at local campsites. In our experience, when we really like a place we often look for a campsite to stay in so we can discover the area deeper. It would be great benefit to any local site to have an advertisement at the Aire.

I do hope that some of the above information is useful, I will be in Lairg mid December to see family and would be delighted to show anyone round our van and answer any questions about motorhomes. If your plans go forward I would be very eager to help with the project, I would love to give something back to the village.

Before finishing I would like to introduce CAMPRA (Campaign for Real Aires), a group formed to help interested organisations, committees and individuals set up and manage European style aires in the UK (campra.org.uk). There is a lot of helpful information on their pages and they can put you in contact with similar organisations who are either in the process of have a working Aire. I have copied in this email to Meg Macdonald (not a relative, as far as I know?) who is on their leadership team. If there are any queries you need answers to please email either of us at any time and we will help. A well managed Aire should be a great benefit to the village.

Yours sincerely,

Jimmy MacDonald



26th August 2021

To whom it may concern,

Lairg "Aires" Project

I am writing to confirm the support of North Coast 500 Ltd, to I am happy to give my full support to Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust's project to develop infrastructure to support the sustainable development of overnight motor home parking in Lairg . I have been very impressed by the way in which the community leaders in Lairg have sought to find solutions and opportunities to the challenges of increased visitors to the area. It is heartening to see the enthusiasm and ambition for the area and the efforts to maximise the gains the increased visitors bring to local businesses. It is important that communities look to enhance the visitor's experiences through the use of new and existing infrastructure, and this is an excellent example of such an initiative. I wish the project and its leaders well in their efforts and I hope that funding becomes available to take this to the next stage.

Sincerely

Craig Mills

Head of Operations

North Coast 500