

CAT Request: Land at Ferrycroft, Lairg – Representations received

Representation 1

I'm writing to formally object to the community asset transfer of the land at Ferrycroft to LDCI.

I have been following the progress of this project through various stages, and I'm disgusted with the LDCI attitude and its disregard for the opinions of Lairg community's people and organisations.

I'm sure there are a number of individuals who support this project, but equally there are a lot that don't and their opinions have not been included or even investigated.

The location of this project is within an area of land used by many people and organisations for different purposes. Many of which have been affected by the pandemic and lockdown measures so the affects may not be as visible at the moment.

The location requires access through small, twisty residential streets, past a public playpark without pavements and suitable safety measures.

The proposed area is used by the Loch Shin Sailing Club, the Lairg football club and during the summer, the Lairg gala for car parking. The track provides access to the little Loch Shin and the slipway. The development can't limit the number of motorhomes and campers using the area, and such a development will only increase numbers, thus reducing access for the local community.

LDCI approached various organisations and individuals to request support for the project, individuals were merely asked to sign a support form and not asked for any opinions. Having read the application, LDCI simply pay lip service to their community engagement.

They try to demonstrate community support using Facebook engagement, out of 8097 views only 15 likes and 16 comments, which represents only 0.2%

They have provided 11 letters of support, only one of them is from a local business.

Most are from larger Highland organisations involved in tourism. Two are from individuals who aren't local.

But where's the negative views, where's the negative impacts?

The Loch Shin Sailing Club sent a formal objection to the LDCI, noting a number of concerns. I know the community council aren't backing this project. I know a number of individuals that are dead against this, but LDCI assure you the community is all for it.

In section 4.3 you ask for negative impacts.

LDCI say there are none! How can that be, any project of this type anywhere is going to have some negative aspects. The fact that LDCI choose to say there's none should set alarm bells going.

The project needs to access through residential area.
It reduces car parking for a number of organisations.
How do they limit use.

The area is included within a flood risk area identified by the Highland council.

The LDCI said they carried out a feasibility study, to assess different sites, before deciding on the site, but completely missed out the most suitable site. The council own a large tarmac area outside Lairg on the Ullapool road, it offers direct access off the main road, is non residential, good location views and river frontage, and most importantly right next to the water treatment plant, fresh water and power on site.

The LDCI are choosing to ignore the views of the local people and organisations, the Highland council should reject this application as it doesn't represent the views of the community and doesn't provide a asset for the community.

Please find attached file show flood risk area, which would effect turning area and two of the parking spots

I'm confused why LDCI need to purchase this piece of land when they own 8 acres immediately next to the proposed site.

LDCI have own this land in trust for the community for quite a few years and have failed to deliver any projects on it. There is direct access off the turning head behind ferrycroft visitor, just the same as the proposed site. The use of this area would then provide the continued free use of the amenity area as already used.

Ldci again has adequate provision of suitable land already available to them, they also currently own the former Sutherland Arms hotel site. There's adequate land available to the rear of the property to accommodate a revised design.

Having investigated further, I have found that LDCI were considering the Ferrycroft site on June 2021. I've read the LDCI minutes, which reveal they were considering two sites, the Ferrycroft area and the former Sutherland Arms hotel site (which the community owns already). They had identified that they require preplanning help from Scottish water to establish whether water was available on either site.

They then ignored this and set their sights on Ferrycroft, without any further investigation There's a letter from Scottish water on the planning portal that confirms they haven't ask for the preplanning development help service. Ldci knew from mid June they were wanting the project sited at ferrycroft, they identify they needed a Community Asset Transfer to achieve this(recorded in June minutes).

Question is why not then share this with the community? They deliberately withheld this information, pressed on in secret with the planning and even when asking for support, they didn't reveal where the proposed site would actually be. The community only learn where it was goes to be, when the information was published on your website.

I've now learned that you are not publishing any more representations until after the closing date. LDCI however are still able to see these representations and address any problems identified. The new survey opened by LDCI is a reaction to the representations received. I would hope the council recognise that is way to late, and the LDCI have failed to engage properly with its community. The results of the new survey should not be considered as adequate support for the project, although hopefully it will show the opposition to the project. The survey itself is questionable, anyone can fill it in, put in a random postcode, not provide any name to double check and leave a comment.

Representation 2

To whom it may concern

Re Lairg Aire Project proposed site at Ferrycroft

Our property overlooks the proposed site, and we would like to make it clear that we have no objections to seeing motorhomes or camper vans parked in appropriate places even if we do see them from our window. However, **we strongly oppose the location** of the above project for the following reasons: -

1. Community and Public recreation and sustainable tourism

Little Loch Shin is quite unique in that it is bordered by two dams and was created by flooding the surrounding riverbank. This has created a superb location for water sports as it is shallow and sheltered. The village has a thriving Sailing club which meets every Saturday encouraging local children and visitors to partake in sailing, paddle boarding and open water swimming. Parking is very limited, and the club members use the piece of land for parking as do the many members of the public who come to Little Loch Shin to enjoy the water.

1. Waste Management in particular Dog Waste and Dog Fouling

As a ex motorhome owner and current caravan owner we have witnessed first-hand multiple dog fouling incidents on camping sites that have 'official' dog walking facilities. Dog fouling is a major problem and as many motorhome/campervan users have dogs this will without any doubt become an alternative problem to the disposal of toilet waste. The proposed Aire site is right adjacent to the football pitch and the area that the community and public use for picnics and water sport recreation. We have already witnessed several motor home users walking their dogs on the football pitch earlier this summer and allowing them to foul the grass.

The Waste Management Plan does not address the disposal of dog waste, it is assumed that those that do pick up their dog's waste will place it in the 1100 litre general waste bin that will be emptied every 3 weeks. This will be a health hazard and potentially have a very unpleasant impact on the local area.

For the health and wellbeing of the children of Lairg, siting an Aire at this location is irresponsible.

2. Increased Traffic

There will be a significant increase in traffic through the Ferrycroft residential area which also has a children's park and football ground. How does this benefit the local community?

3. Definition of an Aires and its impact on the economy of a community.

An Aire is an approved place to stay for the night, but it is not a campsite. Only motorhomes and campervans are allowed: that means no caravans or tents, and the campervan must be a campervan, not just a van with a mattress in the back. An Aire cannot be booked in advance or reserved if you wish to leave the site in your vehicle.

Occupants are expected to cook, eat, and sleep within their campervan and not place anything outside; that means no tables, and chairs outside, no awnings and no generators. You may not even be permitted to use levelling chocks or a levelling system – although most sites are on flat ground, so you will not usually need to.

As Aires are designed to be used while touring, stopping is generally limited to 24 or 48 hours. (Ref: www.motorhomeprotect.co.uk)

The case for the Ferrycroft Aire includes the positive economic impact on the local community. This shows a poor understanding of many motorhome and campervan owners. Many are very self sufficient in terms of provisions and those that do not stock up at the supermarket already use the local shops to top up with fuel and food. It is our opinion that the economic advantages for Lairg do not justify the encroachment on the residents of Ferrycroft.

4. The planning application

The application states the proposal is for the formation of hard standing areas for four caravans/campervans and electric hook-ups. Aires are not designed for caravans or tents or vans without on board facilities. Including caravans makes this a proposal for a campsite.

During this summer, the car park in Bonar Bridge, which is not designated as an Aire or a campsite, have had caravans with awnings and tents parked up for several days at a time. Who is going to police this at the proposed Ferrycroft site?

And will this encourage more people to 'wild camp' at the public slipway?

5. Objective 3.1 of the Lairg Community Development Trust (LCDI) Working for the Community as identified in their Constitution states: -

5.1 "To manage community land and associated assets for the benefit of the Community and the public in general following principles of sustainable development, where sustainable development means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs".

The LCDI called for letters of support via the Lairg Sutherland Facebook Page for the development of an Aire in Lairg without identifying the proposed location. The letters of support they have included in their applications are from Council or Government Organisation. There is only one letter from a Lairg resident. We believe the process conducted by the LCDI to seek support was not conducted in an open and transparent manner and that they are not acting for the benefit of the Lairg community but are blindly following (without proper impact analysis) the dictate of the Tourism organisations. They stated they had ninety-nine expressions of support but refused to share how many of those were residents of Lairg.

In conclusion we strongly object to the location of this proposed Aire due to the negative impact it will have on the recreational and environmental experiences of local people and visitors alike, in particular the people who live in Ferrycroft. There is already a caravan site neatly situated in the centre of the village, unfortunately it has moved from a touring site to a static site. Perhaps the LCDI could explore how this could be further developed to meet their stated objectives.

Representation 3

Concerns regarding:

- Any impact on access to the pitch for children to play and for football.
- Safety of children playing near the proposed Aire.

Representation 4

Hello.

I know you have had a lot of negative responses from parents and locals regarding this "ridiculous" idea of turning the ground at ferrycroft into a motorhome/camping ground, and I am afraid that is all it is, "ridiculous!"

All be it, it's an easy opportunity to make money, that's clear!

But respect the beauty of lairg as a village. It just simply wouldnt be fair.

The pandemic has affected everywhere and everyone as it is.. i feel that with very little regards to people and our scottish land, many tourists have still continued to "take the piss" going where they like, when they like including (e.g.... ferrycroft ground, during lockdown, despite locals not even being able to leave their homes/gardens!!)

Now,,, a few months down the line we are expected to roll over and let this become a permanent area for campers!!

Not to mention the rubbish that some leave behind!

That ground is where children can play safely and freely.

I'm assuming you dont know lairg? Because if you did you would know that there is very limited areas for children to play, people to walk, and above all else locals and others to enjoy the stunning views that it has!!

All of the above and more will be taken away for what? The sake of a few quid that lairg itself as a community would not benefit from.

Anyway, I have written enough reasons as to why I do not agree with this becoming an option.. please leave ferrycroft as it is.

Or better still, use the money to create an even better place/area for locals and children, "which wont upset the locals" that way visitors could enjoy it too, and its keeps everyone happy. Just not a campsite!

Thank you

Representation 5

Asset transfer request by LDCI for land West of the pitch at Ferrycroft, Lairg to develop facilities for campervans and motorhomes (online reference 100466766-001)

As a resident of Lairg and a member of Loch Shin Sailing Club I wish to lodge an **OBJECTION** to the above transfer and use as facilities for Campervans and motorhomes.

I am not opposed to the proposal of an Aire in Lairg at a suitable site, however **Ferrycroft is not suitable:**

1. it should not be in a place where you drive through a residential area, of children and elderly, which can be at any time of day or night. Many of the elderly residents may not be able to lodge an objection and it is the responsibility of the rest of the community to protect the most vulnerable. It is not acceptable to encourage the use of this access route past their homes which could occur at any time through the night and early morning.

2. It should not be placed where the village children play freely, largely unsupervised as it is safe and accessible.

3. If indeed there is a requirement for such a facility given that Chemical waste can be disposed at Shin Falls and there are private businesses offering the same facilities. Perhaps clearer signage to these existing services would be sufficient.

4. It most definitely should not be on a site already used as a community amenity or where there would be disruption to residents.

The application is flawed. It states:

1. no negative consequences for placing a site here, this is not the case.
2. the site currently had no existing use; this is also not the case.

This is an area used by groups in the area including the Sailing club, which use the area adjacent to the pitch for parking.

We have 85 members and the whole length of the pitch can be used for parking and accessing the site, with safety boats and other equipment. The access road is used by the sailing club and local fishermen regularly and by the local fire station who access the loch on occasion for water.

This site is also used as a community amenity by Lairg Rovers supporters, the Lairg Gala week for hosting an annual bonfire night for the community and on occasion for the use of the Hercher's Funfair. Where are these events to take place if it is taken over for non-residents? These are all negative consequences which have not been considered and alternatives not provided on the application.

3. It states there is no risk of flood – this is not the case. Check with Highland Council
4. The application title states 4 caravans and hook ups yet the application state for 5. Which is it?

Unfortunately, full plans were not made available prior to this application, but even then, there were reservations from local groups and residents. LDCI/KOST should have taken on board these reservations prior to submitting this proposal and identified that the letters of support they obtained for this facility DO NOT include any from those people who use the area, live adjacent to the area and those who will be overlooked by the proposed facility.

This is not a proposal that has local community backing and benefits, at this proposed site, and is therefore invalid for a community asset transfer.

Representation 6

Please be advised that my wife and I object to the outlined proposal regarding the Lairg Aire Ferrycroft development.

Representation 7

To whom this may concern,

I am writing to formally object to the "Lairg Aire Project".

As a local with young children I feel this is a project that has not been thought with us in mind. We already have three campsites within close vicinity to the village that these "wild campers" are not using.

For a small fee I know at least two of them let camper vans empty their waste water at these sites, but they still refuse. These Types of campers do not want to pay any money for services, so I can not see how making this "site" In ferrycroft would be any different.

Ferrycroft, as a whole, is an area enjoyed by children and adults. With the woods and loch nearby which attracts dog walkers and families.

There is also the football team with a lot of supporters and a very well attended sailing club with a lots of young children that all use this area.

The extra traffic of big motor homes passing through a built up residential area puts the safety of our children in danger. The opposed site is also passing a children's play area.

Representation 8

I am raising an objection to the LDCI perusing the idea this is the place to site this unwanted project.

No thought has gone into the impact this will have on the community and our Green Space, where through the summer months this area is well used by local groups and families as a recreational area.

Representation 9

To whom it may concern,

I strongly oppose the plans for the Lairg Aire project of the proposed 5 pitch caravan site beside the football pitch, there is plenty of other areas in the village that would be far better suited to what they are planning including the land they already own on the site of the old SA building in the centre of the village.

I see this as having no benefit to the local community and in fact bringing a negative impact.

There is already infrastructure in place within the village and outside the village in shin Ness.

These local businesses should be supported first instead of trying to promote competition. After reading their proposal, all I can see is a load of nonsense to try and smoke screen their real reason for their project which is for their own financial gain and not with the interest of the local community and infrastructure at heart.

Representations 10, 11, 12

[Note from Highland Council: response submitted separately by different individuals]

I'm writing to object to the "Ferrycroft Aire" proposed the Lairg & District Community Initiative.

The proposed hard standing and waste collection system infringes on our established recreation & amenity area providing necessary carparking for the Lairg football club, Loch Shin Sailing Club and supports activities organised by the Lairg gala.

These uses/rights have been established unchallenged for over 20 years.

We also object on the following reasons: -

1. Close proximity to residential area, access to and from site through residential streets. Lack of suitable safety precautions for pedestrians. No pavement or footpaths, concealed entrance to play park, no barrier separation in front of gateways. No street lighting.
2. Site unmanned/no policing of site rules, potentially leading to noisy and antisocial behaviour. No control over numbers and types of vehicles or users. Increase in dog fouling, especially of football pitch.
3. Waste disposal system may prove danger/disease risk to children and wildlife through misadventure. Increase risk of rats and vermin... disease risk
4. Lack of public and local organisations consultation. No neighbourly notification of planning application.
5. Adequate availability of alternative locations out with residential areas in Lairg area.
6. Ability of a voluntary organisation to continue managing facility in the future. Future burden to community or Highland Council.
7. The football pitch is the designated landing area for the air ambulance and landings may be compromised by people camping or parking on the pitch.

Representation 13

Objection to the proposal by LDCI to take over council land at Ferrycroft, Lairg.

I would like to object to this proposal to LDCI to take over this area at Ferrycroft, and use for Motorhomes to park, empty their waste and fill water. As a resident of over 50years in Ord Place I, along with other local residents, use this area regularly.

The land is currently used for local football matches, gala week activities, crofters show, fun days etc. The local sailing club use this area, local children (and tourists) use the playpark daily. Local residents, many elderly, use the woodland walks daily.

If this proposal gets approved it will become dangerous for local children playing, for the many elderly residents on walks as well as taking away car parking and access space.

No consultation or communication has been received by residents of Ord Place, most of whom object to this scheme.

I note that there are 2 adequate facilities for motorhomes to park, to empty toilets and fill waterfalls with a 5 mile radius of Lairg - one north in Shinness, and 1 south at Shin Falls, so there is absolutely no need for this scheme in Lairg.

I also note that those supporting this application consist of: 1 resident in Perth - 200 miles away, 1 B&B owner in Kinlochbervie - 50 miles away. Highlife Highland in Dingwall, 40 miles away! As well as corporate "charities" who have absolutely no connection to the village.

LDCI is not being run with any consideration to the local residents and they have not obtained any views of the local community.

They already own land at the former Sutherland Arms Hotel. They could easily develop this unused site for their Motorhome proposal.

Representation 14, 15, 16

[Note from Highland Council: response submitted separately by different individuals]

I am writing to formally object to the community asset transfer of the land at Ferrycroft, Lairg to the LDCI.

When the Aire project was first put out publicly to the community on Facebook it was not made clear where it was planned to be.

I do believe there is a need for a water dispenser and waste disposal site in lairg. However Ferrycroft is not that site, and here are my reasons why.

1, Ferrycroft has a visitor centre which also has a popular playpark which is very busy with young children going back and forth, there are no pavements and increased traffic could make this more dangerous.

2, This is a residential area, my house is right beside Ferrycroft and i feel having an Aire here will only encourage more campers/motorhomes to stay and encourage dirty camping. We have had enough of finding human waste etc round here, we walk our dogs here, our children play here!!

3, Lairg Sailing Club use the proposed site for parking, this is a long established club and has many members many of whom are local children who enjoy using the loch every saturday in summer. They have also had trouble with dirty camping down by the pier and human waste, this will only make this area an even bigger target for campers who dont want to pay.

4, Lairg Rovers Football Pitch, this pitch has been used by the community for over 40 years. Due to the pandemic there has been no football games. In normal times this area is used by spectators in cars, especially the elderly fans who cannot stand for the length of a football game but still come out to support and enjoy their local team.

5, Lairg Gala Week use this area for the Bonfire every year, there are also sideshows and fireworks and its also used in the gala week for different events.

6, The Ferrycroft Pitch is also used as a landing site for the Air Ambulance, the Lairg Fire Brigade also use the pitch to set out the landing lights for when an ambulance is due to land, how are they to access the pitch if there are numerous campervans and motorhomes in the way?

All of my points impact locals, whilst the Aire only benefits tourists.

Representation 17

Formation of hard standing areas for 4 caravans/campervans and electric hookups ref:21/04302/FUL

Loch Shin Sailing Club Committee wish to lodge an **OBJECTION** to the above transfer and use as facilities for Campervans and motorhomes. This proposed site is at a location currently utilised by the sailing club and its 85 members for parking and access to the Jetty on little Loch Shin.

The project application has made no indication that this site is currently used, on the contrary indicating on the application that there was NO existing use of this site and that there would be no negative consequences to the community or community groups. This is not the case.

Where is the provision made for where we are to park if this goes ahead? Where is the statement that access will be unhindered down to the jetty for residents and all other users? What is the plan during construction for access to the Jetty?

In addition, we also have grave concerns that this is to be an unsupervised facility, what is to happen if there are more campervans than 4-5 bays available? The likelihood, if arriving late, the motorhome/caravan will not move on but park anywhere available. Potentially increasing littering, congestion, and noise pollution to what is a peaceful area in the centre of the village.

On a community level, as this site is accessed through a residential area, we have concerns for the residents, many of whom are elderly and vulnerable and rely on the community to look after their best interests. Having motor homes driving past their homes any time of day or night is not in their best interests, nor is it for the residents who would directly overlook the site.

The sailing club has had a fantastic re-engagement within the community with adults, children, teenagers, and families, as reflected in its growing numbers, since the relaxation in Covid restrictions. We hope to continue with this success improving the health and wellbeing and creating a sense of belonging for all our members.

This application impacts negatively on us being able to do this.

Yours sincerely

Loch Shin Sailing Club Committee