

# Road to the Isles

## Rathad nan Eilean

### Location Action Plan (LAP) 2022

### Plana-gnìomha Ionadail 2022

**Aim:** To outline, define and envision a sustainable and ongoing step-by-step process for the Road to the Isles communities, visitors, environment and economy

**Amas:** Pròiseas ceum-air-cheum seasmhach is leantainneach a mhìneachadh, a shònrachadh is a dhealbhadh do choimhearsnachdan, luchd-tadhail, àrainneachd agus eaconamaidh Rathad nan Eilean.

Matthew Bradley | Access Ranger  
matthew.bradley@highland.gov.uk



## Contents | Clàr-innse

---

Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations   Beag-fhaclair Bhriathran is Ghiorrachaidhean .....	3
Executive Summary   Geàrr-chunntas Gnìomhach .....	4
Objectives.....	4
Core Concerns .....	4
Summary of Suggested Solutions.....	5
Outcomes .....	6
The Staged Process.....	6
Highland Council Tourism Strategy   Ro-innleachd Turasachd Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd .....	7
Introduction   Ro-ràdh.....	8
Stakeholders   Luchd-ùidhe.....	10
Visitor Data and Impacts   Buaidhean Luchd-tadhail.....	15
Tourism context .....	15
Campsite figures.....	16
2021 Access Ranger Data .....	16
Traigh Bay .....	17
Camusdarach .....	18
Morar Sands.....	19
Loch Morar .....	20
Core Concerns   Draghan Bunaiteach .....	21
Comparators   Coimeasaichean .....	22

Glencoe/Etive .....	22
Loch Lomond .....	23
France .....	24
Management So Far   Stiùireadh Gu Ruige Seo .....	25
Community and land managers .....	25
The Highland Council.....	26
Action Plan   Plana-gnìomha .....	27
Road to the Isles as a destination area .....	27
Area 1: Traigh .....	32
Area 2: Camusdarach .....	37
Area 3: Morar Sands.....	39
Area 4: Loch Morar.....	43
Priorities   Prìomhachasan .....	45
Further Opportunities   Tuilleadh Chothroman .....	46
A Lochaber/South Skye visitor leaflet .....	46
Carrying Capacity.....	48
Active travel.....	49
Shuttle bus.....	50
Joint service patrols.....	50
Marine Park .....	50
References   Iomraidhean .....	51

## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations | Beag-fhaclair Bhriathran is Ghiorrachaidhean

---

<b>Road to the Isles</b>	The geographical area from the Rhu peninsula extending to Mallaig via the B8008, and as far east as Bracorina on the north Loch Morar road.
--------------------------	---

<b>LAP</b>	Location Action Plan
<b>RTTI</b>	Road to the Isles
<b>RTTIFG</b>	Road to the Isles Facilities Group
<b>RTTIMG</b>	Road to the Isles Marketing Group
<b>SOAC</b>	Scottish Outdoor Access Code
<b>THC</b>	The Highland Council

<b>Short term</b>	To be achieved within 3 - 9 months
<b>Medium term</b>	To be achieved within 9 - 18 months
<b>Long term</b>	To be achieved beyond 18 months

## Executive Summary | Geàrr-chunntas Gnìomhach

---

### Objectives

It has been identified over successive years the Road to the Isles (RTTI) is in need of a co-ordinated approach to visitor management. This document aims towards that.

The objective of this report is therefore threefold:

1. Discuss the visitor management challenges which the Road to the Isles experiences, and appraise actions taken to date
2. Produce a comprehensive working document considering stakeholder perspectives within the responsible tourism model
3. Map the various solutions through research and conversations which stakeholders can and are able to undertake in the short, medium and long-term to mitigate, reduce or prevent said challenges

### Core Concerns

The core concerns, which arose from visitor related challenges identified through stakeholder engagement and the 2021 Access Ranger Service were:

#### 1. Dilution of local voices and the impact on business

##### Challenge:

Stakeholders voiced concerns that there is a lack of ownership in areas which they either work, own, live or govern, and that this has led to a disillusionment with the area, and which has negatively impacted on business and quality of life.

#### 2. Road congestion and safety hazards

##### Challenge:

It was evidenced that the area's carrying capacity was exceeded during several periods over the last few years. This led to traffic management issues, restricting local access as well as the creation of health and safety hazards for visitors and locals.

#### 3. Environmental concerns

##### Challenge:

Intense seasonal tourism pressures have led to areas in the Road to the Isles becoming degraded from camping and its associated activities like fire lighting, motorhome and car verge parking, as well as evidence of anti-social behaviours directly causing environmental pollution such as tree cutting and littering.

## Summary of Suggested Solutions

1. Road to the Isles destination management
  - a. Establish a Destination Management Forum of stakeholders
  - b. Establish a Destination Development Officer
  - c. Identify an idea of the area's carrying capacity
  - d. Establish a seasonal Road to the Isles Warden
  - e. Improve and join-up virtual destination 'narrative' and information for visitors
2. Traffic management in the Road to the Isles
  - a. Improve and add car and motorhome parking facilities and infrastructure
  - b. Improve traffic flow through a welcoming management and enforcement system
  - c. Increase options for alternative transport methods which promote active travel
3. Responsible outdoor access in the Road to the Isles
  - a. Positive and cohesive messaging reinforcing the Scottish Outdoor Access Code across the area, both virtually and in person
  - b. Seasonal warden working alongside Access Rangers, communities and stakeholders to manage responsible access
  - c. Improved outdoor access provision with signs, footpaths and infrastructure to discourage inappropriate behaviours
4. Monitor and respond to changes and evolutions of community needs and tourism trends.
  - a. The Destination Management Forum can adopt the Location Action Plan, using it as a working document to be reviewed and updated annually in response to changing needs and trends.

## Outcomes

The Location Action Plan, or LAP, has been developed through first-hand experience, secondary research and conversations with stakeholders in order to work towards Visit Scotland's four priority areas for responsible tourism:

1. Supporting Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy
2. Ensuring tourism and events in Scotland are inclusive
3. Ensuring tourism and events contribute to thriving communities
4. Supporting the protection and considerate enjoyment of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage<sup>1</sup>

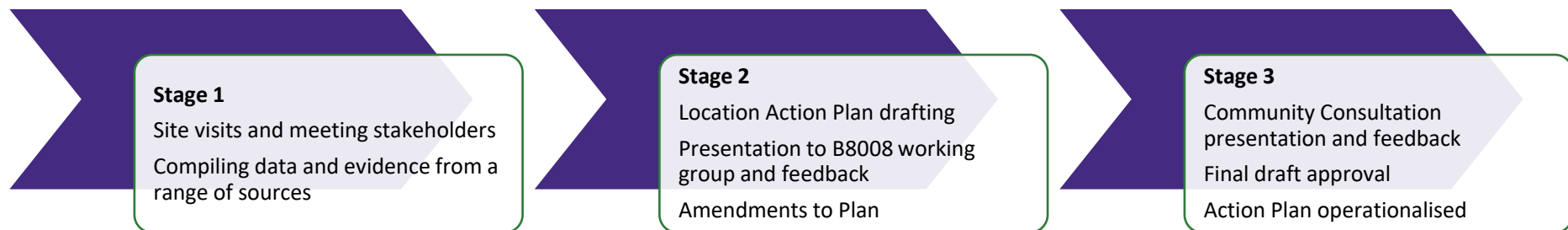
With the objectives, suggested solutions and responsible tourism aims in mind, the following overarching outcomes have been identified:

- Support community wellbeing and livelihoods with a tourism economy that celebrates and protects the local natural and cultural heritage
- Join up the destination management for the Road to the Isles through collaboration across stakeholders and community members.

**It is therefore proposed that a collective group forms in order to implement some of the options provided in this action plan, as well as to respond to and address any future trends and issues which arise, giving the Road to the Isles definitive ownership of the area in which people live, work and play.**

## The Staged Process

The following process was adopted based on guidance from other destination and community consultation procedures.



<sup>1</sup> Visit Scotland (2021) "Industry Guidance: Responsible Tourism"

## Highland Council Tourism Strategy | Ro-innleachd Turasachd Chomhairle na Gàidhealtachd

In 2021, the Highland Council was successful in attracting funding from Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF)<sup>2</sup> for local authorities and National Park Authorities to undertake consultation and produce a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan that would identify the key priorities for their area for the next two to five years. The audit part of the strategy looks at publicly accessible infrastructure, either provided by the public sector or by third party or commercial stakeholders if the infrastructure is easily made available to visitors that are not otherwise customers of the business concerned. This in turn would help us identify, in conjunction with partners, where new or improved infrastructure might be required.

The perspective taken by this plan is intended to move away from the approach previously taken by RTIF, which was arguably driven by the fact that a certain community or group has the capacity to put forward an application (and deliver a project), which has to some extent meant that there was a lack of strategic planning for provision. Instead, this planning document is trying to adopt a more holistic approach by looking at hotspot areas – the Isle of Skye being one of them, where multiple sites experience multiple pressures across different categories of infrastructure. This plan identifies tourism infrastructure needs in the Highland area and proposes projects to address these, thereby constituting a list of priorities which are hoped to attract funding of both national (RTIF, NatureScot, etc) and local nature (Coastal Communities, Town Centre Funds, etc).

The Highland Council’s Visitor Management Plan is a parallel piece of work which was first created in 2021 to tackle the tourism challenges encountered during summer 2020. As opposed to the above which is largely planning for future longer-term capital spend, it addresses shorter-term priorities that require action, focussing more on day-to-day delivery of services across Council teams. As well as the deployment of access rangers, this plan supports enhanced services related to waste, roads and parking management, public transport and public conveniences provision. After being successful in alleviating visitor pressures in 2021, a new Visitor Management Plan for 2022 was approved by the Tourism Committee with an anticipated budget of £1.5 million which will help provide more short-term solutions in advance of any of the proposed new infrastructure being provided.

### The anticipated Visitor Management Plan 2022 budget

£240,000 for Road Management and improvements

£160,000 investment in parking management

£190,000 spend on public toilets

£220,000 on waste management

£350,000 for seasonal access rangers

£55,000 improved provision for motorhomes and waste disposal

<sup>1</sup> Proposed budget 6 Dec 2021 access at: [https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14207/proposed\\_visitor\\_management\\_plan\\_2022\\_agreed\\_for\\_highland](https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14207/proposed_visitor_management_plan_2022_agreed_for_highland)

<sup>2</sup> Further RTIF Information can be accessed at <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/rural-tourism-infrastructure-fund>

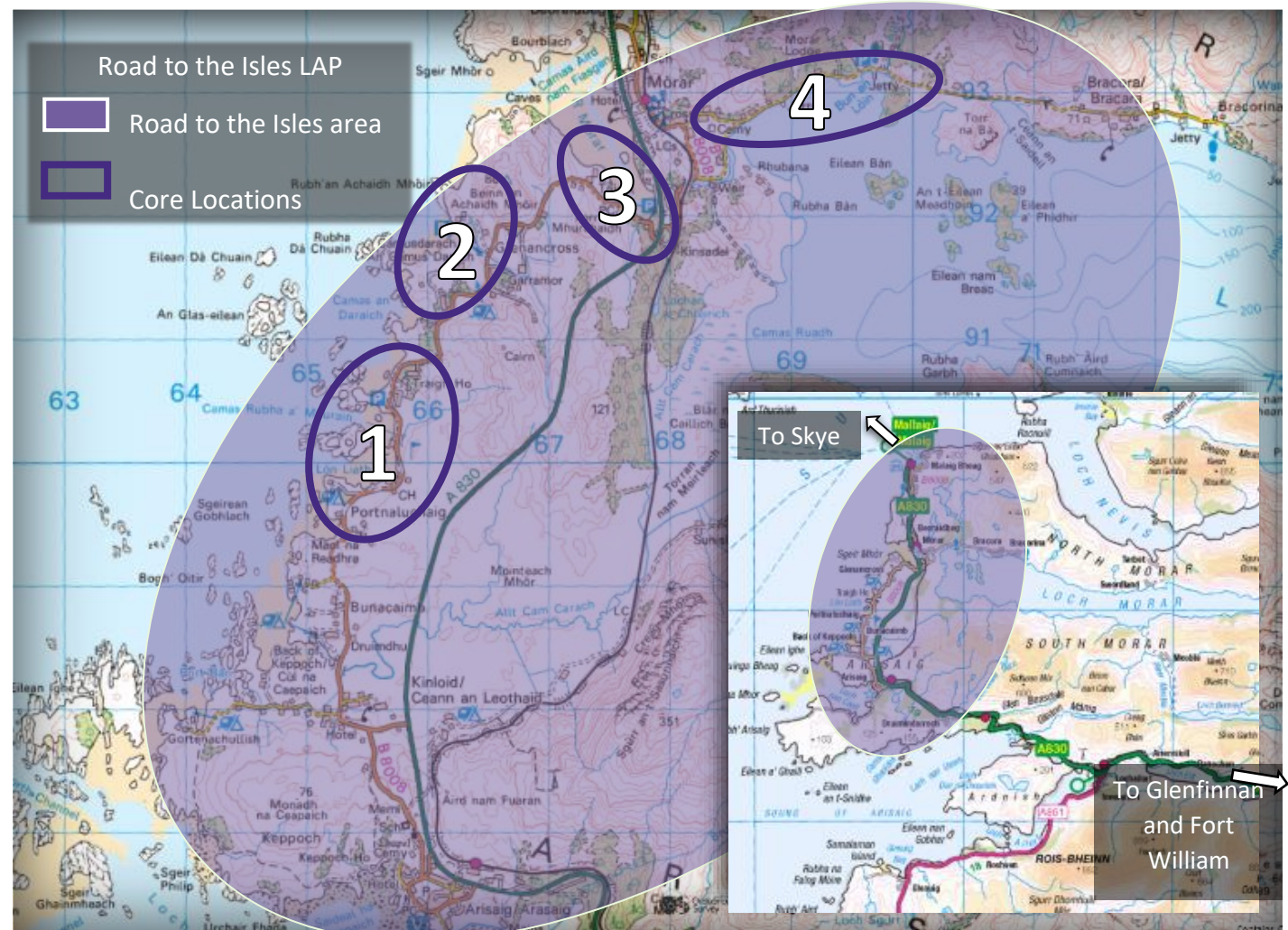


## Introduction | Ro-ràdh

The Road to the Isles (RTTI) area is located forty miles west of Fort William in Lochaber.

An hour's drive from the centre of Outdoor Capital of the UK and the Highland's second largest population settlement, and a four hour journey from the central belt, the Road to the Isles is home to people along the whole peninsula, from the port of Mallaig and the villages of Arisaig and Morar to the small settlements of Tougal, Bracora and Rhu.

The Road to the Isles is in itself a site of natural beauty as well as fulfilling its namesake in accessing the Outer Hebrides, the Isle of Skye, the Small Isles of Rum, Eigg, Muck and Canna and the remote peninsula of Knoydart.



Note: the oval depicted in the map above is indicative of the area which is under consideration. Indeed, sites such as Rhu, Kinloid, Bracorina, Curtaig and Glasnacardoch, all which have not been explicitly identified as Core Locations, are addressed implicitly within the document and will be essential to managing the Road to the Isles area.

Additionally, Loch Morar has been recognised as a Site of Special Scientific Interest due to its native woodland and oligotrophic loch.

The LAP will consider the Road to the Isles as one area, looking mostly within the B8008 corridor from Arisaig to Mallaig. Doing so means that no single location is looked at in isolation – something which is viewed to be of importance when addressing the pressing tourism issues the area faces.

However, the pragmatic nature of this document dictates the Action Plan for the RTTI be split into four distinct areas.

The Core Locations – sites where camping and motorhome related issues are most prevalent – are:

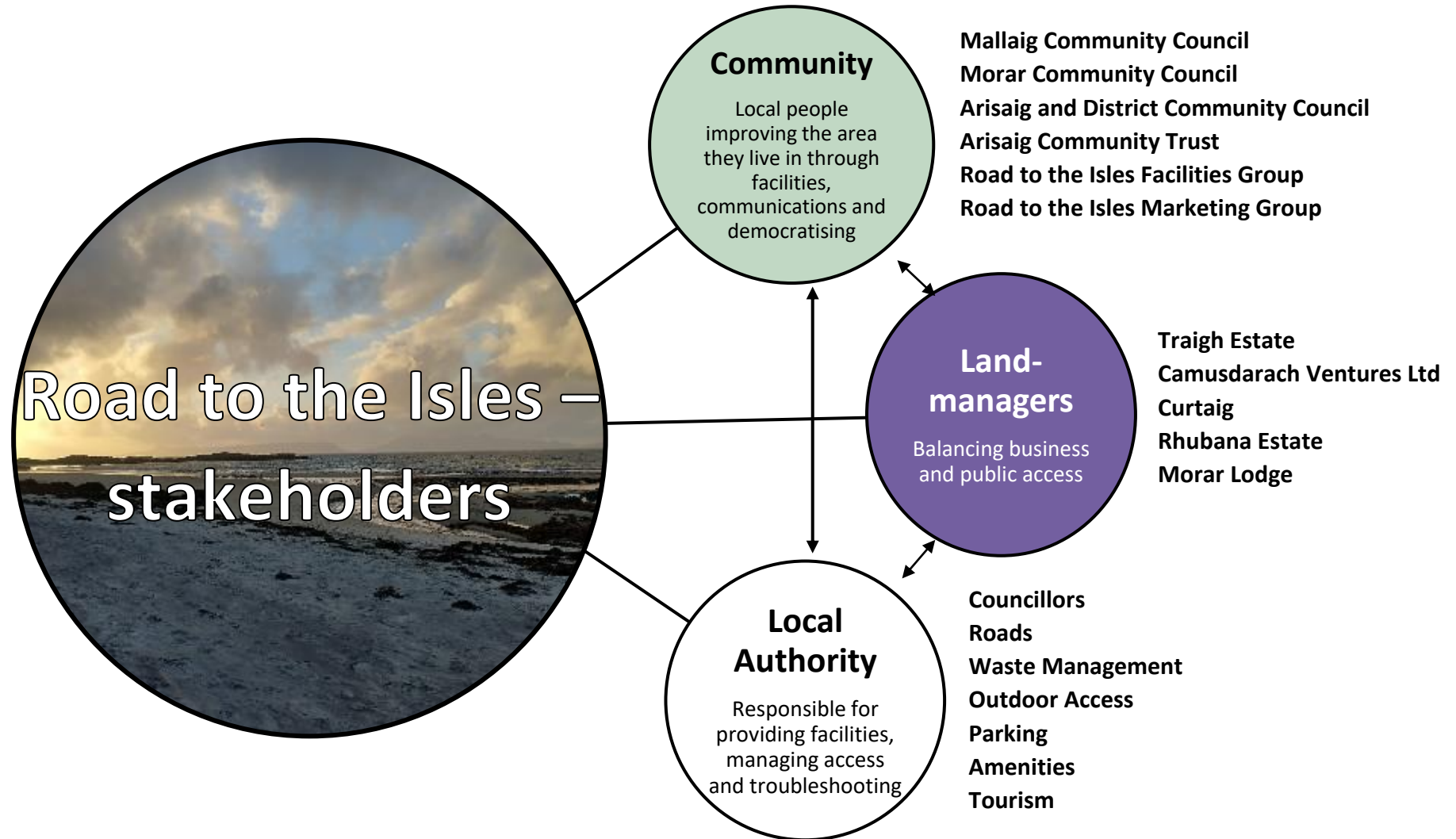
1. Traigh Bay – including the small beach to the north of the main bay
2. Camusdarach – includes the main beach, the core path to/from, Curtaig private car park and Curtaig beach
3. Morar Sands – encompasses the beach area around Tougal and across to Silversands, the public car park and its toilets and the woodland area between that and the beach
4. Loch Morar – the section of road from the Roman Catholic church to Allt an Loin, including the verges and lochside areas

Identifying and defining the discrete, actionable plans for each area's challenges and its stakeholders will therefore be easier to follow, before tying all these areas together again in a unified and co-ordinated vision which each stakeholder can aim toward.

Note: the oval depicted in the map above is indicative of the area which is under consideration. Indeed, sites such as Rhu, Kinloid, Bracorina, Curtaig and Glasnacardoch, all which have not been explicitly identified as Core Locations, are addressed implicitly within the document and will be essential to managing the Road to the Isles area.

## Stakeholders | Luchd-ùidhe

A map of the various stakeholders is given below, showing the various groups and persons with responsibilities and interests in the area outlined in the introduction.



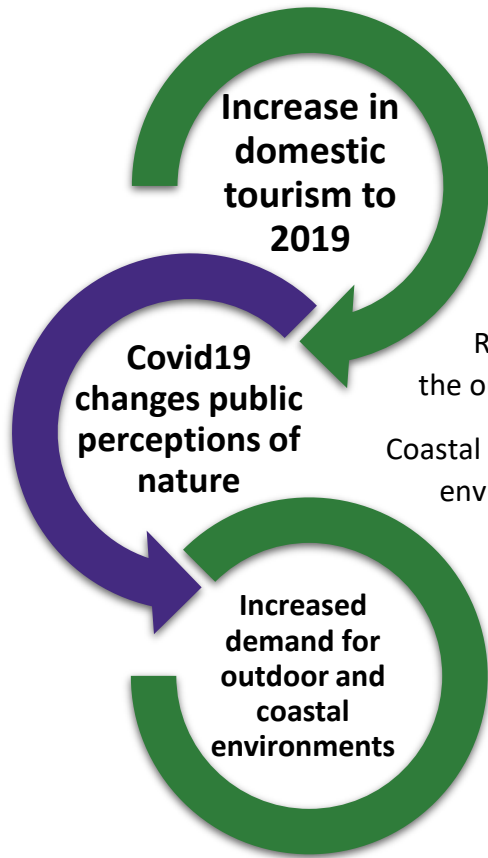
Type of stakeholder	Stakeholder name	About	Past visitor management work	Visitor management plans
<b>Community Council</b>	Mallaig Community Council	Community Council serving Mallaig and Glasnacardoch.	No comment	Improve Mallaig Circular core path Improve visitor car parking
<b>Community Council</b>	Morar Community Council	Community Council serving the Morar, Tougal, Glenancross and Bracora and Bracorina areas.	Erected some responsible access signage	No comment
<b>Community Council</b>	Arisaig and District Community Council	Community Council serving the Arisaig area, across to Lochailort and Roshven, and up to Camusdarach and Traigh.	No comment	No comment
<b>Community Trust</b>	Arisaig Community Trust	A community charity looking to improve facilities and infrastructure in and around Arisaig village for residents and visitors.	Land, Sea and Islands centre Community toilets Bill's Shed	Aire Shorefront project
<b>SCIO</b> (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation)	Road to the Isles Facilities Group (RTTIFG)	A community charity to improve and increase visitor infrastructure such as car parking, toilets, and waste disposal in the Mallaig, Morar and Arisaig Community Council catchment areas.	Mallaig West bay car park: Added toilets, shower cubicle and motorhome waste disposal Traigh Bay: Opened toilets in 2020.	Improve car parking at Tougal beach and Silver Sands Improve path to beach from car park. Coastal walking path.
<b>Voluntary marketing organisation</b>	Road to the Isles Marketing Group (RTTIMG)	Develop, promote and sustain tourism in the Road to the Isles area, focusing on sustainable off-peak tourism.	Visitor website development.	Promote off-peak tourism as a means to sustainable promotion of the area.

<b>Informal pressure group</b>	B8008 working group	Raise and discuss awareness of issues from various stakeholder perspectives.	VMS signs in place for end of summer 2021 season Raising awareness of visitor management issues, with calls for rangers.	No comment
<b>Rhubana Estate Factor</b>	Alexander Way Bidwells	Owns and manages the area around Silversands, Tougal car park and the woodland between the B8008 and the beach.	Erected several responsible access signs.	No comment
<b>Traigh Estate Manager</b>	Shaw-Stewarts Eilidh Henderson	Owns and manages the land around Traigh Bay including the golf course, farming land, and a certified Camping and Motorhome Certified Location.	Put up No Fires signs and wild camping advisory notice boards.	No comment
<b>Camusdarach Ventures Ltd</b>	Val Stuart-Orchard	Own and run Camusdarach Campsite - a family run business, and own the land around the core path and up to the mean high water mark on Camusdarach beaches.	Strives to keep Camusdarach beach as a family-friendly place to visit. Has responsible outdoor access signs.	Immediate attention must be given to creating local bylaws that are enforceable by the police.
<b>Curtaig</b>	None	Owns the car park which visitors access Camusdarach beach from, and the land north of Allt Cuairteach.	No comment	Possibly increase car park capacity with possibility of toilet inclusion.
<b>Morar Lodge Manager</b>	Grace Henderson Viv de Fresnes	Owns and manages Morar Lodge, road frontage just east of the Meoble pier to the bridge at Allt an Loin.	No comment	Improve water safety signage Improve Lochside appearance and functionality.
<b>Elected Councillor Independent</b>	Allan Henderson	Elected official representing Ward 11 Caol and Mallaig residents.	No comment	No comment

<b>Elected Councillor</b> Scottish Liberal Democrats	Denis Rixson	Elected official representing Ward 11 Caol and Mallaig residents.	No comment	No comment
<b>Highland Council</b> Senior Ward Manager and Ward 11 Manager	Dot Ferguson	Manages and oversees Ward 11 of Caol and Mallaig, connecting Highland Council services with local communities.	No comment	No comment
<b>Highland Council Access</b> Outdoor Access and Long Distance Route Manager; Inverness, Nairn and Lochaber Access Officer; West Lochaber Access Officer; Lochaber Access Ranger	Philip Waite Stewart Eastaugh Mark Crowe Matthew Bradley	Improve and manage public access and visitor behaviour, working with communities and land managers to establish better relations with visitors.	2021 Access Ranger summer patrols.	Improve Mallaig Circular path condition Improve public access from Tougal car park to beach Location Action Plan 2022 Access Ranger summer patrols Improve visitor sites
<b>Highland Council Roads</b> Roads Senior Engineer Roads Technician Roads Tourism Technician	Mark Smith Pauline Donaldson Jack Matheson	Council team operating and managing road safety around all roads in the Road to the Isles other than the A830.	Traigh bay verge bunding Double yellow lines and Temporary Traffic Order in form of a rural clearway.	Speed restriction order for B8008: 30mph for Traigh, Camusdarach and Tougal; 40mph for in between Lay-by parking creation at Kinigarry Bunding further round Traigh Improved Passing Place signage Possible No Waiting TTROs

<b>Highland Council</b> Principal Tourism Officer Project Co-ordinator	Colin Simpson Wanda Girard- Prudon	Liaison with Tourism businesses and business groups, Planning and coordination of Council tourism policy and influencing / advising other services on management; support of RTIF applications.	Produced Visitor Management Plan 2021 and 2022.	Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan to be published in February 2022.
<b>Highland Council</b> <b>Waste</b> Waste Management Officer	Ian Cameron	Council team dealing with waste, and specific seasonal pressures.	Increased waste pick up service through seasonal waste operatives.	Continue seasonal pick up increase.
<b>Highland Council</b> <b>Parking Services</b> Principle Traffic Officer	Shane Manning	Deals with The Highland Council area's car parking and Traffic Restriction Orders.	No comment	No comment
<b>Highland Council</b> <b>Amenities</b> Amenity Services Manager	Debbie Sutton	Highland Council service looking at facilities provision and Comfort Schemes.	No comment	No comment

### Tourism context



Tourism is an important aspect of the local economy, with an expansive choice of hotels, bed and breakfasts, self-catering cottages, caravan and camping sites, as well as restaurants, pubs and cafés<sup>3</sup>. The Road to the Isles area has been increasingly busy year on year from international tourists, with the Highlands receiving 30% more visitors in 2019 than the year prior, with a large driver of this being domestic tourists<sup>4</sup>.

With the Covid-19 pandemic interrupting international travel, 2020 saw rural tourism hotspots surge in demand, with city-dwellers seeking out fresh air and free space once Government restrictions had eased in July of that year.

Research conducted on a representative sample of the Scottish adult population showed that 80% of adults took visits to the outdoors at least once a week in the four weeks leading up to September 2020, up from 64% in 2019<sup>5</sup>.

Coastal areas in particular were sought after, being perceived to match visitor’s requirements of “open space, nature and clean environments”<sup>6</sup>.

The end result of this is an unprecedented number of visitors wishing to visit areas like the Road to the Isles.

As accommodation filled up, the beaches and areas typically reserved for day-time visitors became busy with overnighting tents and motorhomes.

<sup>3</sup> Road to the Isles Marketing Group (2021) “Members”

<sup>4</sup> Visit Scotland (2020) “Highland Factsheet 2019”. Edinburgh: Insight Department, Visit Scotland

<sup>5</sup> NatureScot (2020) “Enjoying the outdoors: Monitoring the impact of Coronavirus and social distancing”

<sup>6</sup> Visit Scotland (2020) “Navigating the New Normal – Post-Covid19 Tourism Consumer Trends” Edinburgh: Insight Department, Visit Scotland



## Campsite figures

Camusdarach campsite – Hosts 100 people a night and is generally fully booked throughout the summer. There are however periods when the campsite is not full and yet there are still motorhomes and tents in the Road to the Isles area who have no intention of staying on any site.

There is thus far not much clear data surrounding visitor numbers.

## 2021 Access Ranger Data

The data compiled below is gathered from The Highland Council's Access Ranger team over the period from 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021 to 30<sup>th</sup> November 2021. Each number is cumulative for that month and its data type.

Two rangers were in position for six months, and they were joined by a third ranger from June till mid-September. The rangers patrolled every Friday, Saturday and Sunday, and occasionally the Monday and Thursday of each week if their other duties allowed. The data below then is **indicative** of the volume of visitors and their behaviours found, and it is **by no means an exhaustive**, nor official account of the volume of visitors.

The sorts of behaviour can be found quantitatively in the tables, alongside a summary of what the rangers found qualitatively noted below each table.



Irresponsible car parking at Silversands, Tougal



Irresponsible camping in the woods below Tougal car park, highlighting fire pit and site overuse damage



A series of 'encampments' at Morar Sands, seen from the A830 bridge crossing the River Morar

## Traigh Bay

	Month	No. of patrols	Cars parked	Motorhomes overnighting	Tents	New fire marks	Litter expressed in ¼ bags	Toileting	People seen	People spoken to
Traigh Bay	May	7	73	93	32	7	5	0	74	40
	June	12	89	123	88	16	10	1	157	104
	July	18	479	282	398	33	13	13	841	406
	August	22	373	267	193	48	32	14	701	234
	September	11	67	48	14	12	19	13	97	32
	October	9	30	26	4	3	13	6	67	26

Common observations made by the Access Rangers when out on patrol include:

- Motorhomes parked up on verge restricting vehicle access as half the vehicle can sometimes still be on the road. Camping behaviour often accompanies these vehicles. Also restricts day-time visitor access
- Large tents and volumes of people camping on beach close to road and campsite – i.e. non-SOAC
- Dog waste commonly found within the dunes
- Land Rover “dormobiles” found on the machair below the road and on beach
- A few camping groups staying up to a week, one for up to two weeks on one site – these are determined people who are tricky to engage with as SOAC is advisory and no legal powers
- Unable to ask groups to move on as some had had an alcoholic drink
- Fires impacting on the area, with disposable BBQ’s, fire pits and ash left in situ by campers
- It was found that groups commonly expressed they had heard of this location through friends and social media



Motorhome verge parking commonly found along the B8008 - picture courtesy of Eilidh Henderson, 2018

## Camusdarach

	Month	No. of patrols	Cars parked	Motorhomes overnighting	Tents	New fire marks	Litter expressed in ¼ bags	Toileting	People seen	People spoken to
Camusdarach	May	5	58	7	2	1	2	0	53	10
	June	11	106	10	7	0	8	2	91	49
	July	16	214	15	40	2	10	6	225	90
	August	20	256	26	34	4	25	10	168	70
	September	6	35	1	0	0	0	0	14	1
	October	9	37	6	0	0	0	0	4	0

Common observations made by the Access Rangers when out on patrol include:

- On the busy weekends cars were parked on the verge outside the car park
- MH's on occasion staying overnight, but with most moving on because of "No Overnighting" sign – likewise with tents
- Toileting found within the dunes
- Rubbish left in car park bagged up amongst bracken, and on occasion on beach where tents had been
- It was found that groups commonly expressed they had heard of this location through friends and social media



Dangerous verge parking at the bottom of the Camusdarach and Glenacross hills



Dangerous corner verge parking at Traigh

## Morar Sands

	Month	No. of patrols	Cars parked	Motorhomes overnighting	Tents	New fire marks	Litter expressed in ¼ bags	Toileting	People seen	People spoken to
Morar Sands	May	11	103	16	94	18	5	0	107	86
	June	16	171	37	143	27	11	8	276	195
	July	25	578	132	474	72	19	37	891	468
	August	34	679	218	391	99	54	93	1096	405
	September	10	92	36	36	19	11	5	175	74
	October	9	33	9	0	1	9	3	52	11

Common observations made by the Access Rangers when out on patrol include:

- Cars and motorhomes parked on verge obstructing road driver's views, impacting safety of pedestrians and road users
- Large groups of people camped on beach, outside the SOAC guidelines of lightweight minimal impact camping
- Large fire pits repeatedly found
- Loud music being played anti-socially
- Trees being cut down
- Human waste an issue despite toilets only a two minute walk from beach
- Some aggressive behaviour, stemming from alcohol consumption
- Water safety concerns
- It was found that groups expressed they had heard of this location through friends and social media as well as individuals returning as adults who had visited as children



Cars abandoned dangerously at Tougal

## Loch Morar

Loch Morar was not patrolled often enough by the Access Rangers for the data to be included in this report. This is due to the extensive area they covered of Lochaber, along with a broad scope of roles they fulfilled.

Having conversed with the both the landmanager and owner since the summer period however, it has appeared that the section of road which was adjacent to Morar Lodge estate was in fact busy for its carrying capacity, with particular issues being mentioned below:

- Verge parking damaging the landscape
- Passing places being filled with cars
- Inappropriate roadside camping behaviour, often with large groups
- Water safety concerns
- That implementing any restrictions in the Arisaig to Morar B8008 corridor would impact on the Loch Morar location



Before and after clearing fire pits around Traigh



Mixed signage on the Road to the Isles



## Core Concerns | Draghan Bunaiteach

Through stakeholder conversations and looking at the information provided in the Visitor Impacts section, the core concerns faced by the Road to the Isles identified are as follows:



## Comparators | Coimeasaichean

In order to move forwards, secondary research has been undertaken to understand how other areas around Scotland, as well as internationally, have dealt with an increase in demand for their area and resources.

### Glencoe/Etive

South east of the Road to the Isles is Glencoe and Glen Etive, both seeing a similar level of increase in visitors. Whilst each landowner has different land management strategies, they are currently working together to reduce the negative impacts of this significant hike in visitors. The landowners include – National Trust for Scotland / Black Corries Estate / Glencoe & Glen Etive SCIO / Dalness Estate – and are supportive of a joint campaign called “Love the Glen”, led by the Glencoe and Glen Etive SCIO, which aims to raise awareness of appropriate behaviour in the area through simple instructional videos.<sup>7</sup>

This is something that could be mimicked by the RTTIMG who could make use of HC Access Rangers before the summer season kicks off to promote responsible behaviour when visiting. The website could then be shared to the appropriate social media platforms.

Also noted is the area’s now more co-ordinated approach to visitor management, somewhat detailed in a public document<sup>8</sup>. This is currently being led by several stakeholders, including the Glencoe and Glen Etive Community Council and SCIO, the National Trust for Scotland’s Glencoe management, and Dalness Estate.

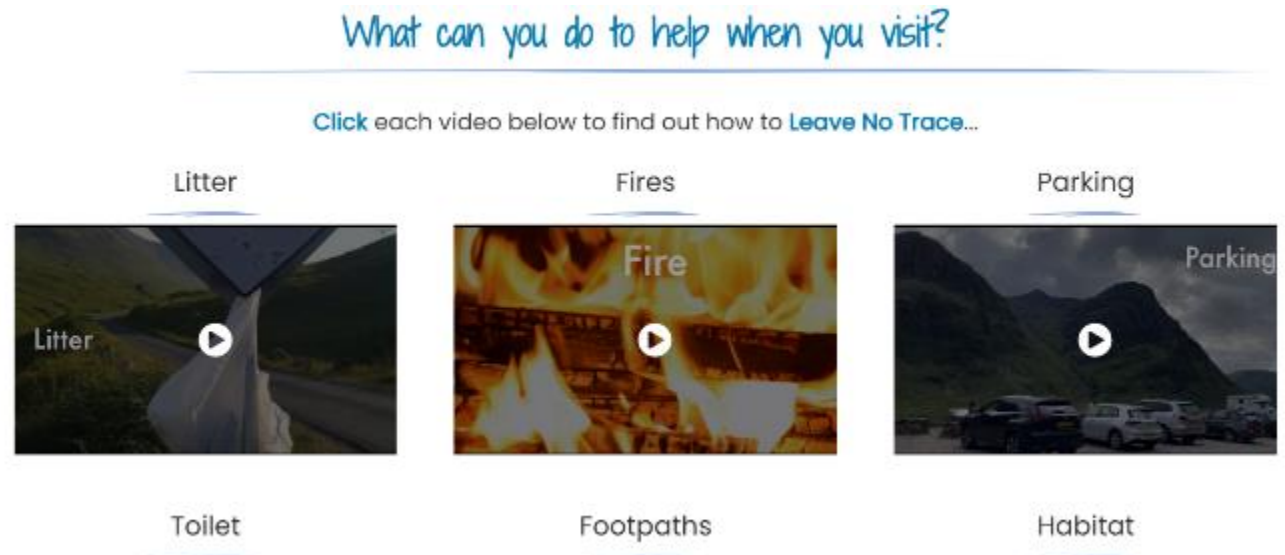


Figure 1 - Screenshot from Love the Glen campaign highlighting behaviours appropriate to the Access Code:  
<https://www.lovetheglen.com/coe-etive50187300>

<sup>7</sup> Glencoe and Glen Etive Community SCIO (2021) “Love the Glen”

<sup>8</sup> Glencoe and Glen Etive Visitor Management Group (2020) “Glencoe & Glen Etive – working together for community landscape”

## Loch Lomond

Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (LLTNP) has dealt with its own camping problems by introducing byelaws. Restricted via a permit system and a Camping Management Zone, these curtail the freedom of wild camping found within the access code in specified high-pressure areas, typically along lochshores. If found to have breached the by-laws, campers can face fines of up to £500, as well as some cases being reported to the Procurator Fiscal<sup>9</sup>.

The national park reported mostly positive findings for both environmental health as well as appropriate behaviour and adherence to the byelaws. **Some of the report's key recommendations were the provision of additional low cost informal and formal camping by both the public and private sectors, as well as resting heavily used permit areas, thus developing the spectrum to which camping is managed by the authority.**

The byelaws were part of a broader, long term approach to management of informal camping in the national park and **were enacted through the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000**. This broader approach can be seen in the document "Camping Development Framework 2019-2023"<sup>10</sup>, whose aim it is to detail various tools which can be used to improve the camping experience for all such as "Information, Education and Engagement, Enforcement and Monitoring" (Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, 2019: 4). Currently no existing access byelaws have been enacted under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act of 2003.

<sup>9</sup> Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (2020) "Three Year Report on the Camping Management Byelaws to Scottish Ministers"

<sup>10</sup> Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2019) "Camping Development Framework 2019-2023"

## Appendix 2: Camping provision/opportunity map detailing National Park Authority investment focus area

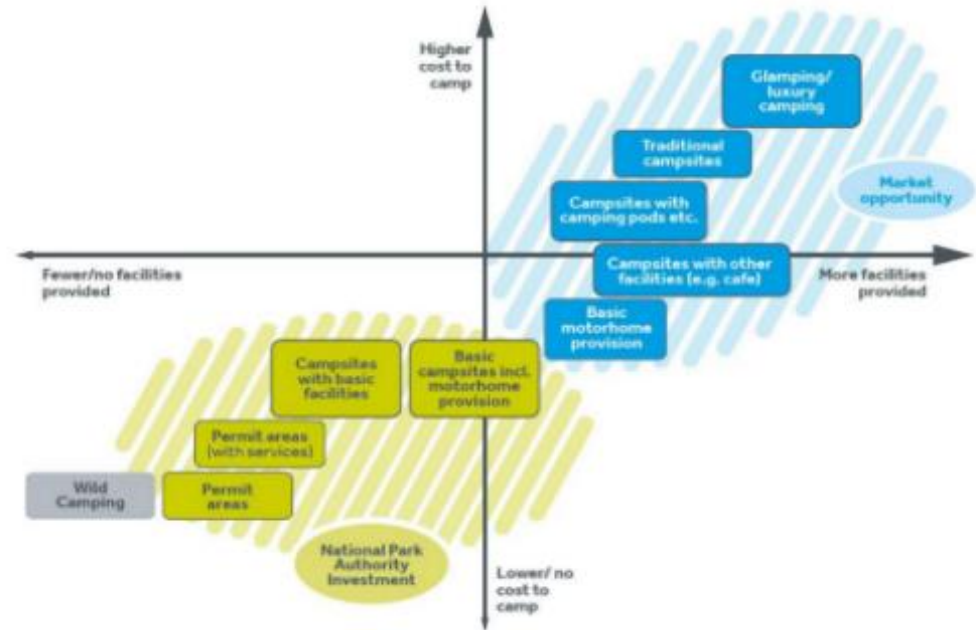


Figure 2 – Graphic from "Appendices to Camping Management Byelaws Three Year Report to Scottish Ministers" highlighting various camping provision within the national park



## France

In France, wild camping is technically illegal unless the camper has permission by the land owner. On public national park land, it is permitted to stay at a reasonable distance from paths, settlements (1 hour from), never lighting a fire and staying for one night only – from dusk till dawn.<sup>11</sup> These rules sound very similar to the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, yet are able to be enforced by the local authorities. Seen in this article by Walk Highlands<sup>12</sup>, a practical way of managing camping is by providing interpretation and information boards with easy to understand pictures of the sorts of behaviour allowed.

This approach is an intermediary between what Glencoe and Glen Etive propose in their management of the area, and the more restrictive measures taken at Loch Lomond. Here it is often implicitly acknowledged that campers cannot set up for more than 1 night, and that fire lighting is also implicitly prohibited<sup>13</sup>. Thus the “culture” of wild camping in France is different to that found in Scotland, in that it is understood because of the positive messaging.

It must be noted however that France operates under different legislation and land laws to Scotland, so it is important to establish opportunities within Scottish law.



Figure 3 - Screenshot of a noticeboard in a French national park – this gives no ambiguity as to what is and what is not allowed in the national park – could something similar be employed on the Road to the Isles?

<sup>11</sup> Le Camping Sauvage (2021) “Legislation/Advice on the practice of wild camping in France”

<sup>12</sup> Walk Highlands (2020) “Managing tourism – lessons from overseas”

<sup>13</sup> Rural Camping France (2022) “Rules regulations and tips 2022”

## Management So Far | Stiùireadh Gu Ruige Seo

---

### Community and land managers

#### B8008 pressure group – 2018

This is a working group set up and involving several of the stakeholders involved in the Road to the Isles area, including land managers, Highland Council departmental representatives, Police Scotland, community groups and councils, and on occasion MSPs. It aims to raise awareness of the issues present in the B8008 corridor, identifying solutions from the various perspectives. It meets once a month to discuss any new developments.

#### Traigh toilets – 2020

Courtesy of Traigh Estate and the Road to the Isles Facilities Group, these public toilets opened up in 2020. The toilets are not composting but simply a waterless, dry-sanitation system which requires the pit being pumped out, twice over the 2021 summer. They are a great asset, and it is hoped more toilets are brought into the area such as Camusdarach and Curtaig. While reducing toileting on the beach and dunes, it has not removed it completely, and there is a need for improved signage around the bay and the wider area to alert visitors to the toilet's location. Nearby campsites still experience visitors attempting to use their own.

#### Mallaig public toilets and waste disposal – 2021

Based in the West Bay car park, these facilities have been championed and organised by the RTTIFG and are a huge asset to the area. They contain public toilets, a shower and chemical waste disposal for motorhomes. In the autumn of 2021 The Highland Council put up some signage around the B8008 at Traigh and Tougal car park alerting visitors of these facilities which will hopefully help reduce roadside chemical waste disposal.

#### Tougal car park community asset transfer – pending

Owned and looked after by The Highland Council, this car park and its toilets have fallen into disrepair. In order to improve them, the facilities are currently being transferred to the Road to the Isles Facilities Group. Plans to develop the car park to carry 80+ vehicles and improve the path down to the beach fell through when the landowner pulled out in early 2021. The Facilities Group now intend to open this car park up to motorhomes, whilst diverting cars into another car park they intend to develop opposite Silversands.

## **The Highland Council**

### **Verge bunding 2020**

Some of the verges around the Traigh Estate were bunded up to prevent parking due to health and road safety concerns. These were notably on corners. It is expected that some more bunding will be developed along the B8008 to prevent any further irresponsible parking.

### **Double yellow lines – 2021**

These were put in place along Silversands, running from Tougal car park to the beach. Prior to this on busy weekends cars would be lined up along the hilly corner making it dangerous for other road users.

### **Variable Message Signs – 2021**

These signs were put in position for the last summer bank holiday of 2021. They are perceived to be of importance in regard to managing the volume of people visiting the area, giving them advanced updates of the busyness of the area. These are used in areas such as Cornwall which see high volumes of visitors, and are shown often over 20, 30 or 40 miles from a beach destination.

Comments made by several stakeholders and communities suggested moving the VMS further up the A830 toward Fort William and Corpach so visitors are aware of the busyness of their destination, giving them time to make alternative plans.

### **Access Rangers – 2021/22**

Seasonal rangers employed by Highland Council were tasked with 2 core objectives: to engage with the public about the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, and to collect data on the numbers of visitors and the sorts of behaviours exhibited. The service was well received overall by both visitors and local communities. There were however frustrations voiced at the lack of enforcement powers with which the rangers could operate within.

### **Parking Enforcement Officers – 2021/22**

This role is perceived to be of vital importance to managing visitors in the Road to the Isles area, with careless vehicle parking being a source of problems as well as being an issue in itself. Whilst this role was not in position during 2020 or 2021, it is hoped it will be filled for the 2022 summer season, and will in fact become full time. It was noted there was a positive impact when a PEO was in place during 2021, issuing fixed penalty notices alongside the presence of a ranger who could help educate the visitors on responsible behaviour.

## Action Plan | Plana-gnìomha

As identified in the introduction, there are several key areas in the Road to the Isles area which require their own discrete action plans. These will come together to form an overarching longer-term vision.

For reference, **short term** interventions are intended to be actioned over the 21/22 winter, **medium term** interventions are intended for the spring and summer of 2022, and **long-term** interventions are aimed for autumn/winter 2022 and beyond.

### Road to the Isles as a destination area

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions	Stakeholder(s) involved
Destination management	<p>Refers to the collective management of the area. This will involve all stakeholders working together.</p> <p>Due to a variety of stakeholders there is no central or lead organisation, business or individual who can take point on drawing together the destination management aims specifically needed for the Road to the Isles. Nor is there one organisation as point of contact for framing the visitor 'narrative' for the Road to the Isles.</p>	<p>Form a Road to the Isles Destination Management Forum and employ a Destination Management Officer (part-time).</p> <p>The Destination Management Officer can coordinate the 'narrative' of the area, through reviewing, correcting and consolidating all virtual destination news across all stakeholders - unifying online presence and work on short-term to long-term solutions identified in the Location Action Plan with Forum stakeholders and community members. The role could also involve ongoing community consultations and linking to wider Lochaber and Skye/Small Isles/Knoydart destination management approaches.</p> <p>Identify ways to fund and source finance in support of the Location Action Plan suggestions being operationalised and for future projects of the Forum.</p>	All

<p>Carrying capacity exceeded</p>	<p>The carrying capacity can be expressed in three different ways:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Physical carrying capacity</li> <li>2. Environmental carrying capacity</li> <li>3. Social carrying capacity</li> </ol> <p>Increased number of visitors to the area, persistently over successive weekends, especially bank holidays saw locales stretched.</p> <p>Identifying the carrying capacity is difficult with little data to use. An aim for the stakeholders will be to get an idea of the area's carrying capacity.</p>	<p>Establishing a baseline from various accommodation providers such as hotels, hostels, bed and breakfasts, self-catering, camping and caravan sites.</p> <p>How does this baseline impact on habitats (environmental) and the communities (social)?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How long does it take for habitats to bounce back</li> <li>- When do communities feel overwhelmed by visitors</li> </ul> <p>How much room for manoeuvre is then given to ad-hoc arrivals – eg: motorhomes and campers</p> <p>How can these ad-hoc visitors be managed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Encourage spread of visitors across the area, promoting other sites through an area visitor leaflet and RTTIMG website</li> <li>- Car park capacities</li> <li>- Motorhome facilities</li> <li>- <b>Where</b> can we shepherd motorhome visitors to?</li> <li>- What is the impact of campers in the areas they are found?</li> <li>- How can campers be informed to minimise their impact</li> <li>- Installation of people counters at key access points</li> </ul>	<p>All</p>
-----------------------------------	--	--	------------

<p>Visitor information, guidance and advice</p>	<p>Visitor information for the Road to the Isles area is scattered online via word of mouth such as social media platforms, traditional news-media sites and other informal places. More official sites such as Visit Scotland mention the RTTI as well, and link directly to the RTTIMG visitor website.</p> <p>Additionally, as identified above, there are attempts by various stakeholders to put in place signage which may aid the visitor in being responsible. The nature of this approach however is a mix of signs from various sources which look very different to each other, leading to ‘sign-blindness’ – indeed at one section on the Silversands area there are 7 signs within 10 metres of each other.</p> <p>In short, this sort of information needs disseminated to combat misinformation surrounding camping and access rights.</p>	<p>Advice should be created for the whole RTTI area as well as for each area individually, outlining what responsible access may look like in practice – i.e. x number of tents, types of cooking equipment, toileting behaviours. This information could be shown on signs which are found along the whole RTTI in an attempt to provide a fluid and seamless information strategy.</p> <p>And/or, this information could also be detailed at the core locations via QR codes which take visitors to the RTTIMG website, specifically the ‘Sustainability’ section. Here, videos could show responsible behaviour according to the Access Code, similar to the videos produced by the Glencoe and Glen Etive Community SCIO.</p> <p>A visitor leaflet could also be picked up in Existing tourism infrastructure such as the Land Sea and Islands Centre in Arisaig, and the Road to the Isles hub in Mallaig.</p> <p>This could all be further explored by the Destination Management Forum in how they wish to control and disseminate information.</p>	<p>All</p>
---	---	--	------------

<p>Traffic management</p>	<p>There are several bottleneck areas along the B8008 and north Loch Morar road which creates issues for local and emergency access. This was particularly prevalent during the bank holiday weekends.</p> <p>Currently there is little provision or active management of car parking in the area, which means it becomes a “free-for-all” with people jostling for the closest access points to the beaches.</p> <p>This results in heavy verge damage being done to the four core areas identified below, with long term costs increasing in order to safeguard the stability of them.</p>	<p><b>Short to medium term:</b> Variable Message Signs will help in the short term to try alert visitors about the busyness of the area and ask them to consider alternative plans. This would have to be in co-ordination with online messaging which encourages alternative areas to the Road to the Isles.</p> <p>A shuttle bus service could help reduce congestion on the road during busy bank holiday weekends. This would need advertising early on both in terms of distance from the RTTI area, both temporally and spatially.</p> <p><b>Short to long term:</b> Combination of restrictions such as rural clearways, double yellow lines and physical barriers like verge bunding or bollards alongside the creation of additional car parking facilities, whether that be car park extensions, new car parks or lay-by creation.</p> <p>Adding in restrictions would allow there to be more active management, using Parking Enforcement Officers and Police to enforce if necessary, with Rangers/RTTI Warden on site to provide advice.</p> <p>Restrictions are needed alongside an increase in facilities which actively guides visitors to where the resident’s and stakeholders want them. Car parks help do this by moving visitors off the road and into designated spaces which can be monitored and enforced by traffic wardens.</p> <p>Terms and conditions could be put in to address overnight parking. Permission for motorhomes to stay overnight in HC car parks – namely the Mallaig West End car park?</p>	<p>Transport Scotland THC Roads</p> <p>THC Tourism Shiel Buses/ Arisaig Community Trust Campsites</p> <p>THC Roads Landmanagers RTTIFG</p> <p>THC Parking THC Access RTTIFG THC Parking</p>
---------------------------	--	---	---

<p>Outdoor access</p>	<p>A prime reason for visitors flocking to the area is because of the natural beauty of the beaches. This, in recent years, has been its undoing, with so many “staycationers” visiting these areas for the first time. Whilst this is a great thing to see, the issue of the cumulative impact on the ground cannot be understated.</p> <p>The Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) allows for small tent pitches for no more than 2/3 nights, with small groups having little to no impact on the environment and local surroundings. There is however a vagueness with SOAC, which allows people to legally camp. It isn’t until a landowner gets involved that powers can be enforced. Until then, education is the answer in the long term. In the short term it means that these places will continue to be overused.</p>	<p><b>Short term:</b> A key aspect to managing the outdoor access to the Road to the Isles is managing the car parking, and controlling the numbers of people allowed to park up. Limiting visitors who can park up right next to their camping spot means there are less people who are willing to walk further in order to camp. See above for more details about managing traffic and parking.</p> <p><b>Medium term:</b> The best short to medium term solution would be to display clear, positive and cohesive messaging throughout the area, and ideally further afield in the Highland Council area, which describes how many tents can be sustainably pitched at any one time, and describing the sorts of behaviours expected and not expected at a “wild camping” spot. The figures for how many tents would have to be agreed by all involved so as to not restrict access rights too much, but enough to curtail the negative impact of overuse. Looking at the French example, it can be seen how this might be achieved. Access Rangers would then have reasonable room for manoeuvre to enforce this.</p> <p><b>Long term:</b> There are calls from some stakeholders to create local byelaws which extend along the whole B8008, and which covers the May bank holiday until the end of the School term in August. Currently no existing access byelaws have been enacted under the Land Reform Act of 2005, with the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park using the National Parks Act 2000. There are also implications about using the byelaws which would displace the problem elsewhere – possibly Moidart and Ardnamurchan.</p>	<p>All</p>
-----------------------	--	---	------------



## Area 1: Traigh

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions	Stakeholder(s) involved
Verge parking	<p>Day time and overnight visitors parking on an increasingly unstable and dangerous verge. Around Traigh, the B8008 is a mix of single and dual lane. Most of this is reduced to single track when vehicles are parked on the verge however, which blocks the road for emergency services, the local bus service and at peak times, other road users.</p> <p>The verge itself is becoming unstable and in fact collapsing in several places due to heavy vehicles repeatedly parking on top. This damages the vegetation, namely machair, sand dune complexes and grasses, not to mention the visual scarring this has.</p> <p>However, it is pertinent to acknowledge that addressing any road safety and environmental concerns must be considered alongside provision of public access to Traigh, be that local or visitor. The easiest way of doing this would be to look into more formal car parking, allowing the landowners to identify where they would like visitors to access the beach from.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short term Physical barrier such as bunding or non-plastic bollards on corners to prevent vehicles driving on to the verge</p> <p>Option 2: Medium term Park and Ride scheme adjacent to physical restrictions put in place as above. Requires a designated car parking site away from B8008. Visitor leaflet Speed reduction Variable Message Signs in place – early, such as Fort William A830, or Lochailort A830 – concise messaging – requires liaison with Transport Scotland No Waiting Restrictions around most of bay.</p> <p>Option 3: Medium to long term Enforceable Rural Clearway around the bay which coincides with... An increase in formal parking availability within the Traigh Bay area, i.e. A 20-25 capacity car park which is chargeable, and/or some formal lay-by creation, granting day visitors space to park. Permission for motorhomes to stay overnight in HC car parks – namely the Mallaig West End car park? Active travel encouragement and infrastructure building Build a path network in area using current verge which would prevent parking and encourage walkers.</p>	<p>THC Roads Team</p> <p>Shiel Buses/Arisaig Community Trust THC Roads Team Transport Scotland</p> <p>THC Roads THC Parking Police Traigh Estate Arisaig Community Trust<sup>14</sup> THC Access</p>

<sup>14</sup> Arisaig Community Trust (2021) “A Potential Aire for Arisaig”

<p>Overnight parking</p>	<p>This had the largest part to play in the visitor management issues found. The parking on the Road to the Isles is largely unregulated, meaning the area sees more people visiting than is sustainable and responsible. Overnight parking presents an issue in itself, as seen in the “Verge Parking” section above, as well as being a source of other problems such as roadside camping, anti-social behaviour, and road congestion.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term Bunding to restrict motorhome overnighting on verge, alongside Info on responsible motorhoming available online and targeted at Facebook groups with help of RTTIMG Visitor leaflet Park and Ride scheme linking up car parking areas, campsites and Airigh at peak times such as bank holiday weekends.</p> <p>Option 2: Medium to long term Create an attractive mid capacity Airigh within the Road to the Isles area, permitting unplanned one-night stays only Opening of The Highland Council owned Mallaig West End car park to self-contained motorhomes, putting in terms and conditions of stay which is enforceable by a PEO.</p>	<p>THC Roads RTTIMG Shiel Buses/ Arisaig Community Trust B8008 campsites</p> <p>Arisaig Community Trust THC Parking</p>
--------------------------	--	--	---

<p>Informal roadside camping</p>	<p>Cars parked up on grass verges above Traigh Bay.  Non-SOAC camping: tents never more than a 2 minute walk from personal vehicles and in view of road and private housing and campsites, often in large groups with large amounts of equipment, close to other large groups. Lots of open fires, toileting sites and litter. Specific areas such as grassy ledge west of the Golfer's Car Park eroded and damaged from fire pits.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term  Temporarily fenced off regenerative camping zones prevent further erosion and degradation – needs clarification from Nature Scot.  Improved streamlined signage detailing Access Code definitions  Provision of picnic benches or other day time visitor infrastructure to make camping seem unsociable and inappropriate  Parking restrictions such as a Rural Clearway or physical barriers such as bunding  Access Ranger interventions (interacting with the public)  Improve awareness of SOAC through social media engagement with help of RTTIMG.</p> <p>Option 2: Medium to long term  Continue pressure for stricter definitions of “wild camping” which can then be enforced  Capacity identified through seasonal visitor counting/placing of people counters at key access points.</p> <p>Option 3: Long term  Camping Management Zone. A similar permit scheme to the one found in Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park which regulates how many people can camp in one place at any one time.</p>	<p>THC Access  Traigh Estate  THC Roads  RTTIMG  Nature Scot</p> <p>Traigh Estate  Highland Council  Scottish Government</p> <p>Scottish Government</p>
----------------------------------	---	---	---

<p>Antisocial behaviour</p>	<p>This comes hand in hand with roadside camping, and therefore can be largely regulated by parking restrictions which curtail accessible overnighting. Cases of dangerous littering such as broken glass bottles, and fly tipping of tents was evidenced by the Access Ranger service in 2021 as well as Traigh Estate’s land manager in years before. Other forms of antisocial behaviour are loud and large groups playing music in the night disturbing residents.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short term  Enhanced bin collection service from HC Waste team (already in place)  Verge bunding – needs backing up in other places along B8008 so it is not simply moved elsewhere  Improved signage.</p> <p>Option 2: Medium term  Access Ranger interventions, with Fixed Penalty Notice capabilities – needs corroboration so perhaps dual or joint service patrols, or use of body cams.  Awareness of SOAC guidelines through social media engagement with help of RTTIMG – “Respect the interests of other people”, and “Care for the environment”.  Visitor leaflet.</p> <p>Option 3: Medium to long term  Byelaw relating to the prohibition of consumption of alcohol in the Traigh bay area. This would need careful consideration for the wider implications.</p>	<p>THC Waste  THC Roads  Traigh Estate  THC Access</p> <p>THC Access  RTTIMG</p> <p>THC Access  Traigh Estate  Highland Council  Scottish Government</p>
-----------------------------	--	--	--

Fires	<p>Most fires are often small and would not likely cause any nuisance to road users. The issue here is they are often left in some manner, with ashes and the fire pit abandoned. They damage the machair, and do not follow the Access Code’s guidelines.</p> <p>Barbecues are problematic in that the sharp metal mesh is often found half buried in the sand, which is dangerous for visitors and residents alike.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term Improved signage re responsible fire lighting guidance – improved balance between “You CAN do/how to” and “You CANNOT do this etc”. Landowner provide designated fire pits? Ask local shops to not sell disposable barbeques, similar to the National Parks scheme<sup>15</sup> Active encouragement of more robust cooking systems, i.e. ones using gas.</p> <p>Option 2: Long term Decriminalisation of fire lighting offences to enable local authority powers to enforce within the current legislation where appropriate, i.e. <b>Civic Government (Scotland) Act 1982; Roads (Scotland) Act 1984</b> Access Rangers could then have powers to advise about responsible fire lighting, with the power to enforce if ultimately necessary.</p>	<p>Traigh Estate HC Access Local Co-op, SPAR, Morrisons, Lidl, Aldi, M&amp;S shops</p> <p>Highland Council Traigh Estate Scottish Government</p>
Toileting	<p>Despite the provision of public toilets by RTTIFG, there has still been issues with human waste, namely around the north end of the Bay. This section, where there are usually large groups distant from the toilets, has several sheltered locations on the headland which people use.</p> <p>This proves a health hazard for everyone involved, especially children and dogs.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term Improve toilet signage around the bay – noting this has already been complete nearer the toilets, but making it clearer earlier, i.e. before the bay. “Public toilets 1 mile...Public toilets 500m etc” Visitor leaflet.</p> <p>Option 2: Long term Some more facilities, even just temporary ones, at north end of bay where camping takes place.</p>	<p>Traigh Estate RTTIFG RTTIMG etc THC Roads</p> <p>RTTIFG Traigh Estate</p>

<sup>15</sup> Co-op (2021) “Co-op removes instant BBQs from sale in National Parks”

## Area 2: Camusdarach

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions	Stakeholder(s) involved
Toileting	<p>Human waste was found often in the dune network east of the main beach. This is due mostly because the nearest toilets are at Tougal car park, a 10 minute walk away or 2 minute drive. A park and ride scheme could be implemented to provide a service to visitors to drop them off at the toilets at Traigh or Tougal.</p> <p>Temporary signage was put in place by the Access Ranger service over 2021, however with increasing numbers of visitors, and some proposals to increase the capacity of the car park, it is viewed that improvements to current facilities must be made before installation of a toilet block is considered at Camusdarach. This must be a last resort.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term Seasonal signage put in place reminding visitors of Access Code Access Ranger interventions Visitor leaflet Social media presence Dog waste bins on path Park and Ride scheme.</p> <p>Option 2: Medium to long term Toilet block added to reduce impact and provide no real excuse for visitors. <b>This would require landowner consent and agreement from nearby residents</b> The RTTIFG perhaps overseeing the construction and/or maintenance Consideration may be given to a THC Comfort Scheme, dependent upon budgeting, what the toilets offer and if there is Members support.</p>	<p>THC Access RTTIMG etc Shiel Buses/ Arisaig Community Trust</p> <p>Camsudarach Ventures Ltd Curtaig car park owners Glenancross and Curtaig residents RTTIFG THC Amenities</p>
Rubbish and toileting	<p>Litter is often found by residents in the car park and along the path, yet there is no bin provision in the area.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term Improve signage information regarding bins elsewhere Access Ranger interventions.</p> <p>Option 2: Medium term Provision of visitor bins in the area, possibly near the road entrance, or at the bottom of the hill where the rear of the car park accesses the road via a small unofficial path. Dog waste bins along path to be emptied weekly.</p>	<p>Curtaig car park owners THC Access</p> <p>THC Waste THC Access Camsudarach Ventures Ltd</p>

Verge parking	During the busy bank holiday weekends, Curtaig car park was full, and cars spilled onto the verge adjacent to the car park despite there being plastic bollards in situ. Most of this traffic were day time visitors, with the “No parking overnight” deterring most visitors apart from on the busier bank holidays.	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term          Improve parking using lined bays          Improve car park maintenance addressing surface issues          No Waiting Restrictions on both sides of road          Immovable bollards          Variable Message Signs          Park and Ride          Height barrier to restrict motorhomes from accessing a car park they cannot easily get out of.</p> <p>Option 2: Medium to long term          Enlarge car park to accommodate increase in visitors on busy weekends, with potential for an income stream through parking meters – <b>this would require careful consideration of how safe this is given the geography of the current car park</b>          No parking overnight enforcement/terms and conditions/height barrier.</p>	<p>Curtaig car park owners          THC Parking          THC Roads          Shiel Buses/ Arisaig Community Trust</p> <p>Curtaig car park owners          Camusdarach, Glenancross and Curtaig residents</p>
Path stability and accessibility	While not an issue at the moment, the path from the car park to the beach may well require some formal planning for development and securing its edges, as well as discouraging any further erosion in the sand dunes. If desired by the Council and landowners there could be wheelchair access to the beach as well.	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term          Edge path to improve stability          Cut back encroaching vegetation being sympathetic to the area to allow a clear walking tunnel.</p> <p>Option 2: Medium to long term          Wheelchair friendly board walk along current path surface.</p>	<p>For both options          THC Access          Camusdarach Ventures Ltd</p>

### Area 3: Morar Sands

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions	Stakeholder(s) involved
Beach and roadside camping	<p>The Silver Sands is unfortunately a victim of its own success, attracting crowds of campers which could often be misinterpreted for an informal festival from afar. There is a common misconception of the Access Code by visitors thinking this form of informal camping is permitted due to the “right to roam”.</p> <p>Large groups with large sizes of tents and equipment pile out of cars straight onto beach and down various path into wooded areas.</p> <p>Associated problems of fire damage, litter being left, car parking issues, road safety and toileting listed below in more detail.</p> <p>Most groups wish to leave no trace, but inevitably do due to either the size of their encampments, length of stay or the cumulative impact over successive weekends.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term</p> <p>Continued Access Ranger Service interventions</p> <p>Managing the car parking to restrict numbers on beach – see verge parking and overnight parking</p> <p>Introduce Terms and Conditions to Tougal/silver sands car park which is enforceable by THC Parking Enforcement Officer</p> <p>Car parking fees for overnighting would generate income</p> <p>Picnic benches for daytime visitors to make overnighting less attractive and not socially acceptable</p> <p>Visitor leaflet</p> <p>Strong online information presence, with a centralisation and ownership of social media information relating to camping at Tougal</p> <p>Streamline SOAC signage on site from Rhubana estate, Morar Community Council, THC Access Team and RTTIFG.</p> <p>Dedicated THC RTTI warden/ranger.</p> <p>Option 2: Long term</p> <p>Establish capacity of area with people counters at key locations</p> <p>Continue to press for legislative terminology for wild camping.</p>	<p>THC Access</p> <p>THC Parking</p> <p>THC Roads</p> <p>RTTIMG etc</p> <p>Morar Community Council</p> <p>THC Access Team</p> <p>Rhubana Estate</p> <p>Scottish Government</p>



<p>Antisocial behaviour</p>	<p>The majority of people which the Ranger Service interacted with were amicable, sociable and well-intended. However, on occasion large groups, when consuming alcohol, have become aggressive and/or inappropriate. During the summer of 2021 the Police became involved in an altercation with a drunken camper.</p>	<p>Option 1: Medium term Continued Access Ranger Service interventions Dedicated THC RTTI warden/ranger Joint service patrols – police, land managers, PEO's, dual rangers</p> <p>Option 2: Long term Continue to press for legislative terminology for wild camping Alcohol consumption byelaw.</p>	<p>THC Access Police Rhubana Estate THC Parking</p> <p>Highland Council Scottish government</p>
<p>Fires</p>	<p>One well-tended fire is ok, but there is a large cumulative impact from dozens of fires every weekend and soon the effects are noticeable. Ash is often left scattered, hot coals covered but not put out, BBQ trays abandoned, unburnt litter left in pits, and hazardous items such as nails discarded. Fire marks are common in the woodland, as well as trees being chopped down for fuel.</p>	<p>Option 1: Short term Provision of official fire pits Continued Access Ranger Service interventions Improved educational signage.</p> <p>Option 2: Short to medium term Ban on BBQ's from local shops Visitor leaflet Social media engagement and education Continued Access Ranger Service interventions Improved educational signage.</p> <p>Option 3: Long term Open fires byelaw for specific areas, including woodland Tighter definitions of where a fire is permitted, if at all.</p>	<p>Rhubana Estate THC Access</p> <p>Councillors RTTIMG etc THC Access Rhubana Estate RTTIFG</p> <p>Councillors Scottish Government Highland Council</p>

Toileting	Despite there being public toilets within a 2 minute walk from the beach, toileting including human excrement and wet wipes which take years to biodegrade are found in the woodland areas near the beach.	Option 1: Short term Improve signage Corridor visitors through specified access points through path improvements and fencing off of smaller paths which end up as toileting sites Medium term Visitor leaflet.	RTTIFG THC Access Rhubana Estate  RTTIMG etc
Litter	An improved waste collection service was implemented for 2021 by The Highland Council which greatly reduced the rubbish found. This being said, litter was still found in the woodland areas, some of it historical, but some of it new.	Option 1: Short to medium term Beach cleaning kits, but might instead attract rubbish Continued HC Waste and Access Team interventions.	RTTIFG Rhubana Estate THC Access THC Waste
Verge parking	A very visual and impactful challenge – one which disrupted the local bus service on the busy bank holiday weekends and restricted access for locals. The verge parking was reduced after double yellows and a seasonal rural clearway were installed from the beach up to the car park. However, it was still concentrated on the Silver Sands stretch on either side of the road most weekends, creating bottlenecks and blind spots for drivers and pedestrians. Access Rangers engaged with these vehicles through conversation and issuing parking warning notices trying to reduce the congestion, alongside Police presence and parking enforcement officers.	Option 1: Short to medium term Extend double yellow lines Create new car park at Silver Sands with height barrier Remove height barrier from Tougal car park.  Option 2: Medium term No Waiting restrictions along both sides of road PEO and Police presence and enforcement Speed reduction Provision and designation of official lay-bys – resurfacing existing ones Variable Message Signs warning motorists of limited parking Park and Ride Path improvements to assist in moving people away from road walking.	RTTIFG THC Roads THC Parking  THC Roads THC Parking Transport Scotland Shiel Buses/ Arisaig Community Trust THC Access

Overnight parking	As with Traigh, once campsites are full, motorhomes have no officially designated location to stay. Motorhomes are found next to the beach and opposite. These large vehicles reduce visibility for other drivers around the B8008 corners. Motorhomes often spread out belongings alongside the road. Again these vehicles and people were engaged with by Access Rangers, but keeping on top of this is nigh on impossible through intermittent conversation alone.	Option 1: Short to medium term Tougal car park resurfacing Provision of overnighting in Tougal car park, with restrictions elsewhere such as clearway – with signage detailing what is isn't allowed – possibly chargeable and then enforceable by THC PEO Visitor leaflet Online communications Permission for motorhomes to stay overnight in HC car parks – namely the Mallaig West End car park?	RTTIFG THC Parking RTTIMG etc
Water safety	Concerns over visitor safety concerning water hazards was raised as well as being seen by the ranger service, with some visitors treating the estuary running from Loch Morar as a water-park, being inadequately equipped and experienced in dealing with tidal waters.	Option 1: Short to medium term Improved signage and online media presence informing individuals of nature of area's tides, with input from RNLI Dedicated HC RTTI warden/ranger to be on site to educate visitors.	RTTIMG Rhubana Estate RNLI THC Access

## Area 4: Loch Morar

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions	Stakeholder(s) involved
Irresponsible and illegal parking	Large volumes of people flocked to the RTTI area. With spots along the B8008 over-crowded, there was overflow to Loch Morar side, on the road to Bracara. Parking is limited here, and has historically been used by locals for quieter walks. Passing places are often filled with Motorhomes or cars whose tents are not far away. Verges are churned up, similar to Traigh, with car parking unregulated. There is currently a sectioned off car park spot for visitors, usually sea kayakers, who contact the estate before arrival. Other than this the estate does not intend to increase any formal parking capacity. The estate are looking to add signage similar to that found on the Rhu road south of Arisaig which alerts drivers about the unsuitability for motorhomes – in contact with HC Roads team.	<p>Option 1: Short term Earlier and improved signage warning large vehicles of narrow road Erect passing place signage to enable enforcement.</p> <p>Medium term Joint THC Access Team and land manager patrols Visitor leaflet.</p> <p>Long term Suitable Airigh located Identify capacity of area.</p>	<p>THC Roads</p> <p>THC Access Team Morar Lodge</p> <p>RTTI FG Arisaig Community Trust THC Access THC Roads</p>
Roadside camping	There are camping related problems such as toileting, litter and environmental damage from fires. The estate have no issue with campers who are following the access code, but by camping here, visitors often violate the description of wild-camping. Joint patrols have been talked about with the estate management and access ranger team.	<p>Option 1: Short to medium term Signage informing visitors of SSSI designation, and related offences Fire ban or restrictions to where fires can be lit, in line with SSSI guidance Provision of fire pits with guidance on how and what to do. Capacity of tents and vehicles identified with guidance from estate Joint patrols to advise when/where not appropriate to camp/how best to not leave a trace.</p>	<p>THC Access Morar Lodge Scottish Government</p>

Water safety	Concerns over visitor safety regarding water hazards, namely the strong winds which can be experienced on the loch. Loch Morar being Scotland's deepest freshwater loch there is also the risk of cold water shock. Improved signage and messaging has been raised by the estate to address this.	Option 1: Short to medium term Review and streamlining of water safety signage from estate and RNLI Joint patrols to engage with the visitors Visitor leaflet.	Morar Lodge RNLI THC Access RTTIMG etc
Environmental damage	Loch Morar is itself a SSSI, the only one in the B8008 corridor. It is noted that it is an offence for anyone, including a member of the public, to intentionally or recklessly damage the features of a SSSI, the features here being the oligotrophic loch and the islands on the loch supporting native pinewoods. <sup>16</sup>	Visitor leaflet – Loch Morar SSSI info? Joint patrols.	RTTIMG etc THC Access

<sup>16</sup> NatureScot (2021) "Loch Morar Site of Special Scientific Interest" [Online]

## Priorities | Prìomhachasan

A list of priority projects which address pressing issues could be given here for stakeholders to begin to tick off as they are actioned.

Location	Project	Challenge which is addressed	Description of project	Suggested stakeholder	Barriers to completion	Effects		Start – end date
						Positive	Negative	
Traigh	Verge bunding	Verge parking	Bunding of verges at Traigh on single track road	THC Roads	None	Protect emergency service access and safety of verges.	Restricts local and visitor access if no alternative provided	14/02/22 – 18/02/22
Traigh	Identifying of car parking options	Local and visitor access	The process of identifying suitable land to continue public access to Traigh	Traigh landowner	Landowner different view	Addresses lack of access for visitors and locals	Landowner has to part with small bit of land	
Traigh, Morar Sands, Loch Morar	Temporary fencing	Environmentally damaged areas from camping overuse	THC Access team to work with landowners and Nature Scot to identify land which can be excluded from public access for regenerative purposes	THC Access Traigh Estate Rhubana Estate Morar Lodge	Unlawful or inappropriate to carry out this task	Protects environmentally sensitive areas for future visitors	Restricts current visitors from using their access rights in specific locations	



Proposed leaflet/QR code locations:

Arisaig/Mallaig: local shops, pubs, restaurants

Public areas in Arisaig/Mallaig such as train stations, car parks and starts of popular walks

Existing tourism infrastructure such as the Land Sea and Islands Centre in Arisaig, and the Road to the Isles hub in Mallaig

Core Location access points such as Tougal car park beach path, Traigh car park and toilets, Camusdarach beach path, Loch Morar picnic area



Figure 5 – Clear, descriptive - Overleaf of The Highland Council's motorhome advisory leaflet

<sup>18</sup> Wester Ross Biosphere (2021) "Your Guide to Touring Wester Ross"



## Carrying Capacity

Currently it is unknown as to how many visitors the Road to the Isles area can sustainably support.

The carrying capacity can be expressed in three different ways:

1. Physical carrying capacity
2. Environmental carrying capacity
3. Social carrying capacity

A key step to getting an idea around the carrying capacity of the Road to the Isles would involve establishing a baseline from various accommodation providers such as hotels, hostels, bed and breakfasts, self-catering, camping and caravan sites.

The Destination Management Forum could then look at this baseline impacts on habitats (environmental) and the communities (social), i.e. how long does it take for habitats to bounce back, and when do communities feel overwhelmed by visitors?

The next step would involve trying to understand how much room for manoeuvre is then given to ad-hoc arrivals – eg: motorhomes and campers, and how they can be managed such as:

1. Encouraging a spread of visitors across the area, promoting other sites through an area visitor leaflet and RTTIMG website
2. Car park capacities
3. Motorhome facilities
4. **Where** can the area shepherd motorhome visitors to?
5. **What is the impact of campers** in the areas they are found?
6. **How can campers be informed to minimise** their impact
7. Installation of people counters at key access points
8. Having on the ground data collection such as the Access Rangers
9. Using car counters at the car parks and north and south B8008 access points

When the capacity has been identified over a few years to gauge an average, Variable Message Signs could then be used more appropriately and accurately.

## Active travel

A key theme underpinning a lot of the outdoor access and traffic management challenges relate to the lack of options of alternative methods of travel in the area. For example, whilst the train, and notably the Jacobite steam train attraction are ever popular forms of visiting the Road to the Isles, there is little encouragement of exploration beyond Mallaig. The Circular Path here is being worked on due to the growing popularity of the walk, but beyond this there is little else holistic tourism provision. Existing access to beaches and visitor hotspots often uses a linear path going from a car park to the beach, and thus the visitor experience is restricted to a few isolated locations.

A proposal by the Road to the Isles Facilities Group is the creation of a coastal path, or a “Path to the Isles”, linking up various existing paths and beaches from Arisaig to Mallaig. This would encourage people to explore the area in a slower and more engaged manner, and thus would be in keeping with the ethos of the local cultural and natural heritage which is currently being promoted by the Marketing Group.

Improvements in public transport such as the shuttle bus service discussed above would then allow visitors to be able to park up further away from the beaches and hotspots, relieving the pressure on the Core Locations. Some small bits of infrastructure such as bridges and signage would be required in addition to the widening of current paths to make them more accessible.

The Highland Council Tourism team are looking at including this proposal in their Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan for the area to improve facilities provision such as car parks and toilets. Funding for the path would be made available in certain sections which link up with these new facilities.

With the road speed expected to be reduced alongside the recent addition of cycling racks at Tougal and Traigh, cycle travel could additionally be encouraged as well on this road, with the possibility for future expansion into an e-bicycle hire scheme, something similar to what is currently being developed in Fort William and Glen Nevis.

## Shuttle bus

A shuttle bus could be operated by Shiel Buses during peak times such as bank holiday weekends. Alongside the identifying of the area's carrying capacity, this would be effective in reducing cars on the verges, and therefore reducing visitors who camp irresponsibly on the beaches.

It has also been looked at as an option for linking the campsites up to the beaches which could have some small bits of bus infrastructure like signage to pick up and drop off visitors to the campsites as well as the paths which access the beaches (see Active Travel).

Several locations have been identified for being the bus stop, but all require some work in order for them to be functional. The following have been mentioned by various stakeholders as possibilities:

- Kinsadel old quarry site – Might not be big enough and may be being re-opened
- Morar sports pitch – Requires improved access, and landowner not communicating
- Kinloid campervan site – Access road would require widening, and not very close to beaches
- Arisaig cemetery car park – Limited space and access on single track road
- Arisaig school car park – expansion underway but can only be used for up to six weeks of the summer

Alternatively, a shuttle bus could be part used throughout the year as a community bus in Arisaig, and then when demand is required, use it as a park and ride scheme.

## Joint service patrols

Having The Highland Council Access Rangers joined by Waste Management Operatives, Parking Enforcement Officers and Police Scotland Officers gives an impression to visitors that the area is not a place for a wild weekend, but is being carefully managed and looked after by relevant authorities. The Access Rangers were more effective in 2021 when there was, for example, a Police Officer on duty in the area; and likewise with a Parking Enforcement Officer or Waste Management Operative. This is of course costly and at most points in the year too much to ask, but it is something to think about for when it is forecast to be busy as a result of a bank holiday and good weather.

## Marine Park

This idea has been mooted in the past and would require the commitment of all stakeholders and communities.

## References | Iomraidhean

---

In alphabetical order by author.

1. Arisaig Community Trust (2021) *“A Potential Aire for Arisaig”* [Online].  
Available: <https://www.arisaigcommunitytrust.org.uk/aire/> [December 2021]
2. Co-op [2021] *“Co-op removes instant BBQs from sale in National Parks”* [Online].  
Available: <https://www.co-operative.coop/media/news-releases/co-op-removes-instant-bbqs-from-sale-in-national-parks> [November 2021]
3. Glencoe and Glen Etive Community SCIO (2021) *“Love the Glen”* [Online].  
Available: <https://www.lovetheglen.com/coe-etive50187300> [December 2021]
4. Glencoe and Glen Etive Visitor Management Group (2020) *“Glencoe & Glen Etive – working together for community landscape”* [Online].  
Available: <https://s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/s3.spanglefish.com/s/7906/documents/other%20documents/glencoe%20and%20glen%20etive%20visitor%20management%20group%20actions%20final.pdf>
5. Highland Council (2021) *“Enjoying the Highlands in your motorhome or campervan”*
6. Le Camping Sauvage (2021) *“Legislation/Advice on the practice of wild camping in France”* [Online].  
Available: <https://www.lecampingsauvage.fr/legislation-et-reglementation/camping-sauvage-bivouac> [December 2021]
7. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2019) *“Camping Development Framework 2019-2023”* [Online].  
Available: [https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Board-20190318\\_Agenda-Item-9\\_-\\_App1\\_Camping-Development-Framework-2019-2023.pdf](https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/05/Board-20190318_Agenda-Item-9_-_App1_Camping-Development-Framework-2019-2023.pdf) [January 2022]
8. Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (2020) *“Three Year Report on the Camping Management Byelaws to Scottish Ministers”* [Online].  
Available: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Camping-Management-Byelaws-Three-Year-Report-to-Scottish-Ministers.pdf> [December 2021]
9. NatureScot (2020) *“Enjoying the outdoors: Monitoring the impact of Coronavirus and social distancing”* [Online].  
Available: [https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2020-10/Enjoying%20the%20Outdoors%20-%20Monitoring%20the%20impact%20of%20Coronavirus%20and%20social%20distancing%20-%20Recreation%20survey\\_0.pdf](https://www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2020-10/Enjoying%20the%20Outdoors%20-%20Monitoring%20the%20impact%20of%20Coronavirus%20and%20social%20distancing%20-%20Recreation%20survey_0.pdf) [December 2021]

10. NatureScot (2021) "*Loch Morar Site of Special Scientific Interest*" [Online].  
Available: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1015> [December 2021]
11. Road to the Isles Marketing Group (2021) "*Members*" [Online].  
Available: <https://roadtotheisles.com/portfolio/> [December 2021]
12. Rural Camping France (2022) "*Rules regulations and tips 2022*" [Online].  
Available: <https://rural-camping.com/france/wild-camping.htm> [January 2022]
13. Visit Scotland (2020) "*Highland Factsheet 2019*". Edinburgh: Insight Department, Visit Scotland [Online].  
Available: <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/regional-factsheets/highland-factsheet-2019.pdf> [December 2021]
14. Visit Scotland (2020) "*Navigating the New Normal – Post-Covid19 Tourism Consumer Trends*" Edinburgh: Insight Department, Visit Scotland [Online].  
Available: <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers-2/navigating-the-new-normal-v3.pdf>
15. Visit Scotland (2021) "*Industry Guidance: Responsible Tourism*" [Online].  
Available: <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/responsible-tourism> [December 2021]
16. Walk Highlands (2020) "*Managing tourism – lessons from overseas*" [Online].  
Available: <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/news/managing-tourism-lessons-from-overseas/?s=03> [December 2021]
17. Wester Ross Biosphere (2021) "*Your Guide to Touring Wester Ross*"



# Road to the Isles

## Rathad nan Eilean

Location Action Plan (LAP) 2022  
Plana-gnìomha Ionadail 2022

Matthew Bradley | Access Ranger  
[matthew.bradley@highland.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.bradley@highland.gov.uk)

