

Agenda Item	3
Report No	TC-01-22

## HIGHLAND COUNCIL

**Committee:** Tourism

**Date:** 16 February 2022

**Report Title:** Location Action Plans for Visitor Management

**Report By:** Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy

### 1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides Members with a final draft of four Location Action Plans on visitor management within four popular 'hotspot' areas in The Highland Council area. This is the culmination of experience and consultation with interested stakeholders within those areas and council officers. It then recommends a range of future activities that can be considered priorities for the Council and other stakeholders.

### 2 Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:-

- i. **approve** the final draft of three of the four Location Action Plans;
- ii. **agree** that these areas are to be priorities for action and any activities that need an immediate solution; and
- iii. **agree** that further Location Actions Plans are produced for other 'hotspot' areas identified in the Strategic Tourism Development Plan

### 3. Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – The resources required will vary for each recommended action and between each plan. A number of early actions will likely be funded from the allocated budget for the Highland Council Visitor Management Plan. Longer term recommendations may be funded through resources gained by the Strategic Tourism Development Plan and other sources within and outwith council budgets.

- 3.2 **Legal** – There are no legal implications arising directly from this report. However, existing legislation and Covid requirements are used in resolving many of the issues identified in this report.
- 3.3 **Community (Equality, Poverty, Rural and Island)** – Tourism benefits communities through being a major part of the Highland economy and through helping sustain local facilities and services. Projects designed to address some of the issues described would be expected to produce positive benefits for communities as well as for visitors. Place-based community engagement is also deemed critical in resolving the issues in the Plan.
- 3.4 **Climate Change / Carbon Clever** – There are no Climate Change / Carbon Clever implications arising directly from this report, but a number of the potential projects likely to be proposed, should they be undertaken, would help reduce climate change impacts. Many of the visitors to the Highlands are vehicle-based and the Plan does attempt to reduce the environmental impact of these visitors by reducing vegetation damage and encouraging active travel opportunities.
- 3.5 **Risk** – There is a risk that without implementing many of these recommendations the challenges and issues felt in the last two summers will be repeated in future years.
- 3.6 **Gaelic** – There are no Gaelic implications arising directly from this report. However, in keeping with agreed Council policy there would be a Gaelic element to projects subsequently undertaken as a result of being identified in this plan.

#### **4. Background to the Location Action Plans**

- 4.1 The Location Action Plans were considered as a result of receiving the reports and data from the seasonal Access Rangers between May and October 2021. Certain areas were consistently experiencing several visitor management issues that required solutions beyond engagement and education provided by the Access Rangers. These areas were extremely busy with a feeling of local communities being overwhelmed. There were numerous ideas being suggested but no one party able to take responsibility or to implement co-ordinated planned actions. When it became apparent that a small team of Access Rangers could be retained over winter, this was an opportunity to utilize their local knowledge and experience in consultation with local communities, land managers and organisations to pull those ideas together into an Action Plan for each location. The four locations chosen were:-
- Arisaig/Morar-Road to the Isles;
  - Durness;
  - Glenbrittle, Isle of Skye; and
  - Assnyt, Sutherland
- 4.2 These areas are incorporated within the eight priority areas identified in the Strategic Tourism Development Plan. Three of the four Plans are attached to this document as **Appendices 1-3** as detailed below.

## 5. The Location Action Plans

- 5.1 The Access Rangers that have written these Location Actions Plans have personal experience of the problems and issues that were evident in the summer of 2021. They have used that personal experience along with the data and information they recorded as a starting point for the plans. They have then contacted and consulted with numerous stakeholders in each area to ensure that their views, concerns, and ideas are represented in the potential solutions and future actions. This has included community councils and bodies, land managers, businesses, government organisations, NGOs and council officers. The Access Rangers have then included other relevant data and information that informs the potential future actions. The Action Plan highlights and describes each challenge, provides suggested actions with options and timescales and the likely stakeholders involved.
- 5.2 The four Plans are at slightly different stages of completion, with Glen Brittle and Road to the Isles being ready for adoption whilst Durness is only a little way behind and is still gathering stakeholder comments. The Assynt plan was begun a later than the others and is not yet available as a first draft but will be consulted on in February. All four will be completed by 31 March.
- 5.3 If Members agree that these Plans provide a useful format for collation of actions in specified areas, then they should become adopted as priorities for the various Council Services and other stakeholders. Furthermore, other hotspot areas would have Location Action Plans produced next winter following a similar process.

Designation: Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment and Economy

Date: 2 February 2022

Author: Philip Waite, Outdoor Access Manager

Background Papers: Appendix 1 - Final Draft - Glen Brittle Location Action Plan  
Appendix 2 - Final Draft - Road to the Isles Location Action Plan  
Appendix 3 - Draft - Durness Location Action Plan

# Glen Brittle

## Gleann Bhreatail

### Location Action Plan (LAP) 2022

### Plana-gnìomha Ionadail 2022

**Aim:** Glen Brittle as a thriving sustainable location where the needs of residents, visitors and the environment are acknowledged and evaluated as an ongoing process.

**Amas:** Gleann Bhreatail a bhith na àite seasmhach soirbheachail far a bheil feumalachdan an luchd-còmhnaidh, an luchd-tadhail agus na h-àrainneachd air an aithneachadh is air am measadh mar phròiseas leantainneach.

Rosamonde Birch | Access Ranger

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## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations | Clàr-mìneachaidh Bhriathran is Ghiorrachaidhean

<b>Glen Brittle</b>	The geographical area of the whole glen surrounding the river Brittle.
<b>Glenbrittle</b>	The farm and township

<b>DMO</b>	Destination Management Officer
<b>FLS</b>	Forestry and Land Scotland
<b>LAP</b>	Location Action Plan
<b>MCHA</b>	Minginish Community Hall Association
<b>MH/CVs</b>	Motorhomes and Campervans
<b>OATS</b>	Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland
<b>SISP</b>	Skye Iconic Sites Project
<b>SOAC</b>	Scottish Outdoor Access Code
<b>THC</b>	The Highland Council

<b>Action Plan Timeframes</b>	<b>Description</b>
<b>Short Term</b>	To be achieved within 3 - 9 months
<b>Medium Term</b>	To be achieved within 9 - 24 months
<b>Long Term</b>	To be achieved beyond 24 months

## Appendices | Eàrr-ràdhan

Appendix 1: Stakeholder Contacts/Groups/Organisations informing the Glen Brittle Location Action Plan

Appendix 2: Community Consultation attendees

Appendix 3: Stakeholder and Community Feedback Contacts/Groups/Organisations

Appendix 4: Visitor Flow Modelling and Management on the Isle of Skye Report – Phased Approach

Appendix 5: SOAC Signs and wording for dog owners

Appendix 6: OATS 2021 Summary Report for the Fairy Pools Car Park and SISP Path Works

Appendix 7: Rural Clearway Proposed Single Track Road Section

## Executive Summary | Geàrr-chunntas Gnìomhach

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### Objectives

The following objectives have been identified for the Glen Brittle Location Action Plan:

1. Summarise in detail the priority challenges in Glen Brittle using a range of data sources, conversations and consultations with stakeholders and community members, and through site visits.
2. Identify possible solutions with stakeholders to mitigate, reduce or prevent the priority challenges in Glen Brittle, these will include:
  - a) Suggested pilot projects to test solutions
  - b) Suggested short, medium and long-term solutions
  - c) Suggested joint and collaborative working opportunities.
3. Generate the 'Location Action Plan' as a working document to share with the community and stakeholders in awareness of evolving factors.

### Summary of Priority Challenges

The priority challenges identified through the Access Rangers team 2021 and stakeholder engagement are:

#### Volume of visitors

Existing infrastructure can't support current increase and expected growth in visitor numbers.

#### Traffic and Parking

Obstructions, verge damage and traffic congestion throughout the tourist season.

#### Outdoor Access

Irresponsible Outdoor Access throughout Glen Brittle at multiple sites.

#### These challenges are causing:

1. Increased strain on local community wellbeing and infrastructure
2. Direct and indirect impacts on the livelihoods of farmers and crofters
3. Accumulative impacts on the land and ecosystems from camping, overnighing and visitor use
4. Stressful and unenjoyable visitor experiences at sites where further discreet destination management is required

## Summary of Suggested Solutions

1. Glen Brittle Destination Management:
  - a. Establish a Destination Management Forum of key stakeholders
  - b. Establish a Destination Management Officer (part-time permanent role)
  - c. Establish a Glen Brittle or Minginish Warden (seasonal full-time role)
  - d. Improve and join-up the virtual destination 'narrative' and information for visitors
  - e. Community and stakeholder buy-in for the Destination Management Forum.
  
2. Traffic management in Glen Brittle:
  - a. Reduce or prevent obstructions to single track road by improving road infrastructure in tandem with b. and c. below
  - b. Establish visitor transport systems that reduce traffic to manageable levels for Fairy Pools Car Park and Glen Brittle
  - c. Connect to the emerging pilot Smart Tourism for 'real-time' traffic, parking and visitor information systems (Appendix 4).
  
3. Responsible outdoor access in Glen Brittle:
  - a. A Glen Brittle or Minginish Warden can work with the seasonal Access Ranger engaging with visitors about SOAC
  - b. Joined-up approach to signs, messaging and advice to visitors throughout the glen about camping and overnighing
  - c. Consistent use of signs for dog walkers (Appendix 5)
  - d. A Destination Management Officer can work with the Warden and the Forum on the virtual destination 'narrative' ensuring visitors understand the importance of the history, culture, land and community, and how to care for it.
  
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.

## Summary Outcomes

The Location Action Plan is working towards achieving the aspirations of the community in balancing livelihoods and local wellbeing with a tourism economy that meets The Highland Council's Tourism Strategy<sup>1</sup> and Visit Scotland's Tourism<sup>2</sup> priority areas of:

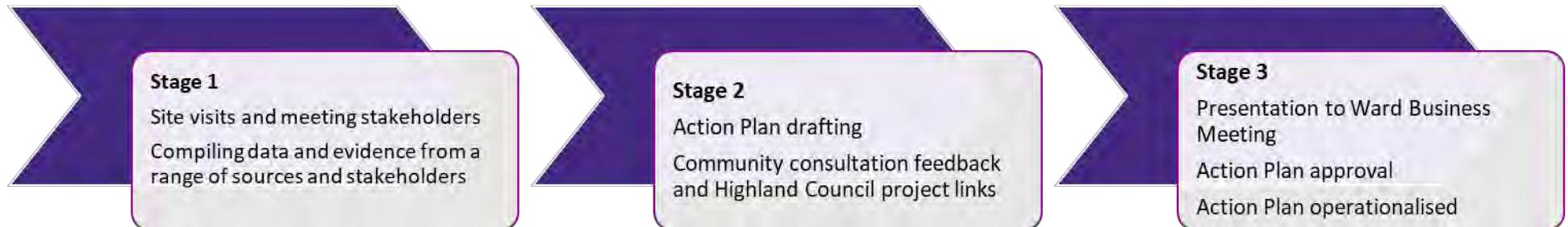
1. Supporting Scotland's transition to a low carbon economy
2. Ensuring tourism and events in Scotland are inclusive
3. Ensuring tourism and events contribute to thriving communities
4. Supporting the protection and considerate enjoyment of Scotland's natural and cultural heritage<sup>3</sup>.

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 Glen Brittle through collaboration across stakeholders and community members.

## The Staged Process Adopted for the LAP

The following process was adopted based on guidance from other destination and community consultation procedures. Please see appendix 1, 2 and 3 for a full overview of all stakeholders and community members who have contributed to developing the Location Action Plan.



<sup>1</sup> More information is available on page 6

<sup>2</sup> Visit Scotland Website <http://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/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>4</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 will include<sup>5</sup>:

£240,000 for Road Management and improvements	£160,000 investment in parking management	£350,000 for seasonal access rangers
£190,000 spend on public toilets	£220,000 on waste management	£55,000 improved provision for motorhomes and waste disposal points

<sup>4</sup> Further RTIF Information can be accessed at <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/rural-tourism-infrastructure-fund>

<sup>5</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)

## Location | Suidheachadh

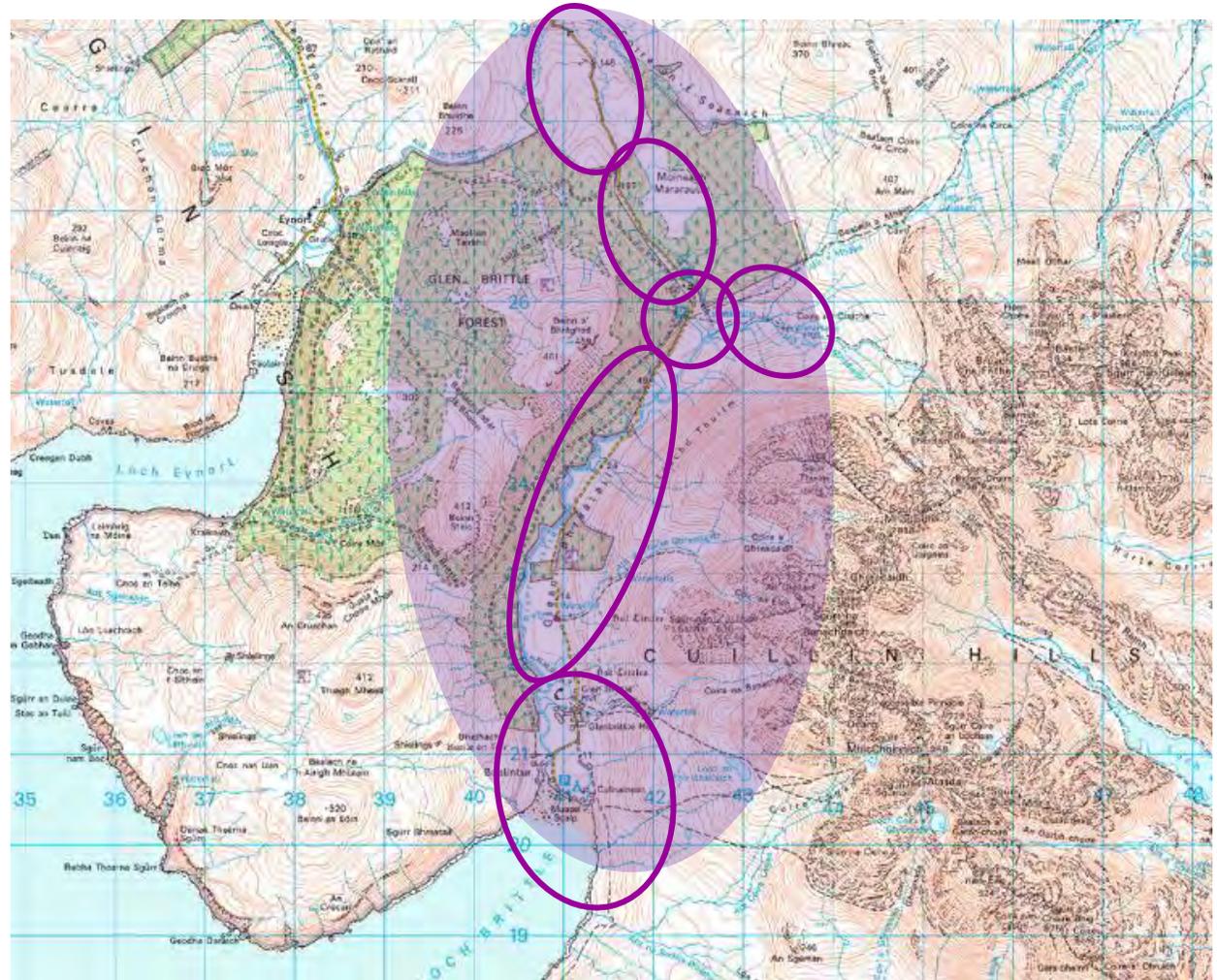


Glen Brittle is situated within the Minginish Peninsular of the Isle of Skye and has a variety of very popular visitor destinations within the glen and its immediate vicinity, including the internationally renowned Fairy Pools, Glenbrittle Beach with Campsite and Cafe, The Cuillins, nearby Talisker Distillery and most recently Talisker Bay gaining popularity.

For the purposes of the **Location Action Plan**, Glen Brittle will be looked at as a single location, as well as separated into six distinct areas, enabling a more focused analysis of key visitor challenges in each area alongside discreet action plan proposals to mitigate visitor impacts for the community and the natural environment of Glen Brittle.

The areas are:

1. Carbst Junction to Forestry Boundaries
2. Forestry and Square Mile Car Park
3. Fairy Pools Car Park Area
4. Fairy Pools
5. Glenbrittle Bridge, Flats and Farm
6. Glenbrittle Beach, Parking and Campsite



## Tourism Background & Destination Trends | Cùl-raon Turasachd & Gluasan Cinn-uidhe



The Highlands is one of the most popular destinations in Scotland, based on 2019 tourism data Visit Scotland<sup>6</sup> states that the Highlands received:

**2.9 million overnight stays**

**9.6 million day visits**

**11.5 million nights of stays**

**£1.6 billion spend**

With staycations and changing tourism trends due to the global pandemic, it is predicted that 2021 will either return to or exceed the number of overnight stays, visits and spend in the Highlands. This is positive news after the pandemic impacted local economies and in some areas across the Highlands 43%<sup>7</sup> of the workforce annually rely on some form of tourism income. However, it is important to note that over the last eighteen months there has been an increase in touring motorhomes/campervans and 'informal camping' across the Highlands, whose data will not be included in Visit Scotland calculations and therefore visitor numbers will exceed those published.

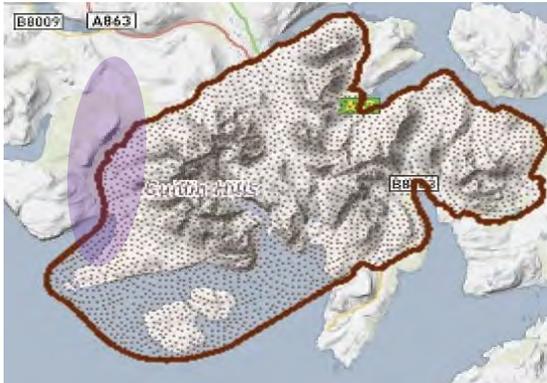
<sup>6</sup> Visit Scotland 2019 Tourism Data <http://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/highlands>

<sup>7</sup> Highlands and Islands Enterprise <http://www.hie.co.uk/our-region/our-growth-sectors/tourism>

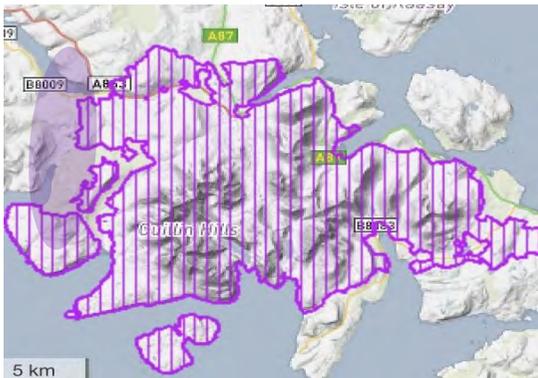
## Scenic, Special, Scientific and Historical Designations | Ainmeachaidhean Fradharcach, Sònraichte, Saidheansail agus Eachdraidheil

The Cuillins have three designations that are monitored and managed by NatureScot<sup>8</sup>. The boundaries of all three of these designated areas sit within and border Glen Brittle as a location and therefore need to be taken into consideration for conservation and biodiversity purposes of the LAP.

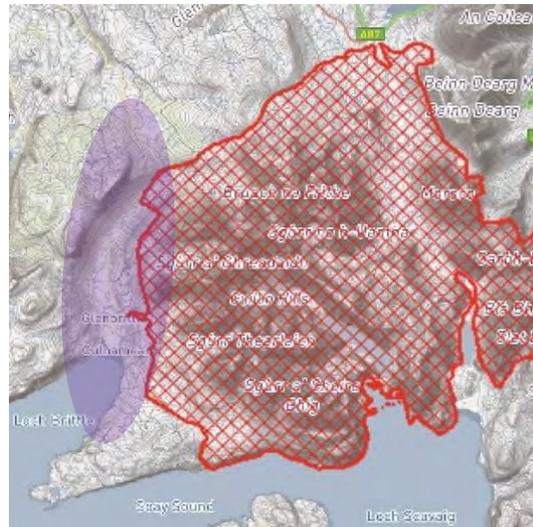
### National Scenic Area



### Special Protection Area

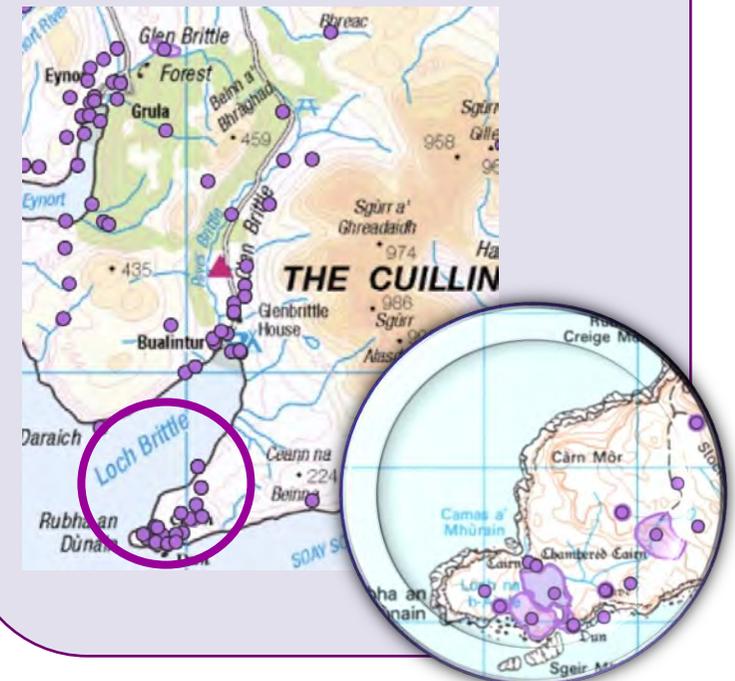


### Site of Special Scientific Interest



### Highland Historic Environment Record

These sites are recorded from the earliest human activity up to the Cold War in the Highlands. The Viking Canal – Rubha an Dunain being the most well-known at the location.



<sup>8</sup> NSA Site Link <http://sitelink.nature.scot/site/9153> ; SPA Site Link <http://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8610> ; SSSI Site Link <http://sitelink.nature.scot/site/476>

## Visitor Management and Infrastructure Development so far | Stiùireadh Luchd-tadhail agus Leasachadh

### Bun-structair gu ruige seo

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**Timber Access Improvements with Roads Authority and Forestry & Land Scotland** - Road infrastructure improvements from Carbest junction to the Glenbrittle Forestry and Land Scotland entrance were completed in 2018.

**Fairy Pools Car Park, OATS and MCHA** - The Car Park is a partnership that began in 2016 between Minginish Community Hall Association (MCHA) and the Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (OATS) both registered charities. MCHA purchased the site and leases it to OATS where some of the parking income goes to MCHA community projects and the rest is reinvested by OATS into pathway projects and environmental restoration work. The first phase of the Car Park construction was jointly funded by the Scottish Government, LEADER, Highland Council, the Scottish Land Fund, Highlands & Islands Enterprise, the Minginish community, donations from local tour bus companies and other individual donations. The Car Park provides approximately 140 spaces for ticket paying cars, campervans/motorhomes and small tour buses with annual passes, and there is a toilet block now on site with a one-way system for all vehicles to follow<sup>9</sup>. (Please see Appendix 6 for further information on income and expenditure)

**Shuttle Bus Project, THC** - The Transport Co-Ordination Unit (TCU) of the Highland Council piloted in 2021 a £60,000 Visitor Management funded tourism transport enhancement bus service on the Isle of Skye. TCU had discussions with Stagecoach to provide extensions to existing bus services Monday to Friday and then worked with Go Skye as a weekend provider. The Shuttle bus pilot ran from June to August for the school summer holidays, with a short extension into September and proved successful enough to establish the shuttle bus service for 2022.

**Roads Authority, THC** - Verge maintenance during Lockdown to protect edges of tarmac from further deterioration and damage. During 2021 roads maintenance officers additionally reversed the verge erosion caused by parking and from track lines and filled potholes in some sections of the single track.

**Waste Management, THC** - Twice weekly up-lifts in Glen Brittle to manage visitor waste with bins at Glenbrittle beach and Fairy Pools Car Park (2 THC bins and OATS bins on site). Seasonal Visitor Waste Operative serviced waste bins and cleared litter at bin sites. The Council's Tourism Committee has proposed funding for the seasonal Visitor Waste Operatives to continue for 2022 which awaits confirmation of the budget meetings of the full Council.

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<sup>9</sup> Outdoor Access Trust Scotland - Fairy Pools Facility Supervisor and <http://www.outdooraccesstrustforscotland.org.uk/projects/skye-projects/>

**Pathway and Environmental Restoration, OATS** - Skye Iconic Sites Projects is now undertaking path restoration, interpretive signage, environmental restoration and constructing footpath bridges at the Fairy Pools Site.<sup>10</sup> Funding has been provided through NatureScot's Natural and Cultural Heritage Fund (NCHF), OATS, Scottish Government Rural Payments Inspection Division (SGRPID), MCHA and THC. Work will commence in April 2022 and aims to be complete by year end. (Please see Appendix 6 for further information on income and expenditure)

**Access Rangers and Path Works, Outdoor Access Team, THC** - The Access Officer for Skye and Lochalsh has previously undertaken path work and volunteering path days at the Fairy Pools and other hiking trails within Glen Brittle. Additionally, there has been a people counter at Fairy Pools collecting data since 2014 to inform visitor and footpath management. In 2021 seasonal Access Rangers patrolled weekly and engaged with members of the public in Glen Brittle in support of improving responsible outdoor access behaviour, as well as, collecting data on visitor numbers and behaviour. The Council's Tourism Committee has proposed funding for the seasonal Access Ranger service to continue for 2022 which awaits confirmation of the budget meetings of the full Council. To ensure the same or improved level of service further funding will be required from Scottish Government or NatureScot as in 2021.

**Smart Tourism Project, SkyeConnect with University of Edinburgh (2021 +)** "Edinburgh University is working with SkyeConnect and OATS to develop the blueprint for a digital vehicle and visitor tracking system for hot spot sites on Skye, which could be used for further data analysis, forecasting and planning purposes by local stakeholders, as well as, potentially, for a live streaming tool, guiding visitors directly on the timing of their visits and nudging/dispersing them to alternative sites. Via this innovative digital solution, more sustainable and safer tourism can be promoted on Skye, as well as enhanced visitor experience." (Report, 2020)<sup>11</sup>

**Public Donations Project, SkyeConnect and Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) Consulting (2021)** - Research and report into 'Public Goods Funding from Public Donations'<sup>12</sup>. The report explores the existing tensions between recreational and primary production land use on Skye, using several case studies from crofters and farmers while showcasing how voluntary donation systems could mitigate impacts on livelihoods and provide financial environmental protective measures.

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<sup>10</sup> Outdoor Access Trust for Scotland (2021) <https://www.outdooraccesstrustforscotland.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/OATS-Annual-Report-2020-2021-Final.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> Visitor Flow Modelling and Management on the Isle of Skye Report (2020) University of Edinburgh Business School in collaboration with SkyeConnect and OATS.

<sup>12</sup> Report provided by SkyeConnect (2021) <http://www.skye-connect.com>

## Visitor Data and Impacts | Dàta is Buaidhean Luchd-tadhail

### Access Ranger Data 2021

This data was collected between May and October 2021 through weekly Ranger patrols of Glenbrittle<sup>13</sup>

#### Square Mile

	Month	Number of Patrols	Number of Cars	Number of MH/CVs	Number of Tents	Number of new Fire Marks	Litter (1/4 bags)	Number of Toileting deposits	Number of people seen	Number of people spoken to
Square Mile	May	3	18	13	2	3	1	3	7	7
	Jun	17	56	39	11	19	2	0	19	10
	Jul	19	58	84	17	20	2	0	81	53
	Aug	22	74	114	18	3	4	3	70	32
	Sep	13	33	81	2	2	4	3	39	14
	Oct	6	8	17	4	2	2	32	3	1

#### Comments and findings of Rangers on site included the following:

- Camping, overnighting and parking issues
- Irresponsible Outdoor Access – Open fires on site, high risk during dry periods and not following SOAC ‘leave no trace’
- Irresponsible Outdoor Access – Toileting and littering across areas where campers and MH/CVs are overnighting.

Photo: No Fires sign erected by Access Ranger at Square Mile.



<sup>13</sup> Site Monitoring completed by two Access Rangers, one a Senior Ranger. The Rangers patrolled for six months and four months depending on their seasonal contract. Patrols were undertaken predominantly during early morning and late afternoon to evening.

## Fairy Pools Car Park Area

	Month	Number of Patrols	Number of Cars	Number of MH/CVs	Number of Tents	Number of new Fire Marks	Litter (1/4 bags)	Number of Toileting deposits	Number of people seen	Number of people spoken to
Fairy Pools Car Park Area	May	2	66	18	0	0	0	0	8	2
	Jun	16	422	68	0	0	0	3	117	8
	Jul	18	594	116	5	0	0	0	296	23
	Aug	19	602	189	0	0	0	0	357	5
	Sep	11	248	56	6	1	1	0	167	7
	Oct	5	1*	1*	0	0	0	0	438	8

\*Car Park not counted in October, only roadside vehicles and number of people on footpath.

### Comments and findings of Rangers on site included the following:

- Visitors using passing places to wait for family or friends
- Visitors parking on verges and obstructing traffic
- Visitors walking to Fairy Pools with some dogs out of control near livestock.

Photos: Tail backs and obstructions from verge parking on hair pins. Filmed by Fairy Pools Car Park Facility Manager.



## Glenbrittle Bridge to Farm

	Month	Number of Patrols	Number of Cars	Number of MH/CVs	Number of Tents	Number of new Fire Marks	Litter (1/4 bags)	Number of Toileting deposits	Number of people seen	Number of people spoken to
Glenbrittle Bridge to Farm	May	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Jun	16	49	23	25	5	0	0	26	0
	Jul	18	220	210	118	12	0	7	174	63
	Aug	20	213	101	105	22	4	1	185	92
	Sep	11	30	34	4	2	2	1	30	7
	Oct	5	1	1	0	0	1	0	0	2

### Comments and findings of Rangers on site included the following:

- Irresponsible Outdoor Access – Campers by river parking on grazing land beyond 3m edge of single-track road.
- Irresponsible Outdoor Access – Open fires on site, high risk during dry periods and not following SOAC ‘leave no trace’
- Irresponsible Outdoor Access – Toileting and littering across areas where campers and Motorhomes/Campervans are overnighing.

Photo: Vehicle found by Access Ranger, which had been driven off onto grazing land and ended up stuck in boggy area.



## Site Photos

### Road Sections



Carbost Junction Signs



Single-track road by Square Mile



Proposed section for extended bollards



Glenbrittle Beach single-track road surface



## Fairy Pools Footpath and Surrounding Desire Lines



Fairy Pools Footpath Start



Desire lines from Square Mile parking area

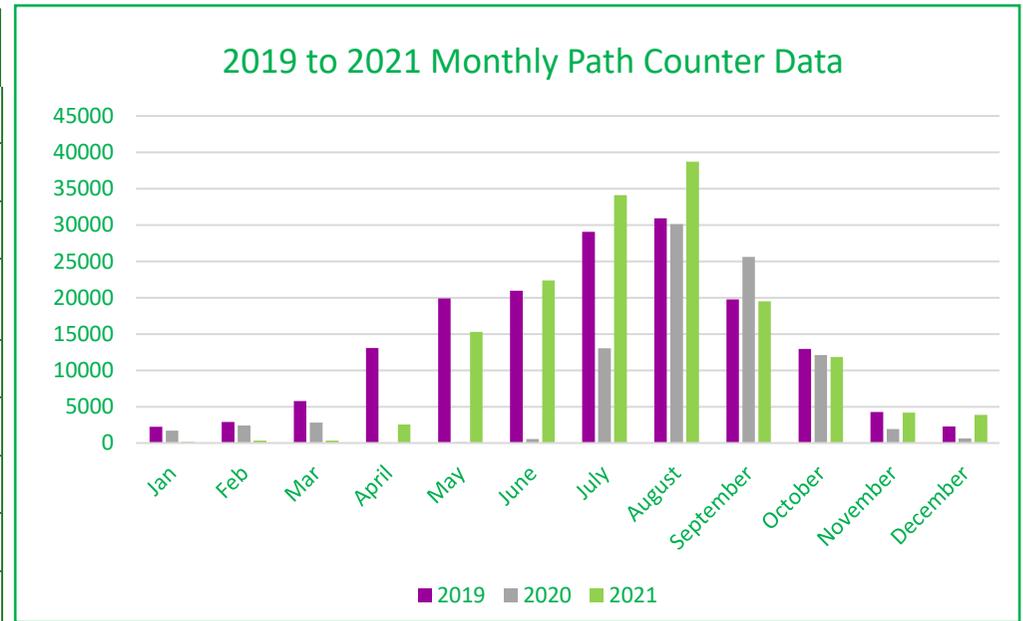


Desire line from lower Fairy Pools Car Park

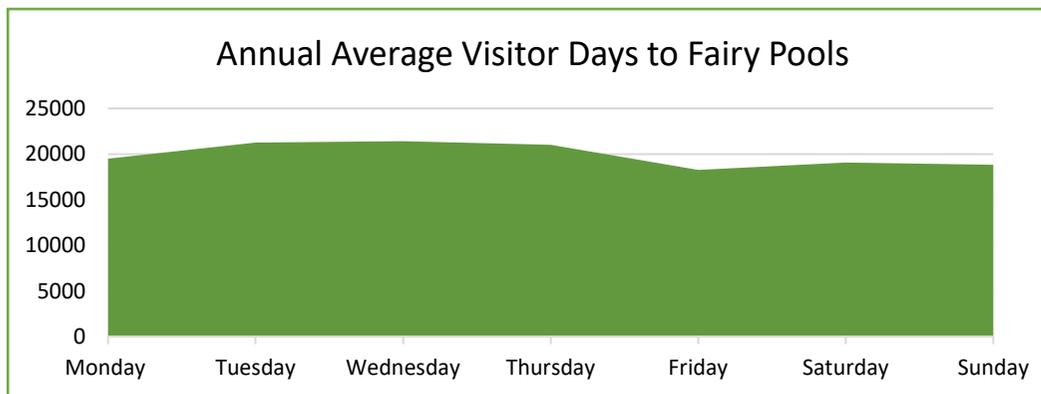
## Fairy Pools People Counter Data

Data provided by the Skye and Lochalsh Access Officer.<sup>14</sup>

Year	Total Count	User Numbers
2002	26,479	13,240
2014	134,125	67,062
2015 (new path installed March/April)	162,769	81,385
2016 (data loss – extrapolated from other data)	205,587	102,793
2017	282,250	141,125
2018	305,189	152,595
2019	360,839	180,419
2020 (Lockdown April to July)	200,679	100,339
2021*(Lockdown January to April)	306,464	153,232



\*An estimated 10% was added, as maximum count of 255 per hour was exceeded numerous times.



### Summary Data Findings:

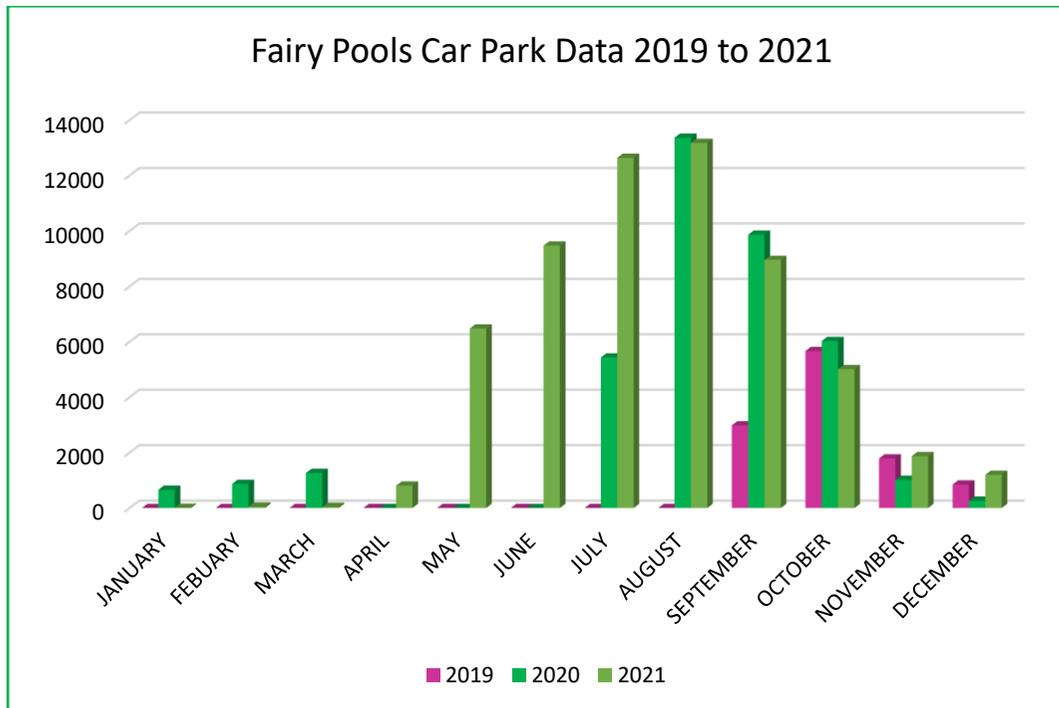
1. Visitor numbers have been increasing annually and are close to returning to pre-pandemic numbers.
2. Visitor numbers for August 2021 exceeded 2019/2020 Fairy Pools visits, which was the busiest month for Glen Brittle overall.
3. The most popular days to visit the Fairy Pools based on the annual average were Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday

<sup>14</sup> Data Collection – Chambers Radio Beam/Conversion Factor 2 assumes close to 100% return via the same route. The total count is also halved to identify total number of visitors.

## Fairy Pools Car Park Data

2019 - 2021 Data provided by Fairy Pools Facilities Manager<sup>15</sup>

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Nov	Dec	Total
2019	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	2,982	5,664	1,787	847	<b>11,280</b>
2020	657	868	1265	-	-	-	5,432	13,362	9,863	6,025	1,016	263	<b>38,751</b>
2021	8	51	41	808	6,478	9,473	12,635	13,173	8,955	5,010	1,870	1,198	<b>59,700</b>



### Summary Data Findings and Comments:

1. Due to increases in MH/CVs in 2021 the numbers are lower for Car Park tickets in August and September yet exceeded capacity due to larger vehicles on site.
2. Car Park was full by 10:30/11:00 through July and August 2021 with verge parking through peak of the day and having to turn arrivals away.
3. Thursday identified as the busiest day for visitors with the possible explanation being a pattern of visiting sites, depending on short three-night stays or week-long holidays.
4. September showed a substantial increase on later summer and early Autumn visitors, extending into November, similar to the trend set in 2019.
5. Due to the recording of data only starting in September 2019 there is no comparison to pre-pandemic visitor numbers

<sup>15</sup> 2021 data collected from cards and coins of ticket machine stats and cash transactions by staff with handheld machines. The data does not include type of vehicle.

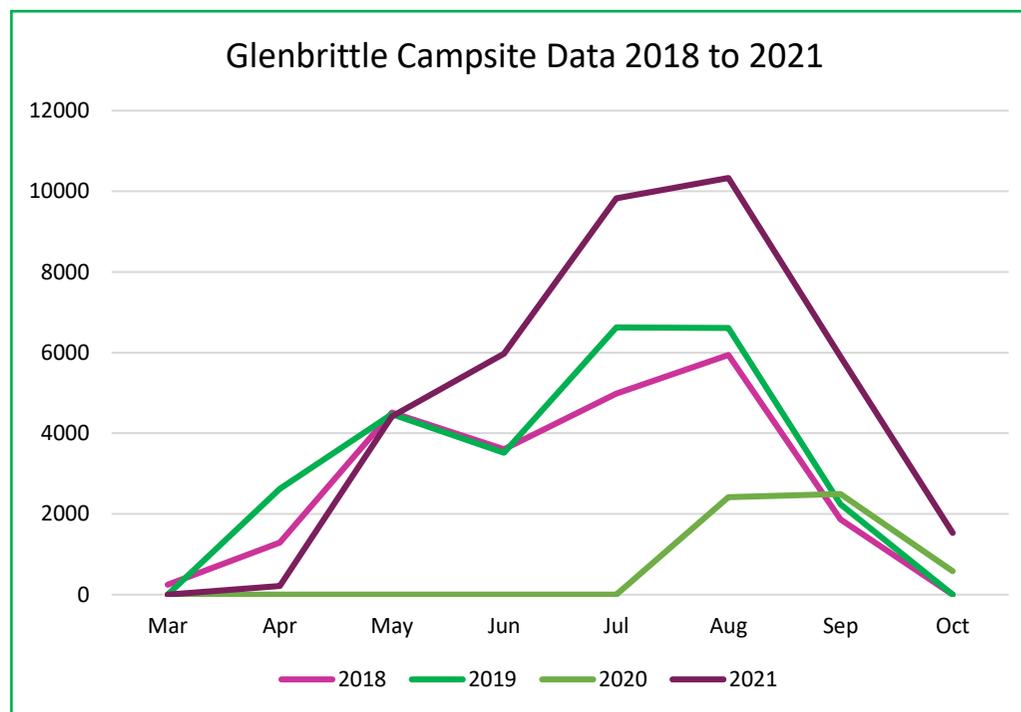
## Glenbrittle Campsite Data

2018 to 2021 Glenbrittle Camping and Café overnight bookings managed by MacLeod Estates<sup>16</sup>

	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sept	Oct	Total
2018	245	1,291	4,516	3,603	4,981	5,942	1,865	-	<b>22,443</b>
2019	-	2,620	4,474	3,517	6,624	6,611	2,241	-	<b>26,087</b>
2020	-	-	-	-	-	2,419	2,495	579	<b>5,493</b>
2021	-	213	4,414	5,975	9,827	10,330	5,899	1,532	<b>38,190</b>

### Summary Data Findings:

1. Open until end of October in 2020 and 2021, evidencing substantial interest of tourists in extending the season during pandemic 'staycationing' years. For example, September 2020 exceeded 2019 bookings after one month of opening from Lockdowns and doubled in 2021.
2. 2021 bookings from June onwards far exceeded 2019 pre-pandemic visitor bookings, peaking in August with over 10,000 bookings in one month.
3. In previous years there had been more of gradual increase in visitors with a drop during June, but 2021 shows that from April there was a steady increase across the tourism season that far exceeded previous visitor numbers.



<sup>16</sup> Data collected is only inclusive of overnight bookings from Motorhomes/Campervans and camping. Not included are day visitors parking on site to use the café, paths or beach.

## Glenbrittle Farm Impact Data

This is a Case Study summary of problems and direct costs for Glenbrittle Farm, reviewed and calculated as part of the 'Public Goods Funding from Public Donations'<sup>17</sup> Report by SkyeConnect and the Scottish Agricultural College (SAC) Consulting in 2021.

Problems	Costs to Business (2021)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disrupting gathers – often when the sheep are being gathered that tourists block there way taking photos. This was resulting in frayed tempers. To reduce this friction but an extra cost the farmer meets the gathers and drives a quad in front of the sheep to clear the tourists out of the way.</li> <li>• A tourism hot- spot activity has resulted in the loss of cattle grazing at that end of the Farm.</li> <li>• A tourism hot spot has resulted in a lot of sheep movement in that area resulting in more mixing between theirs and neighbours sheep.</li> <li>• Wild camping – Summer of 2020 – one area had 14 tents 2 camper vans and 1 organised tour bus parked one night.</li> <li>• Wild camping rules not understood – cars parked on grass, scorched fire areas left, lack of common sense trying to melt glass in fires. Attitude of some keen not to pay, i.e. Wild Camping groups on Facebook and one called Camping in Scotland for Hee Haw.</li> <li>• Litter – lots of smashed glass even in riverbeds.</li> <li>• Dog attacks and sheep worrying. There previous signs were not compliant but is a massive issue.</li> <li>• Inaccurate social media for example their cattle feeding area now marked with a google pin as Car Park and other areas as marked as room for 6 camper vans.</li> <li>• Not clear who is in charge of path and bridge maintenance.</li> <li>• Other businesses making money from the land who they don't even know for example television programme did not recognise Guides featured.</li> <li>• Other businesses publicising and earning money from land that they pay rent on.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extra labour at gathers to direct tourists 4 hours x 4 gathers @ £15 = £240/year</li> <li>• £3.19 by 100 ha (value of Summer Cattle Grazing AECS) = £319</li> <li>• Extra time at gathers and fanks 4 hours per gather x 4 times a year @£10/hours = £240/annum</li> <li>• Wild camping Loss of grazing 10 Ha x £3.60 per hectare = £36.00</li> <li>• Wild camping tidying up after 4 hours per week for 20 week at £15/hour = £1200 annum</li> <li>• Dog attacks and sheep worrying result in 10 less lambs to sell each year @£45/head = £450/annum</li> <li>• Time lost speaking to tourists about improper parking 2 hour per week for 20 weeks @ £15/hour= £600/annum</li> </ul> <p><b>Total costs to business £3085.00 p.a</b></p> <p><b>NB what is hard to quantify but is vital to remember is the frustration and stress these issues cause.</b></p>

<sup>17</sup> Report provided by SkyeConnect (2021) <http://www.skye-connect.com> Costs have been recalculated for the year 2021 for the Location Action Plan.

Glen Brittle as a Destination Area

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions	Stakeholders Involved
<p>Joined-up Destination Management - curate the visitor experience and mitigate negative tourism impacts on the community.</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 Glen Brittle. Nor is there one organisation as point of contact for framing the visitor ‘narrative’* of Glen Brittle.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Form a Glen Brittle <b>Destination Management Forum</b> that will employ a <b>Destination Management Officer</b> (part-time).</p> <p>The Forum can establish contact directories, one of landowners, land managers and tenants. The other of bus tours, guide groups and online tourism sites.</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> The Destination Management Officer (DMO) can coordinate the ‘narrative’* of the glen, 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 Skye destination management approaches.</p> <p><b>Ongoing:</b> 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>	<p>MCHA, THC, SkyeConnect, community members and landowners.</p> <p>To be confirmed</p> <p>Destination Management Forum with other stakeholders</p>

<p>Visitor Information, Guidance and Advice</p>	<p>There are a wide range of websites, personal blogs, social media hashtags and tourism promotional pages (Tripadvisor) that advertise and mention the Fairy Pools specifically and other features of the location.</p> <p>These websites, pages and promotional materials do not adequately explain the vehicle access or requirements of visitors to adhere to parking in designated areas nor raise awareness of impact on communities and places.</p> <p>No visitor research has been undertaken to identify what their impressions are and the experiences of Glen Brittle as a destination. This could inform future planning and ideas.</p> <p>The Fairy Pools Car Park and Glenbrittle Campsite have informally been a point of contact for visitor information and can continue to be important venues to engage with visitors and distribute SOAC, Parking and community information from.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Invite all stakeholders to update visitor information on individual sites currently advertising the Fairy Pools or other features of Glen Brittle to ensure all visitors know parking requirements, responsible behaviour for Outdoor Access and are aware of the glen being a grazing area. (This includes information to dog owners). Once a DMO is employed they can join-up online information.</p> <p><b>Pilot Project:</b> Smart Tourism Project – SkyeConnect and University of Edinburgh. Funding confirmed by SISF to include Glen Brittle / Fairy Pools as a key site for traffic monitoring sensors and to produce ‘real-time’ data for tourists to pre-plan and self-organise destination visits across Isle of Skye. The project includes online website page for ‘real-time’ data and Dynamic Message Boards. Interactive data interpretations, alongside audio update notifications – an option for a Warden, Access Ranger and the Car Park Operatives to upload guidance to visitors for the day.</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> The DMO can coordinate the ‘narrative’* of the glen, through reviewing, correcting and consolidating all virtual destination news across all stakeholders - unifying online presence. Link to all other websites/ Tripadvisor/ tourism info pages – creating a virtual interpretation point / virtual visitor information point. Info about where the fees go to from the Car Park and how they support the community. The DMO could make enquiries with visitors as part of ongoing research into the destination management and researching approaches or examples of culturally and environmentally aware tourism.</p>	<p>THC Access Team / Ranger</p> <p>SkyeConnect, University of Edinburgh and OATS</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>
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<p>Traffic Management</p>	<p>The Fairy Pools Car Park in peak tourist season is full by 10:30/11:00. Once full visitors will park on verges, in passing places, use the Square Mile parking area or park further down the glen causing obstructions.</p> <p>At peak season all residents struggle to enter or exit the glen, which has included difficulties with school drop off/pick-ups for families. Mountain rescue and emergency vehicle have limited access, alongside ongoing issues with obstructions for waste/recycling operatives and delivery lorries.</p> <p>Roadside verge damage puts additional pressure on roads maintenance, increasing the long-term costs for road improvements and resurfacing.</p> <p>There is no plan at this time for the Fairy Pools Car Park to be extended beyond 140 bays nor for an overflow area. Consistent use of the existing Car Park alongside investment in the toilets and path works has meant the current parking areas will remain for the time being.</p> <p>Police do not have staff available to manage traffic daily in the glen during the peak season.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> THC Transport Co-ordination Unit are tendering for the shuttle Bus scheme to run again from June to August 7 days a week with a return route of Portree, Sligachan, Drynoch and Fairy Pools. Additional shuttle options are being considered in early morning and late evening for hikers and overnighers at the Hostel, campsite and Memorial Hut, alongside use for residents is being considered.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> Explore option to have variable message boards to inform visitors of traffic and parking at Fairy Pools (Drynoch or Sligachan junctions). Wording needs to be agreed by Forum.</p> <p><b>Pilot Project:</b> Smart Tourism Project – SkyeConnect and University of Edinburgh Funding confirmed by SISP/OATS to include Glen Brittle / Fairy Pools as a key site for traffic monitoring sensors and to produce ‘real-time’ data for tourists to pre-plan and self-organise destination visits across Isle of Skye. The project includes online website page for ‘real-time’ data and Dynamic Message Boards. Interactive data interpretations, alongside audio update notifications – an option for Warden, Access Ranger and Car Park Operatives to upload audio guidance to visitors.</p> <p><b>With increased roads and parking budget:</b> Put in a ‘temporary’ rural clearway and extend bollards along single-track road and explore option to have a Parking Enforcement Officer attend on peak days of the week (Monday to Thursday). Longer term the rural clearway can be made permanent. (Appendix 7) <i>(continues overleaf)</i></p>	<p>THC Roads and Transport</p> <p>Transport Scotland and THC Roads</p> <p>SkyeConnect, University of Edinburgh and OATS</p> <p>THC Roads Authority</p>
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		Road maintenance at Square Mile single-track road section and Glenbrittle beach. Improved road surface, wider single-track and extend some passing places to significantly reduce tail backs and obstructions. Improved road surfacing would also enable improved access to the campsite for overnighting and with possible reduction in camping and MH/CV parking in the glen.	
Path Maintenance / Route erosion	With increasing visitor numbers, adventure groups and interest in The Cuillins for experienced outdoor trips, path erosion throughout Glen Brittle is worsening.	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Review all routes and identify key path works that are needed throughout Glen Brittle.</p> <p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Establish a Path Volunteering Group of tourists, tour bus groups and tourism guides who are keen to 'give back'. Explore options of accessing materials and equipment to sustain this long-term.</p> <p><b>Medium to Long Term:</b> Seek funding for mountain path improvement projects.</p>	THC, McLeod Estates, NatureScot, Outdoor Activity Providers and Guiding Groups
Google Maps	Incorrect drop pins, information and missing details about the glen. This is confusing for visitors and causes disruption (I.e. an area by the farm had a car park drop pin but it isn't a 'car park' and the parking by the beach had no drop pin for parking).	The DMO could take 'ownership' of google data associated with land and businesses of the Forum. Can edit, add and change information on Google / Google Maps – correcting and editing as things arise. (Wikipedia is also a page where self-editing could be useful to update information for visitors).	To be confirmed

<p>Point of Contact</p>	<p>No single organisation able to designate a point of contact for tourists or to manage issues as they arise in the glen.</p> <p>The Fairy Pools Car Park and Glenbrittle Campsite have informally been a point of contact for visitor information and can continue to be important venues to engage with visitors and distribute SOAC, Parking and community information from.</p>	<p>Employ a seasonal <b>Warden</b>, who could also cover Minginish Peninsular if needed (Eynort and Talisker Bay). A Warden could work daytimes in collaboration with a seasonal Access Ranger who usually patrols early mornings and evenings, and the DMO can further support the Warden through the joined-up online messaging and information about Glen Brittle. Recommended that the Warden has knowledge and experience of the local area and community.</p> <p>The Warden can also link between the Fairy Pools Car Park, Campsite and other tourism points in Carbost if needed.</p>	<p>THC Access Team / Ranger &amp; others to be confirmed.</p>
<p>Tourist Information Point / Tourist Advice</p>	<p>There is no tourism information point in Glen Brittle or nearby.</p> <p>The Fairy Pools Car Park has been functioning as an informal tourism information point, including first aid and outdoor safety advice.</p> <p>Glenbrittle Campsite have informally been a point of contact for visitor information and can continue to be important venues to engage with visitors and distribute SOAC, Parking and community information from.</p>	<p>The Warden and DMO could have a base of operations if desired, possibly connected to the OATS Car Park office/staff facilities being developed soon and Glenbrittle Campsite. Or all tourism information becomes ‘virtual’ and through interpretation points, signs and QR codes – branding could also be linked and connected to Lateral North/SISP projects to continue the joined-up approach.</p> <p>Having an information point and continued interaction with the public at the Car Park would be useful, especially in relation to outdoor safety, first aid support and visitor engagement about responsible access in the glen.</p>	<p>To be confirmed.</p>

\*Destination ‘narrative’ is referring to an overarching visitor story and experience that all organisations, businesses and community members support. Such as raising awareness of the traditions, cultures and local experiences of the community in relationship with the land, and how visitors can contribute and enhance this rather than cause negative impacts. This can include local stories, anecdotes, linking into the Skye Iconic Sites Project interpretation points and curating the visitor experience in the glen.

## Area 1: Carbost Junction to Forestry Boundaries

Challenge	Description	Proposed Actions	Stakeholders Involved
Junction Signs	Variety of business signs on the junction verge.	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Explore improvements to signs. Some options include industrial unit style board with clear arrows and directions towards businesses and holiday lets.</p> <p>Longer term a more aesthetic landscaping as a 'gateway' to Glen Brittle of stonework and bi-lingual signage. Possibility to link this to a visitor centre / information point.</p>	To be confirmed
Traffic Management	Carbost junction is the final point at which traffic can be intercepted and given guidance on Car Park capacity and road congestion.	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Variable Message Board (preference to have these at Drynoch Junction or Sligachan Junction) for visitors to change plans prior to arriving into Carbost. Wording needs to be agreed.</p> <p><b>Pilot Project:</b> Smart Tourism Project – possible Dynamic Message Board point and will be a traffic sensor site.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> THC Transport Co-ordination Unit are tendering for the shuttle Bus scheme to run again from June to August 7 days a week with a return route of Portree, Sligachan, Drynoch and Fairy Pools.</p>	<p>Roads Authority and Transport Scotland for Sligachan</p> <p>SkyeConnect, University of Edinburgh and OATS</p> <p>THC Roads and Transport</p>

## Area 2: Forestry and Square Mile Car Park

Challenge	Description	Action	Stakeholders Involved
<p>Traffic Management - road width, surface and passing places.</p> <p>Verge parking and single-track obstructions</p>	<p>The width of the sing-track road and size of the passing places have been identified as needing attention to ensure there is enough room for two Motorhomes to pass one another and not cause traffic obstructions and tail backs down to the Car Park when the volume of vehicles is high at peak times.</p> <p>Verge damage is ongoing due to vehicles not using passing places appropriately creating track lines or parking on verges, and maintenance of roads is further exacerbated by this damage, which will in the long-term increase overall costs for resurfacing and maintenance.</p> <p>Extremely challenging conditions on single-track from Square Mile to Fairy Pools Car Park entrance – wide range of vehicles (cars, campers, motorhomes) parking on verges and causing obstructions – lack of access for emergency vehicles and loss of traffic flow in both directions. Passing places also being used for parking or visitors not sure how to use passing places appropriately.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> In the short-term gravel fill on edges of single-track, ongoing pot-hole filling and other verge damage maintenance can continue where possible in awareness of the roads team responsibilities to A and B class roads. If resurfacing and more extensive works are wanted sooner, then additional budget for tourism maintenance will need to be allocated for works in the glen beyond general maintenance.</p> <p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Rural Clearway introduced, and No Stopping Signs added with possibility of Parking Enforcement Officer visits on peak days. Combine this with the clearer visitor information about the glen from a DMO and Warden. Consistent requests for all visitors to use the Fairy Pools Car Park, campsite and beach parking.</p> <p><b>Pilot Project:</b> Temporary traffic lights from Forestry and Land gate (wider section of single-track) to Car Park to manage traffic flow through these sections. Explore this option with the Forum and Roads Authority.</p> <p><b>With Increased Roads Budget:</b> Widening single-track, extension of some passing places, re-enforcement of verge edges and overall a reduction in damage to the road due to wider surfaces and visitors able to use longer passing places with motorhomes or several cars where obstructions are reduced, and traffic flow improved. Signs with advice on use of passing places would also be beneficial. Additionally, look at tourism destinations having road designated changed if there are annually high visitor and vehicles numbers.</p>	<p>THC Roads Authority</p> <p>THC Roads / Parking</p> <p>To be confirmed</p> <p>THC Roads Authority, Police Scotland, &amp; THC Roads and Transport Traffic Officer</p>

		<p><b>Skye wide:</b> Tourism information about driving on single-track roads and appropriate use of passing places. All tourism destinations, car hire companies in Highlands and accommodation receive flyers/posters to inform visitors of road use and road etiquette.</p>	To be confirmed
Square Mile Parking Area and Plantation	<p>Open fires found regularly by Access Rangers throughout the summer at edges of the forestry area and within the Car Park. High Fire Risk to Forest and neighbouring plantations, as well as heathlands due to increasing drier summer weather and volume of visitors having open fires.</p> <p>Irresponsible Outdoor Toileting increasing public health concerns in plantation area and possible run off into burns.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Contact with landowner initiated and conversations ongoing about Square Mile site improvement, which aims to include facilities/signs on site to mitigate littering, toileting and open fires.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> Access Ranger in 2022 / Warden can ensure signs are up on site, warning of risks and advising visitors of responsible outdoor access. Recommending overnighting MH/CVs or campers use the campsite at the beach.</p> <p><b>Medium to Long Term:</b> Development of facilities at Square Mile parking area.</p>	<p>Square Mile Estate and THC Outdoor Access / Ranger</p> <p>Square Mile Estate and THC Outdoor Access / Ranger.</p> <p>Square Mile Estate and representatives</p>
Desire Lines – heathland erosion	<p>Due to visitors using the Square Mile Car Park ‘desire lines’ have now formed across the heathland and roadside edges towards the Fairy Pools footpath.</p> <p>There is a narrow ‘unofficial’ footpath section alongside the single-track that is gravelled but not all pedestrians are using this and there are sections with water saturation/run off. Also, a safety issue if pedestrians are going to continue walking on edge of single-track.</p>	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Markers and signs needed to guide visitors on correct route and additional gravel beside single-track with cut offs for drainage needed.</p> <p><b>Medium to Long Term:</b> Footpath work to prevent ‘desire lines’ and create route to join with Fairy Pools and Sligachan paths.</p>	<p>Square Mile Estate and THC Outdoor Access / Ranger</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>

### Area 3: Fairy Pools Car Park Area

Challenge	Description	Action	Stakeholders Involved
Passing Place and Verge Parking	<p>Parking in Passing Places – persistent issue especially on single-track section from Square Mile to lower FLS gateway. Some of this is due to the Car Park being full but also due to visitors refusing to pay for parking.</p> <p>Passing Place signs have been removed and vandalised, vehicles use passing places as waiting areas, for overnighting and parking.</p> <p>Extremely challenging conditions on single-track road between Square Mile to lower Forestry gateway – wide range of vehicles (cars, campers, motorhomes) parking on verges and causing obstructions – lack of access for emergency vehicles and loss of traffic flow in both directions.</p>	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Rural Clearway introduced, and No Stopping Signs added with possibility of Parking Enforcement Officer visits on peak days. Combine this with the clearer visitor information about the glen from a DMO and Warden. Consistent requests for all visitors to use the Fairy Pools Car Park, campsite and beach parking.</p> <p><b>With Increased Roads Budget:</b> Extend verge bollards from below the Fairy Pools Car Park to next passing place or even to FLS gate entrance. Replace Passing Place signs where they are missing. Explore option of road lines where possible to further emphasise ‘rural clearway’ and ‘no stopping at any time’, there are also some signs available to be added to passing place posts as reminders of no parking.</p>	<p>THC Roads Authority, Police Scotland, THC Traffic Officer</p> <p>THC Roads Authority</p>
Virtual Information at Fairy Pools and Glen Brittle	<p>Unclear or confusing information on tourism websites about public or free parking nearby, and some tourism information online doesn’t state the fee for parking and that there are toilets on site.</p>	<p><b>Medium Term:</b> DMO could ensure all websites and tourism information state that there is only the Fairy Pools Car Park available and what the fee is. There is no other public or formal parking available nearby with a request to use available facilities to not cause obstructions or damage to verges. Also, worth adding info about the benefits the Car Park provide to the local community.</p>	<p>To be confirmed</p>

Turning Area	<p>Fairy Pool Car Park attendants find that visitors don't want to pay to park – attempting to turn in entrance area and obstructing the road and gateway.</p> <p>There are also challenges with mini-bus tours, coach tours and other buses needing a drop-off point or turning area. If they do not notify in advance then there is no room in the parking areas for them to park, turn or drive through.</p> <p>Due to verge or passing place parking there are also very few sections of the single-track where vehicles can turn safely and not have to continue driving down to the Hostel, Farm or the Beach.</p>	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> FLS gate entrance could have signs requesting no overnighting to ensure a reasonable 'unofficial' turning area is kept clear. Option to explore tarring and line marking to define a walker's car park, keep clear and/or turning area only.</p> <p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Further conversations needed between bus companies, tour companies, shuttle bus, OATS and THC to identify suitable solutions for a drop-off/pick-up point and turning area.</p>	<p>FLS</p> <p>THC, OATS and other tour businesses</p>
Car Park Capacity	<p>Car Park is full by 10:30/11:00 in peak tourism times (July and August) and this is even when stewards are managing to fit in cars beyond the expected 140 capacity.</p> <p>The Car Park is also considering tarmac surface and lined bays, which would reduce attendant requirements on site but also reduce space for vehicles due to regulation sizes of parking bays.</p> <p>No plan at this time from MCHA to extend Car Park or create an overflow area for peak season.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> THC Transport Co-ordination Unit are tendering for the shuttle Bus scheme to run again from June to August 7 days a week.</p> <p><b>Pilot Project:</b> Smart Tourism Project – SkyeConnect and University of Edinburgh. Producing 'real-time' data for tourists using Car Park ticket sales, which enables visitors to pre-plan and self-organise destination visits across Isle of Skye.</p> <p><b>Pilot Project:</b> Booking system for Fairy Pools Car Park. This could be used as a way of visitors knowing in advance the availability on site and book a time slot for a parking space (Approx. 2hr stay). Can link into SMART Tourism project.</p>	<p>THC Transport Co-ordination Team</p> <p>SkyeConnect, University of Edinburgh and OATS</p> <p>OATS and/or SkyeConnect with University of Edinburgh</p>

<p>Tourism Information – outdoor advice, First Aid and visitor support</p>	<p>Car Park attendants have been undertaking additional elements to their role on site, which have included tourist information and guidance for:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Outdoor Clothing/Footwear and safety awareness for walkers and wild swimmers</li> <li>2. Weather warnings and burn water level warnings</li> <li>3. First Aid support</li> <li>4. Meeting point for missing children/family</li> <li>5. Monitoring walkers on the footpath for any issues or concerns.</li> <li>6. Point of contact for Mountain Rescue.</li> </ol>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Keep a contact point by entrance to Car Park for operatives to speak with visitors on site and sustain communications when accessing the path. Explore opportunities to develop a ‘Tourism Point’ for a Glen Brittle Warden and/or DMO with the Car Park developments.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> Interpretation Board being put in at the Fairy Pools Car Park as part of the SISP project with collaboration with MacLeod Estates. This will be distinct from normal tourism information and safety advise. There is a need to identify how best to inform visitors about safety needs to and to not create ‘sign blindness’.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> Collaboration between OATS and FLS on hiking routes leaflet information. FLS Footpath information will be available at the Car Park.</p> <p><b>Long Term:</b> It may be useful to consider a more formalised tourism kiosk/centre and advisory role on site for safety and advice as visitors to the Fairy Pools are increasingly not experienced outdoor tourists.</p>	<p>THC Planning / OATS</p> <p>OATS / SISP, MacLeod Estates &amp; THC Outdoor Access / Ranger</p> <p>OATS &amp; FLS</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>
<p>Abusive and confrontational behaviour from visitors</p>	<p>Parking attendants have had to deal with verbal abuse and threatening behaviour, as well as conflict resolution at the Car Park through a couple of incidents of assault on the premises between visitors.</p>	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Improve traffic management, reduce stress and agitation of visitors arriving into the glen through the Shuttle Bus system, Smart Tourism project and road maintenance</p>	<p>THC Roads Authority, Shuttle Bus Team, and Parking, SkyeConnect, University of Edinburgh and OATS</p>

Overnighting in Car Park.	Car Park has a 'No Overnighting' policy but as the gates do not lock some MH/CVs do park up overnight. There has been a reduction since putting the 'No Overnighting' sign up.	<b>Short Term:</b> Car Park information clearly stating no overnighting on site – staff verbally reiterate this, keep existing signs and virtually clarify on websites and tourist information. This can be further supported by a Warden and seasonal Access Ranger. Ensure signs direct overnighting to the beach campsite.	OATS & THC Outdoor Access / Ranger
Car Park access to Toilets	Presently the Car Park has two levels with a long walk around from the bottom level to reach the toilet facilities.	<b>Short – Medium Term:</b> Plans are in place to construct a connecting footpath and steps between the lower and upper parking areas for all visitors to access the toilets. This may additionally reduce the desire lines from the lower parking area.	OATS
Desire lines from lower Fairy Pools Car Park	A substantial desire line has formed from the lower Fairy Pools Car Park area crossing the grazing land and meeting up with the formal Fairy Pools footpath.  Urgent improvements required to Fairy Pools path and either prevent use of desire lines or create spur paths	<b>Short Term:</b> Advising visitors parking in the lower Car Park area to walk up the road to join the path.  <b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Explore the option to add a new section of footpath that will encourage walkers to remain on a path in this area and reduce erosion and desire lines on the grazing land. Additional funding will need to be sought.	OATS  To be confirmed
Grazing Land and lack of use due to increasing visitors	The grazings area of Glenbrittle Farm extends beyond the Fairy Pools footpath towards Sligachan. Due to ever increasing visitor numbers, dogs not under close control and the challenges with vehicle access the grazing area available to the farm has substantially decreased but rent is still paid. Recent construction of the Car Park and toilet facilities have also disrupted the grazing land.	<b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Additional discussions need to be made about the wider impact of visitors on the livelihood of the farm and crofters.  <b>Short to Medium Term:</b> The Warden, in collaboration with the seasonal Access Ranger and DMO can have some impact on helping behaviour change of visitors and ensuring overnighting happens at designated sites.	Ongoing  THC Outdoor Access Ranger

## Area 4: Fairy Pools

Challenge	Description	Action	Stakeholders Involved
Awareness of Footpath or River Conditions	<p>Visitors are arriving to the Fairy Pools with inadequate and inappropriate footwear, clothing or abilities to hike down. There are increasing incidents occurring of sprains, cuts, ankle/arm breaks and hip damage from falls, and additionally minor head injuries from slips and trips on footpath. General lack of knowledge about going outdoors, appropriate clothing and weather acumen.</p> <p>Lack of clarity on some websites about ability and clothing requirements to walk to the Fairy Pools.</p> <p>Growing concerns about inadequate experience and knowledge for wild swimming in a range of river / pools conditions. With the addition of the footbridge allowing access to the pools year-round further concerns have been raised about 'cold water shock' from swimming by inexperienced visitors in Autumn and Winter season.</p> <p>There have also been incidents of children swimming without adequate supervision from parents in extremely cold water.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> The bridges being constructed April 2022 will ensure safer river crossings rather than the stepping-stones that are high risk when the river is in spate. Improvements to path in October and November 2022, which include sections to reduce erosion at 'viewpoint' sites.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> Existing Car Park Operatives can continue advising visitors on footpath and river conditions and through the MHCA Facebook Page for the Fairy Pools and on site with existing signs.</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> DMO could clarify footpath/river conditions and accessibility across all Social Media and Tourist Information. Encourage websites and tourism info pages to recommend appropriate clothing, swimwear and footwear. The Warden could also verbally advise visitors on site and appropriate safety signs considered.</p> <p><b>Skye wide:</b> Grading all sites/footpaths across Skye based on the Paths for All system to keep it consistent nationally. <a href="https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/resources/resource/the-path-managers-guide-to-grading">https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/resources/resource/the-path-managers-guide-to-grading</a></p>	<p>OATS / SISP</p> <p>OATS / MHCA</p> <p>To be confirmed</p> <p>Adopted by stakeholders involved</p>

<p>Wild Swimming Safety</p>	<p>Inexperienced swimmers using pools and burn. Increasing risk to life and pressures on Mountain Rescue and emergency services in the glen.</p> <p>On Tourism websites there is advisory notices about wearing wet suits to wild swim due to water temperature, but Car Park attendants are observing advice is not being followed.</p> <p>There have also been incidents of children swimming without adequate supervision or protection from cold water. After Loch Lomond incidents of summer 2021 – outdoor wild swimming needs to be highlighted as ‘high risk’ at sites.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Appropriate warning signs at Fairy Pools Car Park. Verbal advice from Operatives and a Warden on site.</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> DMO highlighting information virtually about wild swimming safety.</p>	<p>OATS and other stakeholders</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>
<p>Mountain Rescue Call Outs to Fairy Pools</p>	<p>12 Mountain Rescue Call Outs to Fairy Pools for slips, trips and breaks, with many of these not wearing appropriate footwear. Mountain Rescue have come across head injuries and dislocations due to visitors diving into the pools and unaware of depth or risks.</p> <p>There has been one heart attack fatality at the Fairy Pools in 2021.</p> <p>MRT don’t have swift water capability for rescues and would need to rely on teams from central belt to attend. This is relevant to burn crossings and year-round access to burn and pools with addition of bridges.</p>	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Appropriate warning signs at Fairy Pools Car Park. Verbal advice from attendants and a Warden on site. DMO highlighting information virtually about wild swimming safety.</p> <p><b>Signs Available:</b> St. John Scotland have mountain risk and safety warning signs that could be used on site. i.e. Beyond this point is mountainous country &amp; in emergency call police and request MR (no ambulances).</p>	<p>OATS and other stakeholders</p> <p>THC Outdoor Access Ranger / St. John Scotland</p>

## Area 5: Glenbrittle Bridge, Flats and Farm

Challenge	Description	Action	Stakeholders involved
<p>Overnighting - cars driving off onto farmland (The Green) and helipad.</p> <p>Informal camping along the glen</p>	<p>Vehicles using The Green area after the bridge to park beyond the 3m distance from the roadside and stay overnight on grazing farmland. Vehicles and campers using helipad to stay overnight. Vehicles not permitted under SOAC to be on grazing /private land. Camping not allowed near buildings or on helipad under SOAC.</p> <p>Land management with large obstruction objects being used to block access to river ford and track to woodlands.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Explore rural clearway introduction with Roads and Parking in this area. With option to have a Parking Enforcement Officer visit at peak times.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> Access Officer providing materials to erect a section of fence (100m) along a stretch of the single-track 1.5m from road edge, which will include safety measures on fence wires. Attached to the fence will be Outdoor Access Guidance for dog walkers and other visitors considering 'informal' camping.</p> <p><b>Short Term:</b> Glenbrittle Campsite signs directing campers and overnighers to campsite.</p> <p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Warden / seasonal Access Ranger engaging with visitors and requesting everyone move to campsite at beach if 'informally' camping.</p>	<p>THC Roads &amp; Transport</p> <p>THC Outdoor Access &amp; Glenbrittle Farm</p> <p>MacLeod Estates</p> <p>THC Outdoor Access Ranger</p>

Dogs not under close control or on leads	Incidents of dogs not under close control or on leads when near sheep causing distress, injury or death to livestock on grazing land – externalities of tourism increasing costs for farm and crofters. Indirect/direct costs to changing where livestock graze. Distress caused to farmers and crofters. Police have been involved in investigating livestock attacks and fatalities by dogs.	<p><b>Short Term:</b> SOAC advice for Dog Owners on fencing section at The Green. (Appendix 5)</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> DMO could ensure virtual information clearly states the glen is grazing land and give SOAC guidance across online sites.</p> <p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Warden / seasonal Access Ranger engaging with visitors and raising awareness about livestock and grazing areas in the glen. Opportunity to link with local Police Officers.</p>	<p>THC Outdoor Access &amp; Glenbrittle Farm</p> <p>To be confirmed</p> <p>THC Outdoor Access / Ranger</p>
Glenbrittle Bridge	MH/CVs parking and overnighting on site. Also used for parking by campers. Track lines, verge damage and erosion occurring on site, alongside irresponsible outdoor access with fire marks, littering and toileting from campers.	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Provision of fencing to prevent cars and MH/CVs pulling off and parking can be supplied by Access Officer to Glenbrittle Farm. Option for more permanent land management with larger boulders being put in at a safe distance from edge of single-track road.</p>	<p>THC Outdoor Access Team &amp; Glenbrittle Farm.</p>
Littering	Where visitors are ‘informally’ camping and overnighting in the glen there have been sites where littering is an increasing concern. Especially when broken glass is left in fires/on ground where grazing livestock are getting harmed/injured causing additional distress to livestock, as well as for farmers and crofters.	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Warden / seasonal Access Ranger engaging with visitors and raising awareness about livestock and grazing areas in the glen. Additionally, the SOAC signs at fenced areas will give guidance to visitors on responsible behaviour.</p>	<p>THC Outdoor Access Team / Ranger</p>

<p>Parking at farm sites and buildings</p>	<p>Visitors using areas that farm keeps clear for feeding or other farm activities for parking. This has included visitors parking in front of farm cottage and buildings, during 2021 cones and other notices were left alongside the single track to prevent parking on farm sites. Experience of confrontational and abusive behaviour when requesting visitors to move or not disturb workings of the farm.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Continue using traffic cones and signs. Explore other prevention methods with Parking and Roads team.</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> DMO can pin drop the beach parking area to ensure visitors stop using farm. Remove any other google pin drops. Details online of SOAC, the glen being a grazings and farmed area.</p>	<p>THC Roads and Transport/Parking</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>
<p>Interference with drinking water / mountain water to farm</p>	<p>Visitors found to be paddling / littering in or near the mountain water source. There is a sign on site but is being ignored and said to look 'unofficial' by visitors. Experience of confrontation and abuse from visitors when asked to move.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> Identify a more 'official' warning sign to put up permanently to prevent contamination and interference.</p>	<p>THC Access Team / Ranger</p>

## Area 6: Glenbrittle Beach, Parking and Campsite

Challenge	Description	Action	Stakeholders Involved
Road Surface between footbridge and beach	<p>Road surface section between the holiday cottage footbridges and the beach parking is becoming impassable and in need of immediate repair.</p> <p>The almost impassable road surface has meant goods lorries refuse to deliver to Glenbrittle Campsite and it is impacting vehicle access to the campsite and beach for customers and residents. In addition, there is erosion and further damage occurring to fencing, grazing land and verges.</p>	<p><b>With Increased Roads Budget:</b> Resurfacing single-track section can be completed sooner and in full to meet community and visitor need.</p>	THC Roads Authority
Parking Area	<p>Not a formalised area for parking. Often used for overnighting next to the campsite without any prevention enforcement.</p> <p>Often overfull, parking on farmland and causing verge damage.</p>	<p><b>With Increased Roads/Parking Budget:</b> Improvements to the parking area and defining the bays more distinctly. Explore the option to have temporary bays painted for 2022.</p> <p><b>Medium to Long Term:</b> Opportunity to continue a conversation about formalising the parking area with consultation on adopting some form of fee-paying system for visitors/passes for residents. Possibly a site for an 'invitation to pay' Car Park? Aim would be to normalise paying for parking throughout the glen for all visitors whilst not impacting residents. Funds from the Car Park could also be reinvested back into local infrastructure (donations to Mountain Rescue, funds to continue the Forum or DMO and pay towards Parking Enforcement in the glen).</p>	<p>THC Roads Authority / Roads and Transport / Parking</p> <p>THC Parking / Roads and Transport with MacLeod Estates</p>

<p>Grazing Land</p>	<p>Some incidents of dogs out of control and causing distress, injury or death to livestock on grazing land. Police have been involved in investigating.</p> <p>Glenbrittle farm have ongoing issues with hikers on farmland not getting out of the way when bringing livestock in from grazing. Changing farming practices with additional costs incurred.</p>	<p><b>Short Term:</b> SOAC signs in the area for dog owners and outdoor access advice in general (Appendix 5). Explore best sign options and positioning. Signs for seasonal livestock activities could also be included.</p> <p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Warden / seasonal Access Ranger engaging with visitors and raising awareness about livestock and grazing areas in the glen. Opportunity to link with local Police Officers.</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> DMO could ensure virtual information clearly states the glen is grazing land and give SOAC guidance across online sites.</p>	<p>THC Outdoor Access / Access Ranger with resources from NatureScot</p> <p>THC Outdoor Access / Ranger &amp;</p> <p>To be confirmed</p>
<p>Viking Canal - Rubha an Dùnain</p>	<p>Discovered in 2009 and from online sources is becoming more known from 2017 onwards. The Viking Canal is accessed from the beach along the coastal path to Loch na h-Airde.</p> <p>Glenbrittle farm have noted that more visitors are stating they are coming down to the beach to specifically find the Viking Canal. There has also been filming on site without notification.</p>	<p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> Ranger and DMO once in post can monitor tourism interest and identify if there is a need to manage additional destination impacts.</p> <p><b>Skye Wide:</b> DMO can identify any growing interest trends. Also, can link to the proposal of a Guiding Association for Skye – etiquette for access onto farmland/grazings.</p> <p><b>Medium Term:</b> Voluntourism Project - “Krall” for walkers to pick up + deposit any flotsam / jetsom / marine waste. Twice a year a boat can be organised along with a skip at the campsite beach to take it all away.</p>	<p>To be confirmed</p> <p>To be confirmed</p> <p>SkyeConnect with THC Outdoor Access / Ranger, MacLeod Estates &amp; Glenbrittle Farm</p>

<p>Glenbrittle Campsite and Café</p>	<p>Annual beach clean by the campsite before opening in April to continue and possibly connect to the Voluntourism project being developed.</p> <p>Glenbrittle Campsite have informally been a point of contact for visitor information and can continue to be important venues to engage with visitors and distribute SOAC, Parking and community information from.</p>	<p><b>Ongoing:</b> Continue functioning as a tourism information point for visitors using the campsite, café and accessing The Cuillins.</p> <p>Opportunity for Warden and DMO to engage with visitors on site as a linked tourism point with Fairy Pools Car Park.</p> <p>Continue beach cleans and explore linking with SkyeConnect’s Voluntourism projects and “krall”.</p> <p><b>Short to Medium Term:</b> MacLeod Estates are producing interpretation points for Glenbrittle Beach and Sligachan alongside the SISP interpretation point project.</p>	<p>MacLeod Estates and other stakeholders</p> <p>MacLeod Estates</p>
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## **Additional Opportunities | Cothroman a Bharrachd**

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**Voluntourism - Glenbrittle Beach Cleans / Beach Cleaning Station & “Krall”** – Proposal to establish a beach cleaning station at Glenbrittle beach and “Krall” at Rubha an Dùnain for visitors to contribute to litter picks and beach cleans while enjoying the area. Conversation has begun with MacLeod Estates and THC Waste Management regarding putting this proposal into action. The “krall” will need additional coordination for waste to be removed by boat annually.

**Voluntourism – Path Works / Restoration Projects** – Proposal to develop volunteering group (Skye wide or for Glen Brittle) in support of path works and environmental conservation projects. SkyeConnect developing plans in collaboration with Access Officer for Skye and Lochalsh.

**Guiding Giving Back – Nature and Adventure Guide Volunteering** – Proposal for all guides who use Glen Brittle to ‘give back’ through an organised set of volunteering projects or days. This could link with a Guiding Association and Good Practice approach for all nature and adventure guiding across Skye.

**Public Goods Funding from Public Donations** – Proposal to set up public donation points to mitigate the direct/indirect costs and impacts of recreational use of land alongside farming and crofting livelihoods. The research and proposal has been developed by SkyeConnect with SAC Consulting.

**Guiding Association for Skye & Good Practice Etiquette** – Proposal to establish an association that joins up good guiding practices and becomes a point of contact for all Guides working across Skye to uphold appropriate etiquette with landowners, land users, crofters and farmers alongside adhering to the principles and expectations of the SOAC.

**Skye Cycle Network** – Plans to establish route within Glen Brittle. Potential for promoting eco-tourism and once the project is underway will need to be additionally considered in future editions of the Location Action Plan.

**Shuttle Bus** – At present there are only plans to run the shuttle bus from Portree to the Fairy Pools, but there could additionally be the opportunity to extend the shuttle route in mornings and evenings for hikers and mountaineers who may be staying elsewhere. This would also provide more ecological and low carbon transport access for visitors to the Hostel, Memorial Hut and Campsite with the potential of being a public transport option for residents.

## References\* | Iomraidhean

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Accesses at: <https://highland.gov.uk/news/article/13833/goskye-free-weekend-shuttle-service-to-popular-skye-tourist-attractions>

The Highland Council: Tourism Committee (06/12/2021) with downloadable Visitor Management Strategy for 2022.

Accessed at: <https://www.highland.gov.uk/meetings/meeting/4532/tourism-committee>

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Accessed at: <https://highland.public.i.tv/core/portal/webscast-interactive/597498>

Tourism, Technology & Data (no date) Isle of Skye and Internet of Things Project.

Accessed at: <https://www.cdcs.ed.ac.uk/>

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Accessed at: [https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/dm\\_plans\\_guiding\\_principles.pdf](https://www.visitbritain.org/sites/default/files/vb-corporate/Documents-Library/documents/England-documents/dm_plans_guiding_principles.pdf)

Visit Scotland (2021) Responsible Tourism for Scotland.

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\*Some references and sources were reports and research papers not currently published or available online, note of the authors and groups involved has been provided in the footnotes. Please contact the organisations and groups referenced for any further information.

### Appendix 1: Stakeholder Contacts/Groups/Organisations informing the Glen Brittle Location Action Plan (Alphabetical Order)

Stakeholders Engaged with	Role/Community Connection
C & J Sutherland	Tenant of Trien Croft and owners of Forestry Workers Holdings
Forestry and Land Scotland	Visitor Services Manager
Glenbrittle Farm	Farmers and livestock grazing throughout the glen
Hostelling Scotland	Skye Group Manager for Hostelling Scotland
MacLeod Estates	Estate Director
MacLeod Estates	Finance Director
Minginish Community Council	Community Council Member and Resident
Minginish Community Hall Association	Project Officer and Directors
Mountain Rescue (Skye)	Team Leader
Mrs Catherine Sutherland	Merkerdale CL Site
Nature Scot	Area Officer
OATS	Facility Manager for Fairy Pools Car Park
OATS	Access Projects Manager – Skye Iconic Sites Project and Fairy Pools Path Work
OATS	Car Park Facility Operative
Police	Acting Inspector (Skye)
SAC Consulting	Agriculture Advisors
SkyeConnect	Project Manager and Destination Management Organisation for Skye
Skye Guides	Owner and Director of Skye Guides
Square Mile Estate	Estate Manager
THC	Waste Management Officer (Skye and Lochalsh)
THC	Roads Officer (Isle of Skye)
THC	Transport Co-ordination - Shuttle Bus Project Team
THC	Access Manager (Highlands) and Access Officer (Skye and Lochalsh)
University of Edinburgh – Smart Tourism	Project Lead with SkyeConnect
Wardell Armstrong LLP	Square Mile Landowner representative

## Appendix 2: Community consultation attendees (alphabetical order)

Stakeholders Engaged with	Role/Community Connection
Forestry and Land Scotland	Visitor Services Manager
Minginish Community Council	Community Council Member
Minginish Community Hall Association	Project Officer and Directors
Mountain Rescue	Team Leader
OATS	Facility Manager for Fairy Pools Car Park
SkyeConnect	Project Manager and Destination Management Organisation for Skye
Skye Guides	Owner and Director of Skye Guides

## Appendix 3: Stakeholder and Community Feedback from Contacts/Groups/Organisations (alphabetical order)

Stakeholders Engaged with	Role/Community Connection
C & J Sutherland	Tenant of Trien Croft and owners of Forestry Workers Holdings
Councillor Finlayson, Councillor Gordon, Councillor MacLeod and Councillor Munro	Eilean a' Cheo Ward 10 Councillors
Cuillin Guides / Ex-Mountain Rescue Team	Guide and Community Member
Glenbrittle Farm	Farmers and livestock grazing throughout the glen
MacLeod Estates	Estate Director
MacLeod Estates	Finance Director
Minginish Community Council	Community Council Member
Minginish Community Hall Association	Project Officer and Directors
Mrs Catherine Sutherland	Merkerdale CL Site
OATS	Facility Manager for Fairy Pools Car Park
Police	Acting Inspector (Skye)
SkyeConnect	Project Manager and Destination Management Organisation for Skye
Skye Guides	Owner and Director of Skye Guides
SAC Consulting	Agriculture Advisors
Square Mile Estate	Estate Manager
THC	Access Manager (Highlands) and Access Officer (Skye and Lochalsh)
Wardell Armstrong LLP	Square Mile Landowner representative

## **Appendix 4: Visitor Flow Modelling and Management on the Isle of Skye Report – Phased Approach**

Details obtained from the University of Edinburgh Business School SkyeConnect and OATS Report, suggesting the following blueprint staged process of developing an Island wide Internet of Things (IoT) SMART Tourism system:

**Phase 1: Sensor Network** – funding secured to include the Fairy Pools as one of the traffic sensor sites. The data collected during these phases will be digitally accessed in ‘real-time’ for traffic, car parking and people counters on footpaths.

**Phase 2: Dynamic Message Signs at key sites across Skye** – information about congestion and suggestions to visitors in real-time.

**Phase 3: Visitor Website or App** – Connected to existing website or App or newly established for visitors to access prior to arriving and during their stay to get the ‘real-time’ data for planning day trips.

**Phase 4: Advanced Parking Tool** – Website, App and dynamic message boards linked to an online car park booking system for visitors to pre-book for all key sites across the Isle of Skye and to keep visitors updated on parking availability.

Additional information about University of Edinburgh SMART Tourism: <https://www.cdcs.ed.ac.uk/> through ‘Tourism, Technology and Data’.

## Appendix 5: SOAC Signs and wording for dog owners

Agreed wording for any community produced signs, online information and verbal guidance to dog owners that meets SOAC:

**“You are entering open grazing land and dogs must be kept under close control at all times and on a lead when sheep are present.”**

Signs and available leaflet guidance (hard copy or virtual pdf) that can be used in Glen Brittle include:



## Appendix 6: OATS 2021 Summary Report for the Fairy Pools Car Park and SISP Path Works

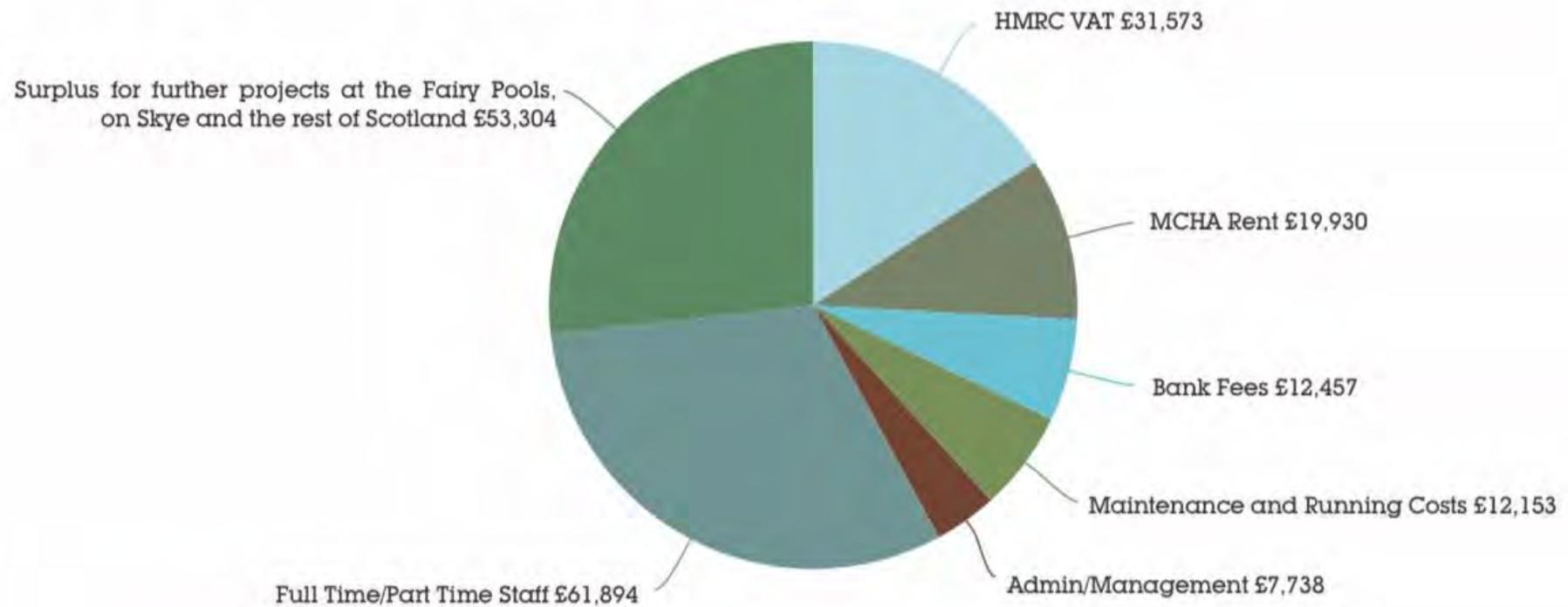
These are extracts from OATS website, for the full report please access the PDF here:

<http://www.outdooraccesstrustforscotland.org.uk/cms/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/OATS-Annual-Report-2020-2021-Final.pdf>

### Summary of income and expenditure of OATS Car Park:

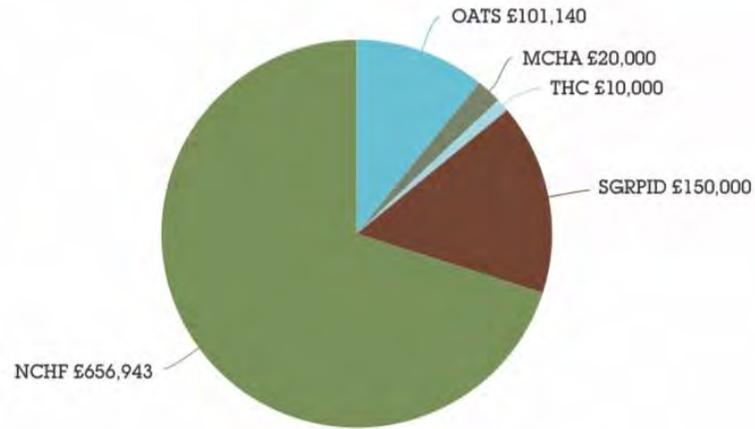
## Fairy Pools Car Park and Toilets 2020 - 21

Income £199,050 | Expenditure £145,746

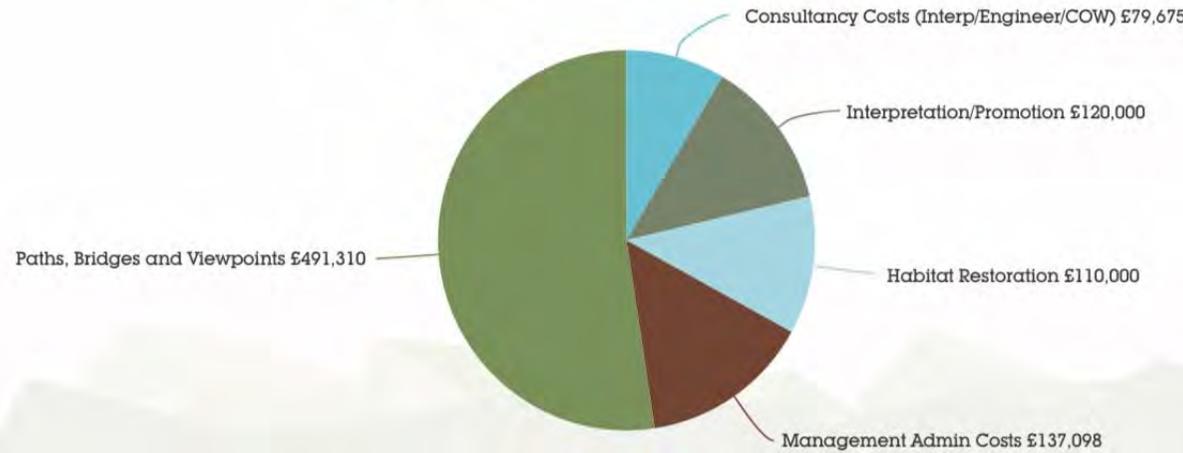


Summary of Skye Iconic Sites Project income and expenditure:

Skye Iconic Sites Project Income



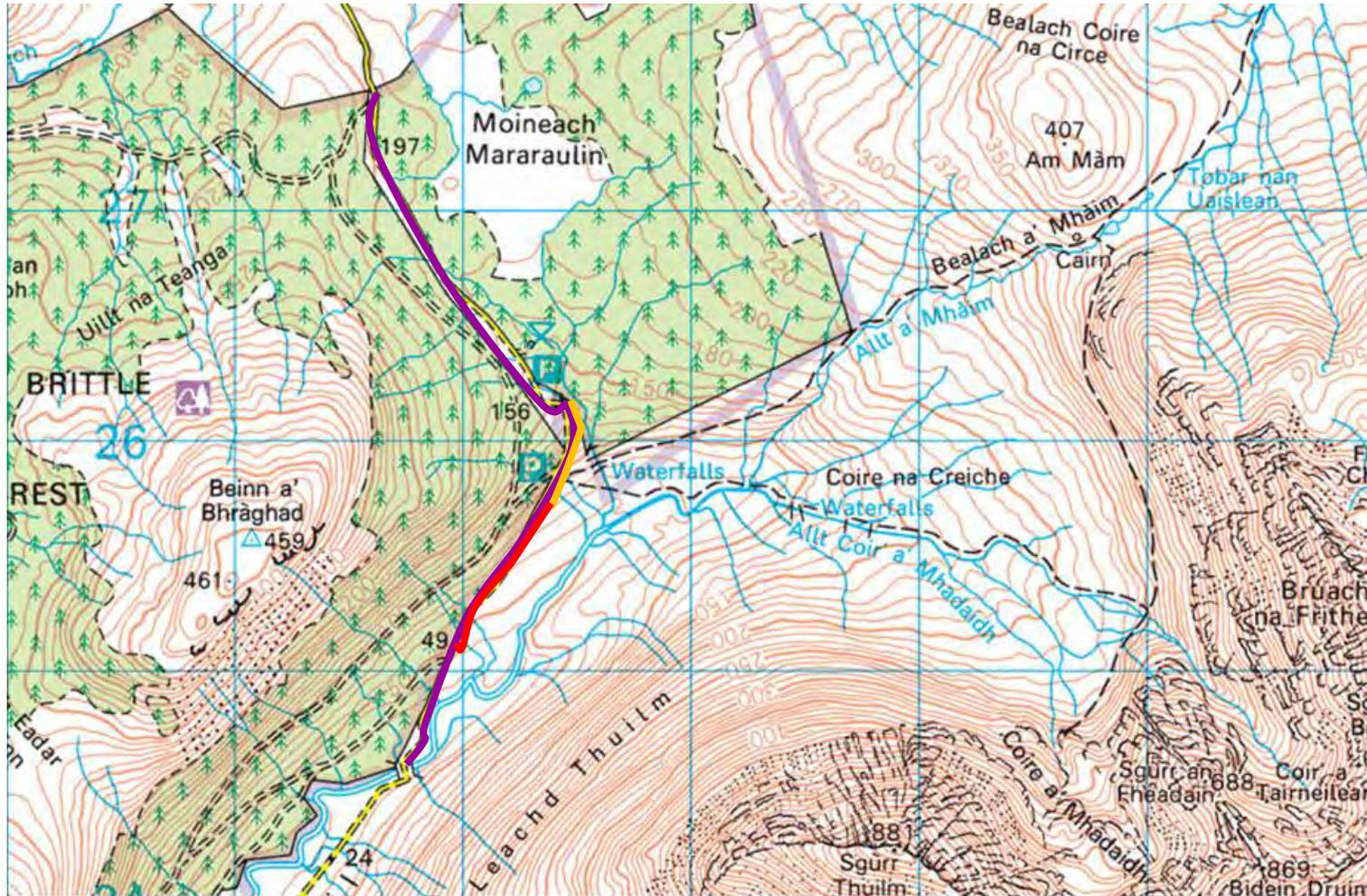
Skye Iconic Sites Project expenditure



## Appendix 7: Rural Clearway Proposed Single Track Road Section

**Purple** highlights the proposed temporary rural clearway for 2022, with an aim that this becomes permanent from 2023.

**Orange** highlights the existing section of bollards and **red** where the extension section is proposed.





# Glen Brittle

## Gleann Bhreatail

Location Action Plan (LAP) 2022

Plana-gnìomha Ionadail 2022

Rosamonde Birch | Access Ranger

[rosamonde.birch@highland.gov.uk](mailto:rosamonde.birch@highland.gov.uk)



# 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:**

Matthew Bradley | Access Ranger

[matthew.bradley@highland.gov.uk](mailto:matthew.bradley@highland.gov.uk)



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## Glossary of Terms and Abbreviations | Clàr-mìneachaidh Bhriathran is Ghiorrachaidhean

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<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.
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<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

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### 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>

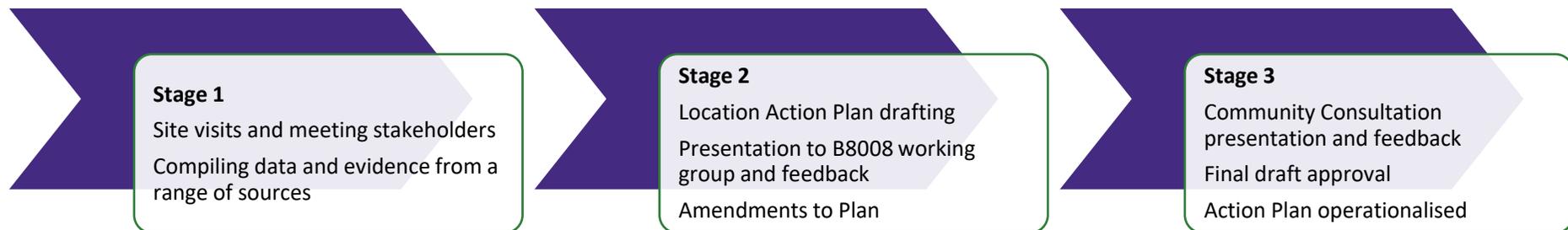
With the objectives, suggested solutions and responsible tourism aims in mind, the following overarching outcomes have been identified:

- 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)

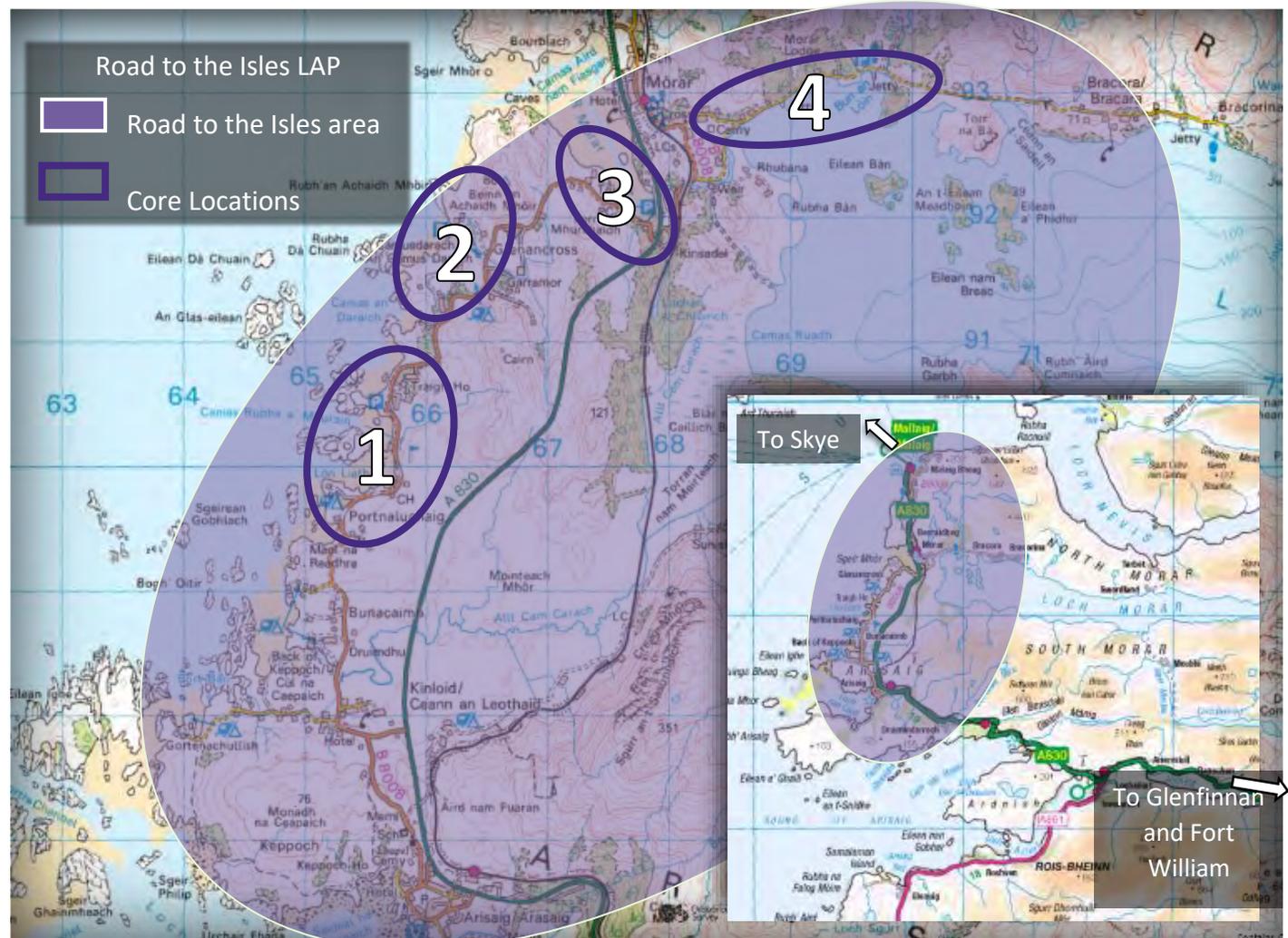
<sup>2</sup> Further RTIF Information can be accessed at <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/rural-tourism-infrastructure-fund>

## Introduction | Suidheachadh

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, Bracara 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-ùidh

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.



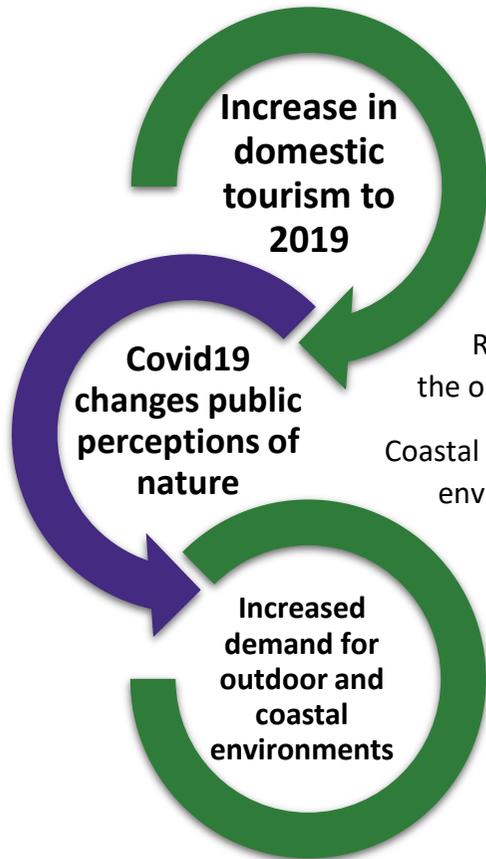
Type of stakeholder	Stakeholder name	About	Past visitor management work	Visitor management plans
<b>Community Council</b>	Mallaig Community Council	Community Council serving Mallaig and Glasnacardoch.	No comment	Improve Mallaig Circular core path Improve visitor car parking
<b>Community Council</b>	Morar 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 (Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation)</b>	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 Glenancross 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 | Coimeasairean

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.

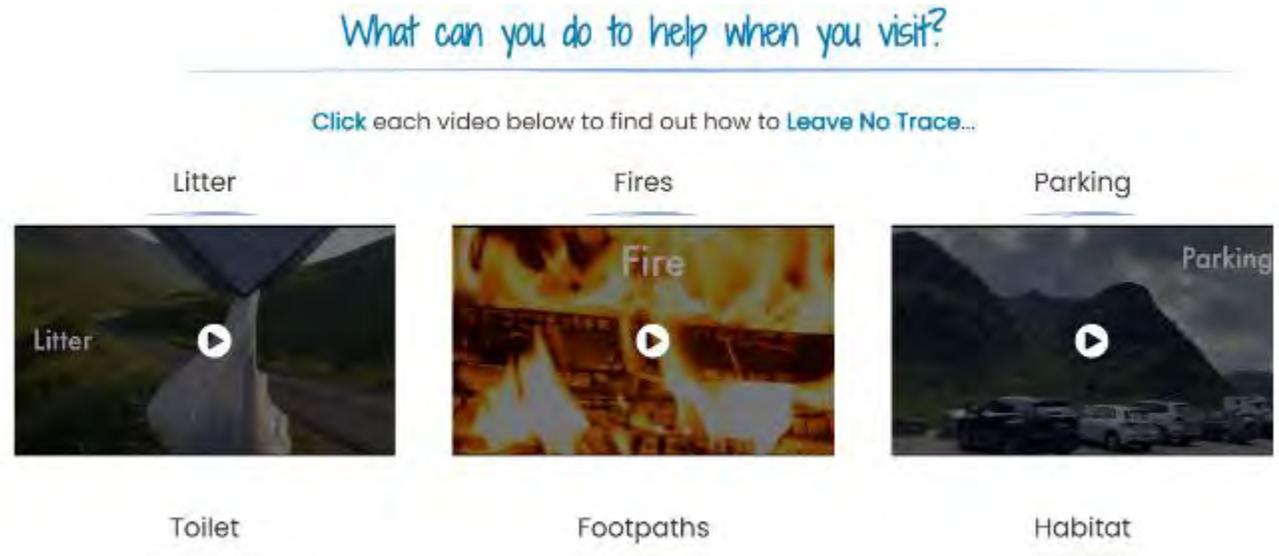


Figure 1 - Screenshot from Love the Glen campaign highlighting behaviours appropriate to the Access Code:  
<https://www.lovetheglen.com/coe-etive50187300>

<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

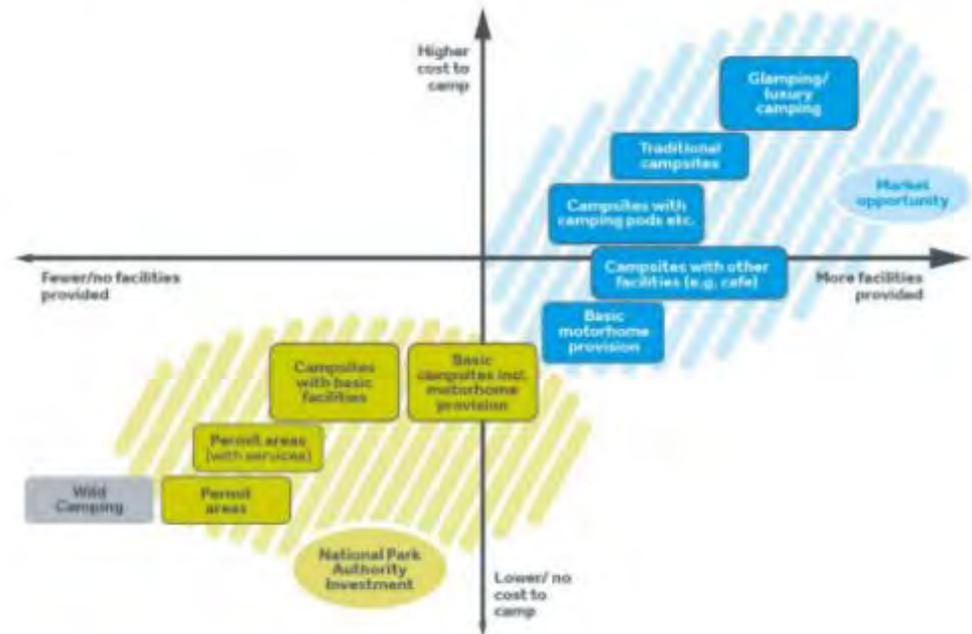


Figure 2 – Graphic from "Appendices to Camping Management Byelaws Three Year Report to Scottish Ministers" highlighting various camping provision within the national park

## 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 | Riaghladh Gu Ruige Seo

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### 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>
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<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>
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<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>
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<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>
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## 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.</p> <p>The parking on the Road to the Isles is largely unregulated, meaning the area sees more people visiting than is sustainable and responsible.</p> <p>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</p> <p>Bunding to restrict motorhome overnighting on verge, alongside Info on responsible motorhoming available online and targeted at Facebook groups with help of RTTIMG</p> <p>Visitor leaflet</p> <p>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</p> <p>Create an attractive mid capacity Airigh within the Road to the Isles area, permitting unplanned one-night stays only</p> <p>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>
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<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>
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<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>
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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
<p>Beach and roadside camping</p>	<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>RTTIFG 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	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	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	



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 Toulgall 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.

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# Road to the Isles

## Rathad nan Eilean

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

Matthew Bradley | Access Ranger  
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# Durness

# Diuranais

## Location Access Plan (LAP) January 2022

### Highland Council Access Ranger Service

**Aim:**

To outline, define and envision a sustainable step-by-step process for the Durness community, visitors, environment and economy.

Jonny Charlton / Access Ranger

Jonny.Charlton@highland.gov.uk

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## Outcomes and Objectives

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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>**

It has been identified over successive years Durness is in need of a co-ordinated approach to visitor management. This document aims towards that.

The **outcomes** of this plan are to:

1. **Establish a baseline from which the Durness stakeholders can co-operatively work from**
2. **Come to an agreement of methods of moving forwards as a Durness community, which comprises its various stakeholders**
3. **Continue to make practical steps and improve communication between stakeholders regarding site improvements**

The **objective** of this report is therefore threefold:

1. **Discuss the visitor management challenges which the Durness area experiences, and appraise actions taken to date**
2. **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**
3. **Produce a comprehensive working document considering stakeholder perspectives within the responsible tourism model**

Management is an evolving process which becomes an intrinsic part of the cultural fabric of a Destination, this document is the beginning of that process. The strength of this approach is in how it addresses fragmentation. Durness' visitor economy is not controlled by any one stakeholder group, so it is essential that public, private and voluntary sectors work together for the best possible management and prioritisation of resources. Destination Management is about more than just promotion of an area. It covers all aspects of the visitor experience; from roads and toilets, to natural and cultural heritage. Communities and their priorities are also key in this process; happy places to visit must first be happy places to live!

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

## Executive Summary

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The following document introduces Durness as an area for the management of visitors and visitor sites, which will be conducted by the various stakeholders identified. It is 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 Durness a collective ownership of the area in which people live, work and play.

The following challenges and opportunities were identified:

**Destination Development Forum** to provide co-ordinated future actions to mitigate tourism pressures and bring about improvements to infrastructure and services driven by community stakeholders.

**Destination/Community Development Officer** to carryout administration and promotion tasks to support destination development and visitor management aims of forum.

**Traffic Management** improvements are required to improve traffic flow, prevent inconsiderate parking, reduce vehicle speeds in congested locations and improve road surfaces

**Pedestrian Access** is very limited across the village. It is not possible to walk to the village locations without walking in the road. A comprehensive network of paths to walk/cycle is required. Disabled access is currently very restricted at all sites.

**Visitor Information** to direct visitors to appropriate locations to camp or motorhome and more effectively plan ahead.

**Socio-economic challenges**, depopulation, poor housing, little access to training and a small working age population make it difficult for the community to staff essential services or develop tourism.

**Parking Management improvement** is fundamental to all aspects of visitor management. Increased parking capacity and parking management needed at most sites. Control of overnight parking.

**Ecology Protection** is required to protect the areas outstanding habitats and species. A Destination Forum could establish a collaborative approach to promote habitat protection and promote wildlife tourism.

**Informal Camping** occurs at exceptionally high levels due to many attractive green spaces in and around the village that exceeds any Scottish Outdoor Access Code (SOAC) guidance. Initiatives are required to reduce the levels of informal camping by re-defining the land with tree planting, fencing, formal picnic areas, and limiting overnight parking nearby.

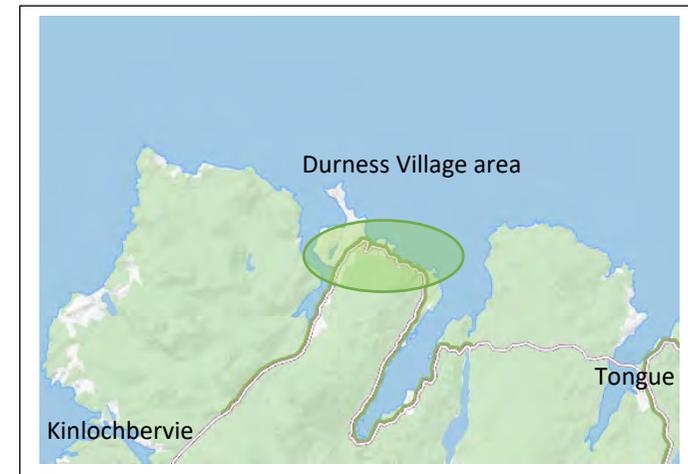
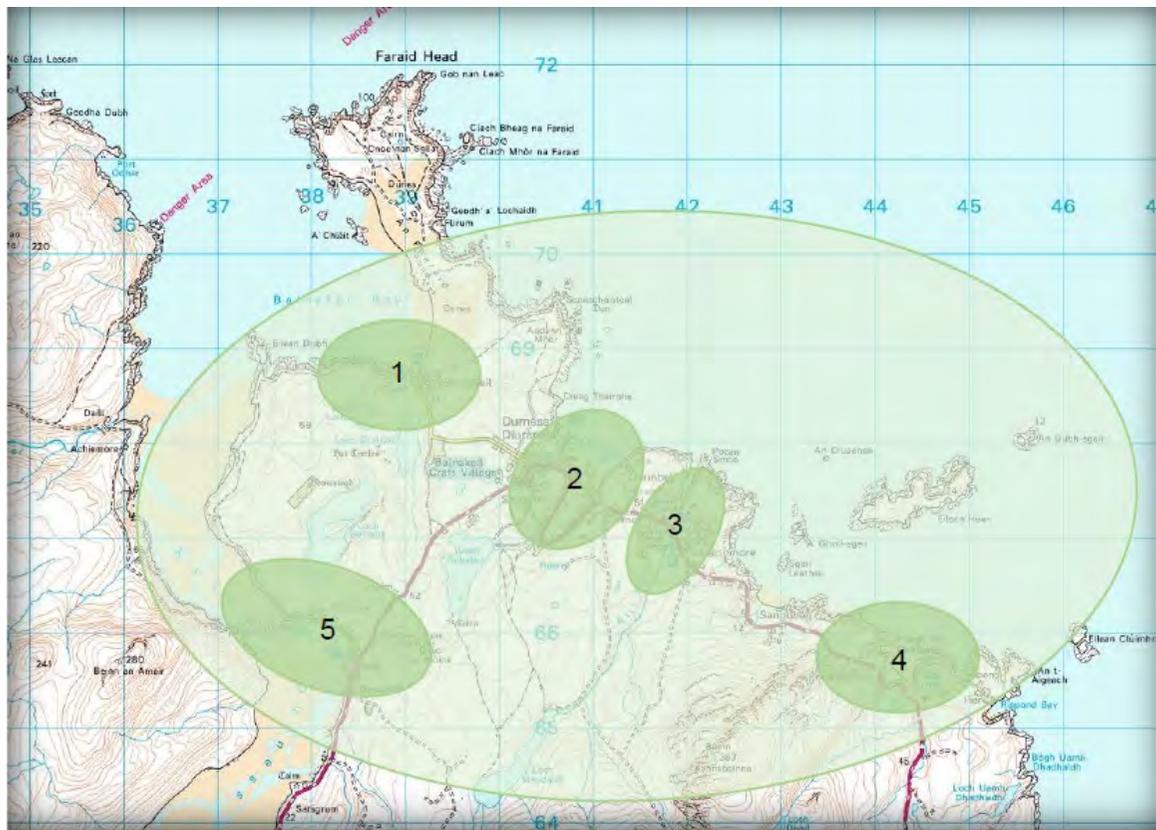
**Signs and Messaging** can be improved to inform drivers of road changes, directions to car parks, etc. Informing and reinforcing positive appropriate camping and visitor activity can be achieved with on-site signs and through social media.

**Policing and civic enforcement** should be increased to match the large tourist population in the summer season.

## Introduction

Durness is the most north westerly positioned village on the UK mainland. It is a popular village for tourists and experienced unprecedented growth in its popularity since the creation of the NC500 holiday concept and post lockdown visitor surges. Durness provides a full range of tourist facilities, tourist attractions such as Smoo Caves and outstanding scenic beaches of national significance.

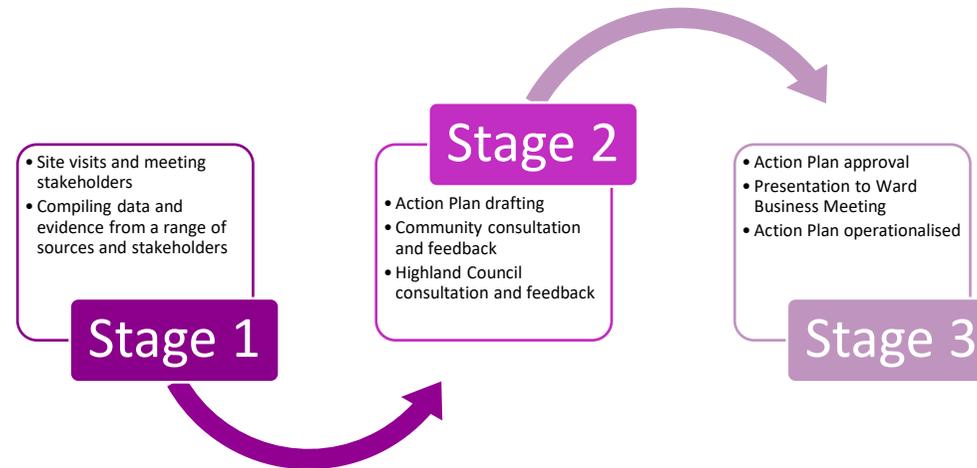
In the North West Sutherland area, Durness provides the highest concentration of camping pitches, motor home pitches, traditional accomodation, tourist attractions, cafes, restaurants, toilets and car parks. It also has the highest concentration of informal roadside camping and motorhome overnight parking at unofficial sites in the northwest. The village is estimated to have approximately 250 residents. During the summer, visitors increase the population to 500 -1000 people each night.



## Stakeholder Consultation

### Staged Process for the LAP

The following process was adopted based on guidance from other destination and community consultation procedures. Please see appendix 1, 2 and 3 for a full overview of all stakeholders and community members who have contributed to developing the Location Action Plan.

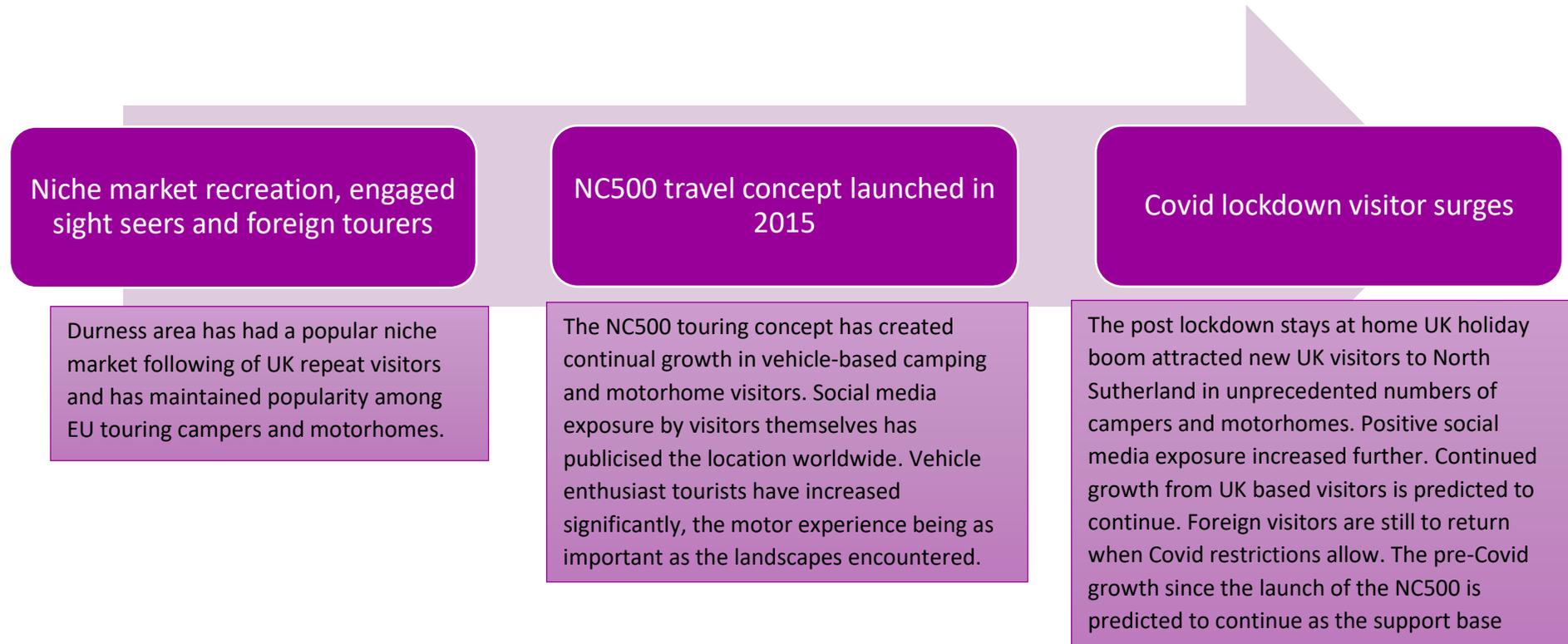


## Durness Stakeholders

<u>Land</u>	<u>Community</u>	<u>Ecology</u>	<u>Enterprise</u>	<u>Local Authority</u>
Durness Estate	Community Council	RSPB	Local Businesses	Roads
Balnakeil Estate	Ward Councillor	Nature Scot	HIE	Waste Management
Rispond Estate	North West 2045	North Sutherland	Business Gateway	Access
Sheep Stock Club	Geopark	Wildlife Group	Visit Scotland	Parking
Grazing Committee	Durness Community Group		NC500.com	Toilets
				Tourism

## Tourism Background

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The Highlands is one of the most popular destinations in Scotland, based on 2019 tourism data Visit Scotland<sup>2</sup> states that the Highlands received:

- 2.9 million overnight stays
- 9.6 million daytime visits
- 11.5 million nights of stays
- £1.6 billion spend

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<sup>2</sup> Visit Scotland 2019 Tourism Data [Highlands - Tourism Statistics & Visitor Numbers | VisitScotland.org](https://www.visitScotland.org.uk/highlands-tourism-statistics-visitor-numbers)

It is predicted that 2021 will either return to or exceed the number of overnight stays, visits and spend in the Highlands. This is very positive news as in some areas across the Highlands 43%<sup>3</sup> of the workforce annually rely on some form of tourism income. Additionally, it is important to note that over the last eighteen months that there has been an increase in touring motorhomes, motorhomes and 'informal camping' across the Highlands, whose data will not be included in Visit Scotland calculations and therefore visitor numbers may exceed those published.

Durness has been a popular, but reasonably low-key tourist destination for many decades with a large commercial campsite becoming established along with residential accommodation. However, vehicle touring, heritage, ecology, geology, leisure and adventure tourism have all seen strong growth since the creation of the NC500 marketing concept which has brought this area to the attention of new UK and foreign tourists.

"The NC500 was launched only 5 years ago, yet in that time, it has reached a global audience of over 11.2 billion and is ranked by so many independent sources as the best road trip on the planet"

(NC500.com)

The NC500 was estimated to have boosted the economy by £22.89 million and created around 179 jobs in 2020.

(Press and Journal, Jan 19<sup>th</sup> 2021)

This new tourism growth adds to, and already outnumbers the areas established tourism markets of traditional country sports and scenic sightseers. Traditionally the north Sutherland and Caithness area had a niche market of tourists in smaller numbers who were often repeat visitors. EU tourists have traditionally been a large proportion of the tourist clientele and will likely return in future.

In addition to strong tourism growth since the NC500 started in 2015, the recent Covid pandemics have increased tourist numbers to unprecedented highs unseen before in Durness driven by the UK tourists who find it difficult to travel abroad.. This huge increase in numbers has brought new pressures on the limited facilities and attractions. Whilst the UK numbers may decrease when overseas travel restrictions ease they will be replaced by European visitors.

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<sup>3</sup> Highlands and Islands Enterprise [Tourism](#) | [Highlands and Islands Enterprise](#) | [HIE](#)

Some social media by visitors has promoted the opportunities to park to camp, or motorhome, for free in many locations. A widely held expectation has developed within the tourists groups to be able to wild camp and park everywhere and a belief it is allowed and a right to do so. Many tourists are planning and expecting to stay overnight in scenic locations such as Balnakiel and Ceannebeinne beach car parks. Tourists are planning overnight stays in public car parks as an accepted feature of their trip.

‘No forward Plan or part plan’ is the travel method of many of the new tourists visiting the area. It has become part of the tourists interpretation of the NC500 concept, to travel with a sense of freedom and adventure, and not be constrained by a fixed schedule and prepaid bookings. They may also have a mistaken belief that it will be quiet and uncrowded. Unfortunately, villages such as Durness lack the campsite capacity to cope with high numbers of tourists randomly arriving at peak times and finding they have nowhere to stay. It is a good holiday concept, to tour around, and makes good use of this sparsely populated area but brings some pressures at peak times due to the lack of campsite capacity and visitors desire to camp and motorhome in ‘off grid’ locations for free.

Tourism marketing and growth since the start of the NC500 in 2015 has increased the number of UK, EU and world wide visitors and increased the range of holiday types. Touring by car, motorhome, cycling and motorbikes has seen strong growth. Cape Wrath Trail walkers, cyclists on the An Turas Mor cycle route, surfers, hillwalkers, anglers, bird watchers and golfers are increasing in visitor numbers and adding to the direct visitor market group, independent of the NC500 customer base. The nearby Wildland Estate is developing accommodation and activities for the luxury market. The NC500 website promotes many tailored itineraries specific to each of the tourist activity themes. The construction of the Spaceport will attract further visitors.

There have always been wild campers and motorhomes in the Durness area. The issues causing concern are not new but just presenting with a higher level of frequency, duration and intensity and bringing the local community into contact with a larger cross section of society. However, the often condemning publicity surrounding informal camping and tourism growth in the area must be viewed in context to the very high numbers of visitors. Overall, behaviour by visitors has been good. Some incidents that have received negative publicity on social media, but have occurred infrequently. Incidents of malicious damage or littering have been minimal. Ecological damage from trampling has occurred due to weight of numbers, insufficient campsite capacity and the absence of any effective way to stop free camping or overnight parking. Pressure of numbers, competition for space, insufficient facilities and under capacity of commercial campsites at peak times led to parking and camping that had a negative impact on some tourists experience and some residents quality of life.

## Development So Far

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Several stakeholders contribute to the network of tourism and community facilities in Durness. Recent initiatives undertaken by stakeholders are summarised below.

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Activity</b>
<b>Highland Council</b>	Access Ranger / Signs / Camping info leaflets/ Motorhome leaflets / Core path maintenance
<b>High Life Highland Ranger Service</b>	Countryside Ranger/ Ecology information / Habitat protection / Guided walks
<b>NW Geopark</b>	Pebble Route / Interpretation Boards and displays / Motorhome leaflets/ Ranger/ Project Management
<b>Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust</b>	Community Development Report
<b>Durness Community Council</b>	Installed barriers at Sangomore/ Community events/
<b>Durness Community Group</b>	Working on play park facility
<b>Venture North</b>	Tourist information signs/
<b>Balnakeil Estate</b>	Renovated Balnakeil House and rent as a high value tourist accommodation for large groups.
<b>Durness Estate</b>	Discussing possible car park location at Smoo Cave with Highland Council
<b>Keoldale Sheep Stock Club</b>	Managed Keoldale Green as a pay-to-park overnight camping and motorhome location.
<b>Sango Campsite</b>	New toilet and shower block and extended electric hook ups for motorhomes.
<b>Smoo Stopover Site</b>	New commercial motorhome pay to use site with electric hook up facilities and a launderette
<b>Balnakeil Stopover Site</b>	New commercial motorhome pay to use site with electric hook up facilities.
<b>Cocoa Mountain Cafe</b>	Moved to larger premises on road front to provide for more customers.
<b>Durness Spar Shop</b>	Revamped interior to enhance customer experience. Largest store in the area.
<b>Durness Bus Company</b>	Extended fleet and services to include bike racks.
<b>YHA Durness</b>	Currently closed. Reopening would enhance the range of overnight accommodation available.
<b>Craft Village</b>	Advertising banners/ information leaflet/ additional refuse bins.
<b>Village Hall</b>	Provided a pop-up shop venue and toilets available to customers, and overflow parking.
<b>North West 2045</b>	Identified priorities for development e.g. Additional Housing, Enterprise Hub, Broadband, etc.

## Visitor Data and Impacts

### Access Ranger Data 2021

Data recording began with evening patrols on Fri/Sat/Sun but changed to Sat/Sun/Tue in response to Community Council feedback that mid-week was always the busiest time. Tuesday patrols and further weekday patrols confirmed mid-week high numbers throughout the summer season. High season weeks in July and August often maintained high numbers throughout the week with no quiet days.

All data was recorded before 9pm but campers and motorhomes typically continued to arrive up to midnight so the data presented in this report should be considered as underestimates and the true numbers were higher. The calculation of the average per night used to calculate projected monthly totals will also be low as it did not reflect enough of the busy mid-week days. Again, the data should be considered as underestimates. Other daytime data was recorded by the Geopark Ranger, Fraser Gibb and recorded in the Geopark report.

### West Sutherland Patrol Area Data Summary (Scourie to Loch Eribol including Durness and Kinlochbervie areas).

	Counted on 13 night patrols each month		Projected full month numbers using average of 13 night patrols	
	motorhomes	Tents		Tents
June	507	310	1170	690
July	529	400	1261	953
August	956	604	2279	1440
September	719	103	1650	210
Total	2711	1408	6360	3293
Total Units	4119		9653	
Estimated People	8238 (2 persons per unit)		19306 (2 persons per unit)	

Informal overnight stays by visitors in tents and motorhomes in North West Sutherland mostly occurred at beach locations and roadside grass verges in the empty spaces between villages. They are typically attractive and scenic locations and often near public toilets and shops. Oldshoremore, Sheigra and Durness provided the main sites for beach front free overnight stays in their respective car parks.

**Durness data projected monthly totals for June to September based on average per day from 13 ranger patrols per month.**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Motorhomes</b>	<b>Tents</b>
Balnakeil	<b>893</b>	<b>86</b>
Ceannabeinne	<b>1252</b>	<b>1683</b>
Keoldale	<b>610</b>	<b>610</b>
Sango	<b>122</b>	<b>30</b>
Smoo Caves	<b>366</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>3243</b>	<b>2442</b>
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>5685</b>	
<b>Estimated People</b>	<b>11370</b>	

Durness and its car parks and roadside grass verges are the main site of informal camping and motorhome parking in the area patrolled from Scourie to Loch Eribol. The data shows that fifty percent of all informal overnight stays in tents and motorhomes in the whole patrol area were within 3 miles of Durness village centre. Within Durness village, Ceannabeinne and Balnakeil car parks, machair, beach and dunes were the most popular informal overnight locations for campers and motorhomes. Access Ranger activity discouraged overnight stays at Sangomore in the village centre, which would have seen much higher overnight numbers without intervention.

<b>Location</b>	<b>Ceannabeinne</b>				<b>Balnakeil</b>			
	<b>Counted on 13 patrols each month</b>		<b>Projected full month numbers using average of 13 patrols</b>		<b>Counted on 13 patrols each month</b>		<b>Projected full month numbers using average of 13 patrols</b>	
<b>Data Activity</b>	<b>Vans</b>	<b>Tents</b>	<b>Vans</b>	<b>Tents</b>	<b>Vans</b>	<b>Tents</b>	<b>Vans</b>	<b>Tents</b>
June	<b>93</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>214</b>	<b>390</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>120</b>	<b>4</b>
July	<b>124</b>	<b>232</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>527</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>238</b>	<b>40</b>
August	<b>187</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>651</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>307</b>	<b>40</b>
September	<b>141</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>325</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>228</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>545</b>	<b>725</b>	<b>1252</b>	<b>1683</b>	<b>380</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>893</b>	<b>84</b>
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>1270</b>		<b>2935</b>		<b>416</b>		<b>977</b>	
<b>Estimated People</b>	<b>2540</b>		<b>5870</b>		<b>832</b>		<b>1954</b>	

**Example of peak season camping and motorhome overnight stays in Durness on official sites and informal locations.**

<b>Location</b>	<b>Motorhomes</b>	<b>Tents</b>	<b>Total</b>
Sango Campsite	<b>100 (estimate)</b>	<b>100 (estimate)</b>	<b>221 units on official sites (approx. 442 people)</b>
Balnakeil Stop Over	<b>6</b>	<b>0</b>	
Smoo Stop Over	<b>15</b>	<b>0</b>	
Kyle of Durness Roadside	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>179 units on informal sites (approx. 358 people)</b>
Keoldale Green	<b>15</b>	<b>10</b>	
Keoldale Ferry	<b>5</b>	<b>0</b>	
Balnakeil Car Park	<b>30</b>	<b>5</b>	
Sango/Sangomore	<b>10</b>	<b>5</b>	
Smoo Cave Roadside	<b>5</b>	<b>2</b>	
Ceannabeinne	<b>15</b>	<b>50</b>	
Loch Eribol West Roadside	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	
<b>Total</b>	<b>219</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>400 units (approx. 800 people)</b>

Throughout July and August official sites remained fully booked with a near equal number of campers and motorhomes staying overnight at unofficial beach locations and car parks. Many weeks through July and August presented high numbers at all official and informal sites throughout each week. The above data example of one busy night in peak months of July and August can be projected to suggest total numbers of motorhomes and tents at all commercial and informal free sites in July and August. Multiplying the above example by 60 days calculates 13,140 motorhomes and 10,860 tents staying overnight in Durness on all sites in July and August.

All visitors are vehicle-based tourists. In addition to the high numbers of overnight motorhome and camping tourists, all other NC500 tourists drive through Durness on their journey, adding to congestion while all visitors have to drive to all village locations.

This example of data projections reflecting the total numbers of motorhome and camping overnight visitors illustrates the pressures on local facilities such as toilets and car parks while also evidencing the need for improved paths and attractions to improve the visitors experience and provide greater opportunities to stay longer and spend more.

Throughout the high season there have been between 100 to 300 people each night wild camping/motorhoming in the wider Durness village area without direct access to toilets, water or waste disposal, creating additional pressures on local facilities.

For example, on Tuesday 29th July the Sango Sands campsite had been full all week and the unofficial locations filled up quickly on Monday and Tuesday evenings. Many tourists were quite stressed later in the evening trying to find somewhere to stay. Car parks were all full of cars and motorhomes by the late evening. The free locations had the following tents and vans on Tuesday 29th:

- Keoldale 14 vans 6 tents
- Kyle of Durness 9 vans 3 tents
- Sango car park 10 vans
- Balnakeil 21 vans 1 tent
- Ceannabeinne 11 vans 19 tents
- Smoo Caves 6 vans
- Total 71 vans 29 tents

Presuming 2 people per unit, that is a total of 200 people staying overnight in the Durness area but not on official campsites, around 1,000 people over the full week with many more in the surrounding area. When calculated to represent the full month, the Geopark reported that this represented 20% of all visitors to the Geopark in July staying informally overnight in and around Durness. Adding overnight stays in the Durness campsites and traditional accommodation would be 40% of all visitors to the entire Geopark in July staying overnight in Durness. The large campsite and significant availability of free overnight space in and around the village has led Durness to be the tourist hub of the area. These figures were typical throughout the peak season and often much higher mid-week.

### Smoo Cave Path Counter Data

Smoo Cave path data provided by Highland Council is an indicator of daytime visitor numbers using popular facilities in Durness

Year	Count	User Numbers
2019		85,639
2020		
2021		80,000+ (Counter failed mid-season)

Smoo Cave is one of the most visited tourist attractions in the north west. Its visitor numbers have continually grown since the creation of the NC500 holiday concept. The Geopark report that the current data shows that over a third of all visitors to the Geopark stop at Smoo Cave, compared to just 10% at Knockan Crag, it's next most popular venue. It is the most popular attraction in the Geopark.

However, the above data only reflects the visitors who pass the counter on the path down to the cave, which does not fully reflect the full range and volume of visitors. Many visitors use the car park and toilets but do not descend the path to the caves so the pressures on the road, parking and toilets are higher than the visitor data reflects.

The Geopark Ranger, Fraser Gibb, collected data on daytime parking and visitor numbers at all Durness sites and published in the report Education and Employment-Encouraging Slow Tourism in the North West Highlands Geopark. The data confirmed high numbers of vehicles from 10am to 5pm in all car parks and parking overspill onto grass verges.

### Visitor Impacts Summary

Economic Growth	A steep increase in tourism growth has generated income following the Covid lockdowns but it has been difficult to find staff to develop hospitality enterprises. The data confirms the unprecedented growth of visitor numbers in Durness and its increasing status as the principal visitor hub and destination of the North West.
Extended Season	The season has extended to run from May to October with higher numbers, but most enterprises closed in October until next Easter. The data shows higher than previous visitor numbers in the spring and early autumn months indicating season growth and unprecedented numbers at peak times.
Civic behaviour	An absence of civic boundaries and enforcement combined with competition for space at peak times led to some irresponsible behaviour. The data shows that campsite capacity was outweighed 100% by demand at peak times causing visitors to compete for space for informal camping, without access to facilities, in often stressful situations. Pressure for space led some visitors to overnight in inappropriate locations, park inconsiderately and toilet by the roadside.
Congestion	Road and parking congestion had a negative impact on visitors and local people trying to access attractions and facilities. The data illustrates the high number of motorhomes and cars staying overnight in Durness. High numbers also pass through on route to other locations during the day with congestion at all village sites and pedestrians walking in the carriageway due to few paths.
Economic undermining	The free overnight parking in council car parks often undermined nearby commercial sites by providing a free alternative. The data suggests that the availability of free parking overnight denied income to the local economy via camping fees.
Ecological Damage	Trampling and disturbance of wildlife occurred at a number of village SSSI sites due to high numbers of daytime visitors and overnight campers. The data confirms the human presence in high numbers of campers and visitors constantly for 4 months with little opportunity for habitats to recover.
Night-time disturbance	Informal campers and motorhomes caused disturbance to nearby residents and hotel guests when staying overnight for free in council car parks. Data at sites such as Balnakeil and Sango confirms the constant nightly presence of motorhomes and encampments causing ongoing disturbance.
Agricultural Displacement	Grazing animals have been displaced off machair landscapes by high numbers of daytime visitors and overnight campers. The data confirms some sites have constant day and night human presence displacing grazing animals off those locations.

# Action Plan

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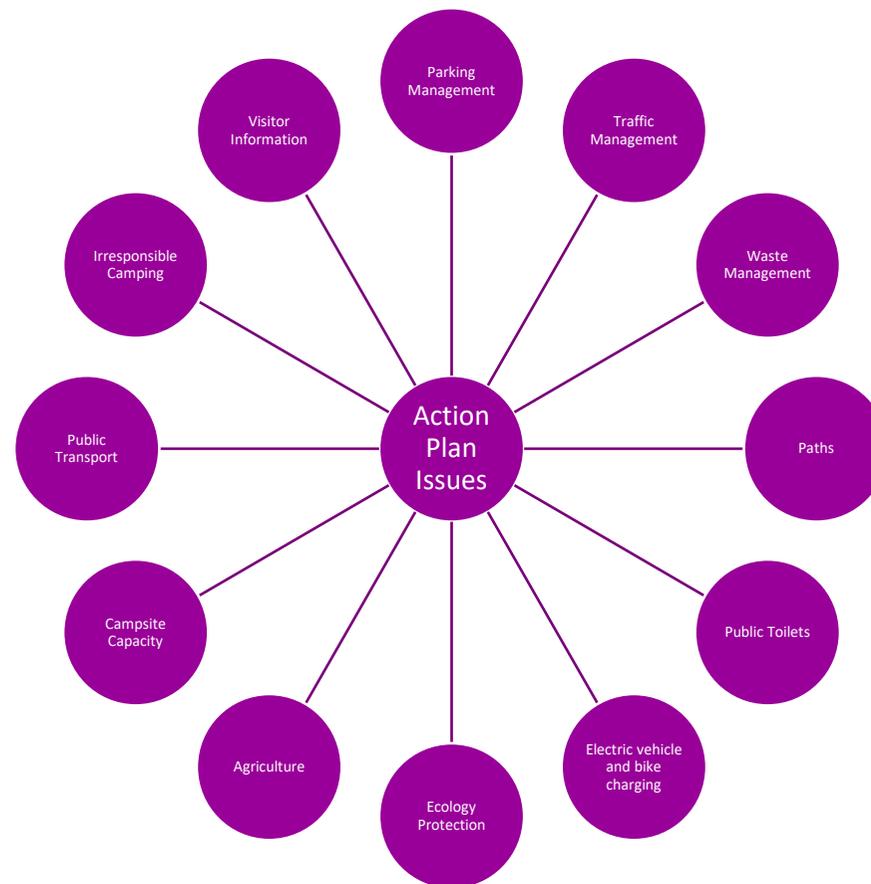
## Durness Area Plan

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For the purposes of the **Location Action Plan**, Durness will be looked at as a single location, as well as separated into five distinct areas, enabling a more focused analysis of key visitor challenges in each area alongside discreet action plan proposals to mitigate visitor impacts for the community and the natural environment of the wider Durness area.

The areas are:

1. **Balnakeil**
2. **Sango**
3. **Smoo Cave**
4. **Ceannabeinne**
5. **Keodale and Kyle of Durness**



## Action Plan

### Durness Area

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions & Outcomes	Stakeholders involved
Joined-up Destination Management to curate the visitor experience and mitigate negative tourism impacts on community.	<p>The Durness Community Group do not have a development officer although may have had one in the past. A range of Durness stakeholders are currently working unilaterally without a coordinated strategy to market and manage Durness as a tourism destination. The coordination role is currently addressed by voluntary actions of community members. A paid officer could co-ordinate and deliver actions more effectively. The community feels disenfranchised from the tourism planning process while tourism is the most current influence on community socio economic development and quality of life.</p> <p>Unilateral actions by stakeholders often displaces problems to neighbouring locations.</p> <p>What is the tourist carrying capacity of the village? How many tourists can the community and environment cope with? What is the future ambition for tourist numbers and tourist types?</p>	<p><b>Appoint a Durness Development Officer.</b> The Development Officer can work on short-term to long-term improvements identified in the Location Action Plan. The Community express a wish to regain control of the tourism increases and require an employed person to lead those initiatives. Durness, Scourie and Kinlochbervie are looking to create a role to serve their combined areas for projects, fundraising and tourism management.</p> <p>Creating a Durness Tourism and Community Development strategy will help design a marketable brand identity, bring about suitable facilities, maximise economic benefit to the community and enhance and protect the local way of life.</p> <p><b>Destination Management Forum.</b> Stakeholders meeting to provide communication and inclusion over issues such as car park management, tourism data, etc. will coordinate stakeholder activity and ensure the community are not disenfranchised.</p>	
Visitor Information,	Visitor information is provided by a range of official and casual sources that advertise and	Create advice specific to each location such as the maximum number of tents at Ceannabeinne, or locations not to have a fire. The information can	

<p>Guidance and Advice</p>	<p>mention Durness specifically and other features of the location.</p> <p>These websites, pages and promotional materials often do not carry messaging to inform visitors of appropriate places to camp or park overnight motorhome if official sites are unavailable.</p> <p>Overall messaging on the common application of SOAC although some local adaptation may be necessary. Rules and laws for overnight motorhome parking are largely unclear and open to misinterpretation so better definition and communication of those rules is needed in visitor information for specific sites.</p>	<p>be advertised via visitor information on-line and sign posted at the sites. Specifically stating what is appropriate at each location removes the random responsibility of visitors trying to interpret the SOAC or Highways Act for themselves. Visitors need this information in their pre-trip planning time. This can be explored in more detail by a <i>Destination Management Forum</i>. In Summer 2021, the Geopark created an online interactive map with information of parking spaces at each location to help visitors make better informed decisions.</p>	
<p>Traffic Management</p>	<p>Durness has few traffic management measures in place relevant to the new volumes of vehicles.</p> <p>There are areas of dual and single-track road interconnecting the village which creates congestion. There are few advisory signs to inform drivers of road changes.</p> <p>Drivers can't find toilets and car parks. More driver's information signs are needed to guide drivers to available facilities.</p>	<p>Undertake a roads review to identify dangers and measures that can be implemented across the village and approach roads.</p> <p>Clear signage and road markings are needed to ensure vehicles are fully informed of the need to slow down and be prepared to give way. They don't know the road is about to narrow.</p> <p>Approach roads have limited phone signal so visitors arriving in need of facilities need driver's signs to direct them to the car parks and toilets across the various village sites.</p>	<p>Highland Council Roads Department</p> <p>Highland Council Roads department</p> <p>Highland Council Roads Department Venture North Geopark</p>

	<p>Overspill verge parking causes congestion and restriction of the carriageway. There are not enough restrictions such as double yellow lines.</p> <p>Road speeds are too high, for example, 40mph in the Smoo Caves area despite congestion and pedestrians walking in the road. Speed control measures have not been reconsidered to reflect current traffic levels.</p> <p>Lorries becoming stuck at Sangomore. Sat Nav leads vehicles onto the Sangomore single-track route through the village causing them to become stuck on the hill.</p> <p>Not enough passing places on village single track roads increasing congestion at each end of the single track and slowing overall movement around the village.</p> <p>Peak season road congestion impacts on travel times and impedes public transport, mountain rescue, emergency and care worker vehicles, making it difficult to maintain essential services. Congested single track roads 20 miles either side of the village impact on all travel times.</p>	<p>The status of some road areas requires reconsideration to bring about management measures needed to reflect the summer traffic challenges, such as double yellow lines, reduced speed limits, etc.</p> <p>Speed control requires a full review to manage the increased risk to drivers and pedestrians. The road has conflicted use, it is the main route for all through traffic while pedestrians have to walk in the road.</p> <p>Through traffic signs are needed to direct traffic away from the steep and narrow Sangomore road. It could also be made one way to reduce traffic flow.</p> <p>Most single-track road in the village would benefit from additional passing places to improve the flow of traffic. Passing places also need enlarging to allow motorhomes to pass one another safely.</p> <p>Some dualing of single-track sections would transform the socio-economic fortunes of the area. Increase the number of passing places and create larger passing places to accommodate motorhomes. Create more viewing stops on the approach roads so people can stop to enjoy the views instead of driving slowly to admire the scenery.</p>	<p>Highland Council Roads Department</p>
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	<p>Roadside verge car parking damage puts additional pressure on roads maintenance, increasing the long-term costs for road improvements and resurfacing. Extensive use of traffic cones has been required to prevent overspill verge parking.</p> <p>Police do not have staff available to manage traffic daily in the Durness area during the peak season. No enforcement for parking issues by Highland Council. There is an absence of advertised behaviour boundaries.</p>	<p>Install verge defences such as drystone walls, boulders, timber bollards, dig open drains that prevent overspill parking while enhancing the appearance of the village environment.</p> <p>There is an overall need to increase the number of car parking spaces available at the popular locations so visitors can park up, pee, poop, pootle around and make a purchase. The village centre, Smoo Caves, Balnakeil and Ceannabeinne all have insufficient day time parking and overspill issues. Further parking could be provided by private landowners on agricultural land during the peak season at these sites on a fee to park basis.</p> <p>A coordinated programme of management and enforcement is needed between Highland Council enforcement and Highland Police to provide a scheduled presence throughout the season. This will be essential if some measures are undertaken to begin to control camping and overnight parking.</p>	<p>Funding from 3<sup>rd</sup> Sector Sources. Highland Council Roads Department Landowners</p> <p>Highland Council Private Landowners</p> <p>Highland Council Highland Police</p>
Irresponsible camping	<p>Durness has open common grazing land within the village which is often camped on. The guidance in SOAC of 'keep well away from buildings and roads' is subjective and causes dispute. It is impossible to enforce if campers are uncooperative or in large numbers.</p>	<p>Elected officials could raise the issue with the Scottish Government. The Durness community have a right to basic civic standards to be upheld and that their village is respected by visitors. Crofting common grazing and the linear layout of crofting townships is unfamiliar to many visitors and then difficult to apply aspects of the SOAC guidance.</p>	<p>MSP Ward Councillor Access Ranger Service Police Scotland</p>

Public Transport	Difficult to use public transport within the village to help visitors move from site to site. Visitors mostly drive which adds to congestion.	A hop on hop off minibus service circulating around the village sites on a low fee or courtesy basis would allow visitors to park their vehicle and not have to drive around after initially arriving. It would help reduce congestion and enhance the visitor experience. Creating a walk and ride ethos for the village would be a good marketing feature.	Durness Bus Company or other Private enterprise
Campsite Capacity	There is insufficient campsite capacity at peak times to match current demands for tents and motorhomes. There is a narrow range of overnight types of facility.	Create small to medium campsites and motorhome stopover sites to provide more commercial capacity and provide more incomes into the community. Visitors express an interest in small interesting sites with electric hook ups that have a natural and attractive appeal with great views. Something special, more intimate and memorable. Durness has unrivalled potential to provide that at numerous locations across the village area. Private enterprise, Sheep Stock Club, a Crofters Camping Collective are all ways in which land in Durness could be commercialised for small campsites in a coordinated way.	Private Enterprise  Crofters Community Collective  Private Estates
Habitat Protection	Vegetation is impacted in some locations by foot trampling and camping pressures cause disturbance to wildlife. For example, Ceannabeinne has tents most nights from April to October putting a constant human pressure on the ecosystem.	Durness Habitat Protection Plan. Form a stakeholder group to identify the ecological impacts from tourism, highlight areas-in need of protection and implement an action plan. A working group can explore the legislation available and identify successful schemes elsewhere. Create restricted areas to protect sensitive areas. Develop paths to create corridors of movement that can be managed while easing pressure off other areas.	Nature Scot  Highlife Highland  Access Ranger

		<p>Control informal camping to reduce habitat damage.</p> <p>Eco tourism is a huge potential market so the ecology should be protected and enhanced as a location asset. A stakeholder group can explore how to develop eco-tourism in the area.</p>	
Pedestrian Access	<p>Village has only partial paths that that don't connect, it is difficult to walk between village locations without walking in the busy road. It forces visitors to drive to all locations adding to congestion. Car parks are exclusive to each location, you can't park at a less busy location and walk to the site you wish to visit. Walking is the most popular tourist activity, but it has limited provision in Durness despite being a favourable location. Access for people with disabilities is very limited.</p>	<p>Create a network of attractive pathways to connect all the village locations with a surface suitable for walking or cycling. Visitors want to be able to walk or cycle around the village to enjoy the location. It would connect facilities such as car parks and shops. It would reduce congestion and enhance both the visitor and residents experience. Paths could be extended to Laid and up hills to viewing areas to create more visitor walking experiences. Tourism path developments in Aviemore are a good example to follow and have been influential in developing a year-round destination.</p>	<p>Highland Council Outdoor Access Geopark</p>
Toilets	<p>Insufficient toilets to meet peak daytime demand and no toilets at informal camping hotspots. This has resulted in significant human waste on the ground at popular camping locations and roadside verges. A stressful experience for visitors unable to fulfil a basic human need. Visitor toilet facilities are usually supplemented by toilets at cafes, pubs and other venues (THC Comfort Scheme) but there are not many in Durness so public toilets are relied upon to a greater extent than at most tourist locations.</p>	<p>A greater number of toilets is needed at peak times across the village. Toilet facilities at the village hall and former visitor centre could be incorporated into visitor facilities to increase availability.</p> <p>Existing toilet buildings could be refurbished and extended to provide more toilet cubicles.</p> <p>Pay to use self-contained toilet units, non-gender specific, have become a popular solution in many tourist locations.</p> <p>New tourist facilities such as a Smoo Cave visitor centre would provide opportunity for new toilets.</p>	<p>Highland Council Geopark Private Enterprise</p>

	Lack of car parking at toilet sites is an interconnected issue. There are few toilets available on the approach journeys to Durness.	Balnakeil and Ceannabeinne require toilets as they have high visitor numbers.	
Informal Camping	Extensive informal camping at scenic locations and roadside encampments that does not comply with SOAC or Roads (Scotland) Act. Many campers are vehicle based with extensive heavy weight equipment. It causes an ecological impact, interrupts agricultural activity, displaces other recreation users, causes a public nuisance, creates human waste posing an environmental hazard and undermines commercial campsite businesses. It impacts the daily living conditions of the local community. At any given location, who decides who conforms with SOAC and who must move on? Who will enforce it? If camping is irresponsible or in too high numbers campers can be asked to leave but if they are un-cooperative or in high numbers, this is un-manageable. This has been proved to be the case in Durness.	Prevent overnight parking in car parks, if people can't park overnight, they won't camp at that location. Obstruct vehicle access onto verges and common grazing land so it can't be used for overnight parking and camping. Repurpose areas of verge and common grazing with tree planting, picnic areas, flower beds, etc, to discourage camping. Enclose or verge fence the area to discourage open access onto the land for camping. Enclosure of special sensitive habitat areas. Stopping informal camping will require a secure legal position to be established at each location and combined action by Highland Police, Highland Council and the landowner to enforce that legal position. Police in sufficient numbers to provide enforcement would be required all summer if campers are going to be moved on from sensitive locations. Civil disorder may occur.	MSP Ward Councillor Highland Council Access Ranger Service Police Scotland
Car Parks	Insufficient parking spaces available at peak season times. Under 200 spaces in the area. Parking is also important for touring visitors to stop to use toilets. Car parks are used most nights for free overnight parking of motorhomes and cars of nearby campers, undermining nearby campsite businesses.	The management of car parks is fundamental to the management of visitors as most are vehicle tourists. It is fundamental to managing the negative impact of campers and motorhomes. Parking capacity at Smoo Cave, Ceannabeinne, Balnakeil, and the village centre require increasing.	

	<p>Car parks are in poor physical condition. There are no stated rules and no enforcement. Parking by cars, motorbikes and motorhomes is disorganised and visitors essentially park as they wish. Parking overflows onto nearby verges. Visitors can't stop to use facilities and spend money due to lack of space.</p> <p>(Many parking areas are poorly defined or un-marked, so it is difficult to state the exact parking carrying capacity in the village. Some long-term parking overspill has become normalised. A full review of parking carrying capacity in the village is required. 150 to 200 spaces is a reasonable estimate of all official and accepted overspill .)</p>	<p>Alternative parking could be provided on private land as a fee charging enterprise.</p> <p>Many car parks are unsurfaced, poorly defined and have evolved from casual parking use so an audit of car parks and proposals to design and upgrade them to better manage the user groups of cars and motorhomes is now needed.</p> <p>Plans to explore more parking at Smoo cave are underway. If tourism growth continues more car parks will be needed to accommodate a growing number of visitor vehicles and coaches. The growth of Inverness will also bring more day trippers and direct visitors as well as the NC500 increases. Foreign visitors are also to return and add to demand. The location will never be popular via public transport so the demand for vehicle facilities and road pressures will be disproportionately high and increase.</p>	
Agriculture	<p>Land at popular camping locations has been informally taken from agricultural use without consultation or agreement. High volumes of campers have displaced grazing livestock from common grazing and interrupted the crofting activity that maintains machair grass land ecology.</p>	<p>Land could be re-enclosed and grazed to remove the land from being available for camping. Locations such as Ceannabeinne had been enclosed in the past.</p> <p>Or informal camping could be stopped on sensitive sites such as machair and dunes.</p>	

Google Maps and Apps	Incorrect drop pins, information and missing details about the area. This is confusing for visitors and causes disruption, often validating visitors to camp or motorhome in inappropriate locations. Many overnight motorhome parking apps carry incorrect advice that leads visitors to plan free overnight stays in scenic car parks and roadsides. Online and social media information is often given as the reason visitors are parking or camping in an unsuitable location.	The <b>Destination Management Officer</b> for Durness could be tasked to monitor and manage third party online information about camping, overnight parking and access to facilities. They can then edit, omit and change information on Google Maps – correcting any additions as they arise and contact parking App companies to correct their information. Visitors can make better planning decisions if they have accurate information.	
Social Media Influencing	Social media has a significant influence on visitor's expectations, plans, decisions and behaviours, often in an unhelpful way. It often unintentionally promotes inappropriate places to camp or park overnight through visitors posts and photos. It legitimises campfires, camping and parking at unsuitable locations and inadvertently encourages others to do the same.	A Development Officer role could monitor this social media to identify problems and post regular information to inform and influence visitors expectations and behaviours. A positive social media presence can be a very effective way to nudge visitors towards making good choices. There is a continuous online conversation about Durness in social media groups, but Durness is not representing itself in that conversation to influence it positively. Durness needs to join the discussion and gain from the free marketing.	
Tourist Information Point / Tourist Advice	There is no tourist information point. Durness is near the midway point on many visitors 7-12 day round trip from the south. It is one of the most remote and uninhabited locations in the UK. It is noted as having the least access to facilities and services in the UK. It is over a 2 hour drive from the nearest town facilities. All NC500 visitors are furthest from information and support services here.	Access Ranger and <b>Development officer</b> could have a base of operations if desired. Or all tourism information becomes 'virtual' through interpretation points, signs and QR codes.	

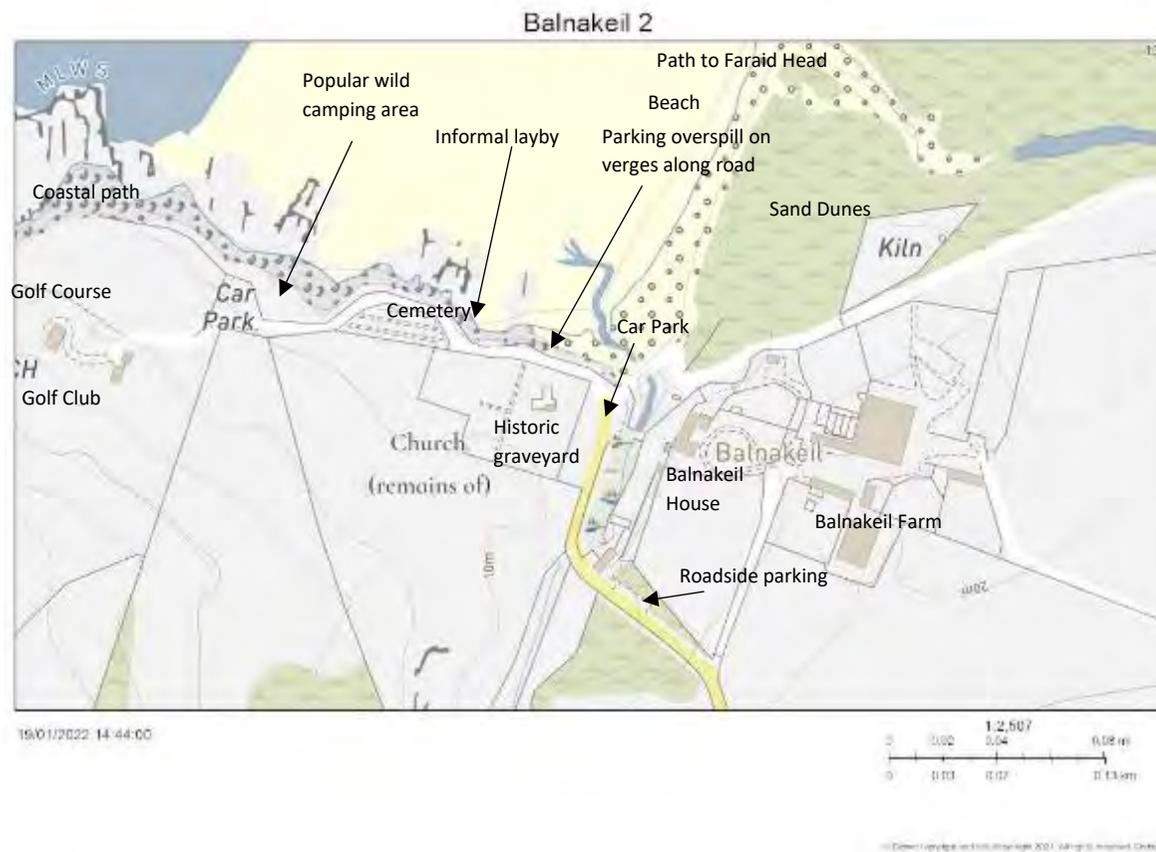
	<p>Durness is a location where visitors are likely to be in most need of assistance at a time of being furthest from it.</p> <p>There is no emergency first aid point, in person advice or opportunity for visitor engagement.</p> <p>No highly publicised single point of contact as a starting point for anyone's enquiries about Durness.</p>	<p>Having an information point and continued interaction with the public at the Sango Car Park would be useful, especially in relation to outdoor safety, first aid support and visitor engagement about responsible access in the area. A hub for tourist service providers and visitors, a base for police, rangers, a one-stop interface point.</p> <p>The Durness location website could be developed and managed from here with updates to manage social media post to inform tourists when sites are full and unofficial sites are under too much pressure.</p> <p>It could also act as a satellite base for police officers patrolling the area and support them to be in the area for extended periods. It would act as a base to promote communication and teamwork between the various workers providing the tourist support services.</p> <p>It can be promoted as a first point of contact via the internet or in person for up to date information and assistance.</p>	
Short Tourism Season	<p>The short season supports only short contract employment and discourages inward investment due the low financial return. Few sites are open in the off season which encourages more summer visitors within a short period, adding to congestion and competition for space.</p>	<p>Encourage a longer season and develop a winter touring product to encourage visitors in the winter season and help facilities remain open. This may help spread out visitor numbers and reduce the very high numbers in July and August.</p>	<p>Tourism Department Visit Scotland Venture North</p>

	It can be difficult for visitors to spend money when venues are oversubscribed.		
Motorhome Waste Disposal	Passing motorhomes rely on the Sango Campsite to empty out their foul waste or dispose of it in the countryside causing pollution and health hazards.	A motorhome waste disposal and replenishment unit is required to allow motorhome tourists to dispose of their waste responsibly. A facility with large bins is also required as motorhomes accumulate large bags of waste while on multi night stays in the North West corner and cannot store it in their vehicle. Coin operated units are used in Europe to avoid staff costs. A car park such as Sango or the Council Depot could be suitable venues.	Waste Management

## Balnakeil Location

The Balnakeil area is of outstanding nature conservation interest for its outcrops of Durness limestone and associated plant communities. Most of the surrounding area is a Special Area of Conservation under the EU Habitats Directive, which continues post- Brexit. There are a number of SSSI sites and the land is farmed in cooperation with NatureScot and RSPB to protect rare species. The machair grassland to the south of Balnakeil is home to Durness Golf Course. A core path follows the coastline southwards to Keodale.

The area is a popular tourist beach and the car parks and road areas are often full at peak times. The recent popularity of wild camping and motorhome touring has also seen the parking areas and grass used for overnight motorhome parking and camping.



The Balnakeil beach area is a very popular daytime location with visitors attracted to the safe swimming beach, coastal path walks, golf course and sand dunes. The site is also a cemetery car park so there is also a need for car parking to be available for visitors attending graves. During the day at peak times, the car park is full and overflows onto roadside verges and grass in front of the historic graveyard.

At night, the car parks fill up again with motorhomes parking overnight and the cars of wild campers who camp on the grass verges in front of the historic graveyard and grass spaces in front of the cemetery. Up to 30 motorhomes park overnight in the car park. Many create encampments with awnings, bbq's and washing lines. This overnight parking undermines the nearby camping and caravan facilities. The local population are upset that their graveyard location is now overwhelmed by recreation users day and night.

## Area 1: Balnakeil

Challenge	Description	Suggested Actions	Stakeholders involved
Parking Management	<p>Parking areas are full and overflowing onto grass verges at peak times. Many visitors cannot park and drive on. Local people unable to park to attend the cemetery due to competition for space. The roadside parking at the historic graveyard is unsurfaced and too small. The west parking area is needed for turning but often full of vehicles. It has no marked parking spaces. The parking area is used as an unofficial campsite and motorhome stop over every night during the summer with up to 30 motorhomes parking overnight. Encampments form on grass verges and nearby land. Gatherings and BBQ's are held near the cemetery, causing disturbance for Balnakeil House and the local community. Many motorhomes stay multiple nights. Overall capacity is too low, this is further impacted by overnight staying vehicles impeding other users and there are no measures to design and manage the parking activities.</p>	<p>Increase and surface parking spaces along grass verge at historic graveyard.            Prevent parking overspill onto grass verges with diamond rail fence barriers.            Designate passing places and no parking with signs.            Designate west parking area for motorhomes only.            Alternative fee charging parking on adjoining field.            Design layout of parking spaces to restrict motorhome use.            Prevent overnight parking of cars and motorhomes if supported by legislation.            Continue to allow overnight parking but charge fees.            Charge fees for day time parking.            Signs on approach road to indicate if parking area is already full.</p>	
Traffic Management	<p>As a cul-de-sac road it is a location prone to congestion. The turning area in the west car park can be obstructed by parked vehicles. Parking overspill on verges reduces road space. All pedestrians must walk in the road. Large motorhomes overhang parking spaces and reduce the carriageway width.</p>	<p>Designate single lane and passing places with new signs.            Mark and sign turning area in west car park so vehicles can turn and exit the site.            Prevent parking overspill on grass verges using diamond rail barriers to maintain a safe space for pedestrians.</p>	

	The single-track approach road doesn't have enough passing places. The road surface is in poor condition.	Specific parking spaces for motorhomes so they don't park overhanging and restricting the carriageway. Additional passing places on single track approach road. Path on access road to take pedestrians out of the carriageway.	
Informal Camping	Encampments form around and within the parking area. It has been a longstanding venue. Surrounding farmland and golf course are managed by landowners to protect vulnerable species in agreement with NatureScot and RSPB. They are concerned their work is undermined by cumulative wild camping in these SSSI areas.	Restrict overnight parking to prevent wild camping. Charge fees for overnight parking to deter some campers. Car park signs stating Highland Council rules on verge camping. Restrict open spaces used for camping by installing benches, picnic tables, interpretation boards and surfaced paths. Signage and interpretation boards in surrounding habitats to discourage camping. Fence off areas of habitat to protect them from camping and other human pressures.	
Toilets	There are no toilets at this popular location where visitors often stay all day, night or multi nights. Toileting occurs around the cemetery walls and surrounding dunes and machair.	Provide permanent or seasonal mobile toilet units for visitors to the beach and cemetery. Can the golf club facilities be used and increase their commercial off sales of refreshments?	
Cemetery Access	Cemetery visitors are often unable to park due to tourist visitor vehicles. The dual-purpose parking area for the cemetery and beach is often dominated by tourist vehicles. A funeral in the summer would be difficult to facilitate due to tourist vehicles.	Create a funeral day parking management plan in cooperation with Highland Police and Council. Alternative cemetery parking in adjoining field to separate tourist and cemetery visitors.	

		Prevent day/overnight informal parking in front of the cemetery entrance gates and redesign into a pedestrian area.	
Farm and MOD Access	The overcrowded parking area at the beach access point often impedes daily used access gate for farm vehicles.	Remove parking spaces to the east of the access gate to prevent motorhomes parking and overhanging into the carriageway.	
Pedestrian Access	There is no continuous path from the village centre to Balnakeil. There is no path beyond the Craft Village. The core path from the village takes an elongated indirect route to Balnakeil. Without walking in the road, visitors have to drive to Balnakeil, adding to congestion.	Install a path alongside the carriageway to provide pedestrian access. A path alteration to the core path from the village centre to lead directly to Balnakeil along with path widening and surfacing.	
Core Paths	Paths have few signs and wider trampling of habitats occurs into many SSSI sites causing ecological damage.	Install more direction signs and white post markers to encourage people to keep to the paths and reduce habitat trampling. Provide info signs in co-operation with RSPB, NatureScot to inform and encourage walkers to help protect the habitats by keeping to paths.	



Parking overfills onto grass verges on busy days and with overnight parking.



Camping on the dunes causes ecological damage. The dunes are a SSSI site.



Signs helped discourage campers but did not provide full protection for this ecologically significant site.



Parking blocks most verges forcing pedestrians to walk in the road. Verge barriers are needed to manage parking overspill.



Motorhomes park in front of the cemetery entrance most nights. The area should be redesigned into a pedestrian verge area.



A path access gate could be installed along with picnic tables to create a recreation space and discourage campers.



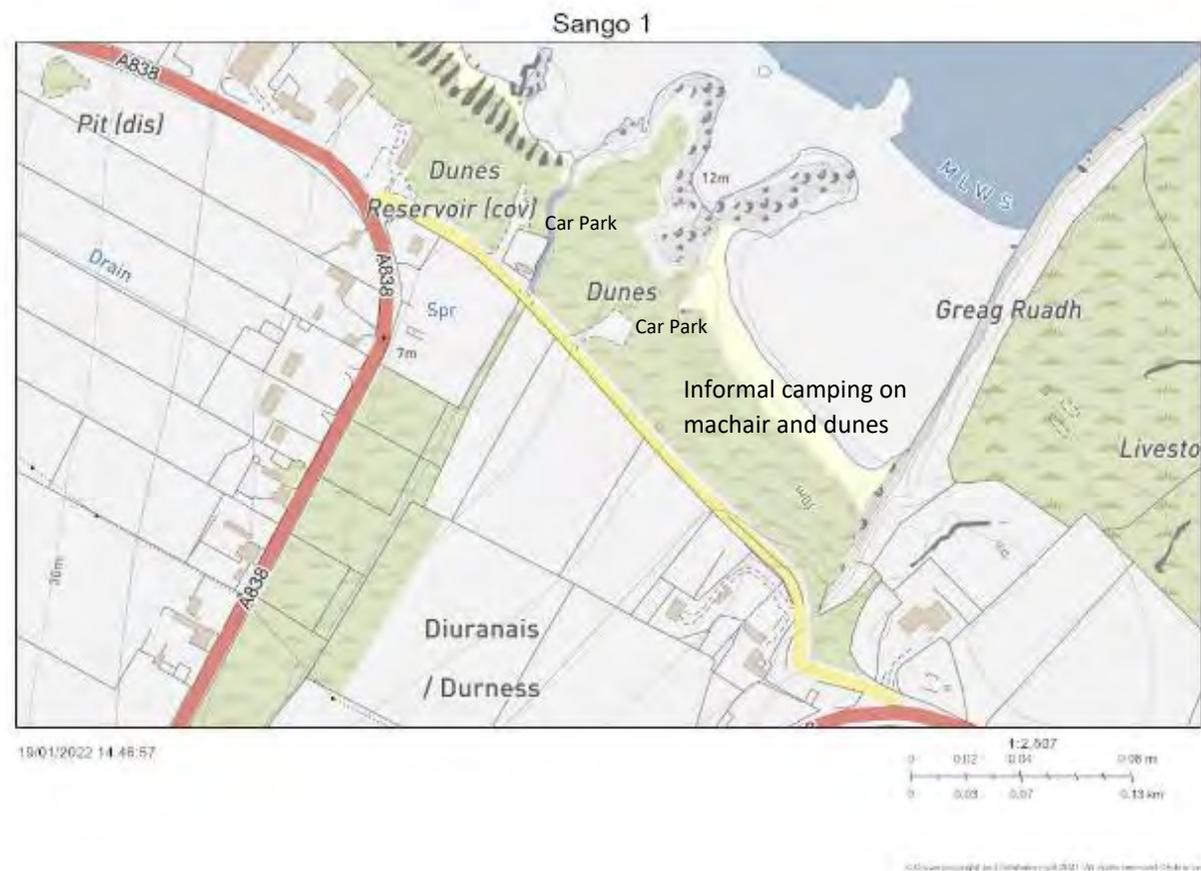
Graveyard parking areas require surfacing, spaces defined and barriers installed to prevent vehicles driving onto the grass.



Grass verges in front of the new Motorhome Stopover site need verge barriers to prevent free overnight parking undermining the business.

## Sango Location

Sangomore beach and machair grass area are a popular recreation area at the heart of the village. Unfortunately, it attracted large numbers of wild campers and motorhomes during the 2019 summer causing the local community to install wooden barriers to prevent vehicles driving onto the machair. Bales of hay were used to block the small car park to prevent vehicles parking overnight to camp on the machair and beach. Signs were installed for the 2021 season to discourage camping and campfires and the Access Ranger visited regularly to encourage campers to relocate outside the village, with mixed success, but numbers of campers were significantly reduced.



## Area 2: Sango

Challenge	Description	Suggested Action	Stakeholders involved
Parking Management	The Sango car park is popular in the day but rarely used for overnight motorhomes. The nearby Sangomore parking area and Water Site parking are unsurfaced and desired by motorhomes for overnight parking and camping on the machair and beach which causes ecology damage, human waste and disturbance to residents. Overnight parking and camping is not suitable in this beach front village centre location and undermines the nearby campsite. The main car park is too small and is full most days.	<p>Increase the size of the main car park to accommodate coaches, minibuses and motorhomes within walking distance of village facilities.</p> <p>Install diamond rail barriers to prevent parking overspill onto machair and verges.</p> <p>Charge fees for overnight parking or ban overnight parking.</p> <p>Surface Sangomore car park.</p> <p>Surface Waste Water Plant parking area.</p>	
Beach Access	There is no beach access path leading down the steep slope and onto the beach. Treacherous desire lines have been used. Such a popular beach in a premier location must have safe access onto the beach suitable to the range of visitor's needs.	Construct a new beach access path down the slope in front of the main car park that is suitable for all visitors to use.	
Informal Camping	Without daily intervention by Access Rangers, informal camping would have continued at high numbers at Sango. Signage and patrols helped reduce the volume of campers but could not prevent it fully. Camping within the village displaces other recreational users from the site and diminishes the experience of the location for other tourists.	<p>Restrict overnight parking in the three parking areas to prevent vehicle based campers.</p> <p>Remove the Sangomore car park to prevent vehicle based campers accessing the machair and beach area.</p> <p>Fence off areas of habitat to prevent camping and protect ecology.</p>	

Paths	There are no paths to connect this area and its car parks to other village sites. Pedestrians must walk on rough desire lines across the machair or walk in the road.	Define paths around the beach and machair site to specific viewing points or picnic area would help keep foot trampling to narrow corridors of movement and reduce wider trampling. A wide surfaced path crossing the site and suitable for walking and cycling would connect the area to the rest of the village and help create a village walking/cycling attraction.	
Visitor Facilities	There are no visitor facilities at Sango despite its popularity. The former visitor centre is closed so there is no access to toilets or café.	Reopen the former visitor centre as a new café/shop/info location that also provides toilets for visitors.	
Coach Parking	There is no coach parking available so some visitor groups are excluded from stopping at this popular site.	Sango has space potential to extend the car park for coaches to stop and visitors to access the beach and shops.	
Habitat damage	Camping, foot trampling and noise has a negative impact on the beach, dunes, machair and adjoining croft fields which are nesting sites for endangered species.	Fence off areas of land to protect habitats. Remove the Sangomore car parks and restore the land to machair to reduce the level of human impact, especially camping at night. Design paths to keep people away from sensitive habitats. Information boards to educate visitors about the site ecology.	



Verge barriers were installed by the community to prevent overnight parking on the machair grass.



The Sangomore car park needs surfacing and marked parking spaces. It could be removed to prevent overnight disturbance to residents.



New benches and picnic tables are needed. Most are currently broken or have been removed due to disrepair.



The former Visitor Information building would be a good shop/café venue and provide new toilet facilities.



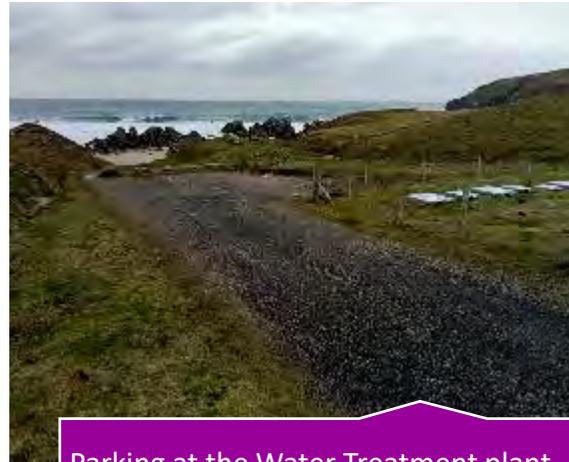
A path is needed to cross the Sango site and link the village sites together. Visitors want to walk or cycle safely around the village.



Sango needs a new beach access path. It is a very popular beach but has no safe access path.



The open machair grass and sheltered beach are highly desired by informal campers but is upsetting for residents due to- the village centre location

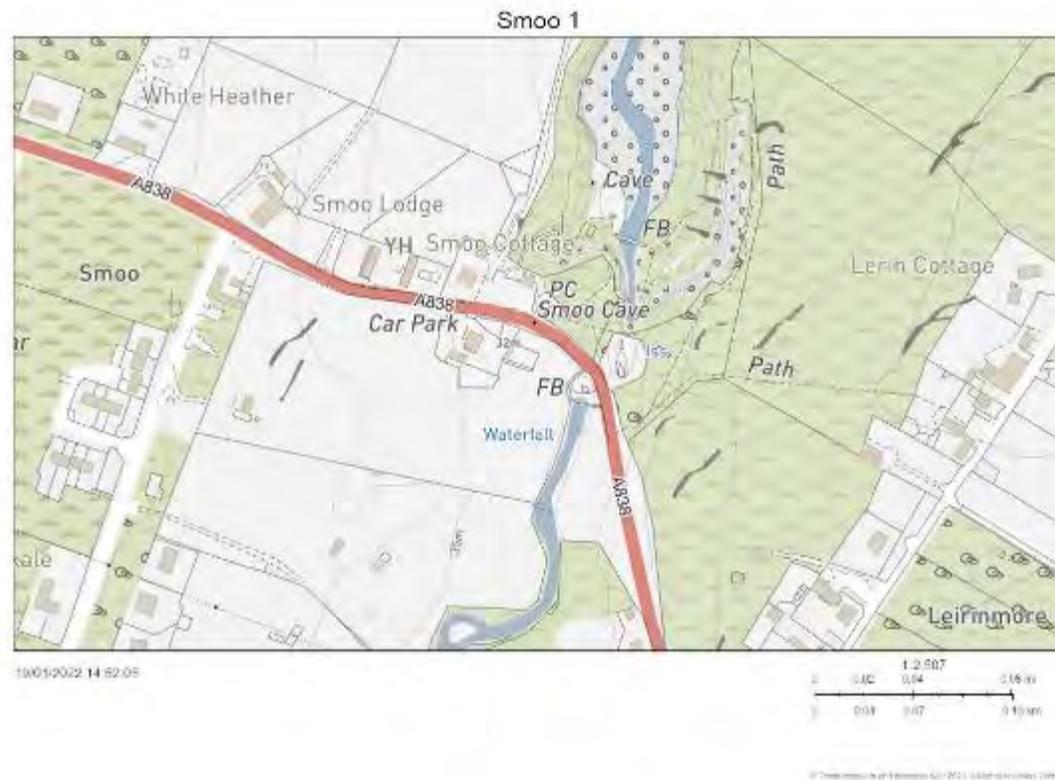


Parking at the Water Treatment plant is popular with Motorhomes but is too close to houses at night.

## Smoo Cave Location

Smoo Cave is a natural sea cave and sheltered cove located 2km to the East of Durness village centre. The cave lies beneath the main road, the A838, and is passed by all NC500 tourists. The site is a protected scheduled monument and archaeological excavations have unearthed Neolithic, Norse and Iron Age artefacts. The geological features are of world significance, the caves are a UNESCO Global Geopark site and the most visited attraction of the North West Geopark. It is the main tourist attraction in Durness, attracting over 80,000 visitors annually.

Smoo Cave is one of the most visited and congested locations in Durness and on the NC500 route. The short section of single track road congests the traffic and brings fast moving vehicles and pedestrians together in the carriageway. High visitor numbers and new nearby businesses seeking to serve the needs of visitors to Smoo Cave have created some new visitor access management challenges.



### Area 3: Smoo Cave

Challenge	Description	Suggested Action	Stakeholders involved
Traffic Management	<p>The single-track road location is a choke point with high risk of a traffic incident. Over 40,000 visitors attend the caves while further visitors stop to use the toilets. All NC500 through traffic also negotiates this congested road. Pedestrians must walk in the single-track road alongside passing vehicles. Passing places are poorly defined. The 200m single-track section has 5 private entrances. No passing Place signs and no single-track signs. The 40mph road speed is too fast for the congested conditions. A row of public refuse bins are positioned on the roadside requiring visitors to walk in the carriageway to use them.</p> <p>Extremely challenging conditions on single-track road and car parking areas.</p>	<p>Set traffic management rules and provide enforcement.</p> <p>Reduce speed limit to 20 or 30mph.</p> <p>Install traffic calming measures such as speed bumps.</p> <p>Traffic light system or priority direction control to manage traffic through the single track section.</p> <p>Install road signs to designate single track road.</p> <p>Define the passing places with signs and road markings.</p> <p>Install double yellow lines to prevent vehicles stopping in the carriageway and prevent verge parking.</p> <p>Install a pedestrian path through the single track road.</p> <p>Rural Clearway &amp; No Stopping Signs with Parking Enforcement Officer visits.</p>	
Parking Management	<p>All parking areas full all day at peak times. Parking overflows onto nearby road verges and residential areas. Many visitors are unable to stop to use toilets or visit the caves. There are no coach, minibus or motorbike parking areas.</p>	<p>Increase parking capacity with a new car park on the east approach road with space for coaches.</p> <p>Install double yellow lines and verge barriers to prevent roadside parking.</p>	

	<p>Parking spaces are too small to accommodate the volume of motorhomes. The parking surface is worn, and white lines eroded. There are no signs or management in place. The capacity does not reflect the number of visitors to the site plus the number of passing tourists stopping to use the toilet.</p>	<p>Incorporate use of the Village Hall car park to provide overflow capacity. Install a path to connect the sites. Investigate further parking capacity on nearby headland.</p>	
Toilets	<p>Toilets are too small. There are not enough cubicles to match the needs of such high visitor numbers. The toilets are kept very clean, but the fabric of the building and facilities require updating. There is no sign on the building to state it is a toilet. Lack of toilet capacity has led to human toileting on nearby grass verges and common grazing land.</p>	<p>New toilets with increased capacity to reflect the number of visitors to the site and passing visitors who stop just to use the toilet.</p>	
Pedestrian Access	<p>Can't walk to caves site from other village locations without walking in the road so most visitors must drive to the site adding to road and parking congestion.</p>	<p>Install roadside footway or paths to connect the site to the Village Hall and Smoo hotel facilities so visitors can park at alternative locations and walk to the caves entrance.</p>	

<p>Information and refreshments</p>	<p>There is no opportunity to purchase gifts or refreshments at the site or take shelter in poor weather. Information is only provided via an information board and some interpretation boards. Visitors must walk down into the caves to find a representative for the underground tours. There is no site sign designating the Caves. There is no brand identity, marketing materials, or in person visitor engagement. If the weather is poor and the underground tours are suspended, there is little access to information and a poor visitor experience. There are few opportunities to gain income from visitors towards the upkeep of the site.</p>	<p>A visitor centre is required on site to provide a visitor interface and engagement, including a gift shop, cafe and information displays about the caves and local heritage. This would allow visitors to make bookings, spend money and create local jobs. It would commercialise the site and make it an all-weather, all year venue.</p>	
<p>Paths</p>	<p>Paths down the gorge have lost their compacted grit surface layer exposing larger rocks and increasing the height of steps. Some timber handrails show signs of decay and require replacements.</p> <p>Desire line informal paths have formed in some places above the caves which are treacherous. Access for disabled people or families with pushchairs is very limited.</p> <p>Paths within the cave are limited so restrict the experience of people less confident to move on broken ground. Access is not family or older person friendly. If you can't get down to the cave the site is just a car park and toilet with some interpretation boards.</p>	<p>Resurface all the main paths that have experienced erosion.</p> <p>Improve the desire line paths into formal paths with steps and compacted gravel surfaces.</p> <p>Install timber walkways within the cave to provide a safe accessible walking surface and restrict casual walking around the cave.</p>	

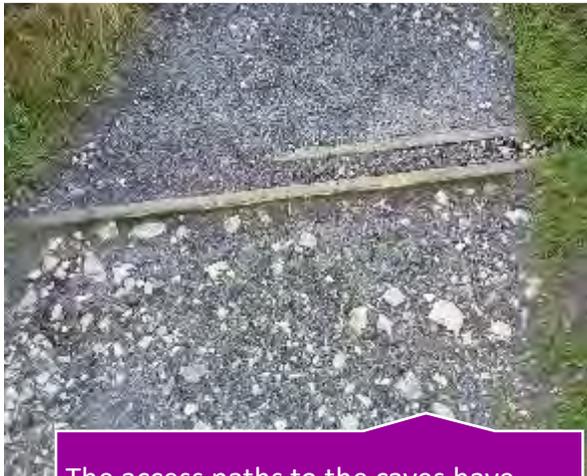
Overnighting Motorhomes	The main car park has a 'No Overnight Parking' sign. Overnight parking of motorhomes still occurs. The overflow roadside parking area has expanded onto common grazing land and is used most nights by motorhomes and sometimes tents creating roadside encampments with fires.	Fence off the common grazing area being used for overnight parking and camping. Ban overnight parking in the car park to ensure the spaces are free for all to use at all times.	
Site Promotion and commercialisation	The site is not properly commercialised to create jobs and incomes to support the site running costs and development. There is limited opportunity to purchase gifts, refreshments, books, etc that promote the caves and generate income. The visitors have nowhere to spend their money.	A plan to commercialise the site is required with a business and marketing strategy. The website can be improved to better reflect the world class heritage status of the venue. Promotion of the venue via social media. Advertising and promotional events. The site has enormous growth potential.	
Accessibility	Many visitors only experience the car park! The paths beyond the car park and down into the gorge are too difficult under foot for many visitors such as young families, older visitors and people with disabilities. The paths into the caves are difficult for many visitors.	A funicular railway could provide access for all visitors down to the caves. An integrated timber walkway into the caves would provide access for all visitors to fully enjoy the caves. These facilities would be attractions themselves and help to make the caves into an all-weather, all year attraction.	



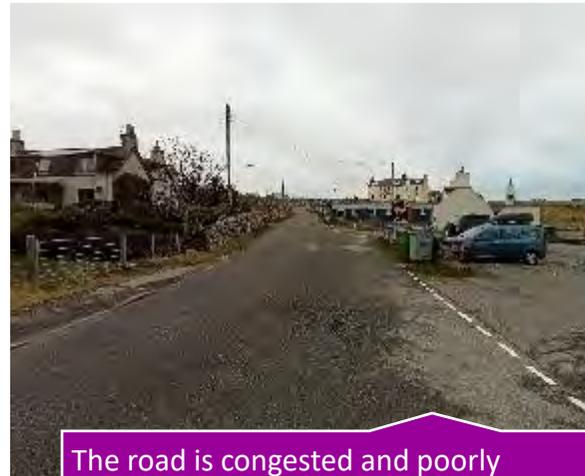
The Smoo toilet building and car park needs upgrading and carrying capacity increasing.



The new nearby Smoo Stopover site and snack van provides parking but visitors have to walk in the road to reach the caves.



The access paths to the caves have experienced erosion and require surface repairs and renewal.



The road is congested and poorly defined. The single-track section has no footpath. Vehicles arriving at speed share the carriage with pedestrians.



A path is needed from the Village Hall. Visitors to Smoo Caves who park at the Village Hall have to walk along the grass verge.



Desire line paths above the caves require formal construction to make them safe for all users or obstructed from use.



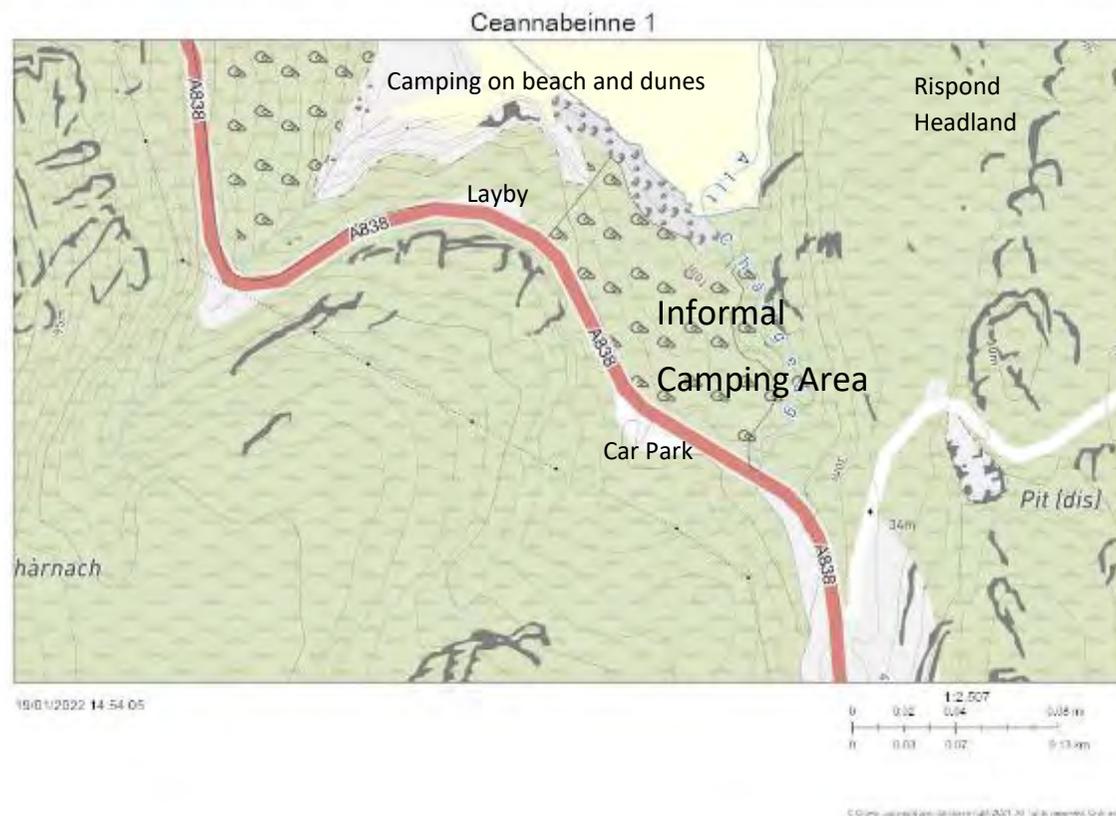
Informal parking and overnight motorhome parking overspill into this area often with encampments and roadside campfires.



The access path is steep and challenging for many visitors. A solution such as an incline lift would provide access for all.

## Ceannabeinne Location

The Ceannabeinne beach site is famous for its machair grass below the road that leads to the east side of the white sand beach via the core path from the main car park. Some steep unofficial paths lead from the roadside layby to the sand dunes at the west side of the main beach. On its east side, the beach is sheltered by the Rispond headland. Only the east side of the beach is easily accessible via the core path. Ceannabeinne is a popular location with local residents for beach walks, dog walking, picnics and swimming. The beach is popular with tourists staying in the various Durness accommodations. Driving tourists enjoy stopping here for a break and to enjoy the scenery while touring the NC500. During the day the site attracts many visitors to the Eagle Zipline attraction along with swimmers, surfers, rockclimbers, nature enthusiasts and sightseers. At night the site is popular with wild campers and motorhomes and is busy most days and nights from May to October. The duration of visitor stays range from 1 hour to 1 week. Visitor numbers would be comparable with the Smoo Caves site, upwards of 80,000 visitors annually.



## Area 4: Ceannabeinne

Challenge	Description	Suggested Action	Stakeholders involved
Informal Camping	<p>Ceannabeinne is a world renown site of scenic beauty, dune &amp; machair habitat and geology but is dominated by large numbers of vehicle based informal campers throughout the summer. The location has become a famous free camping location through social media. Each night from June to September the machair, dunes and beach host between 10 and 70 tents. Stays of up to a week are common. From May to October, between 8,000 to 15,000 people stayed overnight at Ceannabeinne. Peak season nights often experienced up to 20 motorhomes and 70 tents with Monday through to Thursday being the busiest. This free camping ethos undermines local campsites, displaces other recreational users, damages ecology, displaces crofting activity and is a detriment to the beauty of the site and the experience of other tourists.</p> <p>Most nights there were 10+ fires on the ground, in metal fire pits and BBQ's, estimating 1,000+ fires in some form from May to September.</p> <p>Despite the very high visitor numbers and the site in constant occupancy day and night all summer, there was minimal damage or litter. Therefore, it can be viewed that most visitors were considerate and responsible.</p>	<p>If camping cannot be restricted via legislation:</p> <p>Med term: Encourage camping to only take place on the land above the road instead of the machair and dunes.</p> <p>Create attractive camping spaces above the road and install signs asking people not to camp in the machair and dunes.</p> <p>Med to long term: Install permanent or seasonal mobile toilets for use by campers.</p> <p>Short term: Install geology and ecology interpretation boards to inform campers why the area needs protection.</p> <p>Short term: Warden to interface with visitors and encourage camping above the road.</p> <p>Social media campaign to promote camping above the road and explain why.</p> <p>Short term: Fence off some dune and machair areas to protect the habitat from camping and trampling.</p> <p>Promote use of fire pits only, to protect the ground from fire mark damage.</p>	<p>Access Ranger Service</p> <p>Geopark Ranger</p> <p>Police Scotland</p> <p>Durness Estate</p>

<p>Parking Management</p>	<p>The site is very popular all day as a quick scenic stop for passing touring visitors, beach visitors, surfers, geology and wildlife enthusiasts. Car parks remain full all day at peak times with constant vehicles arriving and departing. Daytime parking overflows onto verges and passing places. Many parking spaces are blocked all day by vehicles of visitors camping on the machair and dunes. The parking capacity is too low to support the volume of vehicles at peak times and range of site users.</p> <p>In the early evening the parking areas all refill with the vehicles of campers and motorhomes which remain until the next day. All other visitors cannot park to visit the beach, so a facility open to all is lost to campers. The popular Zipline attraction has only a small car park on the Rispond Headland that doesn't provide capacity to match its visitor numbers so adds parking pressure to the verge and public car park.</p>	<p>Increase parking capacity by extending the car park to the edge of the burn to the east or find a site for an additional car park.</p> <p>Surface the large layby and mark with parking bays.</p> <p>A full review of parking needs and provision is required.</p> <p>The Zipline attraction is exploring the possibility of increasing the size of its car park.</p>	
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<p>Traffic Management</p>	<p>Road congestion combined with badly parked vehicles, narrow roads, vehicles arriving at speed while others try to manoeuvre into difficult parking spaces all creates a confused and disorganised road situation that presents a heightened road incident risk. The road changes from single to double track in several places without warning.</p>	<p>A full review of traffic and pedestrian safety is required at this site.</p> <p>Traffic calming measures.</p> <p>Reduced speed zone.</p> <p>Single track signage.</p>	
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Toilets	Toileting is a significant problem above the car park caused by daytime and overnight visitors. Regular toileting also occurs alongside the burn, in the beach caves and sand dunes. There are no toilets on site. The nearest are 2 miles away.	Install permanent or seasonal mobile toilets that reflect the needs of the high numbers of daily visitors stopping at the site.	
Habitat Damage	Constant use by tents impacts the machair and dunes ecology with trampling and human disturbance continually from May to October. Fire pits burn holes in the machair. The grazing sheep are displaced by human presence which interrupts the machair management process.	Displacing wild camping off the dunes and machair is needed to stop the ecological damage occurring. Fence off some areas of habitat to protect them from trampling. Encourage the use of paths to avoid trampling.	
Paths	The core path from the road to the beach is eroded and requires repair and improvement with handrails. There is no path connecting the site to the village, so visitors must drive here, adding to congestion. There are no paths to allow visitors to walk to the zipline, so all must walk in the road. There are no paths to enable visitors to walk to the historic township site or explore the Rispond headland and interact with the scenery. There are no paths leading to high viewing points to look out to sea and along the coastline.	Renovate core beach path to provide safe access to the beach. Extend paths to connect with the township site and Rispond headland. Install a new path to connect each end of the zipline so visitors don't have to walk in the road or on the verge.	
Visitor Information	There are only historic interpretation boards. There are no ecology or geology interpretation boards despite the site's scientific importance. They could be incorporated with paths to create information trails. The interpretation boards are in the car park and usually hidden behind parked vehicles.	Move existing interpretation boards to the top of the machair where they can be seen. Install new interpretation boards to inform visitors about the geology and ecology.	



The car park is full day and overnight throughout the peak season. The car park supports the high numbers of informal campers.



The large layby is always full and over spilling during peak times. The layby requires surfacing and marked parking spaces.



Between 10 to 20 campfires, BBQ's or metal fire pits are common place every night throughout the whole season. Over 1,000 fires of some sort.



Human toileting is a significant problem across the full site caused by day and overnight visitors. There are no toilets at the site.



Between 10 to 70 tents occur most nights from May to the end of September causing constant pressure to the ecology.



The zipline attraction is very popular but has insufficient parking capacity to meet the needs of it's customers. A connecting path is needed



The beach access path is steep and eroded. Highland Council is appointing a contractor to renew the path.



Constant foot and tent trampling is suppressing the machair plant life. Only unused slopes retain the usual plant populations.



Ceannabeinne is popular with many recreational users including dog walkers, surfers, climbers, wildlife spotters and beach goers.



The road is often congested and challenging due to narrow sections, vehicles manoeuvring and vehicles arriving at speed.



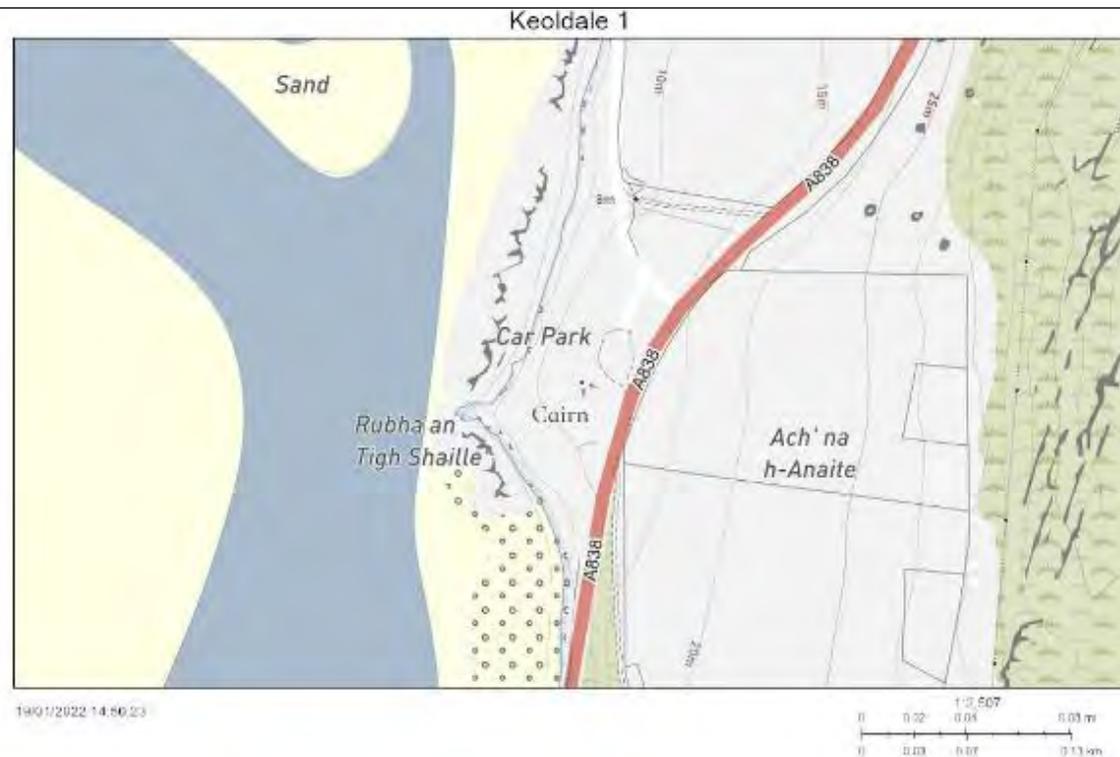
Attempts were made to repair campfire marks in the machair by regularly filling them with beach sand.



Signs were installed to encourage visitors to better manage their toileting but with limited effect.

## Keoldale and Kyle of Durness Location

Keoldale Green is a pleasant viewpoint across the Kyle of Durness estuary on the south west approach to Durness village. A Geopark display, benches and interpretation boards provide a welcome location to stop and enjoy the scenery. At night this is a popular informal overnight location for campers and motorhomes, often hosting up to 20 motorhomes and 20 tents. The landowner has begun charging for overnight parking which has reduced the sites popularity. Keoldale Jetty hosts the small ferry crossing to Cape Wrath and has 20 roadside parking spaces which are occupied by motorhome encampments most nights. The Kyle of Durness has a number of roadside common grazing grass verges that are commonly occupied by 10 to 20 motorhomes and tents forming encampments.



## Area 5: Keoldale and the Kyle of Durness

Challenge	Description	Suggested Action	Stakeholders involved
Parking Management	Keoldale Green parking area is unsurfaced so also has no marked parking spaces. Vehicles drive onto the grass and form overnight encampments. At times it hosted up to 17 motorhomes on peak nights. The landowner has begun charging for overnight parking which displaced motorhomes to other free locations. The site has Geopark display boards and interpretation panels. The site is principally a viewing point, not a campsite. Keoldale Ferry roadside parking is often taken over by motorhomes parked sideways across the marked parking spaces to enjoy the views, obstructing other users (day visitors/MOD staff/ Lighthouse staff/ Oyster Farm staff) from parking.	<p>Keoldale Green: Surface the parking area and mark with parking spaces. Install diamond rail barriers to prevent vehicles parking on the grass.</p> <p>Keoldale Ferry: Break up the row of parking spaces into smaller parking bays so motorhomes cannot park sideways across multiple bays. Most motorhomes will also not be able to park in the regular way as they are too long. Parking will be kept free for ferry users and overnight encampments discouraged.</p>	
Informal Camping	Keoldale Green was heavily used for informal camping but is now less popular after charges have been applied. Large roadside verges and areas of roadside common grazing are used most nights for vehicle-based camping. Multi vehicle encampments with fires next to the road are present most nights throughout the summer.	<p>Reducing the car parking spaces will reduce the number of campers or motorhomes that can stay overnight. Fence off part of the grass as an ecology protection zone. Plant trees to change the purpose of the land and reduce the space for camping.</p>	
Road Congestion	The long single-track road from Rhiconich to Durness is often congested. The road design cannot cope with the volume of vehicles and high proportion of motorhomes trying to pass one another.	A review of the road and opportunities to improve traffic flow is needed, with consideration of passing place size, frequency, dual lane improvements, etc.	



Keoldale is a scenic viewing area but became an unofficial campsite with up to 20 campervans and 15 tents forming encampments.



The Sheep Stock Club initiated an overnight parking fee as it was not possible to prevent overnight use.



A Geopark information stand was installed for daytime visitors. It is often used as a toilet.



Interpretation boards are provided to explain the landscape but are often obscured by tents and motorhome encampments.



The Keoldale Ferry parking area is often taken over by motorhome encampments displacing visitors wishing to park for the ferry.



The 22 spaces could be split into pairs of spaces to stop campervans fitting into them or parking sideways across the spaces as they prefer.



The site is a daytime tourist recreation area and scenic viewing site and has installations of historic and cultural and geological interest.



A number of roadside sites along the Kyle of Durness saw tents and motorhomes every night throughout the summer.

## **Additional Opportunities**

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### **Beach Cleans / Beach Cleaning Stations**

**An Turas Mor Cycle Route / Central Highland Way** – the route ends in Durness so it's popularity can bring more visitors.

**North Coast Path finishing in Durness** – Durness is a natural start/finish point with transport links to the railway in Lairg.

**West Coast Path finishing in Durness** – A new low-level beginners' route from Ullapool to Durness would be popular. The similar unmarked Cape Wrath trail route is already popular with more accomplished hill walkers. Durness is a natural start/finish with rail network daily links.

**'Outdoor Activity Capital of the North' marketing scheme** - surrounded by under-used coast and mountains, Durness has potential to become the long stay destination for visitors who hill walk, climb, sea kayak and open water swim.

**E bike charging network** – future proof a network for the growing e-bike touring market. E-bike popularity is growing rapidly among older touring cyclists. Scotland Government policy is to make Scotland a world leading cycle touring holiday destination.

**Sutherland Trail** – redevelop and publicise to provide an inland multi day walking trail and further reason for visitors to extend their stay in the area.

**Whale Watching Centre** – build centre on Smoo headland, one of best whale watching locations in UK and create an all-weather tourist attraction that promotes the exceptional marine wildlife of the area.

**Heritage Centre** – heritage museum and crofting skills centre providing skill learning activity experiences and holidays to create a further all-weather tourist attraction to help develop Durness into an all-weather, year-round destination.

**Astronomy Centre** – darkest winter skies in the UK and close to spaceport development. Could combine with a whale watching centre to utilise telescopes day and night. It would help to create a winter tourist market.

**Day Walk Paths** – Comprehensive network of walk/cycle gravel paths linking all village locations and wider viewpoints.

**Promote Cycling** – world class cycling location with huge growth potential in all forms of cycling.

**Wildlife Centre** – Durness has some of the UK's finest habitats and abundant wildlife that is rare elsewhere. Wildlife tourism could be developed to attract wildlife photographers and enthusiasts.

**Marine Tourism** – Develop a small marina in Loch Eribol to provide a safe anchorage for touring yachts and long-term anchorage for leisure boats. It would add an additional tourist group of customers to the area and provide opportunity for new businesses such as boat hire, sailing school, boat trips and various support industry businesses.

## Further Discussion

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Camping legislation change to grant better protection to village environment.

RNLI/Coastguard/Mountain Rescue provision to reflect pressures of increasing tourism.

Creating destination identity to encourage multi-night stay visitors who travel directly to Durness as their holiday base.

New tourist attractions to create all-weather and all year facilities.

Marine tourism could be developed with a safe anchorage location and improved boat access to the sea.

Current carrying capacity should be established (parking/roads/camping pitches/motorhome electric hook-up pitches, etc).

Future desired carrying capacity should be set as a target for managed and planned growth suitable for the community and environment.

Migration (how to encourage workers to the area and how to house them)

House market (important to encourage migration, need houses available to buy and rent)

## Comparators

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Aviemore – Tourist path network that has enhanced tourist walking/cycling activity.

Verona – Funicular railway providing access to a fort tourist attraction.

Cornwall – High tourist numbers in small historic coastal villages creating economic growth but conflict of user groups.

Villar (Switzerland) – A ski resort that has branded itself as an astronomy, providing telescopes, information displays and astronomy events to develop winter tourism added value for visitors.

Applecross (Bealach na Ba road) – NC500 road congestion location with similarities to Smoo Cave area issues.

GlenBrittle (Isle of Skye) – high numbers of informal campers and parking pressures similar to Durness.

Morar (Road to Isles) – high numbers of informal campers and overspill verge parking issues.

## Appendices

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### Appendix 1. List of Stakeholders

Name (alphabetical)	Role/Community Connection
Community Council (Don Campbell)	
Ward Councillor (Hugh Morrison)	
Durness Stores	
Sango Campsite (James Keith)	
Balnakeil Stopover (Martin Mackay)	
Military Estates (Cape Wrath)	
Balnakeil Estate ( Mr and Mrs Elliott)	
North West Geopark (Laura Hamlet)	
Sheep Stock Club (Eoughan Mackay)	
Durness Estate (David Boyd)	
Rispond Estate	
Wildland estate	
Craft Village	
Nature Scot	
Cape Wrath Ferry	
High Life Highland (Donald Mitchell)	
Durness Golf Club	
Smoo Cave Tours	
Durness Bus Company	
Highland Council Departments identify	
Police Scotland	
Village Hall	
Coastguard	
Mountain Rescue	
Durness Community Group	
Highlands and Islands Enterprise	
Durness Community Group	