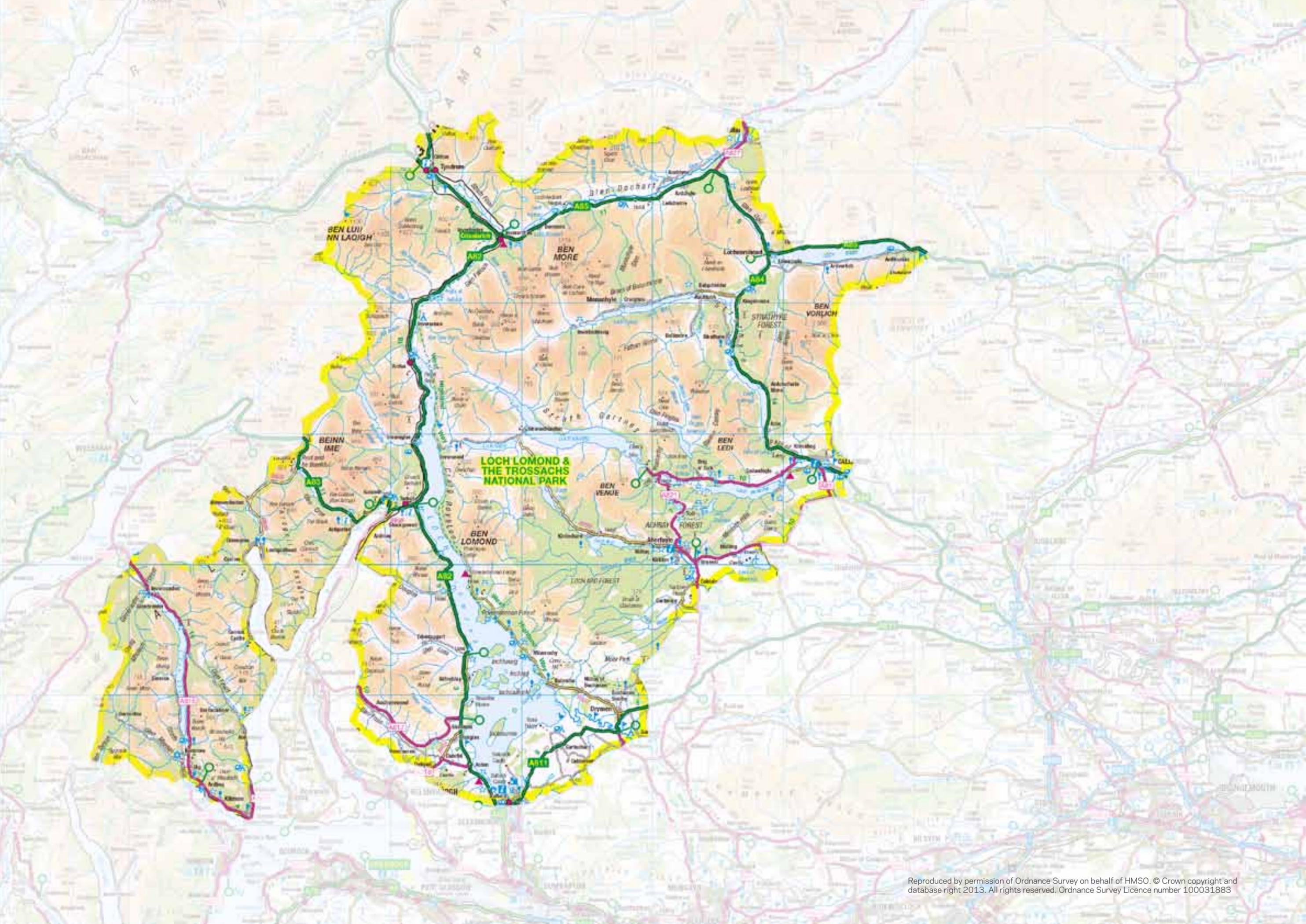




Local Development Plan
Charrette Report

May 2013



Introduction

This report summarises the process and outcome of a pilot initiative by the Scottish Government and the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) to integrate design and consultation from the outset of the Local Development Plan process.

The design proposals for the settlements of Drymen/Balmaha; Aberfoyle; Arrochar/Tarbet/Succoth and Tyndrum have been developed through a process of engagement with the local communities, relevant agencies, landowners and the LLTNPA.

The proposals seek to establish potential common, long term, visions, strategies and key initiatives for these places to focus community and agency energies on the priorities that are needed to deliver a sustainable future for these settlements.

These local initiatives are also framed within a Park wide strategy that aims to weave together the key attributes of each place into a cohesive strategy for strengthening the visitor economy, which will play a major role in the long term economic wellbeing of these rural communities.

The proposals developed by the Charrette Design Team form recommendations to the LLTNPA providing potential options, both in terms of strategy and potential development sites or initiatives, to inform the relevant sections of the Main Issues Report which will be issued for formal public consultation. Issues which were raised which fall outside of the planning process are outlined in an appendix and will be shared with all relevant organisations.



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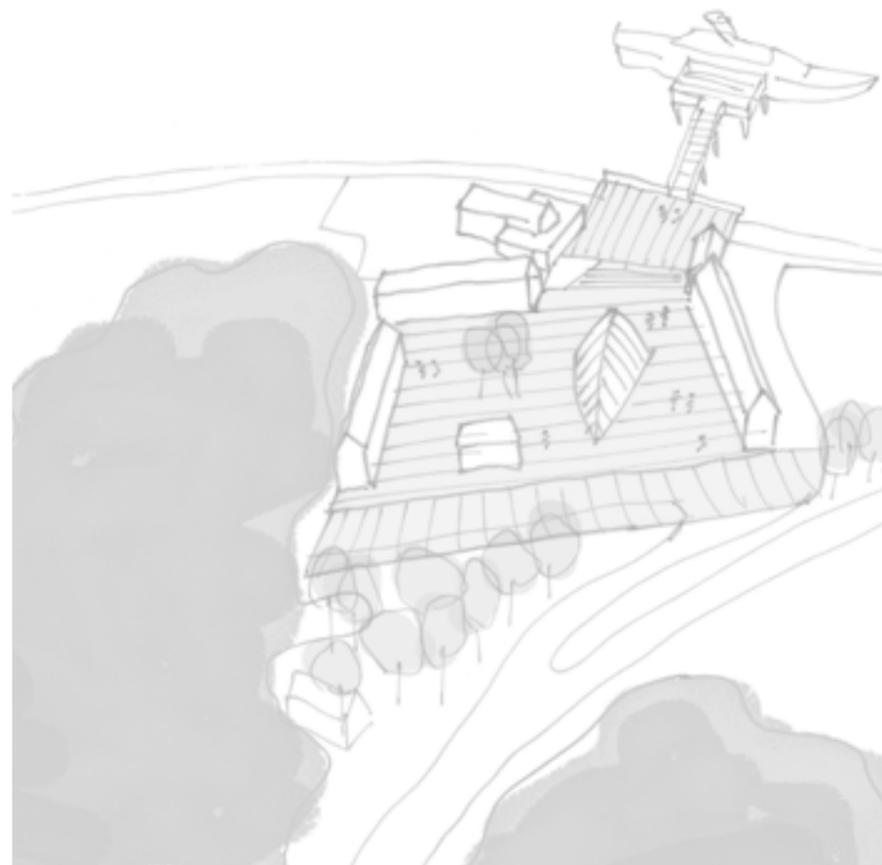
This report is structured into distinct sections which examine the context of the Charrette, a Park Wide Strategy and the proposals for individual settlements.

Section 1 establishes the context for this Charrette initiative in the National Park including its role in the development of the next Local Development Plan.

Section 2 sets out a Park Wide Strategy, which was developed alongside the individual settlement strategies to examine the spatial, visitor and economic issues in the wider context of the whole Park and opportunities for co-ordinating the strengths of each settlement.

Sections 3 to 6 cover the individual settlements that took part in the Charrette in detail, including the engagement process and feedback received, an overview of spatial and character issues and the Charrette outcomes in the form of strategic principles and key initiatives.

The Appendices provide supplementary detail, including a record of the engagement process; additional Charrette recommendations that can best be taken forward by community led organisations rather than through the development planning; suggestions for community initiatives for dealing with flooding issues in Aberfoyle; and a Visitor Strategy report by Jura Consultants which informed the Park Wide Strategy in Section 2 and the settlement specific recommendations in Sections 3-6.

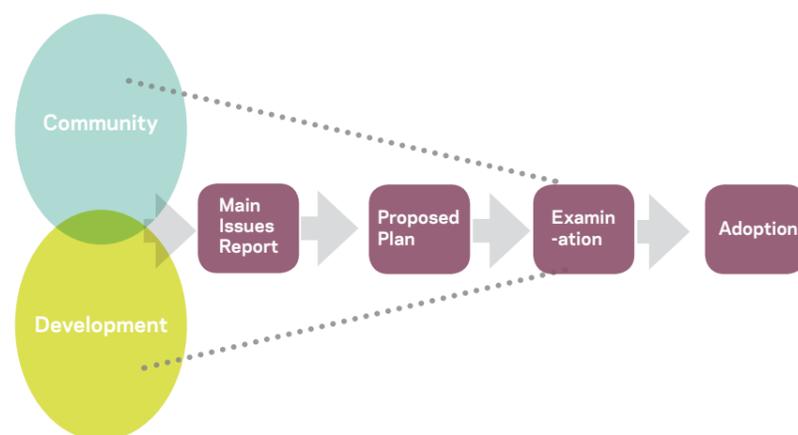


Executive Summary

Charrette Context

The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Local Development Plan Charrette is a pilot initiative by the Scottish Government, working in partnership with the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA), to transform community engagement in the planning process in Scotland.

It forms part of the Scottish Sustainable Communities Initiative and is one of a series of Charrettes taking place in Scotland in 2013 to test the possibilities and advantages of a collaborative dialogue between local communities, landowners, planning authorities and agencies to establish long term visions and strategies for settlements. In this instance, the Charrette outcomes will form a core part of the content for the next formal engagement step in the preparation of the Local Development Plan (LDP), the Main Issues Report. LDPs have a statutory requirement to look beyond the lifespan of the LDP itself, to 20 years time and so are in effect, blueprints for the future, that will be revised in 5 year cycles.



This moves community consultation much further upstream in the planning process so that it proactively informs the Main Issues Report (MIR), alongside other types of evidence gathering, including need and demand, rather than being a reaction to draft proposals prepared by the planning authority, as it is at present. This process also allows a much longer term view to be established that encapsulates shared visions and common goals in a way which integrates design thinking and placemaking into strategic planning.

The LLTNPA selected four settlement areas within the National Park for this initiative; Aberfoyle; Drymen and Balmaha; Arrochar, Succoth and Tarbet and Tyndrum. All are smaller settlements within the scenic context of the National Park. Like many smaller rural communities in picturesque parts of Scotland, they share common issues, including the desire to maintain a diverse and active community versus limited local employment opportunities and affordable homes.

These particular settlements have generally been chosen because, they face change, or the need for change. These settlement areas have already been identified as areas where there is potential for development in the National Park



Aberfoyle Charrette

Partnership Plan. Following on from the Callander Charrette, the settlement areas chosen compliment the work already carried out in Callander and address other key parts of the Park that have the potential for change over the next 20 years, the period of time that the LDP must anticipate.

The Charrette project gave an opportunity for local and Park wide issues and opportunities to be discussed in a public forum at each settlement. More importantly, through the involvement of a Charrette design team, it gave the opportunity to develop and debate possible ideas and solutions that can be taken forward through the development of the Local Development Plan.

In parallel with the Charrette process, two of the settlement areas, Tyndrum and Arrochar and Succoth and Tarbet were involved in updating their Community Action Plans. This presented an opportunity to integrate the two community engagement processes, recognising that community issues and spatial and development planning are intertwined. It also recognised that consultation fatigue is a risk in small communities and that a shared approach to consultation, from which a number of co-ordinated strategies and outcomes can be developed, is a more efficient and positive use of community time.



Six places, One Park

Executive Summary

Macro and Micro Scale

The settlements that have taken part in the National Park LDP Charrette form part of the wider context of the National Park. Part of the project brief for the Charrette was to look at the Park as a whole and how each settlement, including those not taking part in the Charrette, plays a role in the general health and wellbeing of the wider community of the Park. The Park's primary economy is the visitor economy, primarily the day-trip and short stay market. The Park receives 4 million visitors annually, and in order for this to support the rural communities in the Park, there is a requirement to look at how more benefit can be reaped from these existing visitor numbers, whilst also improving the quality of the visitor experience for the long term sustainability of the visitor economy in the Park.

It will be increasingly essential that villages within the Park support each other, rather than compete, with the same visitor offer. This comes from having a clear view of their individual strengths at a micro scale, and an understanding of the Park's overall visitor offer at the macro scale. The need to zoom in and zoom out throughout the Charrette process was designed to aid understanding and help to identify strategies for the future.



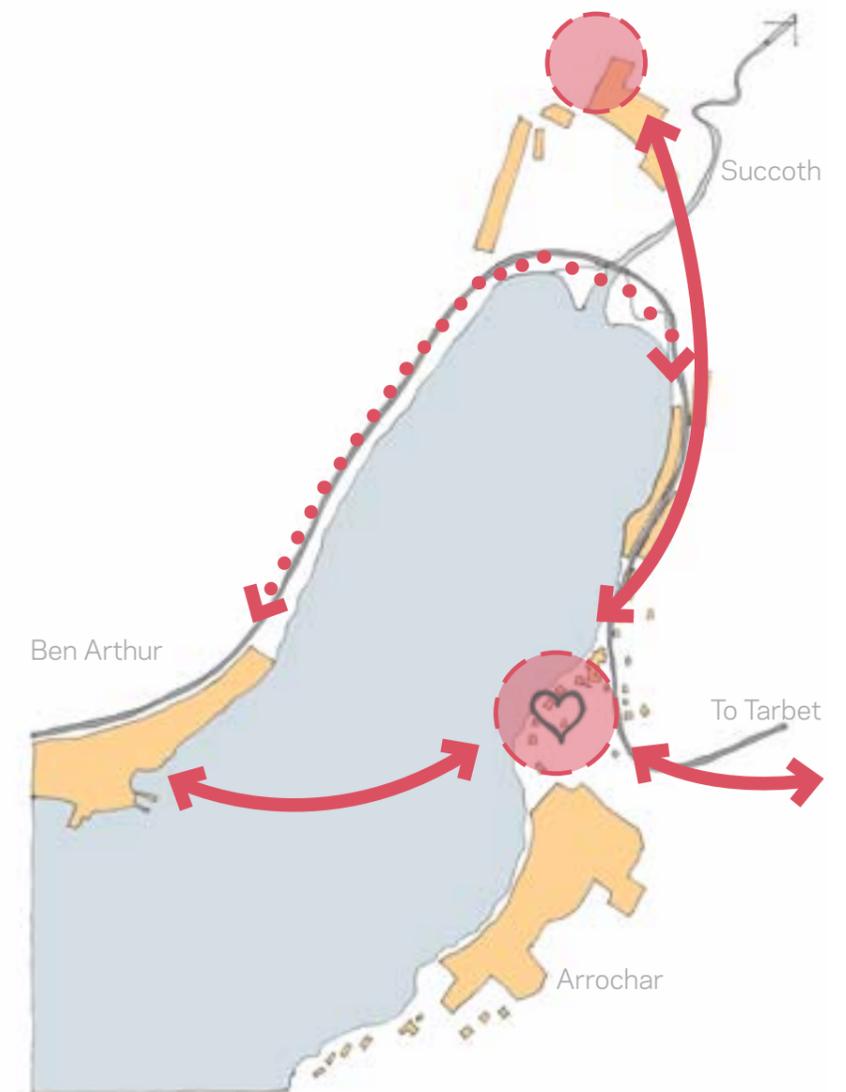
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Placemaking Approach

The key agenda throughout the Charrette project was to help to identify key strategies for the future of each settlement based on the desire to create places that people can enjoy and thrive in. This means working with the community to identify the key strengths of a place, what makes it special, and helping to develop ways of enhancing this in the future and agreeing a clear shared goal that can shape all future initiatives and funding.

The Charrette design team are the catalyst that transforms the ideas and desires of the community into a series of physical proposals, that have been debated by the community and refined to become the shared Charrette output, which is set out in detail throughout this report.

The influence of design and placemaking at an early stage in the development of the next LDP will influence later outcomes, as it will help to ensure that the future physical and social wellbeing of the place is at the heart of the plan.

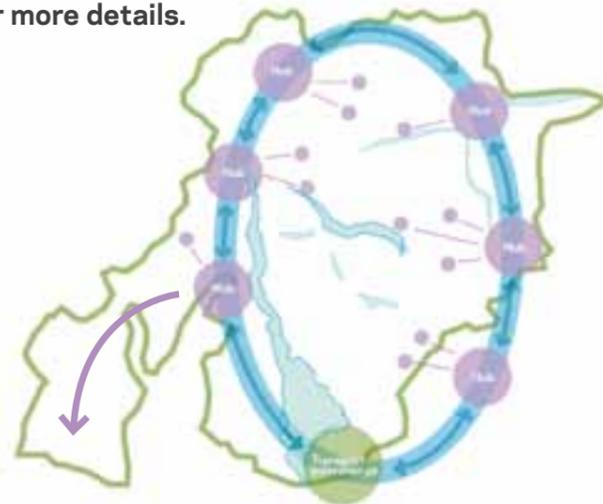


Executive Summary

Park Wide Outcomes

- o A need to enhance perceptions of the Park as a destination rather than a passing through a place to somewhere else.
- o Use the Park loop as a unifying concept that pulls both sides of the Park together into a single identifiable place.
- o Integrate and map multi-modal connections throughout the Park to encourage visitors to plan their bespoke journeys.
- o Develop key settlements to act as 'hubs' within the loop from which to launch exploration of the natural environment of the inner wild heart of the Park, suggested settlements include: Balloch, Arrochar/Tarbet, (linking to the Cowal), Tyndrum/Crianlarich, Killin, Callander, Aberfoyle and Drymen.
- o Cluster small scale visitor accommodation around the hubs, as satellites, where there is demand and landscape capacity, so that they rely on the village hubs for services, shopping, food and drink, whilst retaining the authentic experience of the Park landscape.

This is a very brief summary of Park wide outcomes. Please see section 02 for more details.



Settlement Outcomes

Aberfoyle

- o Flooding is a significant and complex issue that may take time to resolve. In the meantime, the village cannot stagnate. It needs to find ways of working within the constraints of the problem. Local businesses urgently need support in order to overcome the difficulties of operating in this environment.
- o The Main Street needs improvement to the public realm.
- o There is an opportunity presented by the riverside carpark space, which is the primary arrival space in the village. It could work much harder to create an enjoyable experience of the place, including improving visitor orientation, temporary uses and improved links with the Main Street.
- o Family lodge type accommodation is identified as a key initiative and should be sensitively located within walking or cycling distance from the village, or as part of a connected strategy within Strathard.



Drymen and Balmaha

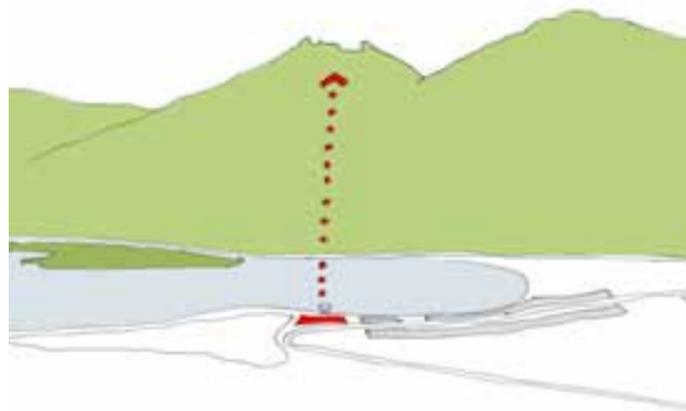
- o The strategy for growth in Drymen should be gradual and prioritise small scale infill site development within the village. The existing character of the village must be preserved and enhanced with the village square being a priority.
- o Drymen and Balmaha require a means of managing traffic congestion during the summer months. The promotion of sustainable travel between the villages should be a key initiative.
- o Balmaha presents opportunity for waterside small scale development that could create a special visitor experience and better harness the value of existing visitor numbers. Visitor residential accommodation however should be carefully considered so as to avoid imbalance between permanent residents and a transient visitor population.



Executive Summary

Arrochar, Succoth and Tarbet

- o The Three Villages benefit from a stunning lochside setting, on Loch Lomond and across the isthmus on Loch Long. There are opportunities to be realised involving access to the natural environment of the lochs and the Arrochar Alps and development of the visitor economy to safeguard the future economic wellbeing of the communities.
- o Both villages, but in particular Arrochar, need to establish a recognisable physical “heart”. The key space that creates a social focus for the community, a sense of arrival for visitors and an orientation point for wider exploration.
- o An accessible cycle and walking link between Tarbet and Arrochar is a clear priority for the community to better connect the two settlements that are a single community.



Tyndrum

- o Tyndrum is seen as a passing through place, but it needs to become more of a place to stay.
- o The goldmine presents a significant opportunity to be harnessed to develop Tyndrum as a destination.
- o New development should create more of a village centre with a defined ‘street’ frontage to the A82 to encourage walking and slow traffic.
- o New housing development should be focussed on the north side of the A82 to reinforce the village centre.

This is a very brief summary of settlement outcomes. Please see settlement sections for a more detailed proposals.



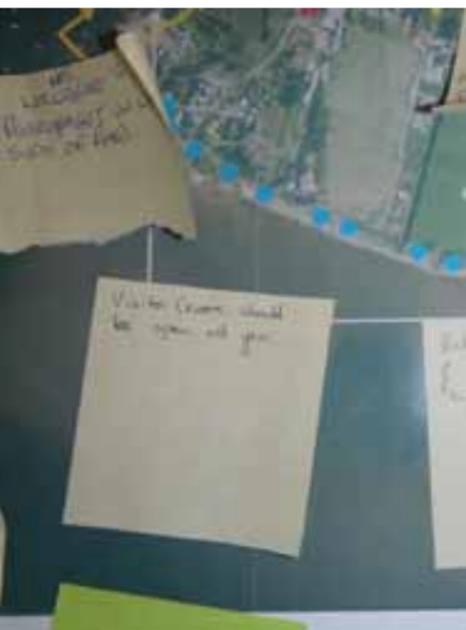
Conclusions

During the Charrette workshops, an extremely wide range of issues were discussed with people from a range of age groups and backgrounds. This included young people at the local high schools whose futures will, arguably, be most affected by the decisions made now. The results of these discussions have now been made manifest as drawn proposals, ideas, and sketch visions of what might be. These will go forward to inform firstly the Main Issues Report, and then the draft Local Development Plan.

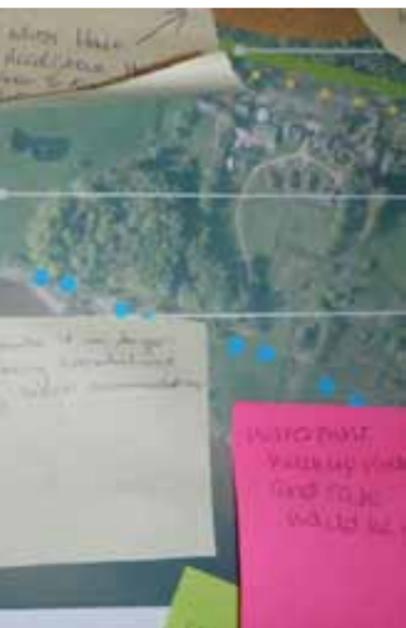
Importantly, the Charrette forum brought together people from the community, with designers, planners, local land and business owners and agency staff. These conversations were extremely valuable in allowing everyone to focus in on the issues that really matter and discuss ways of making things better in the future, whilst preserving those things that are already valued.

Due to the nature of the conversations that took place during the Charrette and the complexity and richness of the issues discussed, there are clearly wider benefits to this process. The Local Development Plan will set out the broad blueprint and parameters for future development in the Park informed by the output of the Charrette. But in addition to this, there will be other ongoing advantages. Communities have a vision to work towards together, and this will supplement local community action planning.

The LLTNPA, partners Stirling Council and Argyll and Bute Council and public agencies now have an up to date tangible idea of what local issues are and can target funding and initiatives more effectively. And local landowners have a clearer idea of what local priorities are and how they can best enhance the future wellbeing of these places with the support of the local communities and the National Park.



Context 01



The Charrette and the Planning Process

Community Engagement

The Charrette process focused on a series of targeted engagement workshops with the local communities in each of the identified settlements. These workshops were spread over three separate days in each settlement and were also attended by representatives of some of the key agencies.

The primary aim of the workshops was to establish the key issues and needs in each settlement in order to develop key principles and proposals to address them that would, in turn, inform the next Local Development Plan.

The engagement in the initial Fact Finding workshops allowed the Charrette team to absorb as much as possible about key local issues and needs to begin to establish key principles and discuss possible options to address them.

An agency and partner event midway through the process gave the chance to test and co-ordinate emerging proposals, as well as strengthen them with specialist knowledge and local experience. A key benefit of this way of working is that having early dialogue with agencies and local authorities, when ideas are still at a sketch outline stage, means that it establishes a common understanding of the key objectives and actions that need to be co-ordinated to deliver a successful outcome.

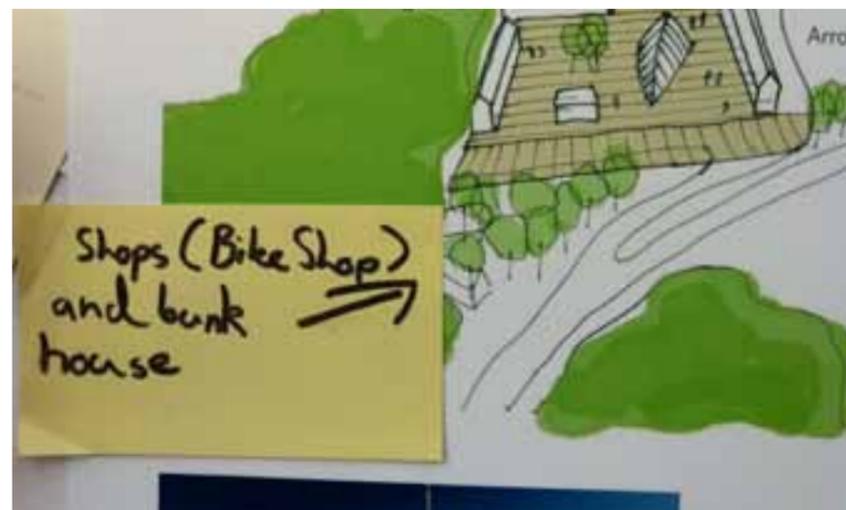
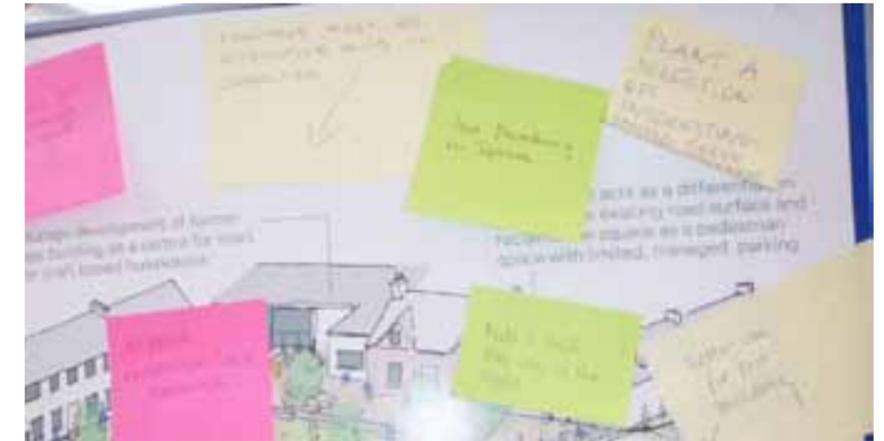
Later workshops then focused on emerging proposals and community feedback on these to informing the eventual Charrette outcomes.

The workshops were supported by a range of other community outreach initiatives, including household questionnaires, school questionnaires, school workshops with student groups, and a Charrette blog.

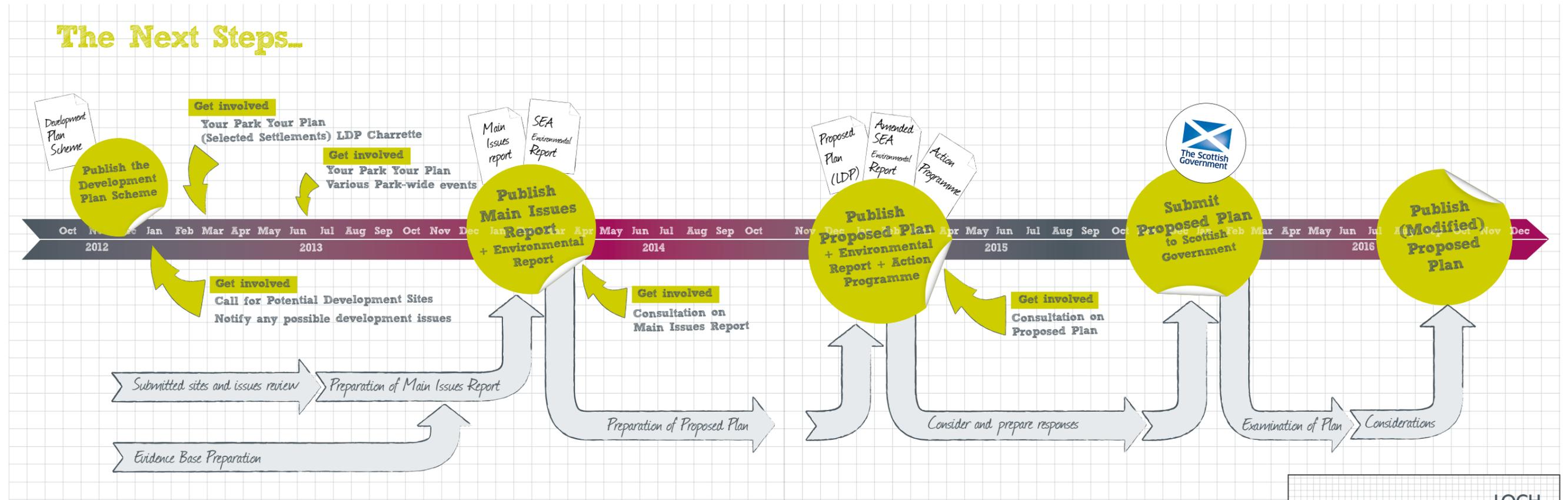
Further detail on the engagement process is set out in Appendix A.

The Local Development Plan preparation process

The diagram on the opposite page outlines the engagement process in the context of National Park Local Development Plan and illustrates the next steps and timescales.



The Local Development Plan Process



National Park Target Dates:

Feb - Mar 2014

Main Issues Report published
Park wide consultation

Dec 2014

Proposed Plan Published
Park wide consultation

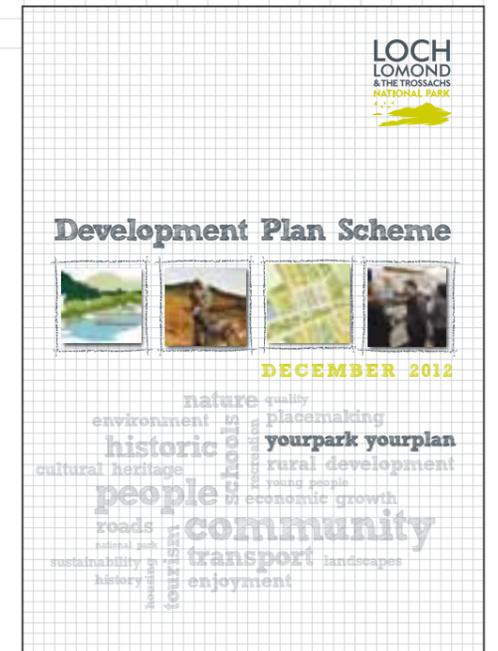
Dec 2015

Proposed Plan submitted to the Scottish
Government

Sep - Oct 2016

(Modified) Proposed Local Development Plan
Published and Adopted

Extract from the National Park's
Development Plan Scheme
Dec 2012



Further details on future steps and updates on progress can be viewed at www.lochlomond-trossachs.org

Four Settlements

The following settlements we selected by the LLTNPA for the Charrette:

- Aberfoyle
- Drymen and Balmaha
- Arrochar, Succoth and Tarbet
- Tyndrum

Each are relatively small villages, or clusters of villages, of varying sizes with their own unique setting within the National Park.

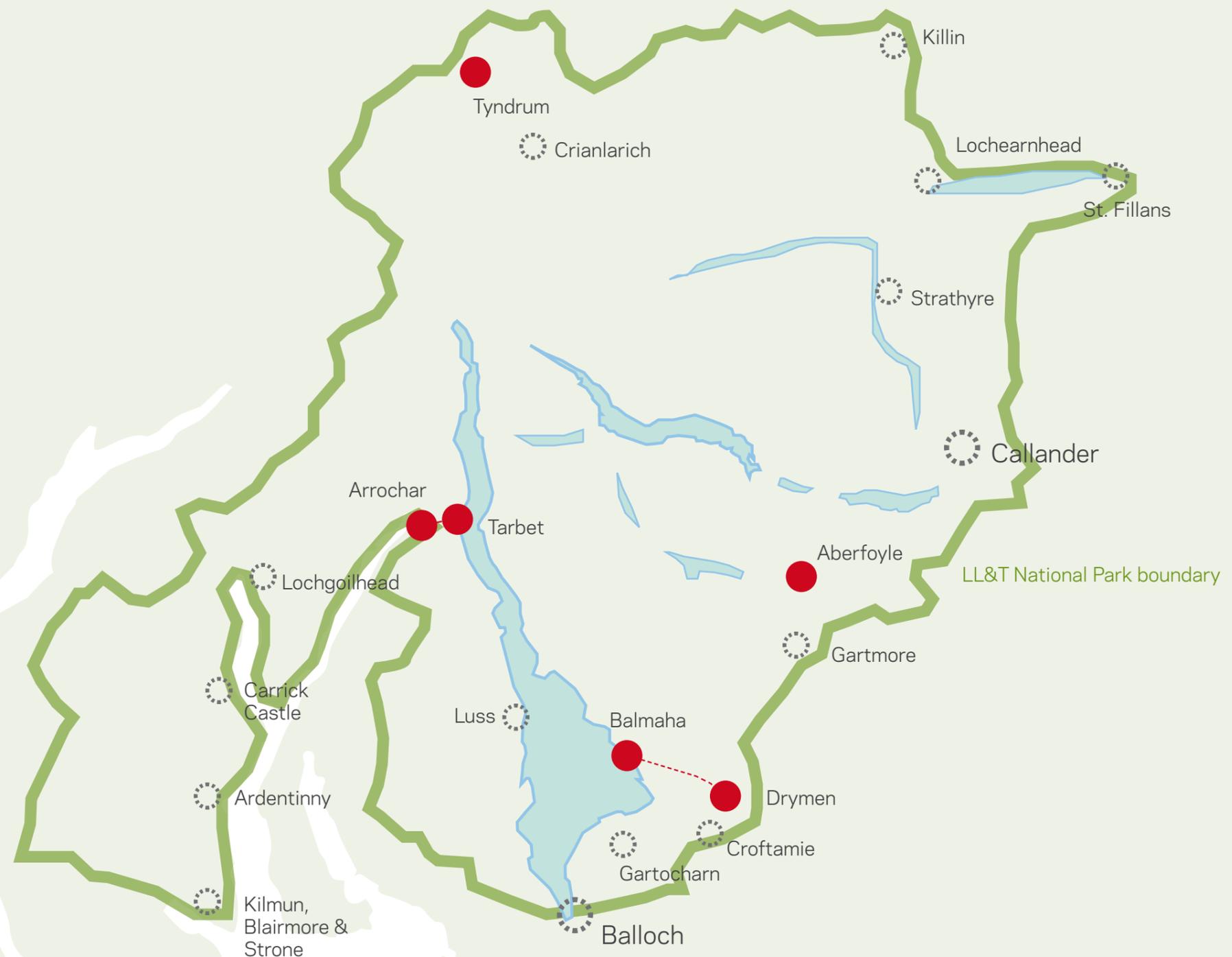
Drymen has a population of approximately 950 people and so is the largest single village taking part in the Charrette. Balmaha has a much smaller population, but Drymen's position as a gateway to the east side of Loch Lomond means that strategies for the area must consider the communities of Drymen and Balmaha together.

Aberfoyle has a population of approximately 600 and is situated in the heart of the Trossachs, within the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park.

Arrochar, Tarbet and Succoth are separate settlements but form a single community. They collectively have a population of approaching 1000 people and are situated in the dramatic setting of Loch Long, Loch Lomond and the Arrochar Alps.

Tyndrum has a population of around 170 and is the smallest single settlement taking part in the Charrette. As it is located on major transport routes north to Fort William and west to Oban, as well as on the popular West Highland Way walking route means that it sees millions of visitors passing through it each year.

The National Park has a total population of about 15,000, about a third of which live in Callander and Balloch and is covered by four local authorities, Stirling Council, Argyll & Bute Council, West Dunbartonshire Council and Perth & Kinross Council.

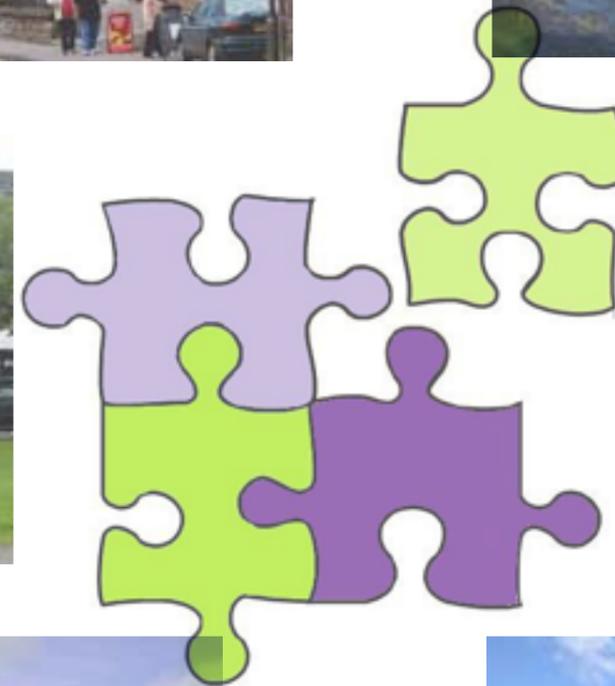
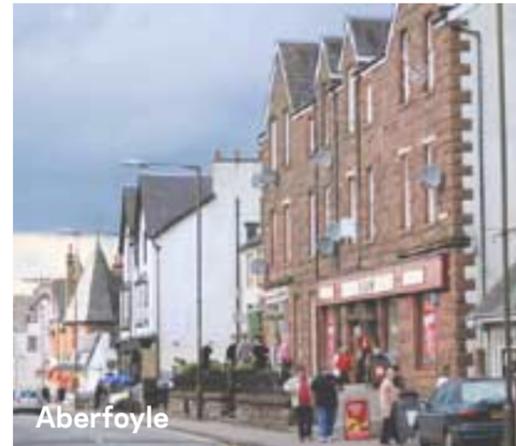


One Park

The National Park exists not only to conserve Scotland's valuable natural landscape and heritage, but also to support local communities within the Park in maintaining their economic and social wellbeing.

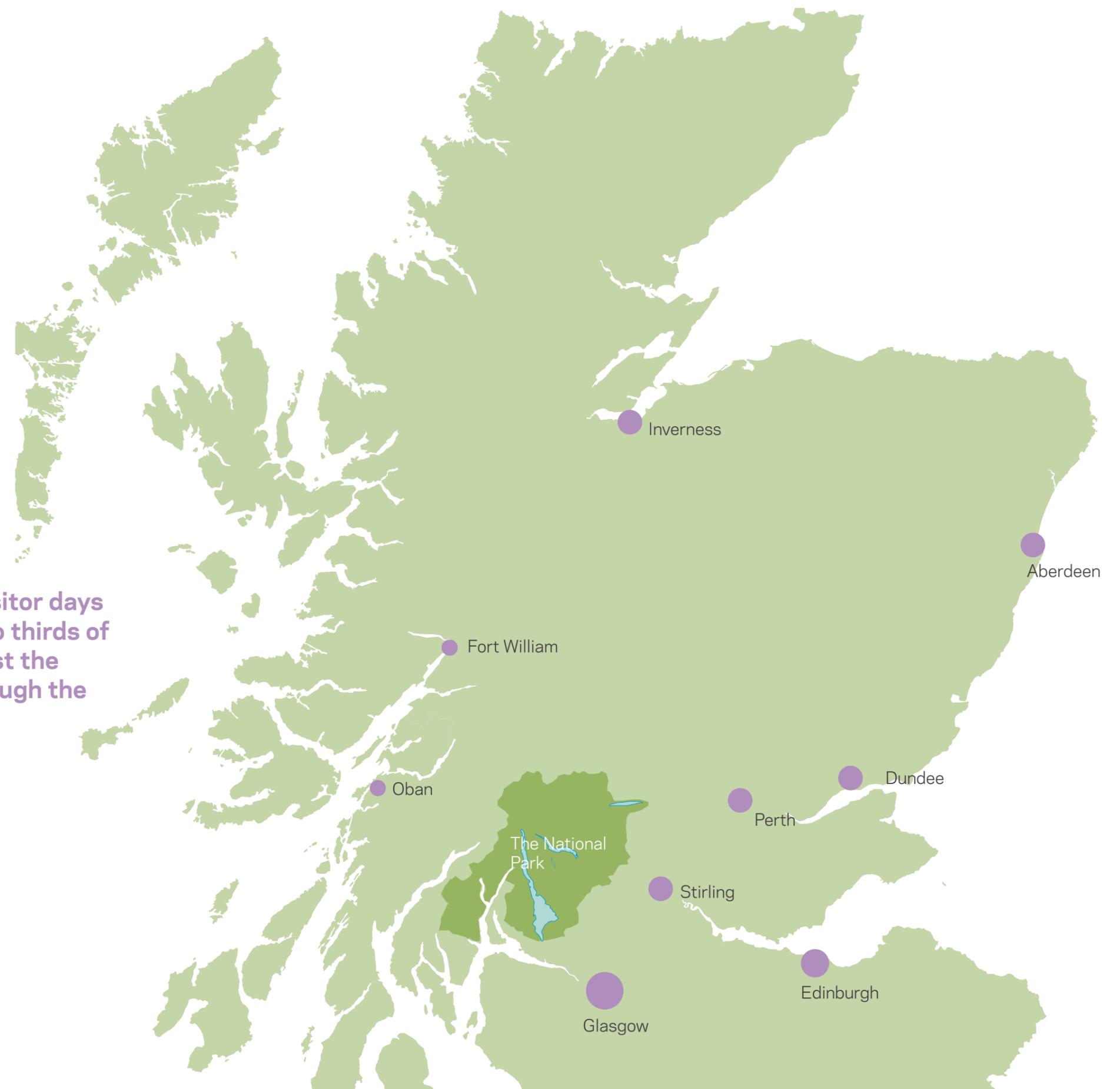
Whilst this Charrette focuses on the four individual settlements and the issues unique to each of them, it also recognises that there are shared common issues throughout the Park, and that each settlement plays a key role in the wider place that is the Park.

Each settlement has its own strengths and weaknesses and by recognising them and working with them, they can contribute to the wellbeing of the Park as a whole. By working together and not in competition with each other, each settlement will feel the benefit of a joined up approach.



In total there are just under 7million visitor days in the Park each year, with just over two thirds of these being a day out or a holiday, whilst the remaining third were scenic drives through the Park, en route to another destination.

Valuing the National Park, Final Report July 2011



The Visitor Economy

The National Park has an area of 720 square miles and a resident population of some 15,000. Some 2,400 people are employed in tourism and recreational activities and these account for one-third of all jobs in the National Park. Many of these jobs are accounted for by accommodation providers, of which there are around 400. The Park attracts 4 million visitors and 7 million visitor days per annum. These are primarily leisure visitors although business tourism and weddings are important markets. Just over 50% of the leisure market are day visitors and just under 50% are overnight visitors, staying on average 4.4 nights. Day visitors are unsurprisingly mainly Scottish residents. Overnight visitors are predominantly from the rest of the UK and overseas. There are some 19,000 bedspaces in the National Park. These include serviced accommodation (5,796 bedspaces), self catering (6,000 bedspaces) and holiday and touring parks (7,520 bedspaces). (Data from Scottish Enterprise & Scottish Development International Tourism Accommodation Audits, January 2012)

The motivations for visitors include sightseeing and active sport. The National Park boasts 21 readily accessible Munros, including Ben Lomond, and 19 Corbetts; 23 lochs including Loch Lomond the largest freshwater loch in Scotland; and a wealth of paths and trails for cycling, walking and running including Scotland's premier long distance trail The West Highland Way, a well established international draw (32,000 people complete it each year) and National Cycle Route 7. Scenery and lochs are a key factor for the majority but visitors tend to cite multiple reasons based on their own specific interests. However, currently only a minority take part in activities. Survey evidence indicates that walking and general sightseeing are the primary activities undertaken.

The National Park status also influences visitors' decision to visit. Visitors are also attracted by heritage and culture, food and drink and events. Survey evidence reports that the top 3 things visitors would like to see more of are better toilets, walks and places to eat.

A VisitScotland survey in 2012 reported the following findings in relation to the LLTNP visitor experience:

- o top reasons for visiting: particular interest in scenery (39%), is an area I know well (23%), to visit a particular attraction (20%)
- o most visitors stayed in a hotel (37%), followed by B&B/ Guest House (15%), self catering (14%), caravanning (13%), camping (10%)
- o most popular activities are sightseeing (41%), short walk/ stroll (40%), long walk/hike (36%), trying local food (35%)
- o most visitors ate out in cafes (70%) and pubs and bars (58%), followed by good quality restaurants (42%)
- o aspects 'very satisfied' with: overall experience of VisitScotland Info Centres, friendly service in accommodations and info locally on places to visit
- o less satisfied ratings recorded for mobile phone reception, Wi-Fi and broadband access, availability of low cost accommodation, cost of travel.



West Loch Lomond cycle path



Drymen square



Methodology and Approach

The charrette design team, comprising a multi-disciplinary group of built environment professionals (supported by the LLTNPA, Council and agency staff), undertook a survey of the areas, reviewed the Adopted Local Plan, relevant baseline information and completed agency, school and household survey returns. This, along with ideas and issues raised at the initial fact finding community sessions provided the basis for preparing options for key development opportunities over the next 20 years.

The analysis of the settlements and the approach to assessing the appropriateness of any new development considered a range of factors in an holistic appraisal of the potential to enhance the place.

This included the physical context in terms of the form and structure of the settlement, it's setting in the landscape and topography, and also the connectedness of the network of streets and routes.

Although visual impact was a key consideration, visual impact assessments alone can sometimes lead to development which may be concealed in contained pockets but is fragmented and isolated from the rest of the settlement.

Visual impact was therefore balanced with a consideration of permeability, connectedness and walking distances and the potential to reinforce the centre of the settlement as the social heart of the community. The potential to use new development to "repair" the less good parts of the settlements with better quality interventions was also a consideration.

Event	Day	Time	Session	Where
Charrette Launch	Monday 4th Feb	2 - 5pm	Presentations and Q&A	Balloch
Fact-Finding Charrettes	Friday 8th March	12.55 - 1.45pm	School Session - McLaren High School	Callander
		3 - 4pm	Community stakeholder group discussion	Aberfoyle
		4 - 5pm	Young family drop-in	
		5.30 - 8.30pm	Public Workshop	
	Saturday 9th March	1.30 - 2.30pm	Community stakeholder group discussion	Drymen
		2.30 - 3.30pm	Young family drop-in	
		4 - 7pm	Public Workshop	
	Sunday 10th March	12 - 1pm	Community stakeholder group discussion	Arrochar
		1 - 2pm	Young family drop-in	
		3 - 6pm	Public Workshop	
	Monday 11th March	10 - 10.50am	Hermitage Academy	Helensburgh
		1 - 2pm	Crianlarich Primary School	Crianlarich
		3 - 4pm	Community stakeholder group discussion	Tyndrum
4 - 5pm		Young family drop-in		
5.30 - 8.30pm		Public Workshop		
Agency/Partner Stakeholder Day	Friday 15th March	10 - 4pm		Balloch
Feedback Charrettes	Saturday 23rd March	1 - 2pm	Young family drop-in	Tyndrum
		3 - 5.30pm	Public Workshop	
	Sunday 24th March	12 - 1pm	Community stakeholder group discussion	Aberfoyle
		1 - 2pm	Young family drop-in	
		3 - 5.30pm	Public Workshop	
	Monday 25th March	10.30 - 11.30am	Balfron High School	Drymen
		4 - 5pm	Young family drop-in	
		5.30 - 8pm	Public Workshop	
	Tuesday 26th March	4 - 5pm	Young family drop-in	Arrochar
5 - 7pm		Public Workshop		
Exhibition of Outcomes	Saturday 27th April	12 - 2pm	Aberfoyle Drop-In Exhibition	Aberfoyle
		4 - 6pm	Drymen & Balmaha Drop-In Exhibition	Drymen
	Sunday 28th April	12 - 2pm	Tyndrum Drop-In Exhibition	Tyndrum
		4 - 6pm	Arrochar & Tarbet Exhibition	Arrochar

Park Wide Strategy 02





The following pages illustrate ideas for a 'Park wide' visitor strategy for the National Park.

The Charrette focused on a number of specific settlements within the Park. Consideration of how these and all of the other settlements within the Park relate to each other, and to their context within the Park, formed a key part of this Park wide strategy, and this in turn, informed the individual settlement overviews set out in later chapters.

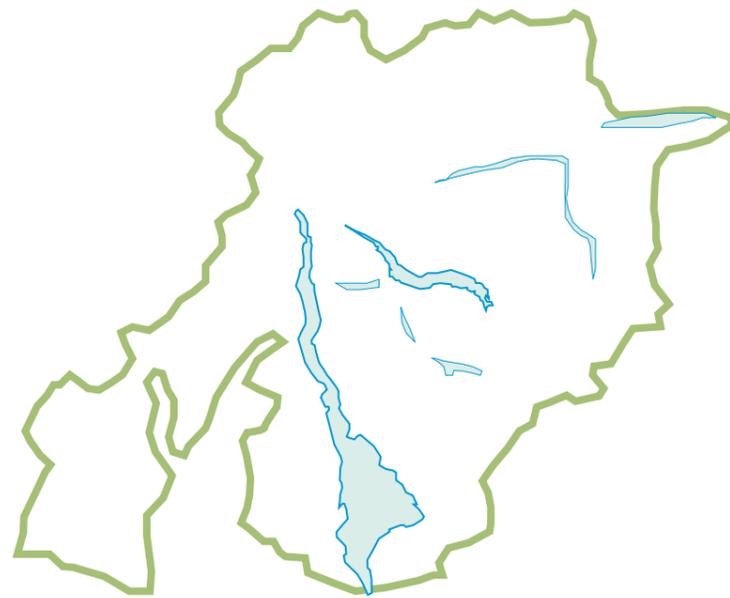
The Park wide strategy illustrates the ideas that resulted from three strands of approach undertaken by the Charrette design team.

The first strand was the 'zoomed in' examination of how settlements work in their own local context focusing on the key issues discussed at the Fact-finding Workshops in each settlement. There were certain common issues that each village shared, such as managing traffic and transport; affordable housing; balancing visitor need with the needs of local residents and the desire to make more of existing opportunities for the shared benefit of both the visitor economy and residents.

The second strand looked at the wider visitor experience in the Park. It evaluated the attractions, strengths and weaknesses of individual settlements. This is set out in more detail within the settlement reviews.

The third strand was the 'zoomed out' view of the Park. This included external and internal perceptions of the Park, ease of movement within the Park, and how all the settlements fit into the wider community of the Park. The Park's key strength, both for visitors and for residents, is its beautiful natural environment. The Park wide strategy aims to examine how people can continue to enjoy living in and visiting the Park, in a sustainable manner, whilst maximising the benefit of a strong visitor market.

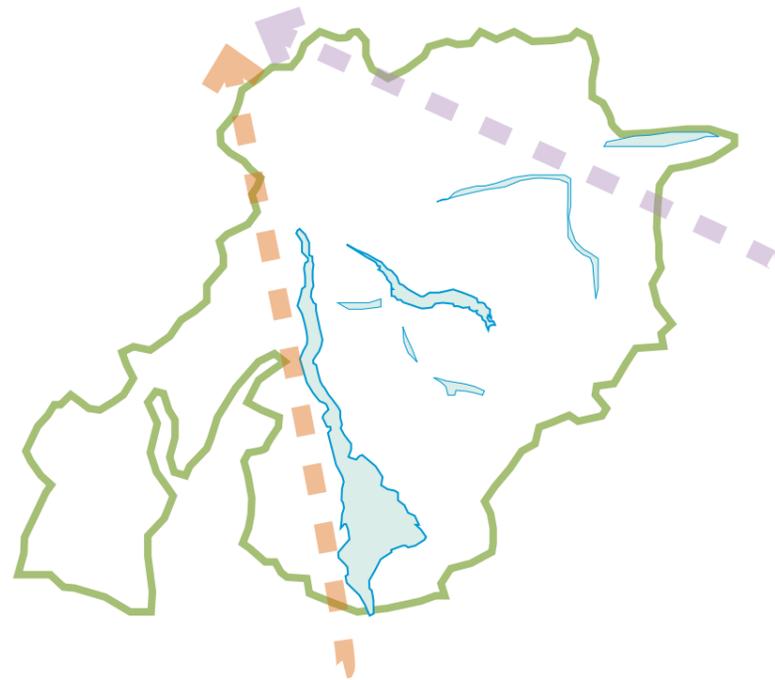
Park Wide Strategy



The Park

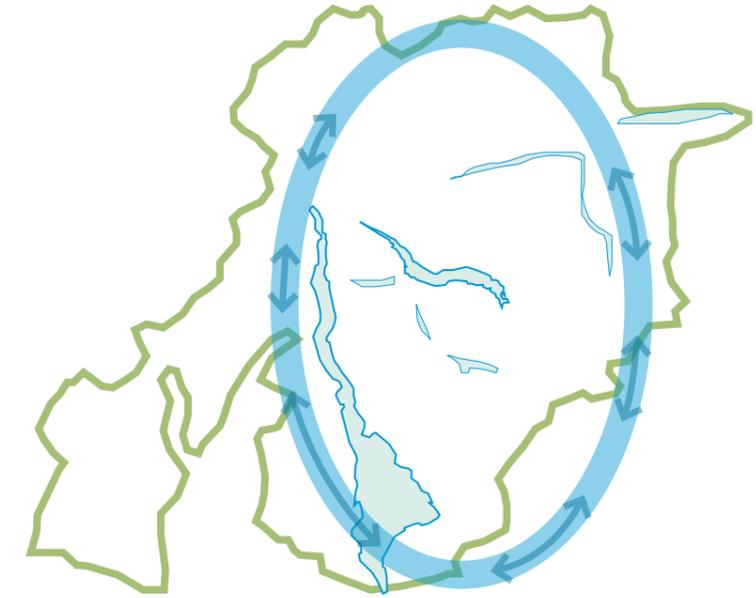
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park was created in July 2002 under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000 to safeguard an area of outstanding and diverse landscapes, habitats and communities. The Park boundary includes Loch Lomond, the Argyll Forest and the Arrochar Alps, the Trossachs and Breadalbane; comprising 720 square miles of some of the best of Scotland's natural scenery and landscape.

It also contains a number of settlements, including the towns of Callander and Balloch, and villages including Aberfoyle, Drymen, Arrochar, Crianlarich, Tyndrum and Killin. These towns and villages contribute to the character of the Park and are home to the Park's local communities.



Movement 'through' the Park

While in terms of landscape, the Park has a clear wild heart, the perception of visitors moving through the Park is often that it is a place to pass through to somewhere else, either from the east, or from the west. The perception that you pass through a particular part of the Park, appears to affect people's inclination to dwell there, to spend time and money. It also affects how visitors plan their experience of the Park and its landscape as it diminishes perceptions of the Park as a holistic entity and place.



Movement 'around' the Park

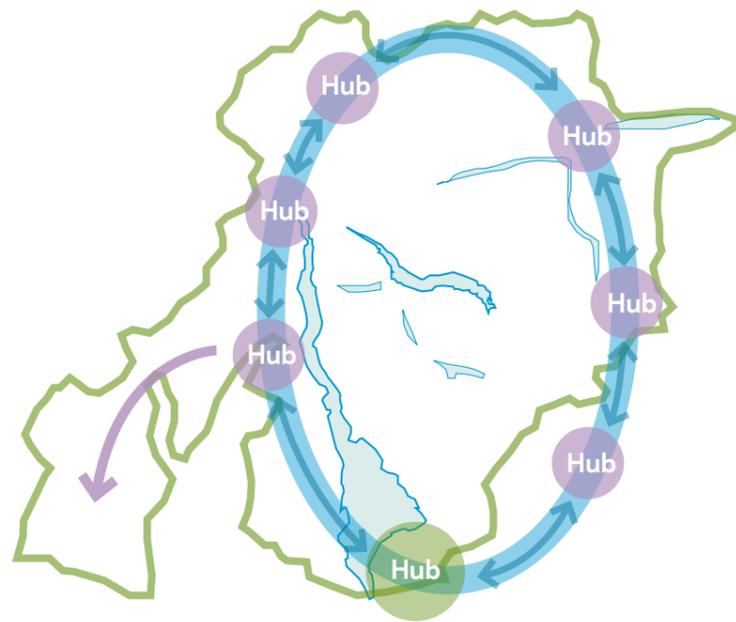
There is the possibility to change these perceptions of the Park by strengthening links between the main settlements, to enhance its position as a visitor destination in its own right, rather than a beautiful place to pass through.

This aims to change perceptions of the Park, to that of a place that is a connected series of villages, landscape and experiences, a place that you travel to and spend time in.

This device would be intended to help perception of an interconnected whole, rather than being a literal circuit.

movement connections experience

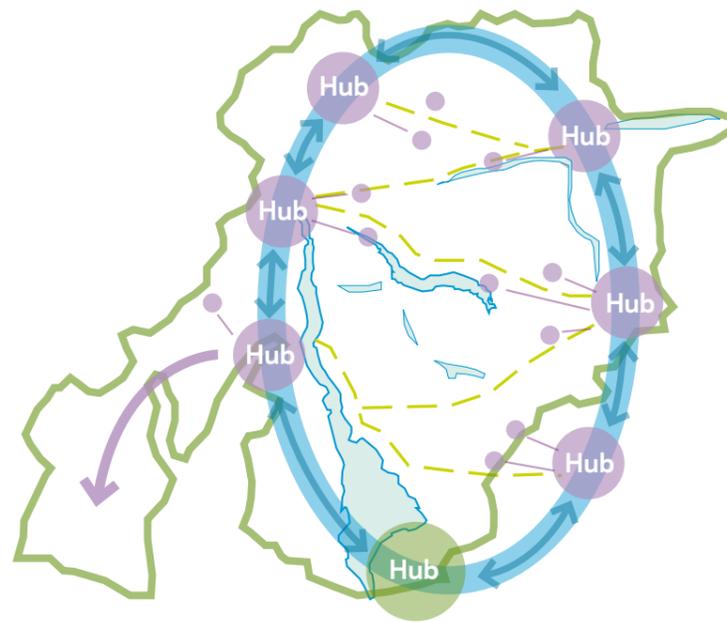
Park Wide Strategy



A Park 'loop'

This Park loop can connect key settlements that act as 'hubs', as principal visitor orientation points, from which to explore the Park.

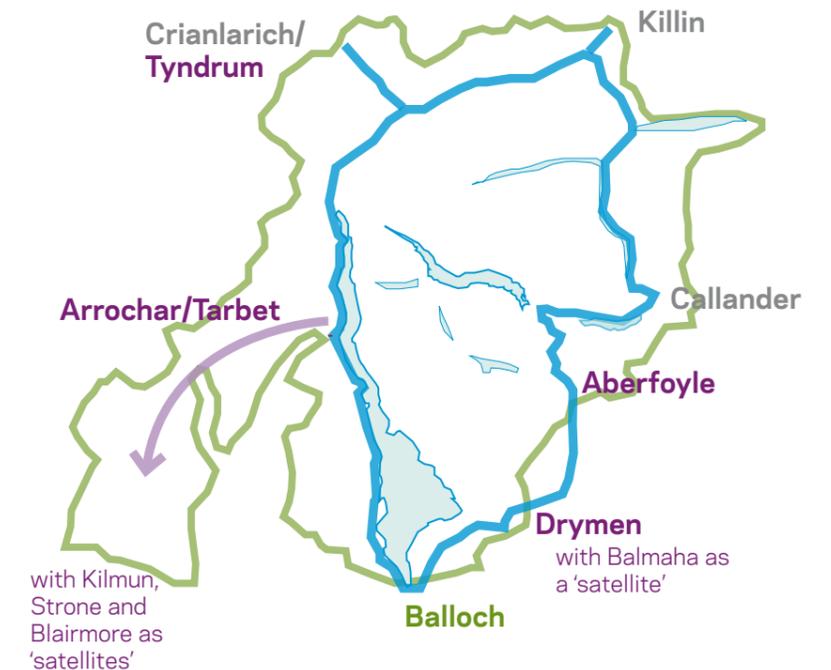
Small scale and sensitively located 'satellite' visitor accommodation and facilities can then be located within the landscape of the Park on the fringes of these settlement hubs, to encourage reliance on the villages for orientation, food, services and activities.



A connected Park experience

The hubs and satellites can be supported by multi-modal transport and connections - and should be strengthened by a joined up approach to public transport for visitors and local communities, with means to transport bicycles.

There is opportunity to overlay existing and improved through Park links such as long distance walking and cycling routes, boat links and train routes. These should all be integrated, so that it is possible to plan exploration of the Park via a number of different means of movement, with a reduced need to re-trace steps, or rely on the car. Visitors would have complete freedom to plan an infinite number of special journeys between the hubs.



purple text indicates those settlements taking part in the 2013 LDP Charrette project

A special Park experience

The Park loop can be punctuated by special visitor experiences that are unique to the Park and its landscape, such as key viewpoints and local landmarks, so that the experience of moving through the Park is as enjoyable as reaching the destination.

Visitor analysis shows that National Park status is a major draw for visitors. This strategy seeks to make the most of that strength, by changing how existing visitor numbers plan their trips and behave within the Park, for the shared benefit of the Park's communities.

movement connections experience

Precedent - Norway's Tourist Routes

The Norwegian Tourist Routes serve as an example of how the experience of a country's landscape can be enhanced and intensified, for both visitors and citizens alike, transforming perceptions of the place and improving what it has to offer visitors from around the world.

This initiative by the National Transport Authority developed an integrated strategy for the principal routes used by visitors which were punctuated by specially designed architectural elements to complement the landscape and encourage people to stop and take in the spectacular views. They also serve to remind people of the environment they are in and intensify the experience of moving through it to create a sense of place and identity.

By building on the successful model developed in Norway, Scotland can make the most of its unique natural assets through a strategic approach that considers the country's road network as an integrated tapestry of special journeys through the landscape. Journeys which are enhanced by a family of low cost, high impact, projects which intensify the experience of the place.

This can be a multi-faceted initiative which will integrate an enhanced visitor experience with planned infrastructure expenditure to gain far more added value from the investment of precious public funds. This can be achieved through innovative thinking and co-ordinated working between agencies.

It also has the potential to stimulate growth and employment in local, rural, economies whilst connecting young Scottish design talent to enterprising opportunities.

Such an initiative can bring a cohesion and quality to the visitor experience and reinforce the National Park's identity.



“National Tourist Routes in Norway. There are still roads that are not merely designed to get you to your destination as quickly as possible. National Tourist Routes are beautiful drives with that little bit extra. The routes are carefully selected by the Norwegian Public Roads Administration, and each of the 18 routes has its own history and character. Our job is to make sure the routes are adapted to travellers' needs. We do so by building spectacular viewpoints with service buildings, car parks, furniture, paths and art.”

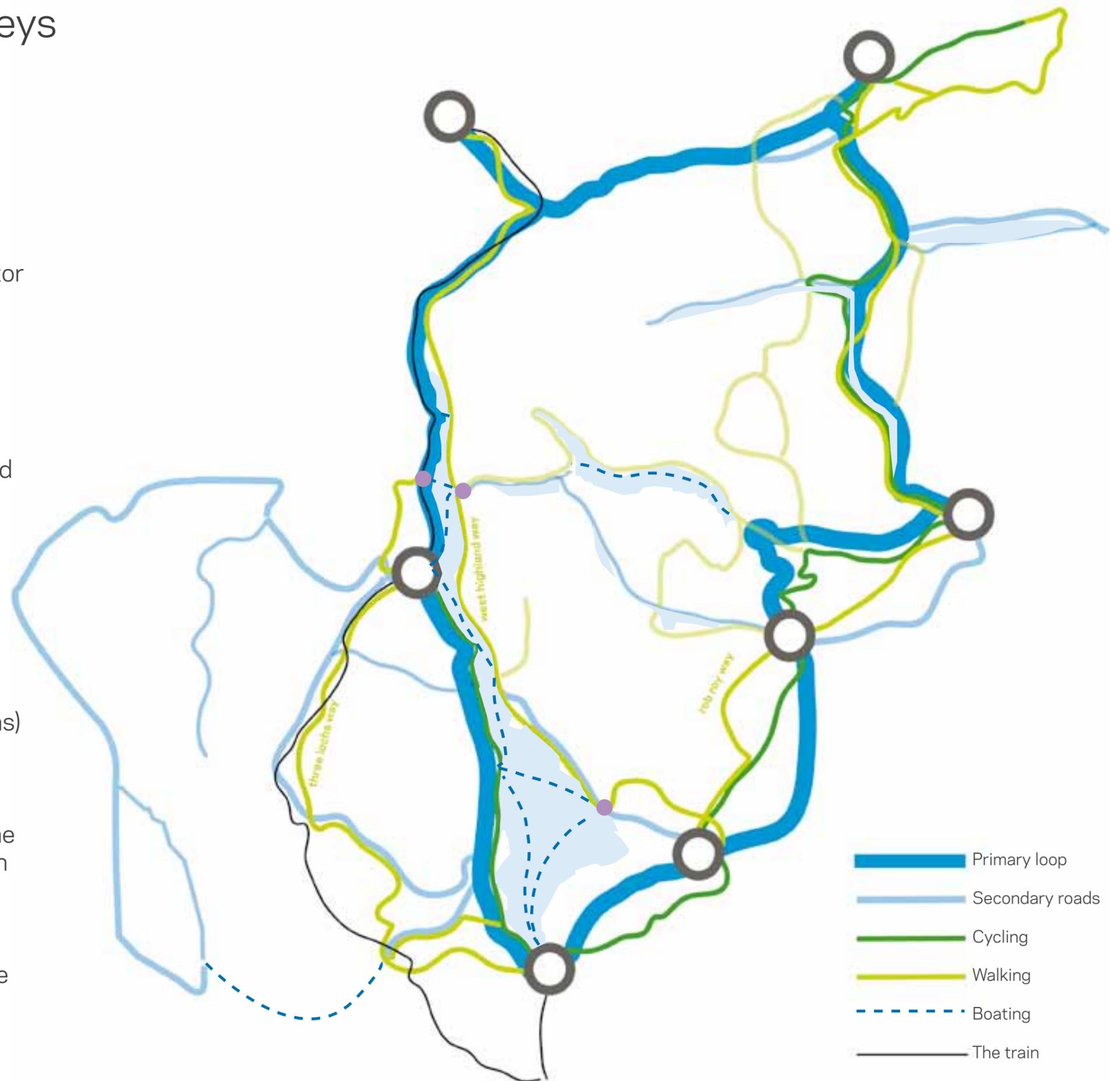
Extract from Nasjonale turistveger website



Mapping Special Journeys

There is the potential to develop an interactive, digital map to promote visitor awareness of the multitude of journeys that are possible throughout the Park and how they can be interconnected to encourage longer trips.

- o emphasise larger settlements as hubs and promote their services and activities
- o highlight multi-modal routes that cross the Park and link hubs
- o mark 'satellites' (small settlements; clusters of visitor accommodation; attractions and activities; special experiences and modal intersections) throughout the Park
- o use public transport and develop Parking infrastructure to support the strategy and reduce dependence on the car for journeys within the Park
- o use the loop concept to strengthen the Park's identity and the collective integration of key settlements and activities



Mapping Special Journeys

A visual picture of links, connections and experiences, with a means of immediately finding out where is best to stay, or what the boat timetable is, will help people to plan their day in the Park, and encourage them to extend this to several nights within the Park. For example:

Train from Glasgow to Balloch

Waterbus from Balloch to Balmaha

Cycle/walk to Drymen

Stay in Drymen

Cycle to Aberfoyle

Stay in Aberfoyle

Explore Loch Katrine

Boat from Inversnaid to Tarbet

Stay in Arrochar

Explore the Arrochar Alps

Train back to Glasgow

The possibilities within the Park are endless

A hub

A place you know you can stay overnight, there is a choice of accommodation, there are supporting services, restaurants, pubs, cafes, local supermarkets, shops for outdoor gear, repair for bicycles etc

A satellite

A place that is supported by a hub, and facilitates local enjoyment of the special qualities of the Park, for example access to the water, a cluster of forest lodges or a visitor attraction.





Settlement Review - Aberfoyle 03

Aberfoyle is a picturesque village situated within the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park with the position of 'Gateway to the Trossachs'.

The village is a popular day trip destination but it also has much to offer families for a longer stay, with plenty of all ability walking, cycling, and the David Marshall Lodge and Go Ape. Identified areas for improvement include the visitor accommodation offer and quality of retail and leisure in and around the Main Street.

The village is extremely constrained by flood risk to the south and densely wooded hillside to the north. Flooding is a critical issue for the village and has a significant impact on businesses in the Main Street.

Aberfoyle's community has already achieved much in the rescue of the local petrol station as a community owned resource but the village now needs co-ordinated action to overcome the challenge and blight that the flood risk presents.

What the community said

Key Issues

- o The village struggles with significant flooding. The flood risk extends to the Main Street, cutting off access, and damaging businesses and homes. Stirling Council are undertaking analysis in order to identify an appropriate solution, but the timeframe for this study and resulting solution(s) appears to be longer term. Without diminishing the critical need for flood mitigation measures, the team have examined what the village can achieve in the meantime, as there is a risk that the village could stagnate whilst waiting for flood mitigation works to materialise.
- o The visitor economy is critical to the wellbeing of the businesses in Aberfoyle. There was discussion regarding how to improve the village's offer to visitors, target their key markets and ultimately, encourage more people to stay in Aberfoyle and explore the Park. This comes from looking at what visitors want, such as self-catering accommodation, family friendly activities and the opportunity for good quality food and drink in the evening.
- o Affordability of housing for young people in the village is an issue for the community. This issue will only get more acute, as the village is effectively restricted in where it can grow, to the south by the flood plain, and to the north by a densely forested hillside. There are few opportunities for new housing to help lower the average cost of owning or renting a home.

- o Realising Aberfoyle's full potential. Particular aspects of this include orientation, walks and heritage, local craft and opportunities for evening entertainment.
- o The Main Street was described by some as 'tired'. Investment in the public realm of the Main Street would have a major impact on how Aberfoyle is viewed by residents and visitors.
- o The wider community need to capture renewed energy and focus to build on the success of the garage initiative. There was a feeling that positive initiatives that involve local business owners as well as community leaders are needed to improve the village's future economic and social wellbeing.



Visitor Economy Headline Analysis

Current Assets:

Service Centre; Distinctive Buildings

Services

Hotels
Guest Houses
Camping and caravanning
Watersports at Loch Ard
Mountain Bike Hire

Attractions

Queen Elizabeth Forest Park
David Marshall Lodge
Trossachs Discovery Centre
Go Ape Outdoor Centre
Aberfoyle Golf Club
Loch Ard
Events programme

Infrastructure

QEFP Trails
Rob Roy Way
National Cycle Network Route 7

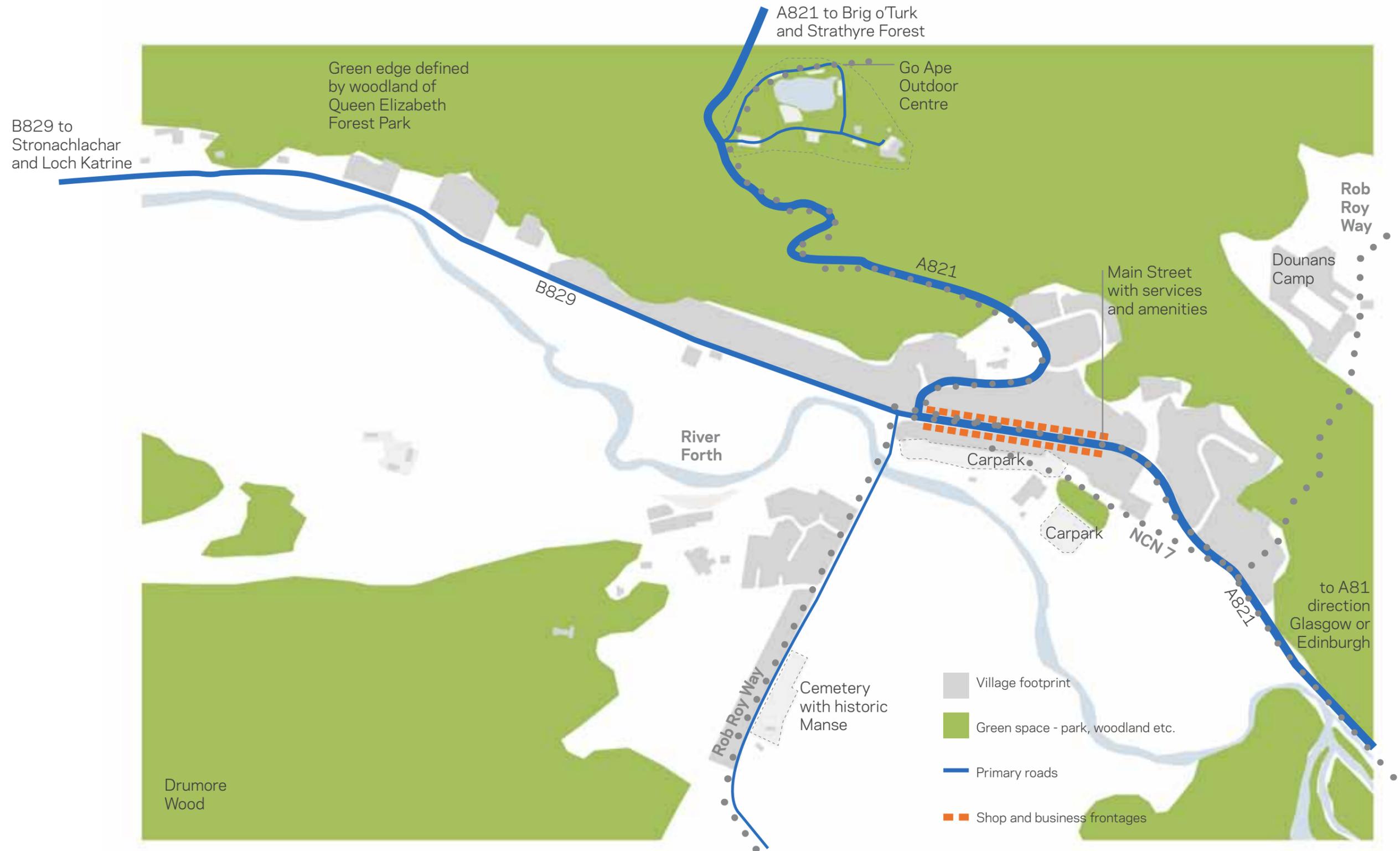
Visitor Experience Enhancements:

‘Short break destination for those who love the outdoors’

- Pre-visit information - route maps, access to services and accommodation options
- Self catering accommodation for families and groups
- Aberfoyle public realm
- Aberfoyle Main Street retail offer



Aberfoyle - Spatial Analysis



Aberfoyle - Character



Western approach to Aberfoyle along the B829 road offers scenic views of the River Forth.



Eastern approach to Aberfoyle along the A821 from the Edinburgh and Glasgow areas. The road is narrow with pleasant scenery of woodland on one side and the National Cycle Route 7 with views of River Forth on the other.



View along the central part of Main Street looking east showing a stretch with wider pavements and town centre parking facilities. The Main Street currently offers a variety of amenities but would benefit from improvement.



View along eastern part of Main Street, looking east showing a mixture of businesses right up against a narrow pavement and residential or visitor accommodation set back from the street with front gardens.

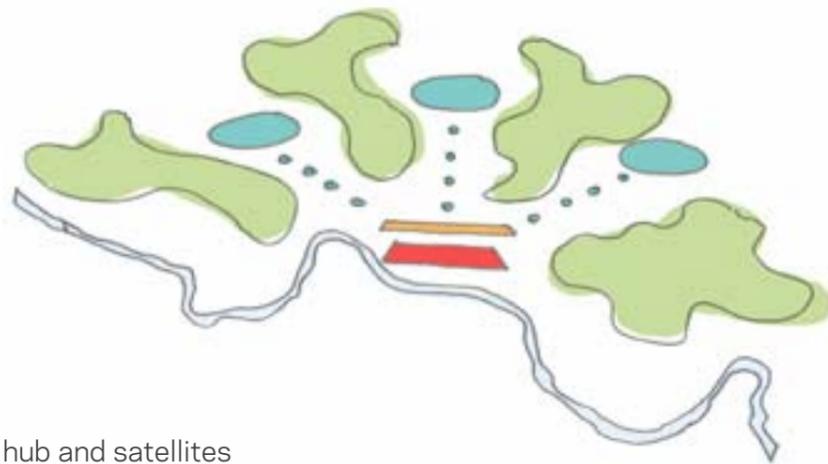


Eastern edge of Main Street where the character turns from town centre to primarily residential.



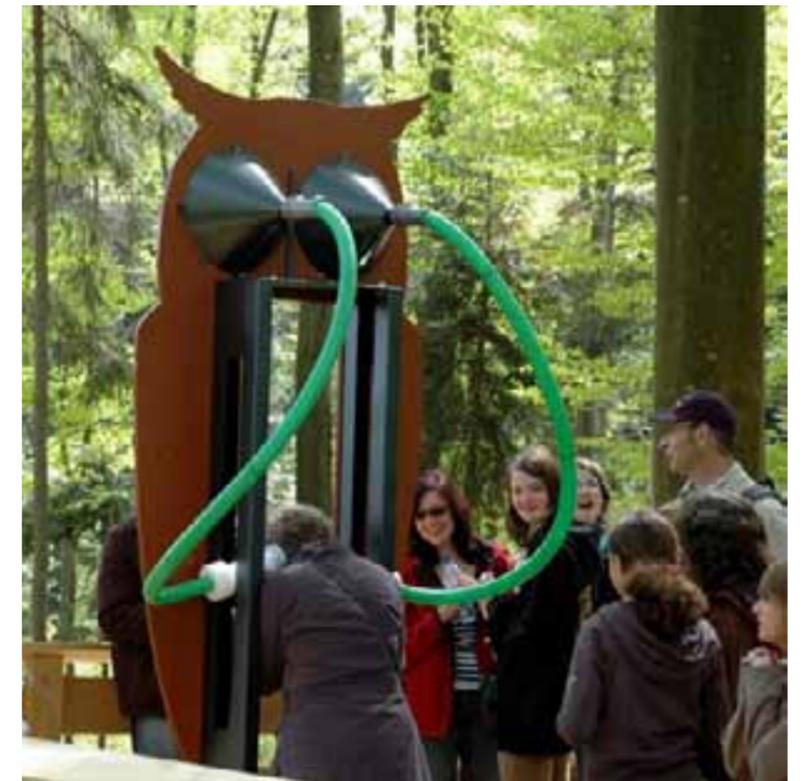
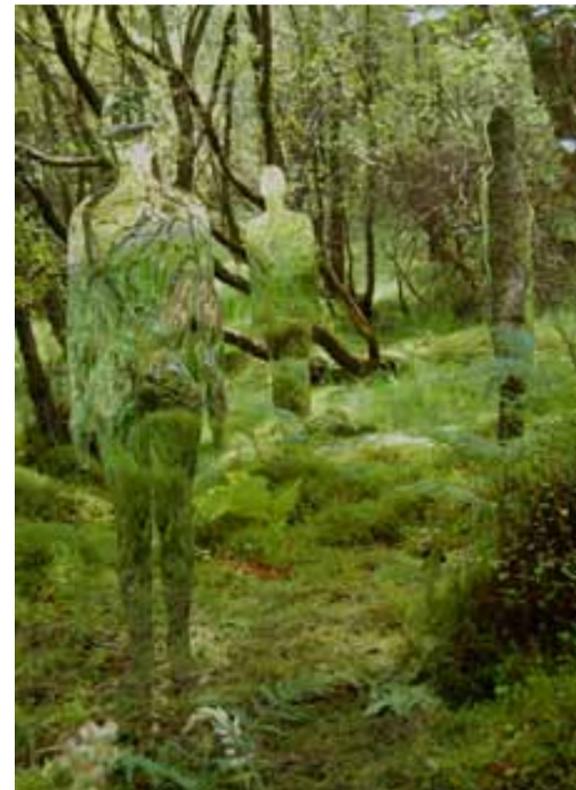
View over River Forth bridge along Manse Road. The river provides not only a topographic boundary to Aberfoyle but also a beautiful setting which at present does not get the attention it deserves.

Strategic Principles

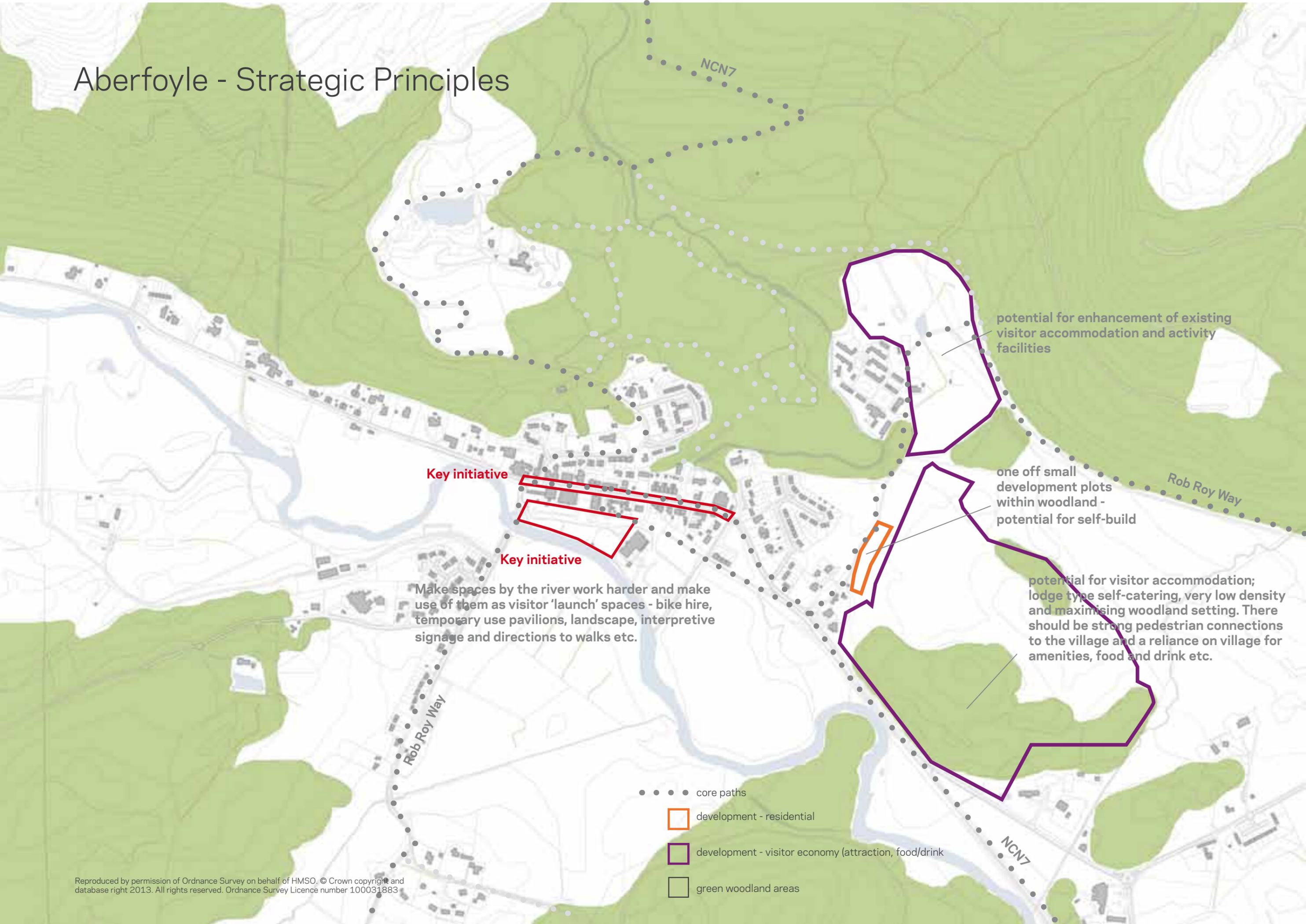


hub and satellites

- o Aberfoyle's economy is reliant on visitors and it needs a strategy to safeguard the future economic wellbeing of the village and Strathard area, including renewed focus on accommodation offer, food and drink offer and outdoor activities, by building on existing strengths.
- o Flooding is a critical issue to the area. Potential solutions are currently being developed by Stirling Council but the Charrette outcomes seek to explore opportunities within current flooding constraints so that the village can move forward, whilst these are being resolved. This does not diminish the importance of a long term effective solution to flooding in the village.
- o The village centre is concentrated around two key spaces, the Main Street and the riverside, targeting improvement of these spaces will have the most positive impact on the village as a whole.
- o Affordability of housing will become increasingly critical and due to constraints on growth, alternative solutions need to be investigated, such as encouraging self-build within smaller woodland sites.



Aberfoyle - Strategic Principles



Key initiative

Key initiative

Make spaces by the river work harder and make use of them as visitor 'launch' spaces - bike hire, temporary use pavilions, landscape, interpretive signage and directions to walks etc.

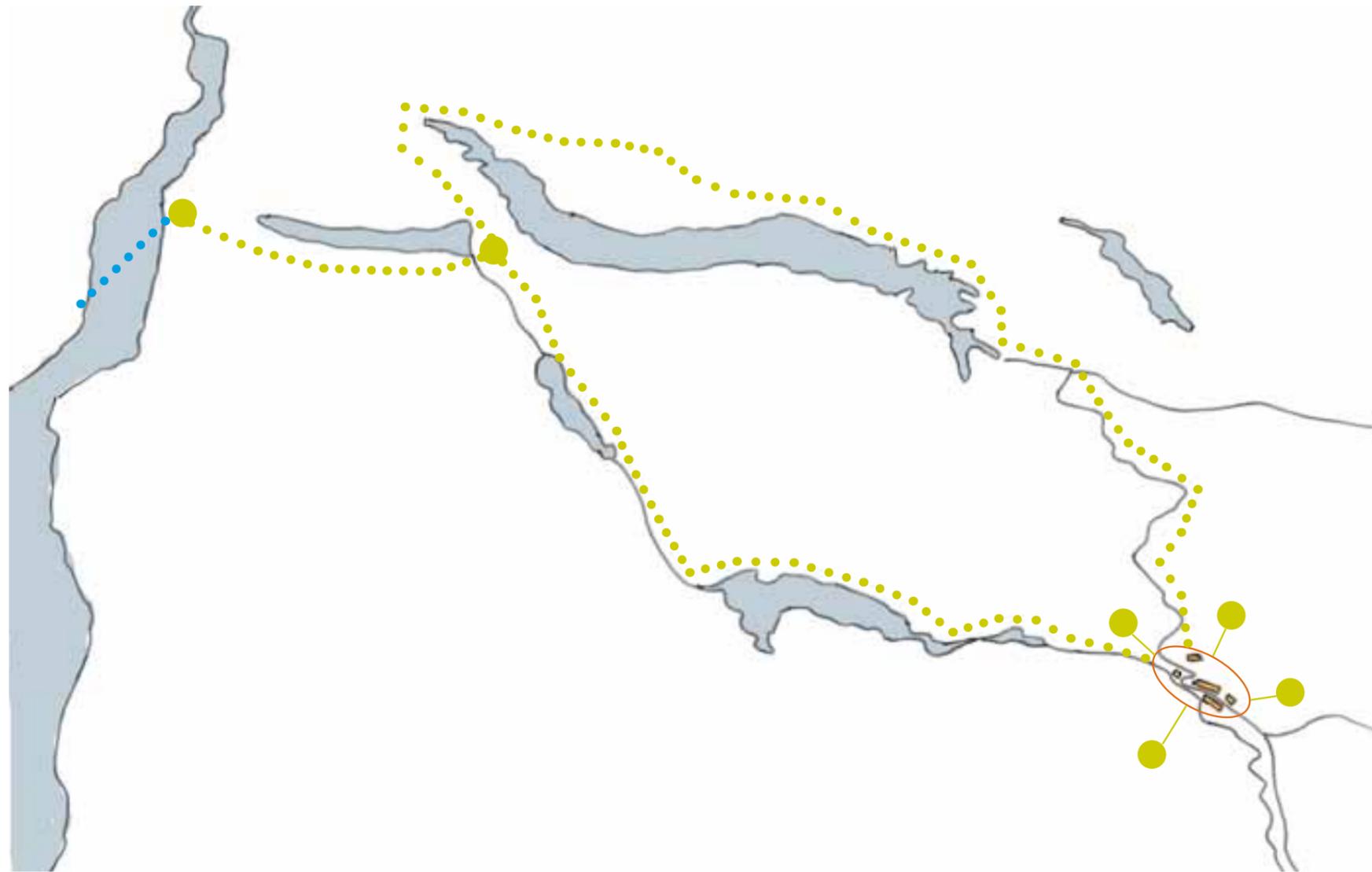
potential for enhancement of existing visitor accommodation and activity facilities

one off small development plots within woodland - potential for self-build

potential for visitor accommodation; lodge type self-catering, very low density and maximising woodland setting. There should be strong pedestrian connections to the village and a reliance on village for amenities, food and drink etc.

- ● ● ● core paths
- development - residential
- development - visitor economy (attraction, food/drink)
- green woodland areas

Key Initiative



This diagram illustrates the hub and satellites strategy for Aberfoyle and Strathard with Aberfoyle being the principal hub and orientation point for visitors to explore Strathard. A key element of the strategy is the promotion of the range of interconnected routes and journeys that can be developed to encourage extended journeys through the Park with stopping off points that connect into other pathways, cycle paths and ferries, Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond.

Aberfoyle is already the main settlement in Strathard. It's position can be enhanced with a co-ordinated visitor strategy which reinforces it's status as a hub for the area. A hub which is the centre for amenities and outdoor activities but also the orientation point and departure point for journeys into the wilder regions of Strathard.

The symbiotic relationship between Aberfoyle and Strathard can be developed by clustering new visitor accommodation around the fringes of Aberfoyle and also at the western end of Strathard, linking to Inversnaid and Stronachlachar. In this way the visitor accommodation can work together to encourage extended journeys through the Park with stopping off points that connect into other pathways, cycle paths and ferries, Loch Katrine and Loch Lomond. Clustering of complementary, additional, visitor accommodation of appropriate, small, rural scale at Inversnaid and Stronachlachar. will help to encourage visitors to turn a day out into a weekend away and extended stays by offering them a wider range of possibilities.

The road to Inversnaid is a constraint in its current form and this strategy needs to be carefully balanced with means of access up the Strath.

Key Initiatives



It is recognised that the health of the Aberfoyle's Main Street and its businesses is largely determined by the health of the visitor economy in the area. During the workshops, the potential for a greater variety in the local accommodation offer was discussed. It was acknowledged that Aberfoyle, in its capacity as an appealing place to stay for young and active families, needs to respond to demand for family and group types of self-catering accommodation.

The Queen Elizabeth Forest Park is a key factor in what makes the area special. A sensitively handled approach to visitor accommodation, with small clusters and dispersed small scale lodges can enhance the experience of being in this woodland setting, which would significantly increase the appeal of overnight accommodation in the area.



The critical factor, is to ensure safe walking and cycle routes to the village centre from accommodation, and that there is ample choice for food, drink and entertainment and other supportive services.



Key Initiatives

The riverside is a key space in Aberfoyle. It is the arrival point for most visitors to the village, by bike, car or bus. It is also where you get a true appreciation of Aberfoyle's setting, against the dramatic backdrop of the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park.

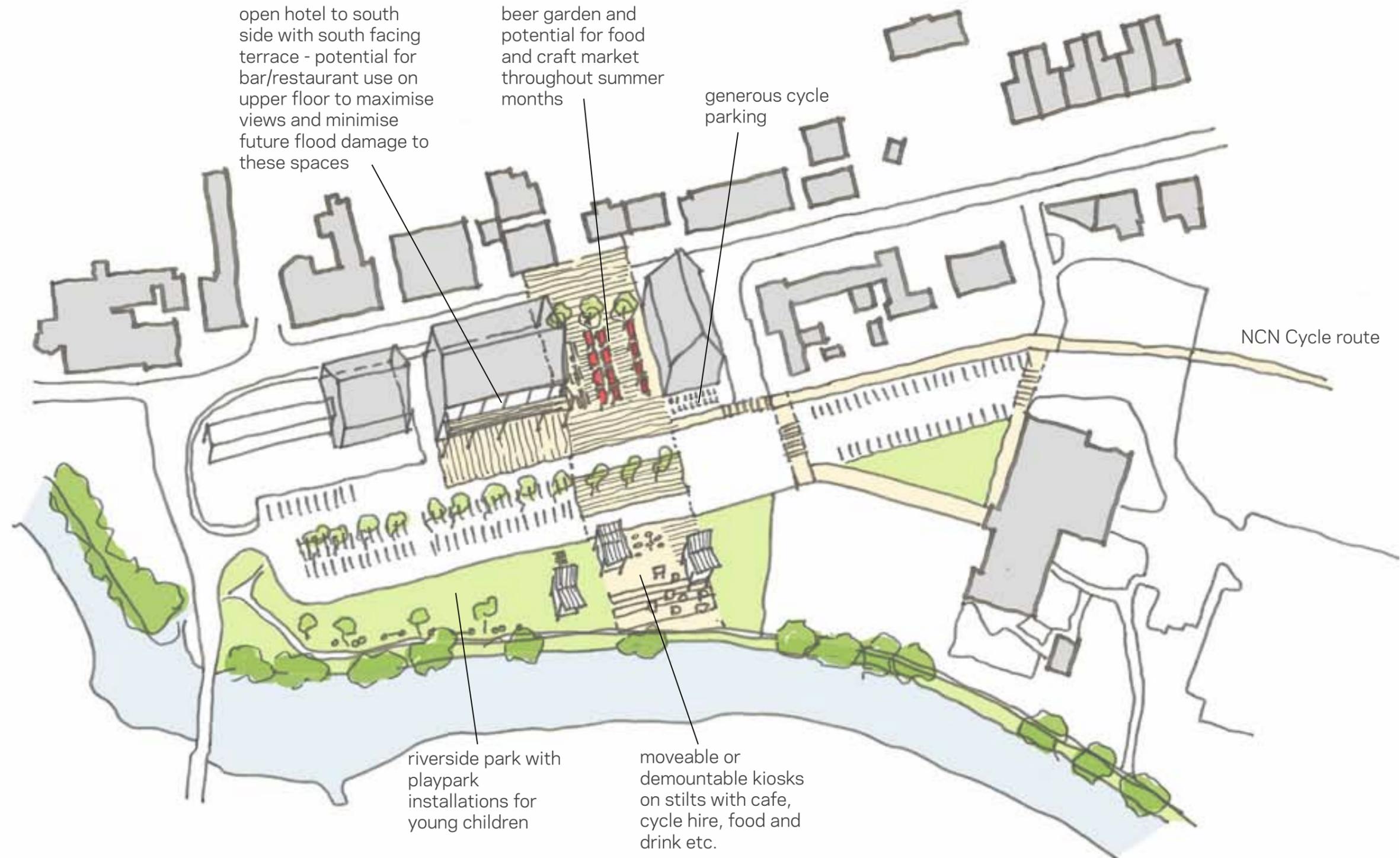
In winter ...
a landscaped park with orientation boards, a chance to park your bike, an opportunity to sit, and the local hotel to enjoy some food and drink

In summer
tables and chairs spilling out from the hotel, pop-up cafe and cycle hire, playpark, performance space, market ...

Some ideas



Key Initiatives



Key Initiatives

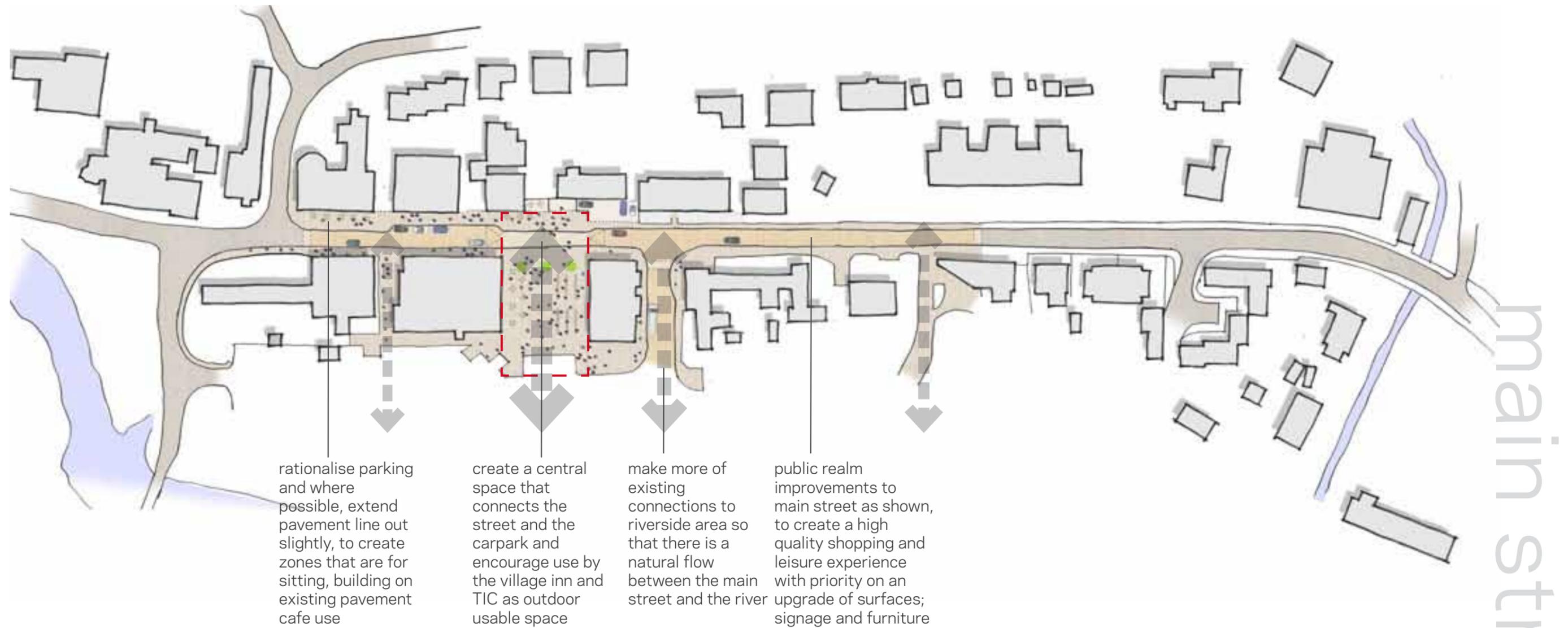
The Main Street in Aberfoyle is, to borrow an expression from a local resident, 'in need of a little TLC'. It is the centre of the village, for both visitors and residents alike and on a sunny day, it is bustling with people. However, it needs a fundamental appraisal of its public space if Aberfoyle is to fulfil its potential as a thriving village and first choice for families looking for a Scottish holiday destination.

The plan on the adjacent page illustrates a potential approach that creates a central space in the village between the Tourist Information Centre and the Forth Inn that, in collaboration with local businesses, can become a key social space in the village for visitors and the community.



View of main street looking west

Key Initiatives



Sketch ideas for main street



Aberfoyle Main Street



Tourist Information Centre Interior



Aberfoyle Memorial Hall Interior



Existing Tourist Information Centre building



Aberfoyle Memorial Hall

For discussion

Co-locate the Village Hall with the Tourist Information Centre

Affordable housing in Aberfoyle is a key issue. 'Affordable' in this context doesn't just mean social rent, it also means the cost of private rent and private ownership, which is dictated by open market demand and availability. Aberfoyle faces difficulties in that there are very few places for new houses to go. There is flood plain to the south and hilly forest to the north. The village has already spread as far as it can in an east west direction.

One suggestion that the Charrette team would like to raise for discussion is the opportunity posed by relocating the village hall. The village hall is a dated building, and will need investment in the future if it is to remain as the centre of the community's activities, particularly during the winter. The Tourist Information Centre is a large volume space, in the very centre of the village, on the Main Street. This suggestion involves testing if the village hall facilities can be relocated in the TIC building, with re-furb and/or extension work funded by the sale of the existing hall site for housing. It is envisaged that this will provide the community with facilities that are much more fit for purpose, and there is the opportunity to still provide visitor orientation facilities within the shared space - see the Three Villages Hall in Arrochar for how these dual functions can share the same building.

The village hall site is centrally located, and can readily accommodate a number of homes within the village centre. Funds generated by this scheme might also go toward small scale flooding protection measures within the village.

This was raised during the final Charrette workshop in Aberfoyle and so is not considered endorsed by the community. It remains a 'for discussion' item and if deemed to have potential benefit for the community, will require feasibility discussion with all parties involved.



The village hall site is sold for housing - targeted at first time buyers and young families. This would be central to the village and reinforce the existing neighbourhood.

Relocate the village hall facilities into the Tourist Information Centre building. These facilities should include hall space, changing, kitchen and meeting space, whilst also providing some visitor orientation and information - see the Three Villages Hall in Arrochar for an example of how these functions can share space.

