

# Strathard Framework

LAND USE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

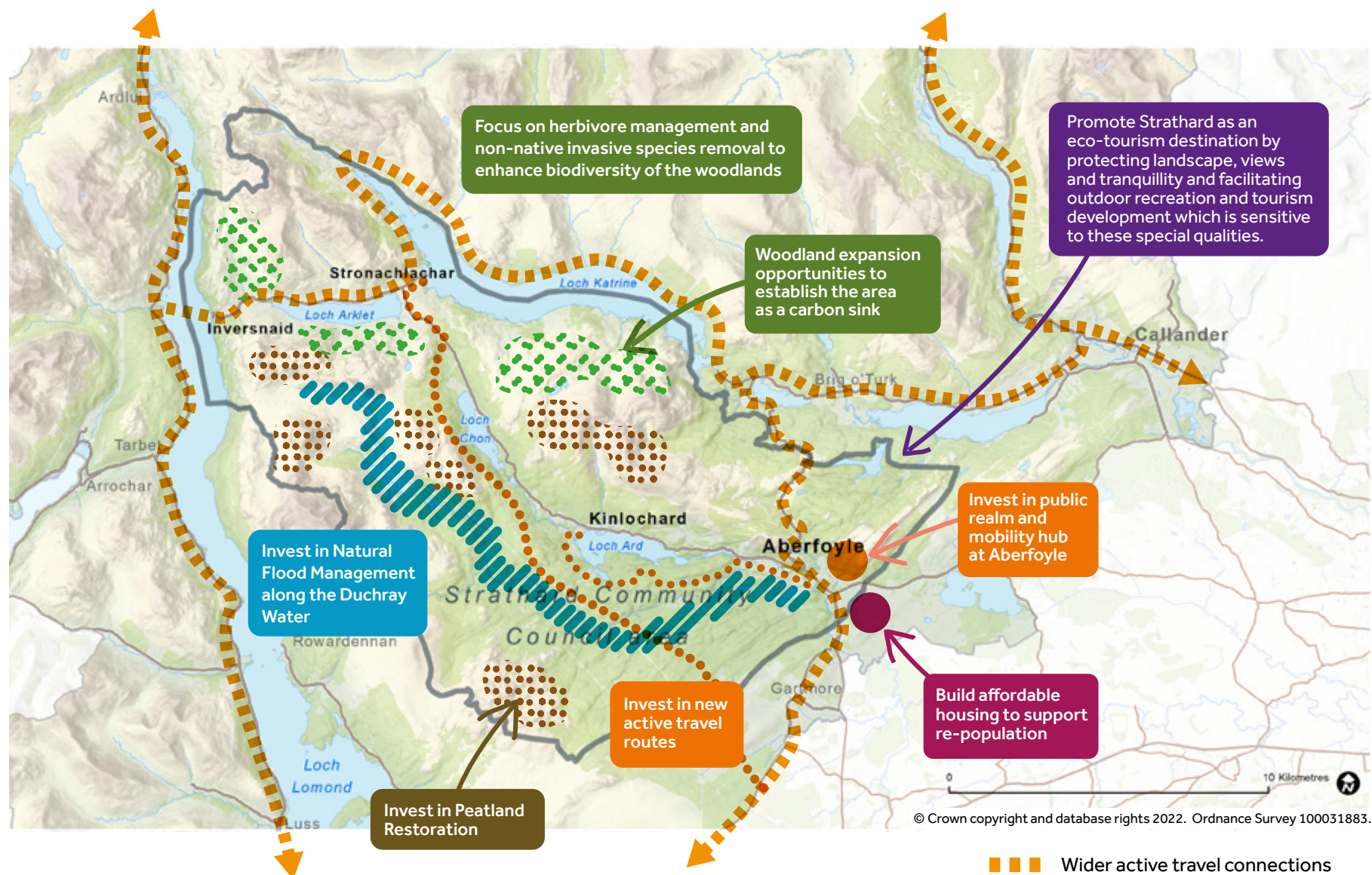


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Map 1 – Area covered by Framework and overview



# 1. Introduction

## What is this Framework?

This framework provides a long term shared vision and strategy for the Strathard area of the National Park up to 2040. It trials a new approach by integrating land use management and development planning at a local scale – for the Strathard Community Council area, shown on [Map 1 on page 3](#).

It is intended to guide and influence appropriate land use change and future delivery of development and infrastructure. It is about sustainable land use in its widest sense – about how land could be used and managed and the benefits this could provide through promoting nature based solutions and restoring nature. It is also about ensuring we meet the development needs for people living and working here, and for the many people who visit the area to enjoy its awe inspiring landscape and special qualities.

By considering land use opportunities jointly with development and infrastructure needs, the area can be considered holistically, enabling a clearer understanding of the value and significance of the area's rich natural capital (its natural assets, e.g. clean air, soil, water, plants, animals) as well as the benefits this delivers for people and place. In so doing, there is scope to identify stronger integration between different land uses in this area, for example forestry, recreation and cultural heritage or natural flood management upstream alongside flood alleviation measures in the village of Aberfoyle and the rest of the river catchment.



This framework is ambitious and clear on the changes that are needed in Strathard. It illustrates the actions identified through stakeholder engagement and shows the aspired key milestones in Strathard's journey of change to 2040. These reflect the targets set by the Scottish Government to address the climate and biodiversity crises and to support a just transition to a net zero carbon society. It is therefore the basis for initiating, guiding and delivering change and will require to be reviewed and updated regularly.

Delivery is key to the success of this framework and requires an ongoing commitment to the partnership working that has recently been established, as well as identification of a funding strategy. This framework is therefore the starting point from which partners can begin to coordinate delivery. The indicative delivery plan is included as an appendix that will be a working document reviewed annually.







### How has it been prepared?

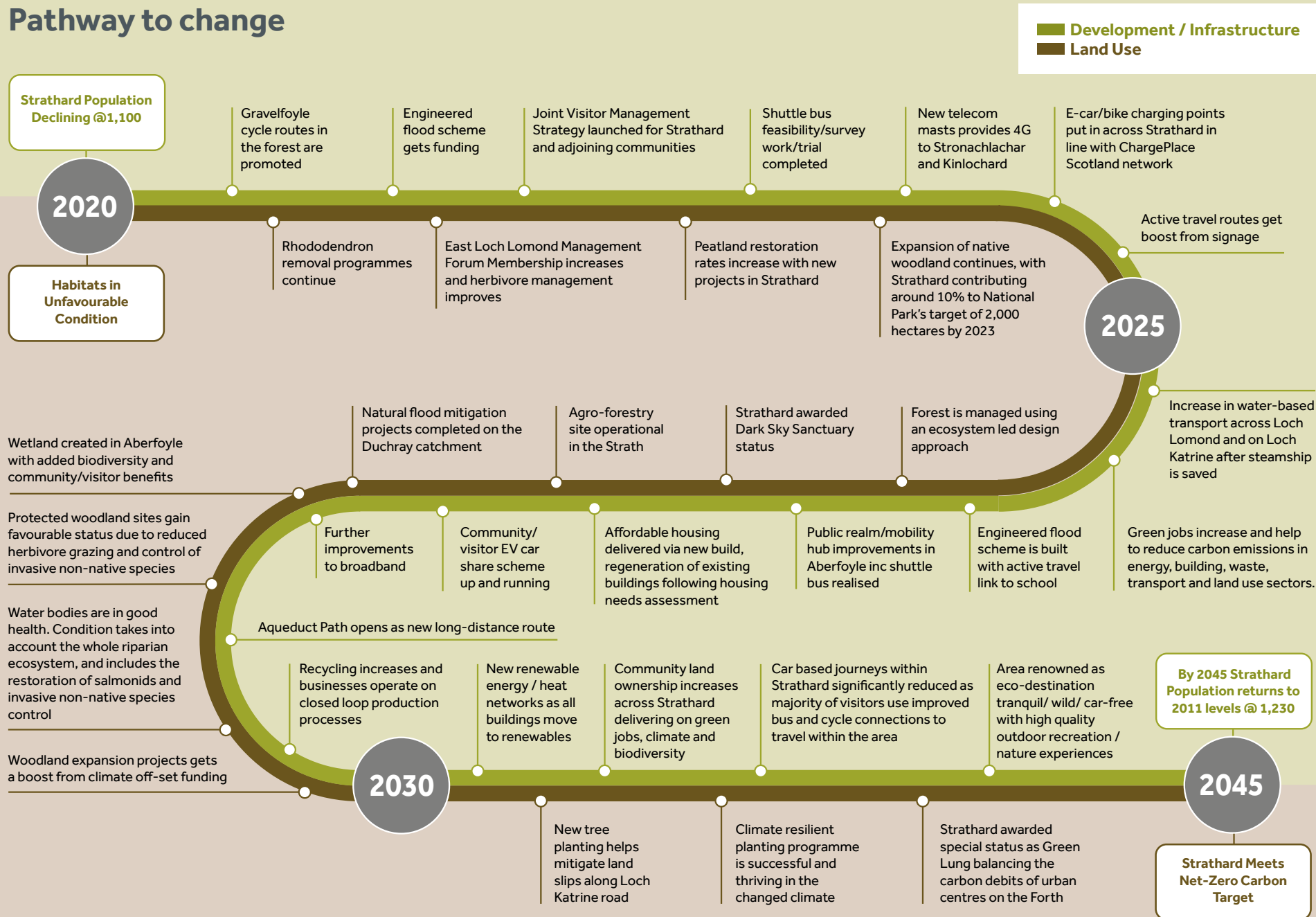
This framework trials a new approach towards developing place based guidance within the National Park and has been prepared collaboratively between the National Park Authority working with representatives from the local community, businesses, land owners and partner public bodies. Further information is within the section - [How did we get here? on Page 10.](#)

### What is its status?

This framework has been approved by the [National Park Authority Planning and Access Committee](#). It is planning guidance and it has weight in terms of influencing investment and development decisions in the area. The Strathard Framework Steering Group will also be asked to endorse this framework to act as the principle basis for agreeing priorities and coordinating delivery of the actions identified within it. More detail on this can be found on [Page 10 – How did we get here?](#)



# Pathway to change



## How it is intended to be used?

This framework sets the context and direction over the next 10 years by identifying the short/medium term issues and opportunities to enable and achieve the longer term objective of becoming a carbon conscious and climate resilient place in the next 25 years.

As described below, it is intended to be used to (a) inform land use decisions and future funding priorities and (b) as Planning Guidance to accompany the adopted Local Development Plan for the National Park and help inform development decisions.

### *Influencing land use decisions and future funding priorities*

This framework is an integrated approach to land use, considering all the land use issues in a holistic way. It seeks to enable more informed and integrated decisions to be made about how land is used in Strathard by making information available to everyone that can inform plans and strategies which others are responsible for. It is intended that the Framework informs and inspires individual land management decisions, by owners and managers, and the decisions and funding support from public sector bodies, other funders and private investors.

Whilst decisions rest with individual owners and managers, the framework provides a steer as to what the wider stakeholders in Strathard would most like to see in relation to land use choices and conservation projects in the area.

This includes a mandate for taking forward projects that are already underway but also to encourage and facilitate changes in land use such as farm diversification, new woodland creation and expansion, peatland restoration that provides carbon storage, enhancement of natural habitats by removal of invasive species, and natural flood management that benefits the local communities and those in the River Forth catchment. It could be used for informing an application for Scottish Rural Development Programme, developing landscape and biodiversity projects and ensuring that the land use change benefits the community, biodiversity loss and/or carbon reduction. Ultimately all coming together to enhance and protect the area's tranquillity and shape how the place should look and feel in future.

### *Use as Planning Guidance to accompany the Local Development Plan*

The Local Development Plan provides place specific guidance for Aberfoyle and includes an overall Park-wide development strategy and a set of policies which currently guide and inform development decisions in the wider Strath area.

Since the time of adopting the Local Development Plan, there has been various agency and community led plans published and partnerships established, with much activity on the ground (see 'How we got here' section on Page 10 for further information on this).

This framework builds on this work and provides more detailed and coordinated place based guidance on development and land use for the Strathard Community Council area. The intention is that, following consultation, it will be approved as Planning Guidance by the National Park Authority.

The Framework sets out the strategy for Strathard as a whole and for four identified sub areas. Within each area the types of changes identified are described, alongside priorities for action. Where potential locations are identified, these are also illustrated spatially on maps. These are indicative only and will need to be tested and confirmed through the planning process. Other opportunities may come forward over time, and the intention is that by setting out a shared vision and strategy for each sub-area, these will be used to guide and inform future decisions. The decision making process is set out on page 8



### Use of the Strathard Framework as Planning Guidance

Development proposals within the Strathard Community Council area will be guided and determined by using the following planning policy approach. Development proposals will be supported where they:

- (a) accord with the policies in the Local Development Plan, and
- (b) help fulfil the area based strategy established in this Framework (Section 6) or the detailed sub-area strategies (Section 8).

If a farm or estate requires additional finance to support a land use or biodiversity enhancement project, that would deliver significant landscape scale benefits for nature and climate, then consideration will be given in exceptional circumstance as to whether a development proposal, that does not meet (a) or (b) is acceptable. It must be demonstrated that the development would provide cross-subsidy and the project would otherwise be unviable.

Either a planning condition or obligation would be used to tie the proposals. All proposals should support the long term objectives of decarbonisation of the area, climate change adaptation and tackle biodiversity loss in accordance with Local Development Plan Overarching Policies;

**One: Strategic Principles** and  
**Two: Development Requirements .**

All proposals must also comply with the natural environment and historic environment policies. New development should firstly seek to redevelop existing buildings and brownfield (previously developed or used) sites, then aim to be 'net zero carbon<sup>(1)</sup>' development – i.e. use less.

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(1) Net Zero refers to achieving a balance between the amounts of greenhouse gas emissions produced balanced between the amounts removed from the atmosphere. A gross-zero target would mean reducing all emissions to zero, and this is not realistic – net zero recognises that there will be some emissions but that these need to be fully offset, predominately through natural carbon sinks – woodland, peatland etc.



## 2. Context

Strathard lies at the heart of the National Park. Covering approximately 100km<sup>2</sup> the area lies within The Trossachs and is part of the far headwaters of the River Forth catchment, stretching from the village of Aberfoyle westwards towards Ben Lomond.

With numerous lochs, flanked by heavily forested hill sides and mountainous peaks and ridges, the area - although relatively sparsely populated, is a popular tourist destination lying just 40 km north of Glasgow.

Within easy reach of the central belt the area, it is an attractive outdoor recreation day trip destination providing health and wellbeing benefits to locals and visitors alike. Tourism drives the local economy and is the major employer in the area.



Despite the scenic beauty and popularity of the area, there are specific localised issues that require to be addressed. These include:

- Woodlands that are being damaged by overgrazing and invasive species.
- Peatlands that are degrading and releasing carbon into the atmosphere.
- Degraded water bodies.
- Anticipated changes to land use due to the nature and climate emergencies and changes in agricultural support.
- Aberfoyle has been periodically affected by flooding events leading to damage to homes and businesses along the Strath floor.
- Businesses have been revitalising Aberfoyle but there are long standing issues of limited transport choices for visitors and the public realm is generally of poor quality.
- There is an ageing and declining local population due to various contributing factors. There is also a lack of affordable housing and opportunities to provide more affordable housing is hampered by various constraints and housing market issues.
- The COVID-19 pandemic effects experienced in 2020/21 have exacerbated visitor management issues and impacted on local businesses, with some closing. The area was overwhelmed with day visitors and the associated pressures from car parking, littering and other damaging visitor behaviours.
- There are more opportunities to work from home but there is a low wage/unstable seasonable employment resulting in people seeking careers elsewhere, particularly young people.

There are many opportunities for action to address these issues and enhance the environment, halt population decline and nurture sustainable communities living and working in the area, supported by services and facilities that can increasingly be accessed locally and digitally. These are captured in the area based strategies that follow.

### 3. How did we get here?

The Strathard Initiative was an environmental project that formed in 2015 to create a multi-agency, ecosystem services approach<sup>2</sup> to explore how the integration of natural land and water management practices could benefit the wider environment, at a landscape scale. This involved a range of stakeholders, including the community who also produced their own local Community Action Plan in 2017.

This Plan was broad ranging and in 2019 the community prepared more detailed, area focussed Community Life Plans for two sub-areas – Kinlochard and Inversnaid & Stronachlachar. These have been used to directly inform this Framework. The community have subsequently also prepared a Community Life Plan for Aberfoyle. These Life Plans are all available on the community's website and should be referred to in order to help inform land use and planning proposals and decisions. They will also be used to inform the preparation of the next Local Development Plan.

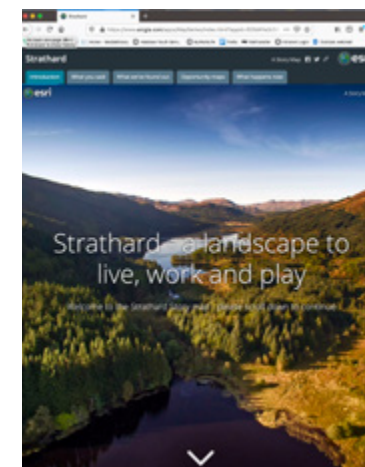
The Strathard community was shortlisted for a SURF award (Scottish Urban Renewal Forum) in 2019 in recognition of the role and strength of community led action and leadership in promoting heritage, revitalising business growth and establishing a local business hub, regenerating Aberfoyle Main Street, village enhancements and recruiting new members to both the Community Council and Community Development Trust, with a commitment to driving forward priorities and strengthening partnership working.

This enabled the Strathard Strategic Partnership to be set up towards the end of 2018. This was established primarily to aid communication between community representatives, businesses and public sector agencies and organisations and to coordinate delivery of the various plans and strategies. From this, a steering group was set up to co-design and steer this draft Framework, bringing together the two strands of work around land use and development.



The National Park Authority, Strathard Community Council, Strathard Community Development Trust, Stirling Council and Architecture and Design Scotland all sat on the group and appointed consultants, Planning Aid Scotland (PAS), to review all the previous work and facilitate two stakeholder workshops to inform preparation of this draft framework.

The workshop events were run in 2020 by PAS gaining a wider range of views from public sector agencies, Stirling Council, businesses and land managers but also have a meaningful discussion alongside the community. There was a strong desire to have a more coordinated approach to land use and development decisions. Architecture and Design Scotland also used the work as a rural case study on how to create a carbon conscious place in their full report Designing for a Changing Climate: Carbon Conscious Places.



(2) Ecosystem services are the processes by which the environment produces natural resources utilised by us all, such as clean air, water, food and raw materials.



## 4. Vision

*Strathard is a tranquil landscape and climate resilient place of outstanding natural beauty, with rich cultural heritage and strong community cohesion. The area's woodland and peatland acts as a carbon sink while supporting biodiversity, recreation and community self-sufficiency.*

*Outdoor activity and eco-tourism work alongside a balanced visitor management approach and a diverse local economy to support the protection of this diverse and connected eco-system and the well-being of local people and visitors. Nature based solutions are used to manage flooding, improve and enhance infrastructure and facilities.*

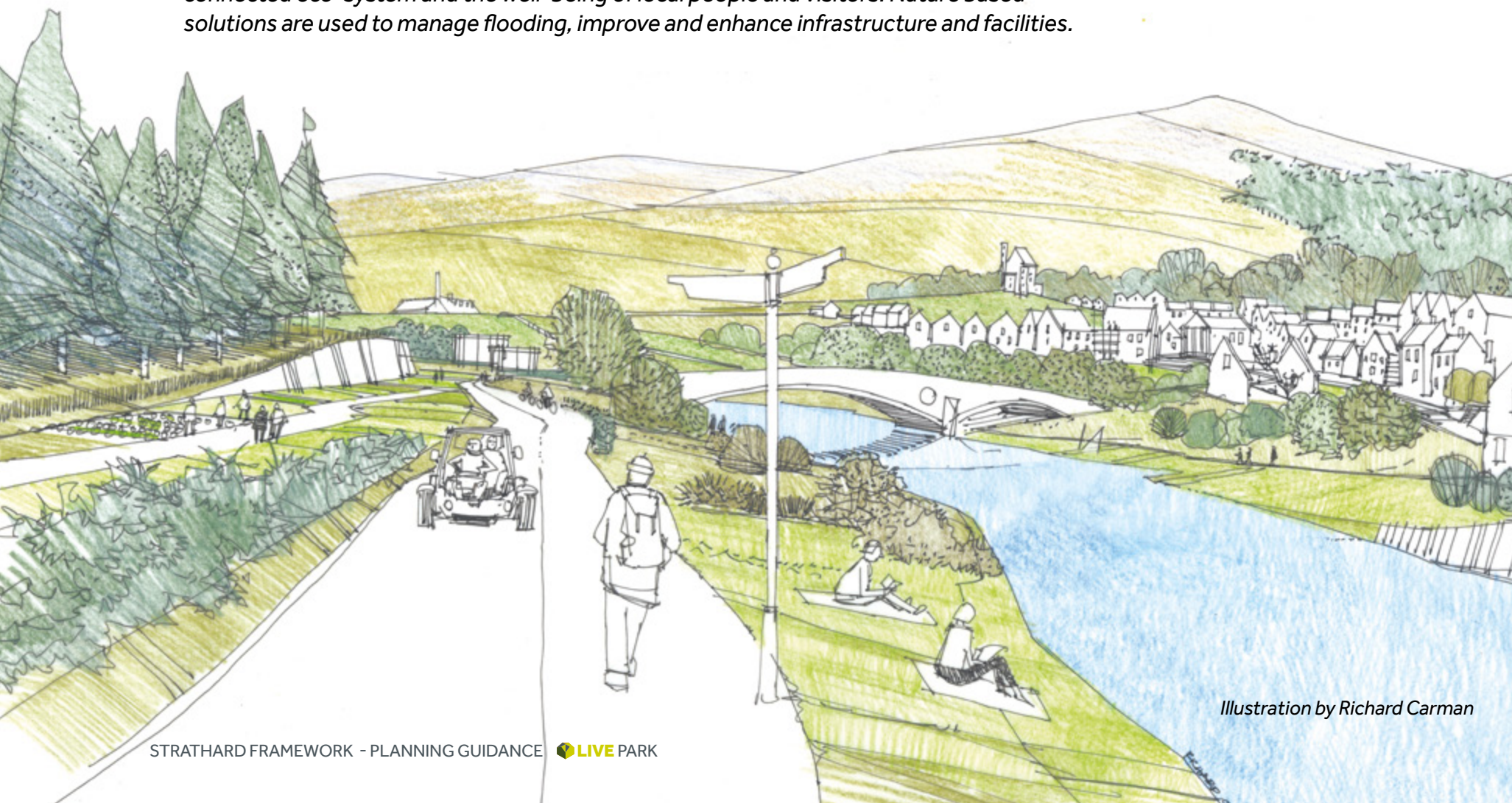


Illustration by Richard Carman



# 5. Strategy Summary

## Strathard and The Forest areas

- Improving the ecological status of the existing woodlands through invasive non-native species removal and herbivore management (deer and goats), diversifying tree species to increase native species, and enhancing habitat networks to help key species (e.g. wetlands for water voles).
- Restoring degraded peatland and planting more trees to increase carbon stores.
- Use natural flood management methods, alongside engineered solutions in Aberfoyle, to reduce the impact of flooding.
- Provide effective infrastructure – communications, nature based water solutions such as drainage ponds, renewable energy (run-of-river hydro, biomass, heat pumps) and shared / low impact heat supply.
- Connect communities to high quality network of signposted paths for cycling, walking, wheeling and other active travel modes and supporting potential for longer distance visitor routes – such as the Aqueduct path and long distance biking routes.
- Introduce innovative transport and parking solutions to try and shift reliance on cars – support shuttle bus and electric charging.
- Enhance local viewpoints and tranquil landscapes, particularly the lochs and promote dark skies.
- Diversify the local economy in terms of providing space for people to work from home including community/business hubs and diversification of land use to support community growing, local food production (honey, wild venison) and other employment opportunities in sustainable travel, education, childcare, essential community facilities/provision.
- Encourage the local tourism industry utilise the area's assets (dark skies, tranquillity, outdoor recreation) and help improve and maintain visitor infrastructure as well as help to restore and enhance natural capital, and realise benefits to the community.

## Aberfoyle

Reimagine Aberfoyle as a central hub for tourism economy and local services, including enhancement of public realm, addressing flooding, consideration of potential to create a new wetland, considering management of on-street parking and open space, regenerate brownfield sites, improved community facilities, affordable housing, discouragement of car based travel by developing a transport / mobility hub with sustainable transport options – shuttle bus service, e-car/e-bike hubs, e-car share.

## Kinlochard

Protect the tranquil qualities of Kinlochard and shores of Loch Ard, with support for more community facilities and infrastructure to support visitors arriving by active and sustainable travel modes. Some potential for small-scale camping around Kinlochard.

## Stronachlachar and Inversnaid

- Reinvigorate these remote communities where the feeling of isolation and resilience is being exacerbated by the effects of climate change resulting in road closures due to flooding and, in recent years a landslip cutting off the community.
- Invest in digital infrastructure and resilience planning.
- Support development that encourages a modest increase in population to live and work in this area to support it to become more self-sustaining.
- Removal of invasive rhododendron and expanding native woodland, local food growing will enable the creation of a carbon sink but also an asset for employment and recreation.

## 6. Strathard – Key Land Uses and opportunities for change

### Key Characteristics, Issues and Opportunities

The Strathard area contains many important designated sites, including both the Loch Lomond Woods and Trossachs Woods Special Areas of Conservation, The Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve, upland habitats at Ben Lomond Special Site of Scientific Interest, as well as the head of the River Forth.

The area is dominated by productive woodland, with 50% of the land managed as part of the Forest Estate by Forestry and Land Scotland. There are also areas of native woodland, including significant areas of upland oak woodlands and wet woodlands as well as scattered remnants of scrub woodland and lone trees in steep gulleys and on crags that could form the starting point for restoring sub montane scrub.



Important peatland habitat covers 15% of Strathard. Lochs are located in the wider glens, and the main communities are found along the loch margins and the River Forth where the floodplain widens out. Although farming has declined significantly in recent decades, the influence of farming still shapes the landscape.



A small number of land managers in Strathard are still engaged in active farming on varying scales, predominantly a mixture of extensive hill sheep and cattle grazing, and there are important areas of in-bye grassland around the loch sides. The land also provides other opportunities for food produce including foraging of wild berries and mushrooms, honey production and game (venison/goat/fish).

The [Strathard Initiative](#) mapped habitats, and undertook an ecosystem condition assessment and hydrological assessments. The group also prepared opportunity maps for natural flood management, woodland planting, peatland restoration and water vole habitat. The East Loch Lomond Land Management Forum have prepared a management plan for deer and a sub-group of the Balquhider Deer Management Group produced a plan for feral goats. Other collaborative projects in the area include the removal of invasive rhododendron in woodland in designated sites and surrounding land and riparian invasive non-native species control. The land managed by Forestry and Land Scotland is also covered by various 10 year land management plans – including Beinn Bhan, East Loch Ard, West Loch Ard and Loch Katrine.



Natural flood management techniques in the Duchray catchment and wider Strath can complement the hard engineering flood alleviation solutions in Aberfoyle (for which funding is currently being sought by Stirling Council) to help to address flooding issues on the Main Street.

Woodland creation is a high priority for the Scottish Government; the current target is to increase woodland cover from 19% to 21% by 2032. Although Strathard has a high proportion of woodland cover, there is scope to increase this in areas such as Comer and around Loch Arklet in the north west area of Strathard. There are also opportunities to continue to improve woodland condition by reducing the impact of grazing from deer and feral goats, and by removing invasive non-native species. A [Deer Management Plan \(2019-2024\)](#) developed by East Loch Lomond Land Management Forum has established collaborative management of the deer population in this area.

Peatland restoration by physical works such as hag re-profiling and by keeping hill sheep and hill deer at environmentally sustainable levels, is important in mitigating climate change and can play a role in flood alleviation.

Degraded water bodies have been identified across Strathard, and a combination of both public and private initiatives can help to address this.

There are opportunities for farms to diversify, and to play an important role in delivering solutions and sustainably managing the land in Strathard. All of these actions help to improve habitats for native flora and fauna.



There are also opportunities to promote and nurture the tranquillity of the Strathard landscape by encouraging sustainable visitor management and active travel in the wider Strath. The various sub-area sections in this draft framework identify short and longer-term objectives for visitor management. For instance, there are opportunities for Aberfoyle to become a mobility/visitor hub with improved public realm and an opportunity to fully explore the area as a potential 'car-free' visitor destination where visitors can travel around the area with ease on regular and efficient shuttle buses, e-taxis, bikes, on foot, and e-bike or e-scooter with exemplar facilities and infrastructure that support these services.

[Map 2 on page 15](#) illustrates the priorities and opportunities in a spatial holistic context and is interactive so if you wish you can delve into more of the detail and add other layers of data to help you make decisions about your land or form new proposals/projects. The priorities are not shown in any particular ranking of importance. The delivery plan in Appendix One begins to consider the anticipated timescales in which these actions could be delivered.




## Map 2 – Detailed Strathard Area Strategy



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# Priorities for overall area

## Woodland Management and Creation


 Continue the diversification and enhancement of the existing productive conifer woodlands by restructuring to form a sustainable woodland habitat network with creation of additional areas of open ground and native woodland to link existing woodland or riparian zones. Enhancing native woodland, particularly the key temperate rainforest, with the focus on invasive non-native species control, herbivore management and controlling diseases. Further details are in the Trees and Woodland Strategy. Encourage expansion of native woodland as shown on Map 2.

Ensure the continued economically important production of sustainable high quality timber and other wood products and consider opportunities to promote skills development as well as diversification to develop services that support the local economy, through both tourism and enterprise.

## Community self-sufficiency, economy and affordable housing


 Promote the development of low impact live/work spaces, workshops, affordable and local workers housing, apprenticeship schemes, shared community workspace/hubs, high speed broadband, childcare facilities to diversify the economy to be less dependent on tourism, retain young and working age people and help the community become more self-sufficient. Details of opportunities are identified in the sub-area section of the Framework.

## Visitor Management and Infrastructure

 Address visitor pressures by developing a Visitor Management Strategy for the area and the adjoining areas. Improve visitor infrastructure and management focusing on signage, seating, traffic management measures, fixed variable messaging signage, toilet and changing provision, litter bins and recycling hubs, motorhome and tent provision and also sustainable and active transport (see below).

There is also the opportunity to grow and develop visitor recreational walking and cycling routes with links to heritage such as developing a long-distance mountain bike route via Comer to Loch Lomond, Gravelfoyle routes, and develop the Aqueduct trail, alongside continued maintenance/enhancement of hill paths such as Ben Venue. Opportunities for collaboration and partnerships with community, and to promote community access and recreational use of woodlands.


## Sustainable and active travel

 A new shuttle bus serving the Strath with the creation of a network of mini travel hubs across Strathard is needed with the priority being a new mobility hub<sup>4</sup> in Aberfoyle (see further details in the Aberfoyle sub-area strategy) where visitors can find a variety of facilities including but not inclusive of - e-charging, bus shelters, drop off points for e-bikes/e-scooters, storage boxes, toilets and bike maintenance. There are opportunities to develop e-car/bike clubs, increased cycle/walking networks and bus frequencies to allow people to get between key places such as the school and outwith the area such as Stirling and Glasgow.


The road along the northern side of Loch Katrine shall continue as an active travel route as it is not suitable for being upgraded for public use. The B829 should be improved in terms of new passing places, road surface and could gain pedestrian/cycle friendly status once a shuttle bus is operational. In some sections the single track road may need maintained to protect the character of the area. Details of opportunities are identified in the sub-area section of the Framework

*(4) Mobility hubs are spaces designed specifically to support public transport alongside active and shared mobility modes whilst improving the public realm. The redesign and reallocation of space from the private car is intended to enhance the experience of visitors as well as benefiting local residents and businesses.*


### Water ecosystems and supporting utility infrastructure

 Improve water quality and ecological value of all water bodies by working with key stakeholders to restore salmon spawning grounds, tackle invasive non-native species, improve riparian edge by creating permanent native woodland habitats along the banks of burns and rivers, reduce diffuse pollution and improve foul drainage systems including Scottish Water assets and private waste treatment.


### Peatland restoration

 Restore peatlands via the Peatland ACTION project to help reduce impacts of climate change, as well as for the benefit of people, fishing, farming, biodiversity, and flood management. Also the benefits to the local economy should be realised through appointment of local contractors.


### Renewable energy

 Identify opportunities for further small scale run of river hydro schemes, small-scale solar in connection with existing and new buildings, biomass, energy centres – heat networks, heat pumps (both air and water) and small-scale wind turbines.

### Community resilience, flood adaptation, mitigation and management

 Flood adaptation is a priority to ensure community resilience within the Strath and at Aberfoyle where access is blocked during flood events. Investigation is needed over alternative access and egress points via the forest during such events. In terms of flood mitigation, the priority is to develop natural flood management solutions e.g. wood debris dams, timber bunds and tree planting, in the upper Duchray, particularly at Comer as shown on Map 2. Wetland areas could also be created in collaboration with key stakeholders. Around Loch Katrine the priority is to stabilise the land and protect the road from landslips by tree planting. The priority for Loch Katrine road is for controlled access for residents to continue to be allowed during flood events.

### Land diversification

 Existing small farms in the glen floor could diversify and/or expand, where there is agreement found with neighbouring landowners to help with biodiversity enhancement.


Diversification opportunities could include agroforestry, renewable energy, camping/glamping sites and/or off grid recreational huts which could aim to support non car based recreation and tourism stays that make the most of the tranquil environment and dark skies.

The area is valuable in terms of timber production and food production (beef/lamb) but there are opportunities in wild food harvesting (mushrooms, berries), wild food products (venison, trout) and honey production.

For the larger estates and public land holdings (including RSPB, Drumlean, Comer, Ledard and Scottish Water and Forest and Land Scotland), there could be an enabling role for development to help finance significant natural capital enhancements– such as woodland creation, natural flood management and peatland restoration but also visitor infrastructure such as paths or e-bike charging points.

There is support already given by the Local Development Plan for diversification of farms to provide small-scale tourism and economic development but where commercial or housing proposals do not comply then the decision making process would be used (as set out on page 8).

### Landscape Tranquillity, Recreation and Dark Skies

 The community, local businesses and visitors derive benefit from the Strathard landscape and its overall sense of tranquillity and relaxing atmosphere. This tranquillity value should be promoted and protected so that both the community and visitors can connect with and appreciate nature. There is an opportunity to develop a dark skies project that can explore options for Dark Sky Sanctuary status. The lochs are an important asset for quiet recreational enjoyment and loch shore areas are highlighted as sensitive areas where the introduction of new/intensified formal recreation development and other forms of development will be resisted.



## 7. Landscape Qualities and Important Views

Strathard is described in the [Special Landscape Qualities report](#) as “a harmonious concentration of lochs, woods and hills.” We have used information from the Strathard Initiative consultation which identifies how the community feel about the landscape and tranquillity of the area.

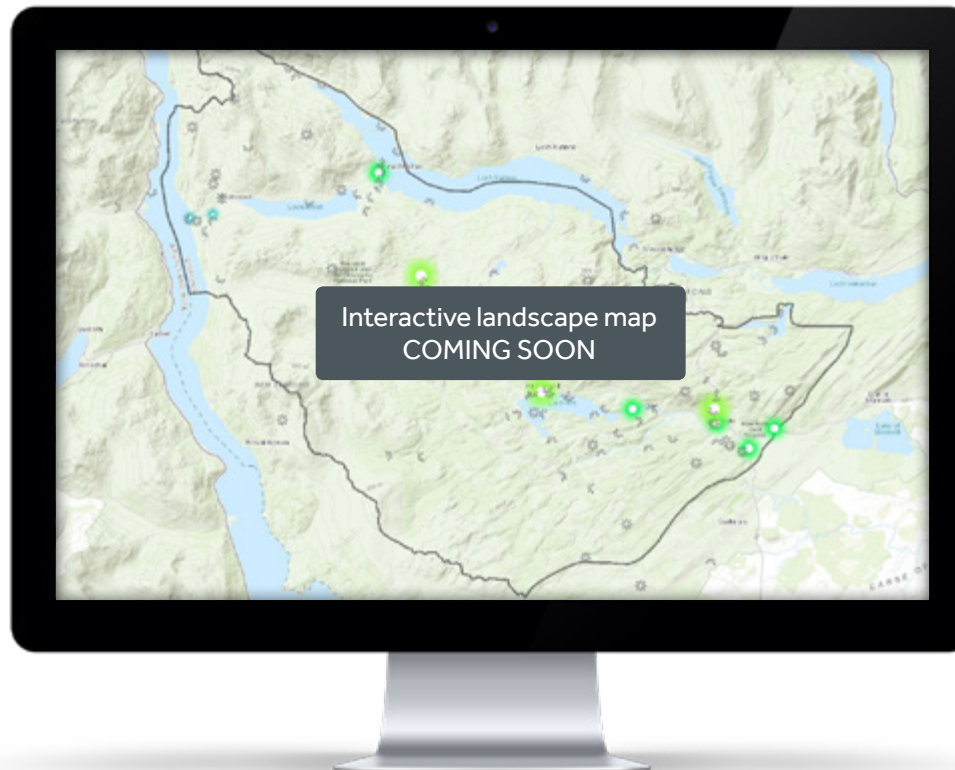
These have been collated from OS maps, visitor leaflets, walking guides, social media and from local knowledge. The list is not exhaustive but it highlights the number of important views across the area. Not all views are managed or require to be managed (as viewpoints) but all are publicly accessible and enjoyed by the public.

Development proposals should safeguard visual amenity and important views and enhance the rich landscape character and features in accordance with the Overarching Policy 2 of the Local Development Plan. Land management decisions such as forest plans and woodland creation proposals or changes in farming activity should also aim to safeguard and enhance these features where possible.

Where a development proposal or land use change is within a sightline of a view (as shown on Map 3), a landscape appraisal should be undertaken when required to assess the impact of the development on the foreground, middle ground and background of the view.

New development and land use changes should not harm and where possible should make a positive contribution to the characteristics and composition of the view.

Development in the foreground and middle ground of a view should not be overly intrusive, unsightly or prominent to the detriment of the view. Proposals in the background of the view should not harm the composition of the view in the context of landmarks – for example Ben Lomond or Church spire in Aberfoyle. For land use changes such as new woodland, where existing views will be unavoidably lost, other views should be identified and opened up.



## 8. Sub-Area Strategies

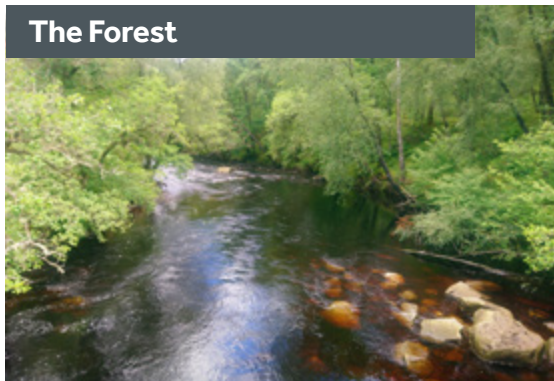
### Introduction

The Sub-Area Strategies set out the opportunities and issues set within four key sub-areas: The Forest, Aberfoyle (The Hub), Kinlochard, and finally Inversnaid and Stronachlachar.

The maps show possible locations for development opportunities. These are suggested locations identified through engagement so far. They have not been subject to any formal assessment nor has formal landowner agreement been sought or agreed.

It is important to note that the identification of these potential development sites will not preclude any future development brought forward outside this process – for example on alternative sites which will be considered within the context established in this draft framework. Any proposal would require to be considered through the formal planning application process, including consideration of any potential impacts on designated European sites.

The Forest



Aberfoyle (The Hub)



Kinlochard



Inversnaid and Stronachlachar



Each section describes the key characteristics and opportunities followed by a strategy map. >



# The Forest

## Vision

The forest is a place with important woodland, wetland habitats and recreation opportunities for both the local communities of Strathard and Scotland to benefit from. Continuing a strong heritage of managing resources such as timber, the place provides clean air, habitat for wildlife, and livelihoods for people.

The area offers watershed protection, prevents soil erosion and mitigates the impacts of climate change both locally and nationally. The area is recognised as a carbon sink, acting as green lungs for Scotland and climate adaptation assets.



## Key Characteristics

The forest area is dominated by the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park established in 1953 and under the management of Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) for commercial forestry. FLS also develop renewable energy schemes, create and maintain trails and visitor facilities and conserve and enhance biodiversity. There are a scattering of private properties including 16th Century Duchray Castle, thought to have been used as a hunting lodge by the Kings of Scotland. From coppicing and fairies to Rob Roy, the area is steeped in history, and further information can be found [here](#).

The [East Loch Ard](#), the [Beinn Bhan](#) and the [West Loch Ard](#) Land Management Plans (prepared by Forestry and Land Scotland<sup>5</sup>) set out how the forestry will be managed and restructured. This framework provides guidance on recreation and tourism development, conservation and natural flood management opportunities.

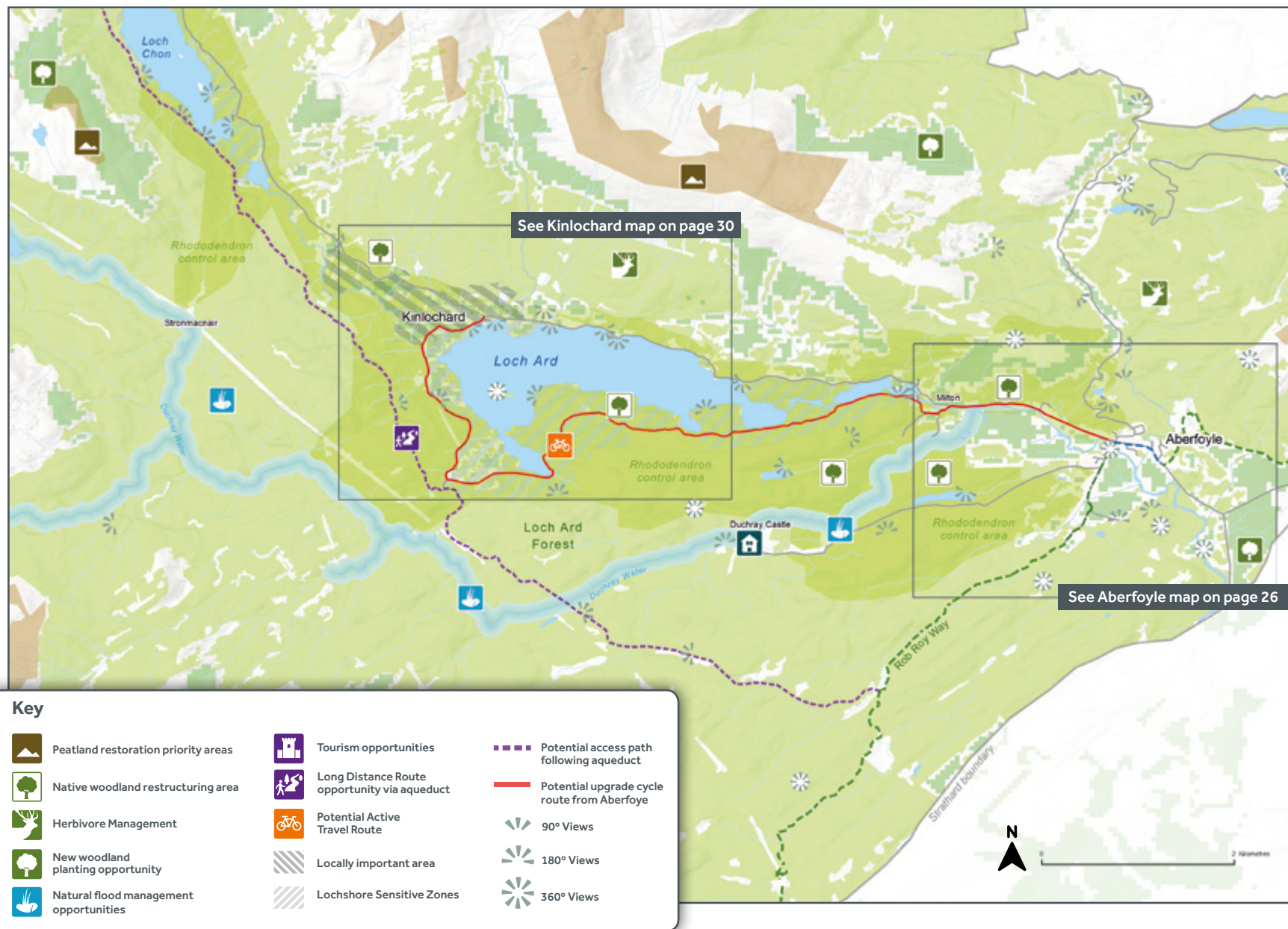
In terms of natural flood management (NFM), the Duchray Water has already been a pilot area for wood debris dams and creating wetted areas as part of a trial. There are further opportunities to explore NFM solutions and enlarge the scheme. Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) is already exploring funding options for this.

During the pandemic of 2020/21 the area was used heavily by visitors and car parks were overflowing at places including Milton and The Lodge at Aberfoyle. The main priority is to encourage visitors to leave their cars at home, or park in Aberfoyle, and explore the area by foot or bike to allow the forest to be a safe car free zone with visitor infrastructure to support this type of use. Gravelfoyle - which consists of waymarked routes for bike users of gravel trails and forest roads - will allow more visitors to feel safe in the forest. However, coordinated signage remains a key priority. There is some scope for sensitive tourism accommodation and the main considerations would be vehicle access, conflicts with forestry operations, topography, protected and ancient woodland, and servicing (water, drainage).



(5) Forest and Land Scotland are the Scottish Government agency responsible for managing Scotland's national forests and land.

## Map 3 – The Forest Sub-Area Strategy




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## Priorities for The Forest


### Woodland management and creation

 Enhance the quality of productive and native woodland by encouraging land managers to work collaboratively to develop plans on non-native invasive species control and peatland restoration. Also ensure forest plans deliver on restructuring of the productive conifer woodland, continuing to manage deer numbers and enhance of riparian edge in line with the Trees and Woodland Strategy and Forth & Teith Management Plan. These should continue to be developed in collaboration with the community to identify opportunities for diversification to develop the local economy.

### Visitor management & infrastructure


 Develop and promote heritage paths in the area, with a specific focus on an Aqueduct pathway connecting Loch Katrine to Milngavie. Link this into the Strathard Heritage Digital archive managed by Strathard Community Trust and Loch Ard Local History Group. Also improve signage in the forest with focus currently being on gravel bike signage, but further review is required to identify if interpretation boards or finger posts are required at key locations to interpret cultural and natural heritage and provide direction.

### Sustainable and active travel


 Improve active travel links through the forest to connect communities and key visitor destinations including, but not inclusive of, Aberfoyle to Kinlochard via the school, Aberfoyle to the Lodge and Kinlochard to Stronachlachar/Inversnaid. These routes shall preferably be gravel sealed surface and follow existing forest roads and tracks where possible.

The Aberfoyle to Kinlochard route is indicated on the map. These routes shall be connected to sustainable travel hubs at Milton and Kinlochard where users are able to rent bikes or interchange from bike/foot to a shuttle bus or taxi. Investigation is needed into the B829 gaining pedestrian/cycle friendly status.


### Community resilience, flood adaptation, mitigation and management

 Using knowledge from woody debris dam trials, develop other dams and wetland areas to reduce the speed of water entering the river system in extreme weather events with the added benefit of enhancing habitats for water voles and other wildlife.

### Renewable energy

 Develop a small-scale hydro and/or solar power scheme in the area, in collaboration with Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS). Also, there is an opportunity to look at feasibility of land for coppicing for biomass.


### Peatland restoration

 There is peatland restoration potential on Drumlean Estate and the land under the management of Forest and Land Scotland which is identified in the various Land Management Plans including Beinn Bahn and Loch Katrine.

### Other opportunities

 **Tourism accommodation**  
There may be opportunities for low impact and off-grid development that supports recreational activities within the forest, such as south Loch Ard, subject to a suitable access point and biodiversity benefits. The Visitor Experience Policy 1 of the Local Development Plan also supports a strategic tourism opportunity in the Aberfoyle area and the land around Duchray Castle may offer an opportunity for this type of medium to larger scale tourism accommodation subject to having no adverse impacts.

### Water ecosystem and supporting utility infrastructure

 Continue to look after re-introduced water vole population in Loch Ard and Queen Elizabeth Forest by monitoring and controlling American mink.



# Aberfoyle – The Hub

## Vision

Aberfoyle is the hub, providing local services and enterprise opportunities with good access and carbon neutral transport options to other places. Visitor accommodation is managed and affordable housing supported to ensure housing meets the needs of all generations of local people.

Nature based solutions connect and enhance the local environment and flooding is managed in a holistic way. Aberfoyle is recognised as one of the most thriving and climate resilient gateways in the National Park.





## Key Characteristics

Aberfoyle is situated with the Queen Elizabeth Forest Park acting as the 'Gateway to The Trossachs'. The village sits alongside the River Forth. There is a riverside picnic area and path next to the main car park, a recently reinvigorated main street with newly opened tourist shops and café, business hub and a small supermarket for essentials.

During the 19th Century, the area became a popular tourist destination for wealthy Victorians. This is where Aberfoyle draws its main character from, its Victorian buildings built of stone and natural 'local' slate. Any new developments should respect this original character if situated alongside such historic buildings. The village can accommodate higher density accommodation up to three storey high in some places. New housing on the edge of the village could use timber and slate as principle materials to fit in with the wooded setting of the village. The village also has 1960s architecture including the Rob Roy Motel and the Forestry 'Lodge', a key visitor centre, and a listed building built of distinctive Lake District slate.

Strathard Heritage Archive provides a collection of photographs and postcards of the area, in particular Aberfoyle, that may be of use when considering development in the village.

The key priority of the Framework is making Aberfoyle the hub and improvements could help unlock economic development potential of the town. Building on the successful recent tourism and economic development work led by the Strathard Community Trust and the development of a Tourism Strategy, Strathard is now being promoted as a cycling destination, with significant opportunities identified for gravel routes in the forest.

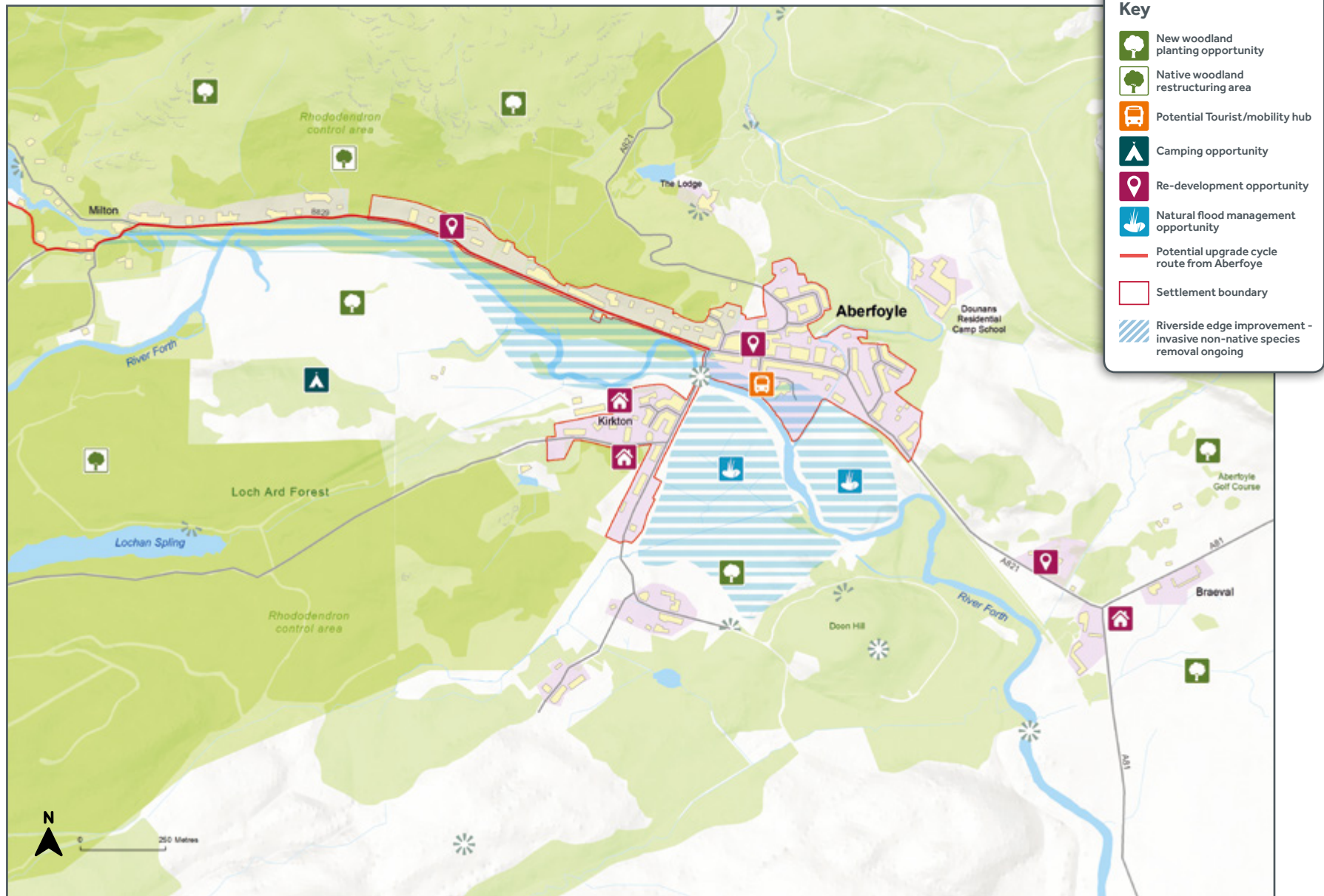


The Aberfoyle Community Life Plan highlights all the historical treasures that can be found around Aberfoyle and also details community identified aspirations and opportunities such as play park redevelopment.

The Aberfoyle Life Plan (similar to those for Kinlochard, Stronachlachar and Inversnaid), highlights locally important areas, however it has not been possible to map these in this Framework as the Aberfoyle Life Plan was published after the Framework was approved (following a further period for consultation and engagement).

Find out more in the Aberfoyle Community Life plan. The Community Life Plan should be referred to in order to help inform land use and planning proposals and decisions.

## Map 4 – Aberfoyle Sub-Area Strategy




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## Priorities for Aberfoyle

### Woodland management and creation

 Priorities as shown on the map include rhododendron removal in the protected woodlands, riverside invasive control and native woodland protection and potential new areas of woodland.

### Sustainable and active travel

 Building on Aberfoyle's assets (bike hire, village wi-fi, bike racks, toilets, riverside picnic area, co-working space) there is an opportunity to re-develop the main street and riverside car park to address the quality of the pavements/surfacing/benches, safer crossing points, step free access, provide changing place for cyclists/bike cleaning, e-bike/car charging, one-way bike hire service, hub for bus with covered waiting space, improved planting, artwork, lockers, mini play area, and improve the active travel links to Milton/Kinlochard along B829 and to The Lodge.


Introduce a shuttle bus to access the wider area and Strath and improve services to Stirling and Glasgow. The location of this project is shown on the map as the Hub and Placemaking Priority and the interactive map has further details on opportunities.

### Flood adaptation, mitigation and management


 Flood management is key to the success of Aberfoyle. A proposed engineered scheme with elements of natural flood management has the opportunity to protect the businesses in a 1 in 100 year event – a decision on funding for this scheme is expected in 2021. However the priority should continue to be a focus on natural flood management and adaptation, particularly in relation to access to the school.

There is also an opportunity to create a new wetland to accommodate flood waters along Manse Road which has added benefits of enriching the biodiversity and providing an area for quiet enjoyment and wildlife watching.

### Renewable Energy

 Feasibility of district heating could be explored – using air/water heat pumps, biomass, hydrogen, solar thermal technology.

### Community self-sufficiency, economy and affordable housing

 Potential opportunities for three sites for affordable housing have been identified on the interactive map (see map and click on each site further details). These should provide a mix of housing types, particularly addressing the needs of young people and local residents seeking smaller sized homes. Should these sites not prove feasible other options to redevelop sites or investigate land opportunities in the neighbouring areas and within the wider Strathard area will be required. This should be informed by an audit of existing buildings/sites, local housing needs analysis, market research and discussion with stakeholders.

Potential economic redevelopment sites are shown on the [map](#) – click on each site for further info. Opportunities include office space, small workshops/units for locally produced goods with opportunities to use locally sourced timber, and produce from foraging (such as gin distilling), honey etc, retail (to provide services for visitors but also the community such as a hardware store), café or restaurants. The community should also be supported in community land ownership and asset transfer, childcare facilities, improving broadband, enhancing play facilities, community growing space and allotments.

# Kinlochard

## Vision

Kinlochard is a tranquil place with the community at its heart. Community-led development, improvements to the digital connectivity and a low carbon transport and active travel network, have reinforced social cohesion.

The surrounding landscape is climate resilient and has been respected and enhanced and a balanced approach to the management of visitors will ensure that both local people and visitors are able to enjoy the tranquil recreational and scenic qualities of the area. Kinlochard has been recognised for its strong sense of community, guardianship of the environment and continued support of access to the surrounding landscape.



## Key Characteristics

Kinlochard is a small community on the edge of Loch Ard. It has been home to the Forest Hills Resort since 1937 following conversion from a large home and more recently Altskeith Hotel which, alongside the community owned village hall, is popular with weddings. The principle character of the place is white render or stone buildings with slate roofs and traditional features such as chimneys. New development should follow this style of white wash or timber and slate could be used if in a wooded setting.

Loch Ard has grown in popularity for water based recreation including open water swimming, paddle boarding and kayaking. The village is situated on the loch with limited visitor infrastructure and parking.

Any development should protect the tranquillity of Kinlochard and sensitive lochshores as shown on the map. New development opportunities are very limited in the immediate village environs and the Kinlochard Community Life Plan notes the priority to conserve areas of open land, rich in semi-wild and woodland habitats. This area has been highlighted on the map as a locally important area.

The B829 and Loch Cottages Road has limited capacity to accommodate large numbers of additional vehicle movements. Any new development should be small-scale development and demonstrate how it can contribute towards improving community facilities (childcare and essential shop), active travel, road condition, bus service, waste water and broadband. Feasibility of district heating could be explored – using air/water heat pumps, biomass, or solar thermal technology.

The village hall website provides further information on the history of Kinlochard.

Find out more in the [Kinlochard Community Life Plan](#). The Community Life Plan should be referred to in order to help inform land use and planning proposals and decisions.





## Map 5 – Kinlochard Sub-Area Strategy



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## Priorities for Kinlochard

### Water ecosystems and supporting utility infrastructure

There are various infrastructure improvements required in relation to any new build development in Kinlochard. A review of existing septic tanks is required including an investigation of connection to and upgrade of the existing Waste Water Treatment Works (capacity currently for around 10 more houses/tourism units) or providing new private systems.

### Woodland management and creation

Opportunities to further protect, manage and preserve existing woodland setting of Loch Ard and new woodland on areas shown. The openness of the loch shore is an important characteristic of Kinlochard and any tree planting or natural regeneration that blocks key views should be avoided.

### Renewable Energy

Feasibility of small-scale hydro, air/water heat pumps, biomass, solar thermal technology.

### Community self-sufficiency, economy & affordable housing

New and improved community facilities including community growing should help support more localised living and working. Affordable housing shall be directed to Aberfoyle, in the first instance, but where sites cannot be found and are ruled out for consideration due to constraints, then consideration will be given to Kinlochard to help meet the housing needs for people living and working within Kinlochard and the wider Strathard area. This will be informed by a housing needs survey and community engagement would be undertaken to establish potential sites.

Potential opportunities for small scale economic development could include small workshops/units for locally produced goods, retail, café or restaurant. Priority will be given to re-purposing existing buildings and at the Village Hall. Investment is needed in digital connectivity (broadband), upgrading the play park and improvements to the B829 from Aberfoyle to Kinlochard. There needs to be identification of and support of opportunities for community ownership to increase economic diversification and self-sufficiency.

### Community resilience, flood adaptation, mitigation and management

There is a need in Kinlochard for enhancing and encouraging community resilience by investigating alternative access and egress points via the forest during B829 closures to enable residents and not just emergency vehicles to access their homes. Flooding should be addressed on B829 via natural flood management solutions looking specifically at the forth catchment and options to capture more water upstream of Loch Ard.

### Visitor management and infrastructure

There is a need to tackle visitor pressures and promote responsible recreational enjoyment in keeping with the tranquil special qualities of Kinlochard. Explore solutions with the community and landowners to address the pressures from visitors (area shown on the map) through a variety of mitigation methods – information and engagement, new infrastructure and services to reduce pressures on west Loch Ard within the village and regulation and enforcement where necessary. New infrastructure must be small scale and appropriate to the area, addressing the issues and focused on low carbon and active travel initiatives.

### Other Opportunities

**Small scale tourism**  
There may be opportunities for small-scale camping/ glamping around Kinlochard. These opportunities are for light touch camping pitches to be provided, with off-grid toilet facilities to the south and east of Loch Ard within the forest.



# Stronachlachar and Inversnaid

## Vision

Inversnaid and Stronachlachar are places rich in history, tranquil wilderness and community spirit. They provide year-round local economic activity through balancing facilities for everyday use and visitors. The repurposing of disused and underused buildings alongside some new build has helped to provide small scale development and affordable accommodation that provides live/work places.

The surrounding landscape is holistically managed, less vulnerable to the impacts of climate change and provides opportunities for local self-sufficiency. Inversnaid and Stronachlachar have been recognised for their celebrated cultural and natural heritage, self-sufficiency, sustainable and active travel via water bus and bicycle and dark skies.



## Key Characteristics

Until around 20 years ago the Stronachlachar and Inversnaid area was a thriving diverse community built upon an economy split between Western Europe's largest sheep station and the care of Glasgow's water supply from Loch Katrine. Further information can be found on the [Scottish Water website](#) regarding the history and recent refurbishment project. The area is characterised with the buildings of this legacy with a now converted school house and church. There is also a lot of history pre-dating this and further information is available in the [Community's Life Plan](#).

The natural environment including the Great Trossachs Forest National Nature Reserve and the RSPB reserve, the lochs and iconic views are one of the area's greatest strengths and where economic opportunities exist.

Loch Arklet and Loch Katrine provide a stunning setting for Stronachlachar and Inversnaid, alongside Loch Lomond. The buildings are similar to Kinlochard with white render and slate being the prominent materials. The area is now dominated by self-catering accommodation and scattered tourism businesses – steamship on Loch Katrine, a few guest houses, bunkhouse, Inversnaid coaching hotel, and the pier café. There are limited community and visitor facilities and affordable housing opportunities.

Any new development must protect the tranquillity of the area and the sensitive lochshore. The rich cultural heritage (Rob Roy home and birthplace, inspiration of Sir Walter Scott's works) and rich mythology offer opportunities to promote the area to visitors. Development must demonstrate how it can contribute towards improving the facilities and infrastructure, in particular community facilities, active travel, bus service, waste water and broadband, as well as consolidating the existing tourism facilities but no scope for new isolated and sporadic tourism development. There is some limited scope for new affordable housing with work places either using existing building stock or new build.

Find out more in the [Stronachlachar and Inversnaid Community Life Plan](#). The Community Life Plan should be referred to in order to help inform land use and planning proposals and decisions.





## Map 6 – Stronachlachar/Inversnaid Sub-Area Strategy



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## Priorities for Inversnaid and Stronachlachar

### Woodland management and creation

- Focus on rhododendron removal at remaining colonies, including those at Inversnaid and Stronachlachar, preserve the existing woodland in the area by carrying out sustainable herbivore management and plant new native woodland/allow natural regeneration to connect woodland in Great Trossachs Woodland National Nature Reserve. Bring to life the rich local history and heritage throughout the woodland.

### Sustainable and Active Travel

- Enhance Inversnaid and Stronachlachar as sub-mobility hubs linking to Aberfoyle, with opportunities for a one-way e-bike scheme/shuttle bus connecting to the ferry, waiting areas, storage. Develop an electric bike scheme for the area, with charging points linking to electric car charging points at key locations. Support safeguarding the future of the historic Steamship Sir Walter Scott and promote the greater use of ferries as a sustainable mode of transport.

### Renewable energy

- Support existing hydro scheme and promote as a positive exemplar for other areas of Strathard.

### Community self-sufficiency, economy and affordable housing

- Promote the development of small number of low impact live/work spaces and affordable homes in and around the building groupings of Stronachlachar and Inversnaid, with a focus on re-using existing buildings and brownfield sites.

There may be an opportunity to develop a shared community workspace/hub with high speed broadband to tie into the existing business hub in Aberfoyle. Sites to be confirmed through further discussion with stakeholders.

Promote loch and pier and collaborate with Scottish Water and Steamship Company to enable more opportunities for active travel opportunities and small-scale expansion of local businesses.

For example; small-scale motorhome, camping and glamping to provide an alternative to the self-catering provision already catered for in the area. The area around the existing parking area at Stronachlachar pier and the existing car parks at Inversnaid could present opportunities. Improve connectivity including condition and reliability of road network in the area and ensure there is broadband connectivity to support local based living and working.

### Visitor management and infrastructure

- Explore opportunities to enhance visitor offering connecting to the wildlife and ecology of the area as well as its rich history (Rob Roy, Sir Walter Scott). The RSPB visitor centre and the National Park owned Rob Roy car park could be explored for further development opportunities once the new viewpoint at Loch Katrine is completed.

If the aqueduct trail is developed then there could be opportunities to promote a shorter loop via Royal Cottage and promote this area as a starting point for this longer trail. Ensure that there is adequate visitor infrastructure – in particular bins and signage. There is an opportunity to improve signage to facilitate positive use of access rights where it may currently be misunderstood by visitors to the area.



# References

These following references have been used in developing the Framework:

[National Park Partnership Plan](#)

[National Park Local Development Plan](#)

[National Park Design and Placemaking Guidance](#)

[National Park Active Park, Healthy People Plan](#)

[National Park Trees and Woodland Strategy](#)

[National Park Camping Management Zones](#)

[Community Life Plans](#)

[Strathard Initiative Maps](#)

[Aberfoyle Flood Alleviation Plans](#)

[Forest and Land Scotland's Land Management Plans](#)

[East Loch Lomond Deer Management](#)

[Strathard Community Trust Annual Report 2018-2020](#)

[Strathard Community Action Plan 2017-2022](#)

[Strathard Strategic Partnership – Purpose and Role](#)

[National Park Special Qualities Report 2007](#)

[Architecture and Design Scotland: Design for a Changing Climate: Carbon Conscious Places](#)

[Land Management Plans by Forest and Land Scotland](#)

- [East Loch Ard 2016-2026](#)
- [Beinn Bhan 2018-2028](#)
- [West Loch Ard \(under consultation\)](#)
- [Loch Katrine \(under consultation\)](#)

[Forest and Land Scotland: Heritage in Queen Elizabeth Forest Park](#)

[Strathard Heritage Archive](#)

[Kinlochard Village Hall – including local information](#)

[Scottish Water: Loch Katrine Aqueduct – Unique View Inside](#)

# Glossary

## Active Travel

means making a journey in physically active ways – walking, wheeling, cycling or scooting.

## Agro-Forestry

is land management approach that combines trees and shrubs with crop and livestock farming systems.

## Car-free tourism destination

this term is used in relation to a zone where cars are not banned completely but visitors are encouraged not to use their car and there are various other options available – bike, e-bike, scooter, e-scooter, e-taxi, shuttle bus or another sustainable mode. This is similar to Alpine Pearl resorts in the Alps – see

## Carbon sink

Anything that absorbs more carbon from the atmosphere than it releases – usually a term relating to the natural environment such as a forest, a peatland given its ability to absorb carbon dioxide from the atmosphere.

## Climate resilient

the process of adjusting to new climate conditions in order to reduce risk to valued assets including roads, settlements etc.

## Eco-system Services

processes by which the environment produces natural resources utilised by us all, such as clean air, water, food and raw materials.

## Good Ecological Status

is a term in the EU Water Framework Directive, the policy framework through which European freshwaters are managed. The elements that make up ecological status include biological elements (including fish, macro-invertebrates, macrophytes and diatoms) and supporting elements e.g. ammonia, pH.

## Gravelfoyle

Marketing name to promote way-marked gravel bicycle routes for all abilities.

## Green lung

This can be any natural area big or small from a park to a forest that absorbs carbon dioxide and provides a healthier environment.

## Green jobs

Jobs that have a direct, positive impact on the planet traditionally involving renewable energy, electric transport, energy efficiency, construction jobs, or nature conservation but also could include green manufacturing with closed loop systems and green tourism services.

## Green and blue infrastructure

in an urban environment, this is all natural and semi-natural landscape elements – ponds, water courses, woodlands, orchards, grassland, hedgerows etc.

## Locally Important Areas

This is an area identified in Kinlochard to highlight its importance to the community. Pg29 explains how “new development opportunities are very limited in the immediate village environs and the Kinlochard Community Life Plan notes the priority to conserve areas of open land, rich in semi-wild and woodland habitats.” Further information is contained within the Kinlochard [Community Life Plan](#).

## Lochshore sensitive areas

The loch shores of Loch Chon, Loch Katrine, Loch Ard and Loch Arklet were identified through the engagement process with the community and these are referenced on page 17 in terms of the priority for quiet recreational enjoyment and the resistance to intensified forms of recreational development. Further information is contained within the [Community Life Plans](#) for Stronachlachar and Inversnaid and Kinlochard in relation to these areas.

## Natural Flood Management

this is when natural processes are used to reduce the risk of flooding such as restoring bends in rivers, changing the way the land is managed so soil can absorb more water (e.g. peatland, woodland) and creating natural dams along rivers to create areas of wetlands to slow water flow.

## Nature based solutions

are actions to protect, sustainably manage, and restore natural or modified ecosystems and can include restoring and protecting forests or peatlands.

## Mobility hub

are highly visible, safe and accessible places where public, shared and active travel modes are co-located alongside improvement to public realm and where relevant enhanced community facilities. The redesign and reallocation of space from the private car to benefit local residents, businesses and visitors

## Small-scale

Small-scale in relation to any new visitor facility, accommodation or infrastructure is defined in the [visitor experience planning guidance](#).

## Sustainable Travel

travelling in a way that minimises our negative impact on the planet – this could be using train rather than air, using a bus rather than a private car, using an e-taxi rather than a private car.



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