

REVISED 2022



# Visitor Experience

# **PLANNING GUIDANCE – Visitor Experience in the National Park**

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## 1. Introduction

Our Local Development Plan visitor experience policies aim to focus new tourism development in our existing towns and villages and allows for small-scale tourism and recreation proposals in the countryside.

This guidance is one of a series of Planning Guidance on how the Local Development Plan policy operates. This guidance aims to:

- Provide an overview of the tourism strategy for the National Park and detailed guidance on the locational strategy for new tourism accommodation.
- Provide more detailed guidance on how the tourism policy will be applied in practice to any new tourism developments and what is meant by accommodation, facilities and infrastructure.
- Give greater guidance on what is meant by small scale, safe walking distance and requirements for supporting information such as a Business Statement and Site Management Plan.

The guidance has been updated in response to the National Park's wider programme for managing visitor pressure, in light of exacerbated visitor pressures because of COVID-19. The update provides more clarity particularly around car parking proposals in relation to our current Local Development Plan 2017-21 which will be in place for an extended period to 2024. Thereafter, a new style local development plan will be in place under the terms of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019, once fully implemented.

### **Who is this guidance for?**

This guidance is aimed at anyone considering developing a new tourism business, project or infrastructure in the National Park. We encourage you to contact us at an early stage to discuss your proposal using our pre-application service.

[Visit our website for more information.](#)

This will help determine what other planning factors apply such as design and site constraint issues.

### **Status of Guidance**

This Planning Guidance is non-statutory and is a material consideration in determining planning applications. It has been approved by our Planning and Access Committee following post consultation amendments. This guidance should be read in conjunction with the Local Development Plan which includes overarching and detailed policies.

## 2. The Role of Tourism Development in the National Park

The National Park visitor experience is centred on the landscape. The European Charter for Sustainable Tourism awarded to the National Park seeks to ensure the protection and enhancement of the National Park's natural and cultural heritage in a holistic manner which balances conservation and development.

The key principle is to enable tourism that won't compromise the key landscape experience.

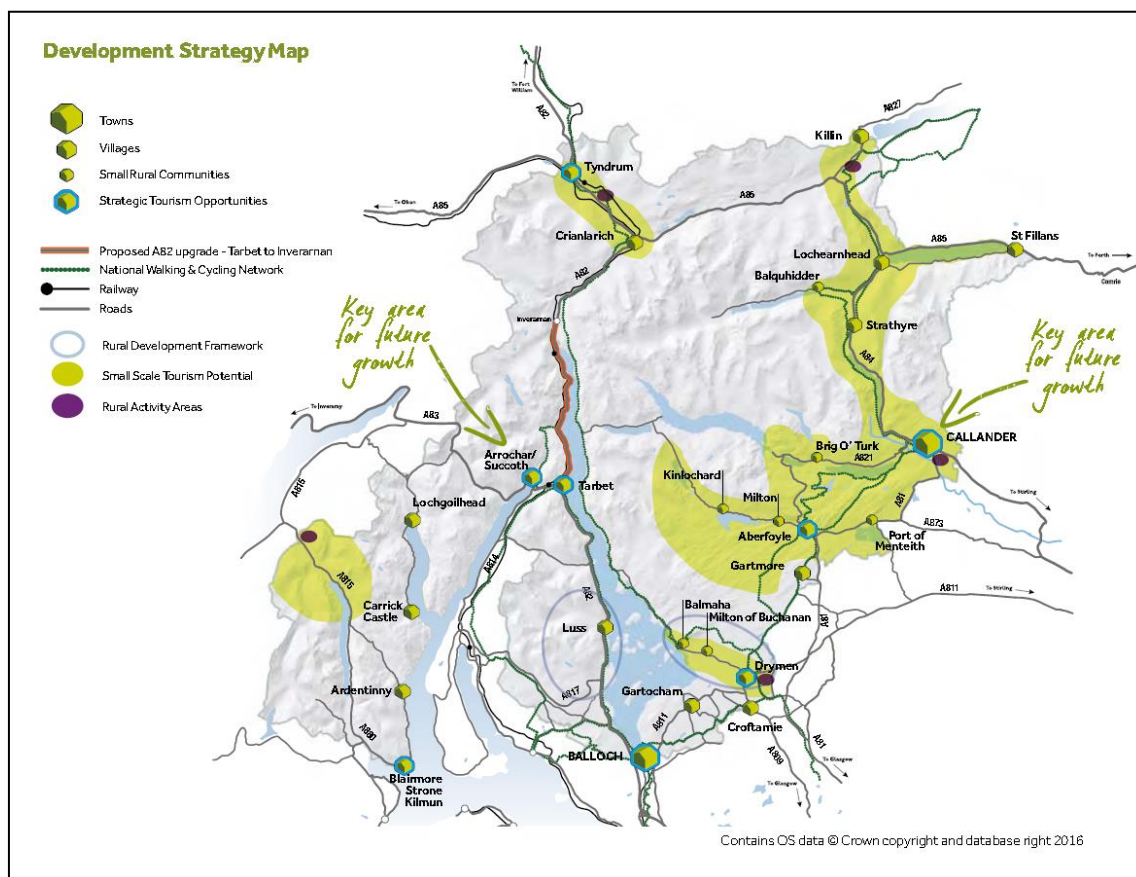
Our Tourism Strategy identifies and promotes specific tourism sites and points to where other tourism development could be accommodated through the local development plan. We want to meet the tourism market demands while conserving and enhancing the environment on which the same market depends. New tourism infrastructure is particularly important for creating the conditions for tourism businesses to prosper.

There are three categories of tourism developments in planning land use terms:

- Accommodation – broadly, a building or place of short term accommodation for tourists on a commercial basis.
- Facilities – broadly, buildings or places that provide entertainment, function, information and cultural activities including for the broader community.
- Infrastructure – broadly, car parking, toilets, viewpoints, picnic areas and outdoor recreational sites specially designed to support tourism and to enable and enhance the visitor experience, such as an access point on a loch for kayakers.

The above categories of tourism development are explored further in this guidance. Many other ancillary services including retail, food and drink, and other integrated services are used by visitors and residents alike.

### 3. Development Strategy



Map 1 – Development Strategy Map

The [National Park Partnership Plan](#) (“NPPP”) gives the context for tourism and recreation development in the Park. Map 1 shows the development strategy map from page 17 of the Local Development Plan which is accords with the spatial strategy contained in the National Park Partnership Plan (2012-2017).

It sets out our key challenges and recognises the current inadequate supply of high quality visitor facilities. It directs new facilities, accommodation, infrastructure and services to the most sustainable locations within the Park. Our [Tourism Strategy](#) sets out the strategic tourism aims which focus on the need to improve the existing tourism facilities and infrastructure in order to meet customer expectations and to develop a destination brand. The purpose of the planning system is to guide new development to appropriate, sustainable locations and to ensure it of a high standard that embraces good quality and sympathetic design and building materials in the wider public interest.

## **4. Existing Tourism Accommodation**

*“There are 19,000 bedspaces in total in the National Park. Accommodation capacity is split almost equally between serviced, self catering and holiday parks , with 5,796 fully serviced, 6,000 self catering and 7,520 holiday park bed spaces” (Reference: NP Tourism Strategy 2012).*

The existing tourism accommodation provides an important economic function in the park for tourists, local businesses and rural communities, particularly where tourism facilities are used by the community such as shops, restaurants, pubs or leisure facilities. We therefore want to retain and enhance the existing tourism accommodation in the Park.

### **Safeguarding existing tourism sites**

The aim of Visitor Experience Policy 3 is to safeguard existing tourism sites. Therefore, we would not be supportive of proposals for change of use of existing tourism accommodation, unless it can be demonstrated that it is not feasible to continue for any reason including lack of demand for the facility or, if selling, a lack of buyer, or where there is adequate provision for that particular type of tourism business in the locale. We would expect a business to have been actively marketed for a year at least and evidence to be provided to demonstrate a lack of demand for the business to be submitted with any application for a change of use. If a change of use to housing is proposed then please see our housing policy for guidance.

## **Improvement or expansion of an existing tourism site**

Visitor Experience Policy 1 supports the improvement or expansion of existing businesses, visitor infrastructure or facilities.

Part (a) of the policy supports expansion to an existing business of any scale within towns and villages. Part (d) of the policy supports existing sites in the countryside where it is a small-scale expansion based on a case by case assessment. This assessment, of whether the proposal is small-scale, will be based on the size of the extension in the context of the size of the existing business or visitor infrastructure/facility i.e. the relative scale. So not restricted to the guidance below on small-scale that relates to part (b) of the policy or part (e-g). Site capacity, landscape and design are important factors where an existing business or facility is expanding. An assessment would also be made in relation to site capacity in terms of roads, parking, landscape, even if the proposal is small-scale.

A site management plan may be required for extensions to a hotel or holiday park particularly where it would affect the wider grounds. Section 10 below gives further guidance on what should be included in the management plan.

### Existing Static Caravan Sites

Some established holiday parks are not restricted to short-term holiday lets and can be lawfully used as second homes by individuals or groups for longer holidays (usually restricted to certain periods in the year). In accordance with Visitor Experience Policy 3, applications for a change to permanent residential use will be resisted, whether on an individual or whole site basis, in order to support the retention of existing holiday accommodation. Exceptions may be considered if it can be demonstrated that it is not feasible to continue the existing use.

### Existing Touring Caravan and Camping Sites

If you are thinking of diversifying your caravan and camping sites, depending on the original permission, a planning application may be required for wigwams, yurts, or static caravans. We would require an applicant to demonstrate the need for the diversification and scope to retain existing touring and camping pitches given the vision of the Local Development Plan is provide more places to camp and experience the outdoors.

## **5. Staff Accommodation**

We recognise it is sometimes difficult for rural businesses to attract staff, including seasonal tourism related workers. There is also a shortfall in some areas of affordable housing for key permanent staff such as chefs and managers and tourism businesses may need to provide staff accommodation themselves.

Wherever feasible, permanent staff accommodation such as a staff block, integrated accommodation (i.e. a flat above a hotel), or a manager's house should be provided opposed to temporary accommodation. Our housing policy and supplementary guidance provides information on where provision of a new house or staff block may be justified to support an existing business.

A few hotels in the Park have static caravans within their grounds (the curtilage) and providing the use is ancillary and directly linked to the hotel, for example, used for sleeping accommodation by staff or as a staff dining area, then planning permission would not normally be needed. However where a caravan is intended to serve as self-catering accommodation then planning permission would be required. Anyone considering using a caravan for any such purpose should first get written confirmation from us to ensure they can proceed.

We do not encourage the use of caravans including touring caravans for staff accommodation as they are unattractive in the landscape and unsuitable as permanent accommodation. We may support their use on a temporary basis if essential for the continued operation of a business.



## 6. Where will new tourism development be supported?

Local Development Plan Visitor Experience Policy 1 supports new or improved/expanded/altered visitor facilities, accommodation and visitor infrastructure (including recreation and access proposals) where the proposal:

- a) Forms an identified strategic tourism opportunity in Callander, Balloch, Tyndrum, Drymen, Arrochar and Tarbet, as shown in the Development Strategy Map (page 17), or forms new strategic tourism opportunity in the Aberfoyle or Blairmore/Strone/Kilmun areas; or is located in, or within a safe walking distance from a town or village; or

*Guidance: The policy supports development within towns and villages or within a safe walking distance because essential and visitor facilities, and access to public transport and recreational routes tend to be found in and around villages - safe walking distance is defined on the following page.*

- b) Comprises small scale development within areas of countryside with access to the existing recreational network of paths, infrastructure or visitor facilities, as shown within the areas shaded green on the Development Strategy Map [Page 17]; or

*Guidance: Small-scale development is defined on the following page.*

- c) Is identified as part of National Planning Framework 3: National Development 8 – National Long Distance Cycling and Walking Network, or addresses the gaps or improvements required in the core paths network, local path networks and outdoor recreation provision in the National Park and ensures links with adjoining authorities' networks.

Where a proposal does not accord with the above principles support will be given for small scale development where it involves:-

- d) Improvement or expansion of an existing tourism business, visitor infrastructure or facility; or
- e) reuse, restoration, conversion of an existing building; or
- f) diversification of an existing rural business; or
- g) development which will help deliver a Visitor Management strategy or action identified in the National Park Partnership Plan.

*Guidance: Small-scale development is defined on the following page. Section 4 of this guidance provides additional information on the expansion of an existing tourism business or facility. Visitor Experience Policy 3 does not support change of use from tourism to non-tourism uses (see the policy for further details). Where a proposal is for a conversion of an existing building (criteria (d)), it must also comply with Historic Environment Policy 5. Change of use of non-historic buildings in the countryside is not supported by this policy. If the conversion or change of use is in, or within safe walking distance of, a town or village, there is no requirement to meet Historic Environment Policy 5.*

Proposals for medium to larger scale tourism development within the countryside will generally be resisted unless there is demonstrable evidence of:-

- h) Strong market demand for the development that is currently not being met, and
- i) the benefits that development would bring to the local economy and/or the local community

*Guidance: A number of medium to large-scale sites for visitor experience within the countryside area are designated in the Local Development Plan and these are supported by criteria (a). For any speculative medium to large scale proposals, the economic benefits and benefits to the local community must be outlined in a detailed business assessment (see Section 10 of this guidance).*

All proposals must comply with the overarching policies, including natural heritage, in the Local Development Plan and will be assessed on an individual basis to ensure site by site design issues and constraints such as flooding, access, proximity to neighbours, etc are considered.

There is further guidance on design and placemaking guidance including sub-division of plots and holiday park and camping development.

### **Definition of a 'Safe walking distance': Visitor Experience Policy 1, Part (a)**

An applicant should describe, or show the route on a plan, that people would use to walk to the nearest town or village.

To provide a safe walking distance preference will be given to routes that are off-road, all ability paths and routes that avoid busy roads.

In terms of walking distance, this will vary as people will be willing, or able, to walk different distances. Research<sup>1</sup> indicates that the average person is likely to walk 10 mins (1km) to a nearby facility or service.

Applications will be considered on both the safety of the route and the distance to the nearest town or village. In some instances distances greater than 1km may be supported where, for example, these utilise a safe and attractive route.

### **Small-Scale Tourism Potential within the Countryside: Visitor Experience Policy 1, Part (b)**

Whilst Visitor Experience Policy 1 directs most new tourism development to the towns and villages, there is continued interest for tourism development in the countryside, particularly holiday accommodation, and the right balance is required for supporting small scale tourism development as a way of supporting the rural economy and businesses, whilst ensuring that the landscape and environment are safeguarded from an unplanned and uncoordinated increase in development.

The four green shaded areas, on the Development Strategy Map (page17) of the Local Development Plan, have been identified for small-scale tourism development. These are areas with access to a good range of visitor infrastructure and facilities, including cycling and walking routes and/or links with towns and villages providing services and transport. A proposal does not require direct access to a path but a sustainable location is required by the Local Development Plan transport policies.

The four areas and the infrastructure within them include:

- Tyndrum/Crianlarich – the West Highland Way and Cross Pilgrim Way (under development) bisect this area.
- The Five Lochs area, Loch Ard Forest and Killin – this is the largest area covering Loch Earn, Loch Lubnaig, Loch Venachar, Loch Ard, Loch Achray and Loch Chon as well as Lake of Menteith. There is an extensive existing recreational network with good access to the lochs and links to long distance routes including National Cycle Route 7 and the Rob Roy Way.
- Glenbranter and northern area of Loch Eck – This is a relatively remote, tranquil area with extensive walking and cycling routes and some loch based activity. The routes are based around the existing Glenbranter forestry commission hub.
- Drymen/Balmaha (Buchanan South) – A waterbus runs between Balmaha and Luss and there is a new cycle route from Drymen to Balmaha. See the Buchanan South Rural Development Framework for more information.

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<sup>1</sup> Research in North America (2002 National Survey of Bicyclist and Pedestrian Attitudes and Behaviour by National Highway Traffic) states that half-mile (0.8km) is a reasonable distance for most people to walk to a bus/rail station. It also states that a quarter mile is reasonable for parents taking children to the park. How far people are willing to walk is complex and varies depending on age, health, time availability, quality of surroundings, safety, climate and many other factors.

Further information about the qualities and sense of place of each of these areas can be found in the Design and Placemaking Guidance and also the National Park's Special Qualities report. These locations have a range of environmental designations and all proposals should comply with Local Development Plan policies on the natural environment.

### **Definition of 'small scale': Visitor Experience Policy 1, Parts (b) and (d to g)**

Visitor Experience Policy 1 (criteria (b) and (d) to (g)) supports only **small scale proposals**. Further guidance is given in relation to part (d) of the policy that supports expansion of an existing business or facility in section 4 on page 7. These proposals should meet the other requirements of the development plan and be sympathetic to, and integrate well, with the landscape and built context. Small scale will be assessed against the following guidelines:

- Small scale self-catering accommodation proposals would be assessed on the number and size of units. An example could be two or three units however for each case an assessment of building footprint, massing, height and number of bed spaces will be undertaken.
- Caravan and campsite proposals will be assessed on the number of pitches and size/type of pitches/accommodation (i.e. static caravans, touring caravans, tents, motorhomes, pods, yurts etc.) and the facilities provided including toilets and parking.
- A small bunkhouse or guest house (Class 7) will be assessed on the number of bedrooms and size of the building.
- Infrastructure and facilities such as toilets, paths, public art or a new pontoon or slipway etc could be considered small scale.
- In terms of car parks, new car parking provision in countryside areas should only be provided in areas where it is demonstrated as essential in connection with either an existing or a new visitor management issue that cannot be addressed by other means and which requires an immediate solution, for example in locations where parking pressures are causing damage to the environment and/or where irresponsible parking is a danger to the host community and public safety. Based on recent planning applications, small scale is generally considered to be around 10-20 spaces.<sup>2</sup> More than 20 spaces would be considered medium scale. Further guidance on car parking is on Page 19 below. Medium to larger scale proposals are supported where they meet criteria (a) within a town or village or safe walking distance or criteria (h) and (i) which supports medium to large scale proposals.

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<sup>2</sup> This is informed by a review of recent planning applications for new or expanded car parking in response to visitor pressures.

## 7. Types of Tourism Accommodation

This section describes the different types of tourism accommodation that would be assessed under the Visitor Experience Policy 1. The locational criteria in Section 6 above would be the main consideration regarding whether the principle is acceptable at a certain location.

Tourism accommodation is a building or place providing short term accommodation for tourists (A tourist trip is defined by VisitScotland (2009) as a “stay of one or more nights away from home for holidays, visits to friends or relatives, business/conference trips or any other purposes except such activities as boarding education or semi-permanent employment”) both serviced and self-catering accommodation.

New **serviced accommodation** is more likely to be sustainable as part of an existing or proposed tourist facility or within a town or village. It may also be useful on popular long-distance routes like the West Highland Way. Serviced accommodation includes:

- a) Hotels/Guest Houses/Bunkhouses/Hostels; and
- b) Bed and Breakfast within a house.

Self-catering holidays are becoming increasingly diverse in location, season and duration. Many people go away several times a year, often for short breaks on a year round basis and demand for **self-catering accommodation** is rising and can include: -

- c) Self-catering houses / cottages/ chalets;
- d) houseboats;
- e) camping, glamping and caravans sites;
- f) bothies; and
- g) recreational huts.

Second homes which are left unoccupied for long periods of time make a very limited contribution to the local economy. New holiday units will be safeguarded from being used in this way by applying a condition which allows a person or group to stay in the unit for a limited period of time in any one year period and keep a record of guests.

The following are common types of tourism accommodation found in the Park.

a) Hotels/Guest Houses/Bunkhouses/Hostels

Hotels, guest house, bunkhouses and hostels all fall within Use Class 7 (Hotels & Hostels) in planning terms. This type of accommodation doesn't include a public bar which is a different use class but ancillary sale and consumption of alcohol to residents and guests does not need planning permission.

Parking can be a significant problem and requirements are calculated on the number of bed spaces, function rooms, meeting rooms and restaurants. In some instances occupancy restrictions may be used to control the use of a hotel for coach parties 'only' if parking cannot be provided on-site. We would expect proposals for hotels or larger guest houses to be on allocated tourism sites or at least close to a town or village to allow guests to access food places if there is no on-site restaurant.

b) Bed and Breakfast (within a house)

Planning permission is not required for a house operating limited bed and breakfast as it is unlikely to raise any planning issues such as impact on neighbours and parking/access. The use is limited to providing only one bedroom where the house has less than 4 bedrooms and no more than 2 bedrooms where the house has 4 or more bedrooms. This allows householders to run a small business tourism accommodation, without adverse effects on the surrounding area. Planning permission would be needed for any use that exceeded these limits as it would amount to a change of use from a house to a hotel/guest house.

c) Self-catering units, cottages and lodges

This is the most common type of accommodation in the Park. We receive high numbers of applications for new self-catering units of a range of unit types. The aim of our visitor experience policies is to support high quality visitor accommodation with many opportunities to appreciate and enjoy the National Park. Second holiday homes are discouraged, given they offer a limited opportunity for visitors and only meet the needs of a single family/group. Where new self-catering accommodation is approved, this would be restricted to holiday use limiting length of stay by one group/family in a calendar year.

Planning permission is generally not required for use of an existing house as a holiday home or for short term self-catering letting.

d) Camping, touring and static caravan sites including 'glamping' (pods and yurts)

There is a growing demand for camping and overnight motorhome provision in the Park and we consider that caravan and camping sites provide valuable, inexpensive holiday accommodation in Park.

Planning permission is needed for using land as a campsite, motorhome or caravan site and for the provision of services and any ancillary buildings such as a reception/shop or toilets. A site licence is also required for a motorhome or caravan site which issued by the relevant council Environmental Health licensing department.

There are some circumstances where land can be used for touring caravans without the need for planning permission or a site licence such as where a small site is certified by the Caravan Club reserved for members only. In some locations in the Park, temporary sites of less than 28 days with no permanent structures are exempt from requiring planning permission for change of use. Please check with us to confirm whether your proposal requires permission or not.

Glamping, or 'glamorous camping', has become popular and is generally provided for by simple timber pods or tent-like yurts or tepees within existing or new sites.

We are supportive of more camping, glamping and touring caravan/motorhome facilities in the Park as they offer an appropriate an appropriate outdoor experience. New seasonal camping byelaws came into effect in 2017 and their purpose is to protect some of the most fragile lochshores within the Park.

We are working with communities, landowners, businesses and agencies to ensure more camping sites are available both within these camping management zones and elsewhere in the Park.

Our [Camping Development Strategy](#) sets out the camping provision that will support the new camping bylaws (i.e. within the designated Camping Management Zones). Finally, if the campsite is within one of the camping management zones then authorisation (separate from planning permission) is needed to exempt the site from the bylaws.

Any new campsites need to be in the right locations with appropriate access, parking and no adverse environmental impacts including landscape and visual impacts. We encourage applications for appropriately sited, small-scale informal campsites within or out with the camping management zones to help increase the provision of camping within the park.

## Types of units

**Touring Caravans and Motorhomes** are individual units towed or driven onto a site and usually require only a hook-up to an electricity supply and access to a facility to dispose of foul drainage. They are often seasonal but some tourers and motorhomes are suitable for using all year round.

**Static Caravans**, including twin units, fall within the same statutory definition as a touring caravan. Static caravans, albeit popular, tend to have a significant impact on the amenity of an area and we would generally not support any proposals for new static caravan sites on account of the Park's landscape sensitivities. Exceptional proposals may be acceptable in less sensitive areas or within existing sites.

**A basic pod** is a simple timber structure comprising a floor, sides and roof with no services (water, electricity) that is simply placed on the land. Planning permission is needed for the use of a pod for accommodation purposes and may be required for the provision of services, decking or hardstanding. Pods are classed as static caravans for planning purposes.

**A yurt or tipi** is a large tent-like structure with wooden frames and soft sides usually with beds, a wood burning stove inside and remaining erected throughout the season or all-year and as such, they are usually considered to be a structure or building for planning purposes. They need planning permission as would the provision of services (electricity, water) decking or hardstanding.

## Types of sites

There are a wide range of caravan and campsites throughout the National Park offering different levels of facilities from those with hot showers, shops, play parks and electricity hook ups to those with only fresh water and toilets. The level of facilities, size of the site, number/type/spacing of pitches and the style of landscaping determine how a site feels.

Caravan and campsites are evolving and many existing sites are diversifying with yurts and wigwams. Some of our static caravan sites are also improving their look and feel with the introduction of timber chalet style caravans. Other sites such as the National Park campsites are bringing users a closer outdoor experience similar to wild camping but still providing fresh water, toilets and car parking. It is important to have a range of different sites to suit different needs and budgets within the National Park.



e) Bothies

A bothy is a basic shelter traditionally built from surrounding stone to temporarily house estate workers in remote rural locations and now mainly used by mountaineers and hillwalkers as refuges, usually at no charge. The Mountain Bothies Association maintain some bothies but there are very few within the Park. Bothies are considered to be a building for planning purposes and erection of a new bothy would need planning permission. Bothies by definition are generally located in sensitive wild locations, so any proposal would be assessed against a demonstrable need and any environmental and landscape impacts.

f) Recreational Huts

Recreational huts are defined in Scottish Planning Policy as a: *“A simple building used intermittently as recreational accommodation (i.e. not a principal residence); having an internal floorspace of no more than 30sqm; constructed from low impact materials; generally not connected to mains water, electricity or sewerage; and built in such a way that it is removable with little or no trace at the end of its life”.*

We have not identified any sites for recreational huts and would consider any such application on the merits of the particular proposal. Any proposal for a hut would be assessed against Visitor Experience Policy 1 of the Local Development Plan. There is support for this type of development within the green shaded area shown on page 17.

We would expect any proposal to demonstrate how it would meet the spirit of Scottish Planning Policy i.e. how it would be constructed and used. Proposals should either be a single unit or a few units.

We would use conditions to ensure that the hut continues to provide a basic recreational facility and is not used as a normal holiday home or permanent home.

g) Houseboats

Planning permission would be needed for use of a houseboat for accommodation purposes and for the development of the permanent mooring points and walkway. A houseboat is any boat or barge or any vessel or structure which does not have bona fide use for navigation (definition “British Waterways Act 1971”) and is moored permanently. There may be a requirement for on-shore parking, road access and sewerage disposal facilities all of which would have to be outwith any flood zone. Safe access and egress to the houseboats would also need to be considered. We would not support proposals within sensitive sites or where ecological or wildlife issues arise. Any houseboat proposal is likely to need a flood risk assessment and an ecological survey and, as with self-catering units on land, a condition would be used to restrict them to short-term holiday use only.

## 8. New Tourism/Visitor Infrastructure and Facilities

Although there is a wide range of facilities that could be defined as visitor infrastructure this guidance is focussed on the most common types.

The Park's Outdoor Recreation Plan sets the context for outdoor recreation visitor infrastructure as it outlines our actions and aspirations for increased participation in outdoor recreation including archery, caving, climbing, cycling, diving, dog sledging, fishing, horse-riding, kayaking, canoeing land-based motorised activities, motor boating, personal water craft, recreational towing, rowing, sailing, ski mountaineering, stalking, open water swimming and walking (long distance, wilderness, upland, in towns and villages).

### Water based recreational infrastructure

Within the Park, the majority of marinas, piers and pontoons are tourism related as the inland and sea lochs are popular for many kinds of recreational activities including larger sight-seeing vessels.

Planning permission is needed for works affecting inland lochs and for works affecting sea lochs up to the high water mark beyond which is considered as the 'sea' and Marine Scotland take over as regulatory authority. Please see the Scottish Government website for information on marine licensing. Works affecting the water environment are also likely to require a Controlled Activity Regulations (CARS) licence from SEPA. If other licences are required then we recommend a twin-tracking process to save time and to help inform the decision making process as we will need to certain there will be no significant impacts on the water environment.

**Marinas** are a group of moorings typically comprising a floating pontoon(s) secured to the land by piles. They vary in size from accommodating a few berths to a few hundred. Applications for marinas should include adequate parking provision and landscape, wildlife and water environment considerations.

**Moorings** are commonly of a swing-type comprising a heavy base on the bed of the loch chained to a floating buoy usually set off-shore on a loch or river. Planning permission is needed for setting down any mooring or set of moorings on any inland loch or river in the National Park. The Park's Outdoor Recreation Plan seeks to encourage more mooring and berthing opportunities on Loch Lomond and the sea lochs for motorised and sailing boats. Any new moorings should be located in areas where there is a connection to land-based infrastructure such as parking and landscape/ecological impacts will be key considerations.

**Piers and pontoons** provide locations for sight-seeing vessels and the waterbus to pick up and drop off passengers. The waterbus service connects towns, villages and tourism attractions on Loch Lomond and Loch Katrine. There is ambition to expand the service to Loch Long and to open up the sea lochs to larger vessels such as the Waverly. The key planning considerations for new piers or pontoons would be car parking, access for buses, and landscape/ecological impacts.

**Slipways** that allow kayakers and canoeists to access water are supported by the Park's Outdoor Recreation Plan which aims to encourage more infrastructure including slipways on lochs across the Park and at access points on some rivers. As above the key planning considerations are parking, access and environmental impacts. We are likely to require an ecological survey as well as a landscape and visual assessment.

**Water-based sports facility or centres** (including water ski jump or slalom facilities) need planning permission even where associated with an existing hotel. Depending on the scale

of the activity proposed an appropriate level of storage provision, access, parking and reception / welfare facilities would be required. We would not be supportive of large scale water sports facilities on the more tranquil lochs within the Park and the locational criteria listed above would apply.

#### Viewpoints and picnic areas

We have recently installed art structures as part of a Scenic Routes project and we are looking to provide more innovative viewpoint structures in countryside locations across the Park. Our visitor experience policy supports the principle of infrastructure facilities in places identified as priority areas within the NPPP. Proposals should be uniquely designed to fit into and complement the landscape and there should be no ecological or access issues relating to their installation. Any proposals outwith the areas identified in the NPPP would need to demonstrate how the installation would enhance visitor experience without detriment to the Park.

New benches, picnic areas are unlikely to be supported in sporadic, remote or wild areas but are encouraged in association with existing car parks, visitor attractions and viewpoint areas.

#### Paths

Planning permission is needed for the formation, alteration or extension of paths regardless of the intended user group (walkers, cyclists, horse riders). We would support proposals that meet the criteria within the policy. This would also include proposals that are appropriate re-routing of an existing core path or long distance path, or part of a visitor or recreational facility, or connects a visitor attraction to and from a town or village.

#### Horse riding

There are existing horse riding hubs within the Park with nearby paths with suitable riding surfaces and ancillary provision to accommodate horse riders including parking for horse boxes. These facilities are classed as tourism infrastructure and any new proposal should align with the aims of the Outdoor Recreation Plan and would be determined against the visitor experience policies except where they are for individual or local community use only. Equine tourism offering accommodation and horse riding should be linked to the existing horse riding hubs.

### Toilets and Parking

Proposals for any scale of toilets and stand-alone parking is supported in principle by Visitor Experience Policy 1 at key hubs (within towns and villages), or in connection with a small-scale expansion of the tourism facility or outdoor recreational site or a new small-scale proposal that is in the green shaded area identified on page 17 of the plan, or where the proposal helps to deliver a Visitor Management Strategy or action identified in the National Park Partnership Plan, subject to compliance with other planning criteria.

### Toilets

We would encourage innovative solutions which increase the provision of toilet facilities, such as community arrangements which permit shop/business toilets to be used by members of the public and for these to be appropriately signed and made known. Please check with us to see if this would need planning permission.

We would encourage new toilet facilities to consider rainwater recycling, maximising the use of natural light and renewable energy for lighting and heating purposes, such as solar panels. In rural locations composting toilets with no mains sewage may be appropriate rather than a new waste water treatment facility. Please see the design and place-making guidance.

### Car Parks

We would generally not encourage new car parks and seek to support investment in alternative forms of sustainable transport and active travel infrastructure in the National Park to support less reliance on cars. However, it is acknowledged that visitor pressures are currently severe in some locations and that some additional parking solutions may be required. Preferably new car parking would be a short term temporary solution and capable of being removed at a later date once alternative transport solutions are in place (for example shuttle bus). In addition, any new car parking should be designed where possible, to be a mobility hub where car parks are integrated with other transport solutions (see [CoMoUK](#) for further guidance).

Where demonstrated as necessary, new car parks should follow best design practice, in terms of being unobtrusively located and design and landscaped to fit sympathetically and where possible enhance the surrounding landscape. In terms of surfacing, it should be in keeping with the surrounding. For rural locations, crushed stone, gravels, wood chippings and reinforced grass (i.e. grasscrete) provide a range of less formal solutions and bitumen surface would be acceptable in a town/village but only where sustainable drainage is provided.

You should refer to the design and placemaking guidance in terms of sustainable drainage (please consider permeable drainage and/or a SUDS pond) and landscape assessment. Also see [NatureScot's car parks in the countryside – a practical guide to planning, design and construction \(2000\)](#) which has relevant guidance on layout, cut and fill and other such matters that are relevant to designing a car park in a rural setting.

Proposals should be in accordance with the other policies within the Local Development Plan. For instance the trees and woodlands policy and avoid the removal of trees and transport policies relating to road safety and sustainable/active transport and ev charging.

We would encourage an application for a new/extended car park be accompanied by a design statement and also a supporting statement. The supporting statement should answer the following where relevant:

- How does the proposal relate to existing and future sustainable transport infrastructure and service and respond to climate change? i.e. future proofing for new

shuttle bus route by providing a bus shelter with real time information, or a path link to an existing bus stop or train station, provision of bike parking, e-charging points for both cars and bikes, solar options (where appropriate and no obtrusive in the landscape) and how can the car park connect to an existing path and link into an active travel network. See our Sustainable and Active Travel Guidance for further suggestions and also CoMoUk for guidance on mobility hubs.

- How does the proposal relate to the existing recreational and tourism offer and other car parking provision or lack of?
- What alternative sites were considered and why was this site selected? Please note that existing and previously developed sites are preferred.
- How will the car park benefit the needs of both visitors and communities? – and what other facilities have been included such as signs, toilets, picnic area, small play area and if not included, set out reasons why?
- What are the visitor pressures in the area (what is the peak level of use and how often is this exceeded? What other issues are there in relation to congestion, illegal parking and human waste and litter) and why a car park is being proposed and what other solutions were explored other than car parking?
- If the proposal is to address visitor pressures, then what other traffic enforcement/management measures are being used so the problems are addressed rather than exacerbated?
- How will the car park be maintained? Will there be car park charging and is any infrastructure needed for this?

#### Aerial Adventure Rope Courses

These should be located in low ecologically value woodland and where they would complement an existing tourism destination or facility for example in the grounds of a hotel or holiday park. We have approved adventure rope courses at Loch Lomond Shores and David Marshall Lodge.

#### New Visitor Centres/Attractions

There is support for new visitor centres and attractions in towns and villages i.e. in relation to geology/mining, a brewery or smokery. In the countryside, small-scale visitor centres/attractions are supported in green shaded area or where it is a small-scale expansion to an existing facility.

In rural location a visitor centre would have to demonstrate how it meets a demand not being currently met and brings benefits to the local economy and local community (i.e. relate to a natural or cultural heritage interest) in accordance with (h) and (i) of Visitor Experience Policy 1. A robust business statement demonstrates should be submitted to support their viability.

## **9. Ancillary Tourism Facilities – retail, cafes**

Cafes, restaurants and retail are covered by separate retail policies but they may be ancillary to a tourism development. They occur mainly in town or village centres and are sometimes present in some form in holiday parks, visitor centres, tourism facilities and hotels. We would expect any new proposal to complement existing facilities or be located within the villages and towns. We would be supportive of specialist tourism related shops such as an outdoor recreation shop with bike hire, a chandlery related to a marina, or equally, a small snack bar or cafe attached to a visitor centre or recreational facility such as a water sports, equestrian or mountain bike centre.

## 10. Supporting information

There are various types of information that may be required to support your planning application. This could be statutory requirements such as an Environmental Impact Assessment or other information required by our policies such as a Design or Energy Statement, Business Plan and/or Site Management Plan. This section summaries the type of information we would require. Information on what a design or energy statement should contain is found in our [Design and Placemaking Guidance](#).

### Environmental Impact Assessment (EIAs)

All of the National Park is regarded as a 'Sensitive Area' for the purpose of EIA legislation so the following tourism developments must be screened to assess whether an EIA is required or not:

- Marinas,
- Holiday villages and hotels outside urban areas, and associated developments,
- Permanent camp sites and caravan sites, and
- Golf courses and associated development.

The location, size and type of proposal are assessed when screening a proposal to determine if an EIA is required. Please see our [planning advice leaflets](#) for further information on the EIA process and our free pre-application service.

### Habitats Regulations Appraisal

There are a number of European Protected sites (SAC or SPA) across the National Park, as shown on Natural Heritage Designation Map on page 37 of the Local Development Plan. These sites protect species such as salmon, lamprey, otters, golden eagle and geese but also habitats such as oak woodlands. If your proposal is located within an SAC or SPA or has the potential to negatively impact on the qualifying interests of one of these designated sites, the application must be accompanied by an expert appraisal to inform a project-level Habitats Regulations Appraisal (HRA)."

## Site Management Plans

Permission for developments that includes communal landscaped or wooded grounds are likely to be conditioned to ensure that the grounds are maintained including as a single entity in the long term to provide a suitable setting for the development.

A site management plan may be required to be produced and approved before permission is granted and it may require to be covered by a legal agreement or planning condition. A site management plan should cover an initial period of 10 years and should be reviewed regularly.

The type of content expected in a Management plan includes:

- Introduction – vision for the management of the site.
- Background – site history and details of all supporting materials and evidence considered in preparing the plan including assessment work undertaken. Site photographs should be included.
- Objectives – the plan should include the overarching objectives the detailed objectives or prescriptions. It should clarify the purpose of each objective (for example meeting business priorities, achievement of Local Biodiversity Action Plan targets, improvements to biodiversity and landscape to meet National Park aims, reduction of environmental impact i.e. a reed pond for surface or grey water drainage).
- Management Area(s) – A description and plan of proposed management area(s) illustrating the various elements with an appropriate key to phased planting (shrubs and trees), paths, lighting, signage, parking, water and waste management, woodland protection and enhancement work, ecological issues etc.
- Management Matrix – best presented in a table setting out the detailed objectives or prescriptions for the site. It could range from invasive species management, signage, fencing, boundary treatment work, ecological enhancement work such as bat boxes, bird hides, lighting and water management, maintenance and inspection regime of different habitats, programme for trees and shrub planting etc. Objectives need to be SMART – specific, measureable, achievable, reasonable and time constrained. Depending on the size of the site this section could be split into management prescriptions for each area.
- Review of the Plan – a clear statement as to when the plan will be reviewed (i.e. every 5 years) for NPA to sign off the revised version. It should confirm that a review shall not be completed unless a monitoring report has been submitted outlining what objectives have been met and reasons for not meeting objectives.

A separate landscape plan setting out initial planting and hard-surfacing details and tree protection plan for during construction may be required independently of the Management Plan.



## Business Statement

Visitor Experience Policy 2 states that some proposals may require to be accompanied by a business statement to demonstrate viability and market demand. We want all proposals to enhance the visitor experience and provide a world-class offering that meets visitors' needs.

Business statements vary in length and depth according to the size of business proposed. The contents should include:-

### *Background*

It would be useful to know the background to the project including project inception, how the idea arose. You may also want to list those involved in the project and their experience of running the particular type of business. If the proposal is part of an existing business then this should be explained in terms of its demand (inc. occupancy rates for accommodation) i.e. is it fully booked? Who does it attract? Details of an existing website can be useful. If the proposal is part of a larger project then please provide details of the project i.e. a community or National Park project.

### *Market Research*

The statement should present the market research undertaken to demonstrate the demand for the accommodation or the tourism business/facility at the particular location. It should include information on how it would complement other tourism businesses in the area, particularly if there is a known unmet demand for the type of accommodation or facility you are proposing.

### *Benefits to Local Economy and Community*

Information as to the location and nature of complementary facilities such as local attractions, core paths, shops and restaurants would assist us to understand how your business would support the local economy and community.

A breakdown of any anticipated job creation in terms of seasonal, temporary, permanent, part-time/full-time would likewise be useful.

### *Marketing Proposed*

Marketing information including details of the target market and mechanisms you expect to use to advertise the accommodation or facility? Websites etc.?

### *Financial Information*

You may wish to present financial forecasts to assist your case and these would be kept confidential.