

# Strategic Estates Update

## Agenda Item 8

### National Park Authority Board Meeting 9 December 2024

Paper for noting

1.	Purpose .....	1
2.	Recommendation(s) .....	1
3.	Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan .....	1
4.	Background .....	1
5.	Next steps.....	5
6.	Appendices.....	5

#### 1. Purpose

- 1.1. At various points since 2021, there have been updates and decisions provided to and required from the Board on estates-related matters. The purpose of this paper is to provide Board Members with an update on current strategic estates matters in relation to progress against these historic board decisions.

#### 2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1. Members are asked to note the contents of the report.

#### 3. Contribution to National Park Partnership Plan and/or Our 5-year Plan

##### 3.1. National Park Partnership Plan

- 3.1.1. We want our Estate to contribute proactively towards the transformational change needed to meet the challenges to nature and climate as detailed in the National Park Partnership Plan 2024-2029.
- 3.1.2. This work links to 3.3 Developing and Investing in The National Park, particularly objective three; make the best use of land and assets.

#### 4. Background

##### 4.1. Estates Strategy

- 4.1.1. Our [Estates Strategy](#) agreed by Board on 12<sup>th</sup> June 2023 states that National Park Authority property may be disposed of where it no longer directly supports the three strategic functions of the Estate.

- 4.1.2. Disposal will be prioritised based on properties where Park Authority ownership or servicing costs are high (net of income generation potential), or disposal helps achieve National Park Partnership Plan 2024-2029 outcomes.

#### **4.2. Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway Car Parks Transfer**

- 4.2.1. In 1999, an agreement was reached between Scottish Enterprise and the Loch Lomond Park Authority (a predecessor to Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority) to allow a Licence to Occupy the Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway Car Parks. This licence was granted for the purposes of the development of the provision of a public boat launching slipway, facilities building, car and trailer parking and related infrastructure, car parking, coach drop off and related land-based infrastructure for the pier. This tied in with the offer of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding dated 14<sup>th</sup> December 1999 for The Loch Lomond Project where a key objective of the project was to allow maximum public access to the Loch edge and along the River Leven.
- 4.2.2. The Licence also provided that Scottish Enterprise (“SE”) will use all reasonable endeavours to convey the Land to the licensee or West Dunbartonshire Council (“WDC”) within two months of registration of a Deed of Conditions by SE, which was registered in the Land Register on 7th September 2001. The transfer of ownership should therefore have been effected by 7th November 2001. A map of the site, and the Authority’s interest in it, is at Appendix 1.
- 4.2.3. In 2001, this agreement was varied to take into account that the Loch Lomond Park Authority had become the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Interim Committee and conferred the same rights of use to it.
- 4.2.4. In November 2002, the Board considered a paper on Staff and Property Transfer as part of establishing Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority. This included Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway and Car Park. The majority of assets transfers to the National Park Authority was concluded in 2004, via several Property Transfer Orders. The exception was the Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway Car Parks, which was not transferred at the time, due to delays from SE.
- 4.2.5. Discussions have continued in the intervening years and have been challenging to progress; however, we are now in a position whereby we expect the transfer of Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway car parks to take place imminently and are working through final legal documents to enable this matter to conclude timeously.

#### **4.3. Former Visitor Centre in Luss**

- 4.3.1. In March 2022, the Board approved that officers of the Authority begin a process to instigate the disposal of the former Luss Visitor Centre, noting that this could include options such as outright sale on the open market or via Community Asset Transfer. A map of the site, and the Authority’s interest in it, is at Appendix 2.
- 4.3.2. The benefits of instigating the disposal of the asset were to enable, in time, reallocation of resources to other priority activities and our programme of work on the Park’s estate. It would also make savings both in terms of staff time and budget

from the responsibilities and duties due to ownership of the vacant building and associated land. Luss Visitor Centre was inherited by the Authority on its forming in 2002; it is not an asset developed by the Authority in response to current needs and organisational requirements – it is a legacy building. It has been drawing on resources for a number of years with no real return or organisational benefit.

- 4.3.3. In order to dispose of the asset by any means, there were two matters to resolve with Argyll and Bute Council and our Estates and Legal Teams have been working to progress these in line with our plans for disposal of the asset. These pertain to wayleave rights of access and parking should the Authority end up retaining the land known as the “picnic area”.
- 4.3.4. Once a disposal decision like this is taken, there are requirements within the Scottish Public Finance Manual (“SPFM”) to implement a decision within three years, and officers have been working towards this.
- 4.3.5. In May 2024, we received an initial Asset Transfer Request (“ATR”) from Luss and Arden Community Development Trust. We were unable to validate this due to missing information. The Trust were informed that the ATR would be placed on hold until the information was provided to enable validation.
- 4.3.6. In separate discussions, Argyll and Bute Council expressed a desire to purchase the B-shaped area of land owned by the NPA in Luss Car Park to enable them to reconfigure the car park. As a result of this, this land has been removed from ongoing discussion in relation to the former Visitor Centre and is being progressed separately.
- 4.3.7. At the end of July 2024, the Authority took the decision to go to the Trawl – this is a four-week Scottish Government process for advertising assets for disposal before going to the open market.
- 4.3.8. In mid-August, we met with Luss and Arden Community Development Trust to discuss the Asset Transfer Process, and the minimum amount of information we required to legally validate the ATR.
- 4.3.9. In early September, we received a note of interest from Argyll and Bute Council in relation to the asset. All parties, including LACDT, are aware of the noted interest in the asset.
- 4.3.10. In late September, we received information from Luss and Arden Community Development Trust which allowed us to validate their ATR. They are seeking to purchase the asset, at a reduced cost, to create a co-working space upstairs and to lease the downstairs to a commercial operation, currently unknown. As we already have noted interest from Argyll and Bute Council, this does not preclude us from disposing of the asset to the Council, should its’ interest materialise.
- 4.3.11. Upon receiving a valid ATR, the Authority has six months to come to a decision. We have established the appropriate governance internally to ensure that the ATR can be robustly assessed. It is also worth noting that whilst Luss and Arden Community Development Trust has noted a desire to purchase the site, there are other options

available to the Authority, which include long term leases at peppercorn rents, should that be deemed more appropriate.

- 4.3.12. The ATR will be assessed by a panel of senior officers from our Estates, Legal, Finance and Communities Teams. The assessment covers;
- Benefit to the Community;
  - Capacity of the organisation to deliver;
  - Level of Community Support;
  - Sustainability;
  - Utilisation; and,
  - Resourcing.
- 4.3.13. A formal decision on the ATR should be made by the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025, in keeping with the six month timescales dictated by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act, but this timeline may be extended by mutual agreement.
- 4.3.14. Any proceed generated from the sale of this asset, regardless of how they are realised, will be required to be returned to Scottish Government.

#### **4.4. Gateway Centre**

- 4.4.1. The Gateway Centre was established as part of the same ERDF funding that was used to develop the Slipway site in 1999. It was built on land owned by Scottish Enterprise, and a long-term ground lease was entered into for the Gateway Centre. A map of the site, and the Authority's interest in it, is at Appendix 3.
- 4.4.2. The site initially operated as a visitor centre and provided operational office space for both the Authority and VisitScotland. In more recent times, the site was briefly operated as a wedding venue by a third party, before falling vacant during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- 4.4.3. In June 2021, Board members reaffirmed a previous Board decision to explore exiting the lease. This reflected a view that it is not a core purpose of the Authority to be a landlord for a building that is not otherwise performing a clear purpose in relation to National Park objectives.
- 4.4.4. The Park Authority took back vacant possession of the building in 2022, and the asset has remained vacant since. We are currently working with the landlords, Scottish Enterprise, to take a lead on establishing a new use of the building. After numerous historic Board discussions on the use and potential uses of the asset officers maintain that there continues to be little to no operational benefit to the Authority retaining the Gateway Centre.
- 4.4.5. The Authority are seeking to remove our interest in this building in due course and are working to achieve that end through disposal of the asset.

- 4.4.6. Board members are asked to note that this asset excludes the pontoon at Lomond Shores; this is leased from Scottish Enterprise to the Authority on separate terms and the current intention is to retain this for strategic purposes. They allow the Authority to continue to explore water transport options as part of our wider sustainable transport and mobility work.

## **5. Next steps**

### **5.1. Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway Car Park Transfer**

- 5.1.1. Authority staff will continue to work with Scottish Enterprise to conclude the transfer of the David Mills Memorial Slipway Car Parks.

### **5.2. Former Visitor Centre in Luss**

- 5.2.1. Authority staff will continue to work to meet the assessment deadline of the 26<sup>th</sup> March 2025 for the Asset Transfer Request. The outcome of this assessment will indicate next steps in relation to the asset and will be reported to Board in due time.

### **5.3. Gateway Centre**

- 5.3.1. Authority staff will continue to work with Scottish Enterprise to divest of our interest in this building.

## **6. Appendices**

6.1. Appendix 1 - Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway Car Parks Map

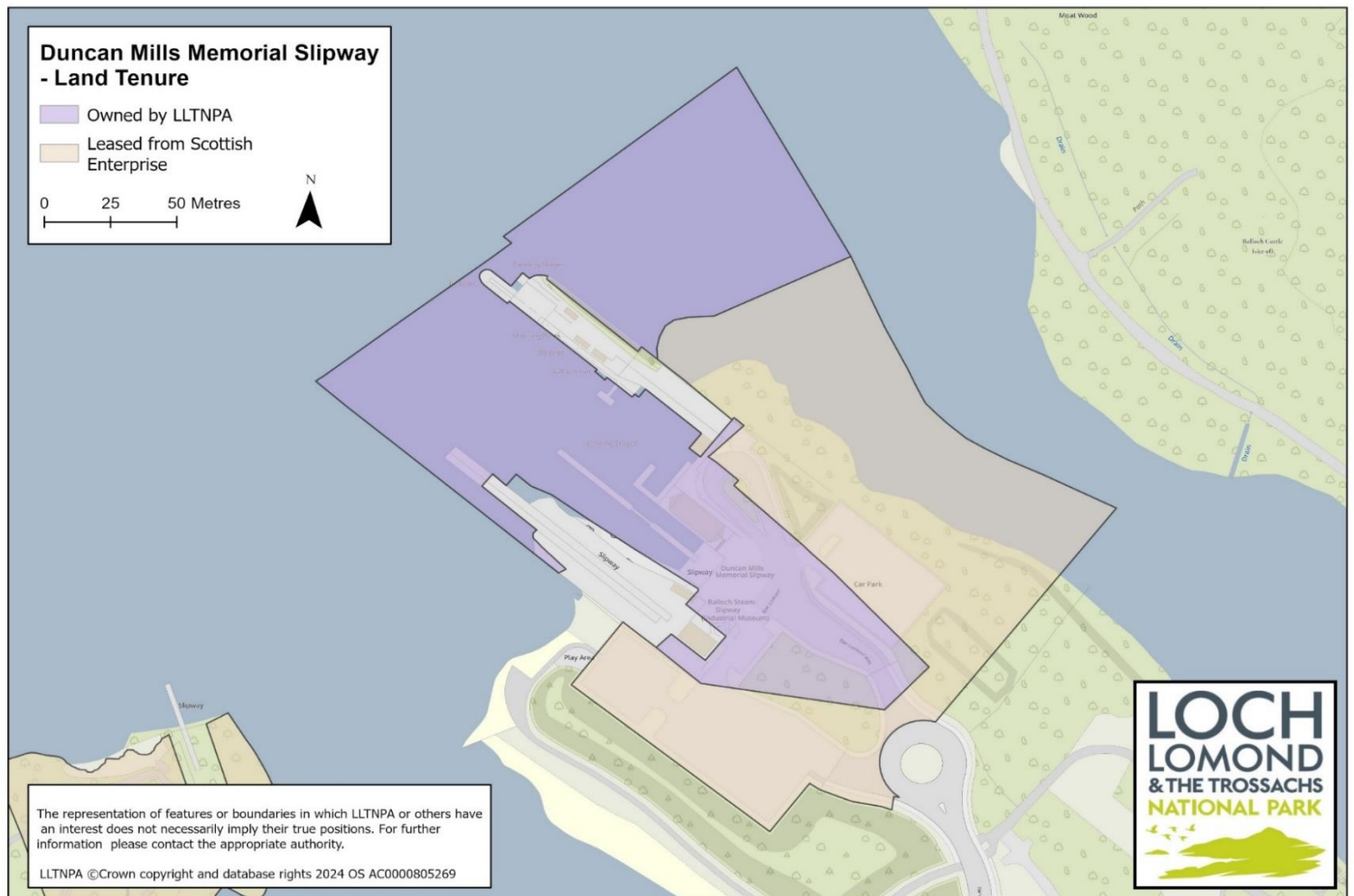
6.2. Appendix 2 - Former Visitor Centre in Luss Map

6.3. Appendix 3 - Loch Lomond Shores

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## Appendix 1 – Duncan Mills Memorial Slipway Car Parks





## Appendix 2 – Former Visitor Centre in Luss



## Appendix 3 – Gateway Centre

