

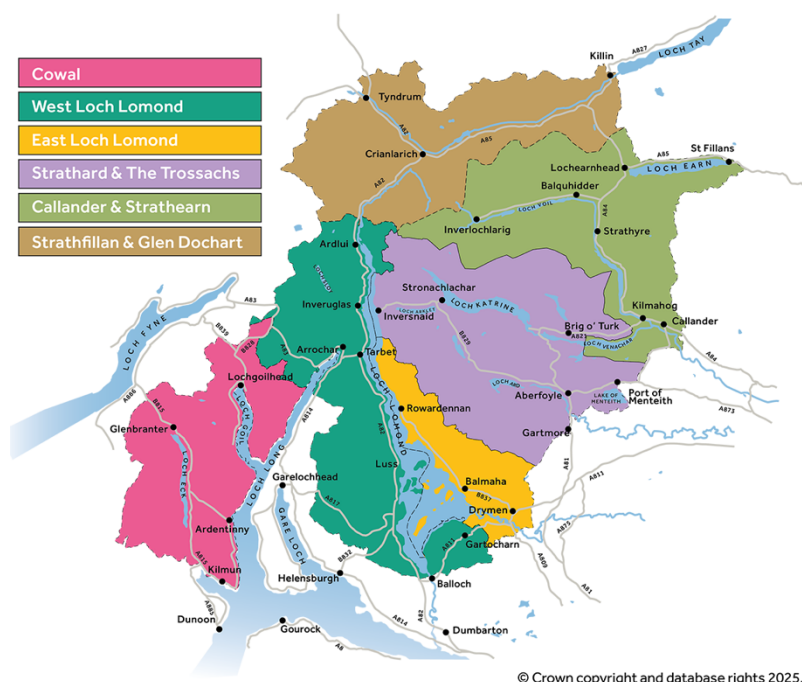
# **Loch Lomond & the Trossachs National Park New Local Development Plan**

**Report of pre-Evidence Report  
consultation workshops  
held in May-June 2025**

# Introduction

This document contains anonymised summaries of eight workshops organised by the National Park Authority during public consultation for the Evidence Gathering stage of the [new Local Development Plan](#). The workshops complemented publication of [Topic Papers and Area Summaries](#) for comment, offering participants opportunities to find out more about the Evidence Gathering stage and the new Local Development Plan, and to discuss the Topic Papers and Area Summaries.

Session	Location & date	Summary
<b>Cowal</b>	Strachur, 22 May 6pm	page 2
<b>West Loch Lomond</b>	Balloch, 21 May 6pm	page 4
<b>East Loch Lomond</b>	Drymen, 4 June 6pm	page 5
<b>Strathard &amp; the Trossachs</b>	Aberfoyle, 28 May 6pm	page 7
<b>Callander &amp; Strathearn</b>	Callander, 2 June 6pm	page 9
<b>Strathfillan &amp; Glen Dochart</b>	Killin, 29 May 6pm	page 11
<b>Park-wide</b>	Online, 18 June 2pm	page 13
<b>Land managers</b>	Balloch, 26 June 2pm	page 14



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Each workshop followed a similar format: a presentation from National Park Authority officers about how the National Park Authority is approaching preparation of the new Local Development Plan, followed by a facilitated discussion. The land managers workshop also included information about the inclusion of land management in the new Local Development Plan. Each of the area-specific workshops was preceded by an informal drop-in session for an hour, supported by presentation boards which summarised the relevant Area Summary in an easy-read graphic format.

This document was prepared by the independent facilitator, Nick Wright. His reflections on the process are contained at the end of the document (page 17 onwards).

4 participants were in attendance - three from the community organisations noted below, and one National Park Authority Board Member (Depute Chair of Planning and Access Committee - Argyll & Bute):

- Lochgoil Community Trust
- Carrick Castle Community Trust
- Historic Kilmun

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Main discussion points

1. Restricting the Regional Land use Framework boundary to the National Park means that it will only cover part of Cowal, rather than the whole region.
2. Thinking of the topic papers and how they cut across linked topics and different organisations' responsibilities, how will cross-cutting issues / silos / topics be joined up?
3. Who is this stage of consultation targeted at? *Response: Anyone, probably of more interest to people who are engaged in technical planning issues*
4. How do community organisations get to the right people in the public sector to help deliver their Local Place Plans or tackle specific issues?
5. How can communities link up on shared issues, e.g. Lochgoil and Arrochar?
6. Electricity – will the new Local Development Plan cover renewable power generation, distribution infrastructure, EV charging points etc?
7. Transport – Cowal is a fragile peninsular economy, transport is essential – there is more potential for water transport.
8. Water supply and wastewater – there are constraints in Lochgoil as elsewhere, will this be tackled in the new Local Development Plan?
9. Interested in seeing proposals for housing-led allocations. *Response: These will come at the next stage of community engagement, the draft Plan, and will take account of suggestions in Local Place Plans and other elements of the Evidence Report; greater consensus on housing sites in Local Place Plans will help smooth the way for delivery.*
10. Discussion about the benefits of doing a Local Place Plan: two participants referred to their Local Place Plan helping secure funding and support, but emphasised that it is a big job to prepare a Local Place Plan, and they are only just getting started with delivery.
11. How will planning decisions be made before the new Local Development Plan is ready in 2027? *Response: Using NPF4 and the existing Local Development Plan*
12. Is the National Park anticipating any major changes in the new Local Development Plan from the existing one? *Response: That will emerge from the evidence analysis and be clear in the Evidence Report submitted to the Scottish Government – tourism management, housing, new technology like battery storage and low carbon power generation have each witnessed changing circumstances since the last Local Development Plan. Commenting on this response, one participant noted "It's good that these things are being looked at."*

13. The ongoing 75 year investment plan for Faslane by the Royal Navy / Babcock represents a huge investment and opportunity for the area, and should be fed into the thinking on the Local Development Plan.
14. Forestry & Land Scotland (F&LS) seems to be focussing on timber extraction and doing rather less on paths and visitor infrastructure, including some thorny ongoing issues like clearing a blockage on the key Ardentinn-Carrick Castle connection, and extending the network to create loop paths (e.g. between Loch Eck and Loch Goil). Getting traction with F&LS on these issues is a challenge for community groups.
15. The National Park should give Cowal its fair share of visitor infrastructure and promotion – communities feel neglected!

## West Loch Lomond

11 people participated, including 1 National Park Authority Board members (Board Convener and Depute Chair of Planning and Access Committee - Argyll & Bute). These organisations were also represented:

- Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust
- Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui Community Council
- Balloch and Haldane Community Council
- Balloch Castle Country Park Regeneration Group
- Luss and Arden Community Council
- Luss Estates Company
- Kilmarnock Community Council

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Main discussion points

1. Does the planning definition of 'development' include lochs? *Response: Yes*
2. Active travel:
  - Map in presentation shows an active travel link across Loch Lomond at Inversnaid/Inveruglas, but because of lack of rail station on the west side this might be better shown as Inversnaid/Tarbet, which already has a waterbus connection
  - Need to avoid active travel infrastructure running against nature requirements, e.g. paths fragmenting nature sites or corridors
3. Are boundaries of the new Local Development Plan areas fixed, e.g. West Loch Lomond / East Loch Lomond? *Response: No*
4. The Local Development Plan needs to recognise that different issues and challenges exist within those areas (e.g. within West Loch Lomond, Luss wants fewer tourists, Arrochar wants more)
5. Will the new Local Development Plan continue the strategy of development being permitted within settlements but not outwith?
6. Potential gaps in evidence report:
  - a. A811 improvements
  - b. A82 traffic issues
  - c. Over-tourism and congestion in Luss makes it difficult to retain/grow population
  - d. Housing is maybe not given the attention it deserves on the place profile (e.g. repopulation, attracting families, the viability challenge of providing affordable homes in small developments/communities), the potential role of shared equity homes
  - e. Delivering development, especially community projects and Local Place Plans – needs development worker support
  - f. Opportunity for a bold ambition about more natural use of Loch Lomond (e.g. swimming, sailing etc like Lake Windermere) rather than motorised uses like jetskis.
  - g. LLTNPA should be supported to seek more powers over use of lochs and more enforcement resources.

- h. Potential for leisure use of access tracks constructed in connection with electricity infrastructure (noted that specifications of temporary and permanent tracks differ).

## East Loch Lomond

19 people participated, including 2 National Park Board Members (the Board Convener and the elected member for Ward 4 - East Loch Lomond and Port of Menteith). These organisations were also represented:

- Buchanan Castle Estate Roads and Infrastructure Group
- Croftamie Community Trust
- Drymen Community Council / Drymen Community Development Trust
- East Loch Lomond Community Trust
- Kilmaronock Community Council
- Kilmaronock Community Trust
- LCDK Ltd (Landowner)
- Oak Tree Inn
- Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB)

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Main discussion points

1. Gartocharn / Kilmaronock are more aligned with East Loch Lomond than West Loch Lomond – e.g. community organisations work with those to the east, many pupils go to school in Balfron, it's only really the Co-op and railway station in Balloch that are used (and that applies to people in Drymen too).
2. Does the [Sandford Principle](#) still apply? *Response: Yes*
3. 10 years is a long time for a Local Development Plan... will it be flexible?
4. The map in the presentation for the Strathard Framework example was quite general compared to the existing Local Development Plan – will the new Local Development Plan be that general? *Response: It will have to be site specific too, as NPF4 requires that.*
5. The National Park Authority is being asked to deliver a lot through the new Local Development Plan – not just planning, but land management and climate change too.
6. How will delivery of the new Local Development Plan be co-ordinated with the other authorities' whose involvement is needed, e.g. local authorities, Health Board, SEPA etc? Are they responding/interacting? How do the relationships work in terms of 'seniority' and power? *Response: Those other agencies have been involved in preparing the topic papers and have generally been interacting. Relationships are more based on responsibilities rather than seniority.*
7. What do terms like "primary hub", "secondary hub" and "gateway" mean? What are the consequences of these designations?
8. How will the step / gap between planning policy and implementation be bridged?
9. Car parking – there are now 800 fewer car parking spaces on East Loch Lomond, a shortfall highlighted by recent good weather and the Ben Lomond Race, which damaged relationships between businesses and residents. It seems to reflect a lack of consideration of businesses and residents. There's a need for the National Park Authority to look at solutions.
  - a. Community-led car parking survey in 2021 was mentioned

- b. The National Park Authority strategic tourism infrastructure report's purpose was to unlock national funding and work with other agencies to deliver its proposals
  - c. The National Park Authority is also doing a Park-wide mobility review – because we need to look at other options for people rather than cars
  - d. The East Loch Lomond / West Loch Lomond areas need to work together in planning and policy terms, for example part of the solution to congestion issues on East Loch Lomond could be directing visitors coming from West Loch Lomond onto waterbuses at Balloch
10. At the call for sites stage, will there be a size criterion? *Response: Guidance will be issued when the call for sites starts, but it will probably be pretty open. The National Park Authority recognises that many small communities are looking for small numbers of affordable homes.*
  11. Affordable housing is a big issues – where sites are identified for affordable housing, does the National Park Authority work with housing providers like Housing Associations to encourage their development? (thinking of 2 allocated sites in Gartocharn which have lain undeveloped for 15 years) *Response: Yes*
  12. It's very difficult for communities to build because of the complications and the expense – around about £1m cost for East Loch Lomond Community Trust to build 4 affordable homes.
  13. Need to avoid refusing permission for developments which are not in walking distance of local amenities (example of glamping pods) – unrealistic and stymies development.



## Strathard and the Trossachs

13 people participated, including two members of the National Park Board (the Depute Convenor / Stirling Council appointee and the elected member for Ward 2 - Breadalbane and the Trossachs). These organisations were also represented:

- Aberfoyle Life Plan
- Forth Rivers Trust
- Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Countryside Trust
- Port of Menteith Community Council
- Strathard Community Trust
- Strathard Community Council
- Strathard Flood Group

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Main discussion points

1. What is meant by “dependencies” on slide 12 (first box)?
2. How does new Local Development Plan process differ now from previous Local Development Plan particularly in relation to NPF4? *Response: One suite of national planning policy rather than 34 separate suites of local planning policy in each local authority / NP area.*
3. How will Local Place Plans be incorporated into the new Local Development Plan? Is the National Park Authority picking and choosing what to include from Local Place Plans?
4. Summaries for Moving Around / Local Living could better reflect contemporary national policy, e.g. referring to all journeys rather than only functional journeys
5. Concerned that there is too much focus on the control / regulation / development management elements of the National Park Authority functions, at the expense of the more proactive enabling role – needs both
6. Responsibility for different services and functions is split across different authorities (e.g. National Park Authority, local authorities, Forestry and Land Scotland, SEPA, Transport Scotland, public transport operators) and the dialogue/co-ordination between those organisations could be better – even in Strathard where they have six-monthly liaison meetings, more traction and resource is needed.
7. Local Living - what's the equivalent of a 20 Minute Neighbourhood (an urban concept) for rural communities? How can our rural communities aspire to something like that?
8. Boards are very clear and impressive
9. Housing likely to be an issue in Strathard, like other areas of the National Park – but land is in short supply and there could be tensions between housing aspirations and other NPF4 policies (e.g. policy 22 on flooding could prevent housing development). In other words, potential tension between what people want to see in their communities, and what's possible.
10. Issues should not be siloed – e.g. housing, flooding, repopulation are all connected.
11. Holiday lets are increasing and reducing the supply of homes for locals. Can the National Park Authority control who lives in second homes? Can that be strengthened?

12. There is a housing shortage across the board, and also a lack of tourist accommodation and its economic consequences
13. Port of Menteith is half in and half out of the National Park area, so falls across two Local Development Plans. How will they be co-ordinated?
14. There is very little land in private ownership in the Trossachs (mostly owned by FLS, Scottish Water etc) which means that there is very little opportunity for development and wealth creation. Alongside flooding, this is a huge constraint.
15. Development and investment should not be only about tourism income and jobs, but about quality of life and community.
16. There is a gap between the visions in most Local Place Plans and what can realistically be implemented. For example, how will land restoration or upgraded cycle networks ever happen? Where will the resources come from?
17. A new Local Development Plan based on Local Place Plans should help channel investment into delivering community aspirations
18. Tackling flooding is essential!
19. SEPA flood requirements for developments are a critical constraint and need to be resolved to enable the development that communities need. Stakeholders need to come together to agree what development can go and how to tackle flooding.
20. Local Development Plan policies should be crafted to get around NPF4 constraints

## Callander and Strathearn

12 people participated, including one National Park Authority Board member. These organisations were also represented, plus a number of local landowners:

- Balquhiddier Deer Management Group
- Balquhiddier, Lochearnhead & Strathgryre Community Council
- Callander Community Council
- Callander Community Development Trust
- Callander Flood Group

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Main discussion points

1. Relationship between Callander South masterplan and NPF4/Local Development Plan in terms of determining planning applications ( )
2. How does the uncoordinated timing of different levels of plans – NPF4, Local Development Plan, Local Place Plans – work? ( ) *Response: Local Place Plans have been useful to inform the Local Development Plan evidence gathering. The National Park Authority is discussing how to support communities to update Local Place Plans, and wants to continue working with communities.*
3. Local Place Plans – challenging to prepare, but the bigger challenge is delivering what's in them ( )
4. What are the implications of land use proposals (i.e. outwith planning control) being included in the Local Development Plan? What compulsion will there be to implement then, if any? *Response: The National Park Authority would like there to be a collaborative discussion around implementation rather than compulsion; it's the start of a journey, as trialled in the Strathard Framework. Consultancy work on land use / management is being commissioned by the National Park Authority and the results will be shared.*
5. The National Park Authority doesn't own most of the land within its boundaries – landowners do. So need to work with landowners and land managers to implement the plan, whether it be land use/development or land management (e.g. nature restoration, planting, grazing)
6. Need to protect the National Park's 'jewels in the crown' – the Trossachs Lochs – and avoid them being over-developed in the way of Loch Lomond
7. Responsible right of access needs to be reviewed
8. Health of rivers is really important, they are the water of life
9. Will the new Local Development Plan have settlement boundaries to limit the extent of development? *Response: Probably, but Local Place Plans are encouraging the National Park Authority to release more land for housing – have to balance that demand with other needs/challenges set out in NPF4 etc*
10. Parking and camping along the Loch Voil single-track road and the A84 is chaos on sunny days
11. Flooding – needs an integrated / holistic / co-ordinated / long-term approach cover the whole catchment, and a more responsive / action-oriented approach from Scottish Water, FLS and other agencies/landowners (e.g. open up sluices in advance of heavy rain or

snowmelt, reinstate dredging of rivers at key points, agree approach to riparian planting with NatureScot/SEPA). Need to get agencies aligned. Could the National Park Authority help broker a co-ordinated solution with stakeholders like Scottish Water, Forestry and Land Scotland, NatureScot and SEPA?

12. Land management created the beautiful environment that residents and visitors enjoy – but the reduction in proactive land management in recent years threatens that beauty (e.g. removal of grazing, lack of river dredging)
13. Local landowners and land managers have considerable technical knowledge / experience about nature and land management, and should be part of the solution – go to the cattle market on Thursdays and talk to them!
14. Need education for children about nature, e.g. litter picks
15. Motorhomes / camping facilities in Callander – the LDP should identify facilities, rather than the current ban and lack of enforcement (which results in overnighting at Callander Meadows for example). *Response: There's a limit to what the National Park Authority can do, but it can reinforce the need and help others to deliver.*
16. Mobile phone signal – landlines are being switched off, there is poor / fragile coverage even in Callander, which also impacts on people's electricity supply. The plan should say something about the anticipated need for more masts as 5G is rolled out, as 5G needs more masts than 4G.

## Strathfillan and Glendochart

9 people participated, including the National Park Authority Board elected member for Ward 2 - Breadalbane and the Trossachs. These organisations were also represented:

- Auchlyne Estate
- Glenfalloch Estate
- Killin and Ardeonaig Trust
- Killin Community Council
- Strathfillan Community Development Trust

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Main discussion points

1. Challenges accessing community engagement data from community-led plans produced in Strathfillan and Killin over the last few years, linked to changes in personnel in communities and the National Park. (A specific request for support is being followed up afterwards.)
2. Delays in getting Killin Local Place Plan registered. *Response: It is being progressed.*
3. National Park partnership Plan visitor infrastructure priorities and National Park Authority ranger operations are focussed on busier parts of the National Park to the south, but there are management challenges created by visitor in the north of the Park as well even if the numbers of visitors are lower:
  - a. Concern is that the priorities in the southern part of the National Park will continue to suck up the limited resources as that is where the visitor numbers are greater, so the situation will never change.
  - b. Could there be more support to local groups e.g. to appoint their own rangers?
  - c. Could opportunities for visitor infrastructure be identified in the north, e.g. a strategic car park at Dalrigh between Crianlarich and Tyndrum with facilities, which could be delivered with local organisations.
4. Lots about nature and climate, but less about people – particularly jobs, housing, services.
5. Should the next Local Development Plan look to release more land outwith towns and villages for small scale housing development?
6. Challenge for landowners is that small developments may not be viable. Would it be possible to achieve economies of scale by combining delivery of small developments together?
7. Jobs is a big issue – how can we keep young people by giving them better quality jobs, not just hospitality?
8. Young people don't understand the opportunities that nature-based work like Wild Strathfillan might offer them – needs more work to convey this.
9. How could young people be supported/encouraged to stay and get work? E.g. more investment in modern apprenticeships.

10. Could the National Park Authority be higher-profile in calling out / putting pressure on other organisations on what needs to happen priority agendas? e.g. Transport Scotland, local authority housing departments.
11. Renewable energy – community don't benefit as much as they could from hydro schemes for example. And should we be looking at more wind energy generation given the recent hot dry weather?
12. Battery storage associated with renewables generation is an accident waiting to happen – there are lots of these installations at renewables schemes, all in remote locations that would be difficult to access in case of fire or other emergency.
13. Tourist tax – could we have one not just related to overnight accommodation, but charging visitors a fee to stop in the National Park? Could use numberplate recognition tech at access points to the National Park, or car park charging like FLS. Would help to create resources to pay for implementation of plans.
14. Could Local Place Plans be made more dynamic? So rather than being a snapshot of aspirations every 5-10 years, they can be continuously updated?

4 people participated from national Key Agencies and interest groups.

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Main discussion points

1. Transport Scotland has been engaging with the National Park Authority on development of the topic paper but wasn't aware that the topic papers have been published. The Transport Scotland team wants to contribute to the final version but has annual leave coming up between now and the 10 July deadline, could comments be submitted after the deadline?
  - *The National Park Authority will be in touch with Transport Scotland about the deadline and with key agencies to check the final versions of the topic papers for the Evidence Report*
2. How will the Scottish Government's changing objectives for National Parks in the Natural Environment Bill be reflected in the next Local Development Plan?
  - *The new National Park legislation is still in Bill form – changes in the eventual Environment Act will be captured as the Local Development Plan moves towards adoption over the next couple of years*
3. How is increasing importance of recreational access, particularly recreational walking, in the National Park reflected in the topic papers? Recreational walking is by far the most important way that people get exercise nationally, and that is amplified in the National Park – needs to be reflected strongly in the topic papers.
  - *NPF4 Policy 21 in Topic Paper 8 (Local Living) - additional data relating to sports facilities will be included in the final version of the topic paper*
  - *Analysis of available evidence - Partnership Plan, Local Development Plan, Local Place Plans, Topic Paper, Core Path Network, Play Sufficiency Assessment etc - will identify any particular local actions that might be required in relation to walking at the local level*
4. It would be helpful to have a standard agreement for sign-off by Key Agencies prior to the Evidence Report gate check, given number of Evidence Report rejections by Reporters and the need for Key Agency agreement.

## Land managers

12 people participated from estates, farms and representative organisations such as Scottish Land & Estates.

Where appropriate, officers' responses to questions are shown in *italics*.

### Structure of session

After an initial presentation about planning and the new Local Development Plan preparation process which was common to all workshops, there was a presentation specifically about the intention to incorporate both land management and land-use planning into the new Local Development Plan. Much of the subsequent plenary discussion focussed on the integration of land management and land-use planning.

### Main discussion points

1. A lot of land managers feel that they haven't been able to contribute any evidence yet – when will that happen? It would be good to be able to feed into the new Local Development Plan process between this high level strategic stage and the detailed Call for Sites stage.
2. Could LLTNPA circulate a written update on the timetable for the Local Development Plan, as the timing of the Call for Sites seems to have slipped from the last update, when it was due to take place this autumn? Yes
3. Some other planning authorities are using their topic papers to trail potential policy responses – will LLTNPA topic papers do that?
4. “What does regenerative land management mean? Just tree planting?”
5. Need to ensure farming and farmers are not forgotten or ignored in these discussions.
6. Are there any exemplars that we can learn from elsewhere for this new approach of combining land management and planning?
  - e.g. [Pasture for Life](#)
7. Nature-restoration land management schemes are difficult, expensive and labour intensive to implement – is the National Park Authority up for facilitating and helping?
  - It would be helpful if the National Park Authority was also to support grant applications
  - Easing relationships and garnering support from other agencies like NatureScot would be helpful
  - We have to do Land Management Plans anyway – could the land management side of the new Local Development Plan help with that?
8. Will including land management in the Local Development Plan make planning consents more difficult or complicated to achieve? We don't want more hurdles to have to jump through.
9. If a proposal not subject to planning control (e.g. forestry) comes into conflict with the land management aspects of the next Local Development Plan, what will be the negative consequences for land managers? Not simply in terms of challenges in getting planning consent, but impact on grant applications and other consents?



10. Luss Estates has set a good example by supporting/feeding into local communities' Local Place Plans and preparing their own estate masterplan to feed into the Local Development Plan Evidence Report, although that work does come at a cost.
11. If the next Local Development Plan is looking at land management in the gaps between settlements, does that include renewables?
12. The new approach instinctively “feels uncomfortable” – top down, like the Woodland Strategy, bringing more magnification to look at or even interfere with decisions – despite the intention to be supportive.
13. Many land managers and farmers have a fear that once proposals are mapped, they are regarded as fixed and become a millstone, a blight or a stick to beat landowners with if the proposals don't materialise – even if they are intended as suggestions or aspirations
  - Land management mapping should be about identifying opportunities, not control and regulation
  - Please involve land managers in drawing up the maps
  - Maps are a useful tool to provoke discussion
14. If there are National Park-wide target figures for nature restoration, please let land managers know before you produce any maps – so we can see if we can contribute and use those figures to inform our work, rather than things be imposed on us further down the line
15. The 10 year timeframe for Local Development Plans is very long compared to pace of change in land management – how can the Local Development Plan retain the flexibility that will be needed over the 10 year period?
16. Land management is a long term challenge
  - Any suggestion of increased public access makes me nervous
  - The wording in the presentation about increased management of access is good
  - The public are very hot on their rights, less so on their responsibilities
17. Will there be money to implement everything in the Local Development Plan?
  - *Response: No, but a Local Development Plan is a great manifesto / sales pitch to government, especially in the National Park*
18. The new land management / planning approach doesn't make me nervous at all – it's the way things are going anyway, and the National Park Authority team has been very helpful *[point made by estate manager in one-to-one conversation at the end of the event]*

## Facilitator's reflections

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This final section comprises reflections from the independent facilitator about the workshop series as a whole. They do not necessarily represent the view of the National Park Authority, its Board members or staff.

This section draws out overarching points that are not mentioned in the summary notes. It does not attempt to summarise the detail of what people said in the workshops, as these have been summarised in the preceding sections.

### 1. Key issues emerging from the workshops

Across the workshops, a number of common issues emerged that the new Local Development Plan should tackle. These included, in no particular order:

- Transport – active travel, public transport, road safety / accessibility (especially A82)
- Renewables generation and infrastructure – including securing community benefits
- Housing – affordability, impact of second homes, development viability in small settlements
- Tourism management – tailored to different issues in different communities
- Jobs and investment – make the most of opportunities of Faslane investment (West Loch Lomond and Cowal) and nature restoration
- Flooding – especially in the Trossachs catchments
- Land availability – especially where large public sector landowners dominate as in the Trossachs
- Enabling and regulatory National Park roles both need to be balanced to achieve success
- Community support – particularly delivery support for Local Place Plans/Community Action Plans

### 2. Opportunities for meaningful engagement at the Evidence Gathering stage

The 2019 Planning Act introduced a new first stage of public consultation in preparation of Local Development Plans – the Evidence Gathering stage. Planning authorities across Scotland are getting to grips with this new process, which is markedly different from the previous first stage of public consultation on a Main Issues Report. Rather than consult publicly around what the planning authority considers to be the main issues and put forward options of how to tackle them, public consultation now instead focuses on whether the Evidence Report contains a summary of relevant evidence to prepare the Local Development Plan and what that evidence means for the future Local Development Plan.

From a community engagement perspective, this new focus for consultation raises a challenge. How can communities, particularly members of the public, be meaningfully engaged in determining what evidence is missing from the professional and often technical endeavour of creating a land use plan?

The National Park responded positively to this challenge by offering local community organisations, land managers, businesses and other interested parties a range of opportunities to discuss its draft Evidence Report content (in the form of Topic Papers and Area Summaries):

- Six area-based evening workshops in different parts of the National Park.
- An online workshop for those who preferred to engage that way.
- An in-person workshop focused on land managers (estates and farms) to explore a specific National Park objective of integrating land management into the new Local Development Plan.

These eight workshops offered interested parties a range of opportunities to engage more meaningfully in preparation of the Evidence Report, to complement the more conventional publication of Topic Papers / Area Summaries online for feedback (which took place simultaneously, and to which workshop participants were also signposted).

How did this range of activities work in practice?

Essentially, the new Local Development Plan system expects the public to give their time to assess and then comment on the evidence that the planning authority is collating to prepare its Evidence Report - the ingredients of the cake, if you like. This is always likely to be a niche interest, even for people who are already involved in local community activity through Community Councils and Development Trusts. This was borne out at the engagement events.

I made two observations around people's engagement at the events.

Firstly, participants generally wanted to see what will be proposed in the next Local Development Plan, how it takes account of their interests and aspirations (especially as articulated in Local Place Plans and Community Action Plans) and how they can influence the new Local Development Plan's content. To continue the cake analogy, people want to taste the cake rather than see the list of ingredients. But the new Local Development Plan process will not reach that stage until after the Evidence Report has been approved by the Scottish Government's Planning and Environmental Appeals Division; and the National Park Authority has to consult the public before the Evidence Report is submitted for approval.

There is no easy solution to this conundrum. But it was clear from discussions with National Park Authority officers after the workshops was that they see an opportunity to build on the workshops' positive engagement and relationships by reconvening the participants after the Evidence Report has been submitted with the explicit purpose of starting to co-design the draft Local Development Plan. This is an excellent suggestion which would successfully build on these initial workshops, ensure that the new Local Development Plan preparation is as collaborative as it can be with community organisations, and respond positively to participants' aspirations to be meaningfully involved in preparing the Plan.

Secondly, expecting volunteers (including committed Community Councillors) to read, assess and comment on the full range of draft Topic Papers is unlikely ever to be successful as the central plank of an engagement strategy. It is clearly challenging for communities to engage with the sheer volume of information required to be included in the Evidence Report. To comply with Scottish Government requirements, Evidence Report papers are inevitably lengthy, technical and prepared for a professional audience.

The National Park Authority adopted a strategy of focussing the workshops on people who are already involved in community organisations (such as Community Councils and Community Development Trusts) or who have previously expressed interest in the Local Development Plan (such as estate managers). This proved sensible, as it meant that participants generally had a base level of knowledge about the planning system and Local Development Plans.

The format of the workshops, with summary display boards and staff available, proved to be useful additions to the basic Scottish Government requirements on pre-Evidence Report engagement:

- The summary boards were very well received at each of the events; participants spent much time looking at them and typically said that they found them useful, because they shared key information in a digestible form.
- The availability of planning and land management staff to explain the consultation and answer questions was also much appreciated by participants: the new Evidence Report stage represents a significant change from the previous Main Issues Report approach, and introducing land management into the new Local Development Plan is also a big change. Both of these things needed discussion for people to consider the implications.
- Using the workshops as the basis for a further round of co-design sessions for the new Local Development Plan itself would be a useful development.

### **3. Value of the workshops for participants**

Whilst not every Community Council or estate manager in the National Park, for example, participated in the workshops, they were all invited – and many did attend. The summary notes of the workshops in this report demonstrate the value that they seemed to get from the sessions, which included:

- Learning about the new approach to Local Development Plan preparation from National Park Authority officers - particularly the Evidence Gathering stage, subsequent consultation stages, the National Park Authority's aspiration to integrate land management into the new Local Development Plan, and being able to explore their own specific issues or concerns.
- Understanding the timing and purpose of future consultations in the new Local Development Plan process after the Evidence Gathering stage.
- Understanding how Local Place Plans and other community-led action plans – of which there is good coverage across the National Park – will be taken into account in preparation of the Local Development Plan.
- Seeing the range of other sources of evidence that need to be taken into account in preparation of the new Local Development Plan, which helps to build understanding of the multiple factors and agendas that the new Local Development Plan needs to accommodate.
- Hearing other participants' perspectives and experiences, such as communities hearing land manager perspectives (and vice versa) and learning how they have developed and are using Local Place Plans in different ways.

## 4. Future Local Development Plan engagement

Taken as a whole, the workshop participants are a valuable cohort of local people who are interested in the Local Development Plan and the future of their communities. Whilst there will of course be other individuals who did not attend the sessions, it would make sense to continue to engage with this cohort to co-design the new Local Development Plan and to build wider trust and awareness in the process amongst their local communities. That said, any future sessions should also be open to other community groups and land managers in the National Park who were not able to attend these workshops.

More specifically, there was clearly an appetite amongst many workshop participants to understand what policies and proposals should be included in the new Local Development Plan (and to be able to influence them). As explained above, the workshop discussions naturally set the stage for participatory co-design events once the Evidence Report gate check is complete and the National Park Authority is ready to move on to preparing the draft Local Development Plan.

Building on the National Park Authority's experience of using charrettes and other innovative approaches to community engagement, there are excellent opportunities to:

- Tap into the knowledge and enthusiasm of participants (plus those who were invited but unable to attend) to discuss priorities and proposals to include in the Local Development Plan, for example using a similar structure of area-based, land management and National Park-wide co-design workshops. These do not need to be expensive or complicated; they could simply be a continuation of the discussions started in these Evidence Gathering workshops.
- Continue to support communities who wish to undertake more community-led planning at their local level to feed into the Local Development Plan and also provide useful updated tools for the communities themselves. This could include, for example, helping communities to update their plans and share best practice on planning and delivery, building on the good work that the National Park has done over many years to support community-led planning within its boundaries.

## 5. Land management

The dedicated workshops with land managers was, in particular, an important step towards the National Park's goal integrating rural land management and land-use planning Local Development Plan.<sup>1</sup> This is important pioneering work, and the workshop was a valuable opportunity for land managers to learn more about it, voice their hopes and fears, and be "in at the start" to take it forward collaboratively with the National Park.

It is important to note that, whilst combining land management with land use planning is a legitimate aspiration of the National Park Authority, it is not necessarily an aspiration held in common with local communities and land managers. Many participants had uncertainties about how it would be rolled out, particularly:

- Would land management come under planning control and be subject to additional regulatory control? (put another way, how can combining land management and planning be a truly collaborative endeavour, rather than a top-down approach?)

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<sup>1</sup> See "Why is the new plan being done differently?" on [www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/planning/planning-guidance/plotting-a-map-to-the-future-our-new-local-development-plan/](http://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/planning/planning-guidance/plotting-a-map-to-the-future-our-new-local-development-plan/)

- How can the National Park actively support regenerative land management by land managers, beyond simply including proposals in the Local Development Plan? (especially as nature-restoration land management schemes become more difficult, expensive and labour intensive to implement)
- How could the inclusion of land management in the Local Development Plan be beneficial to land managers? (for example, supporting grant applications or consenting processes for their proposals)
- A specific concern about the status of maps used in consultation, with examples of farmers and land managers suffering negative impacts from maps of future proposals which haven't ultimately been included in final plans or been delivered.

Although the land managers workshop clearly revealed uncertainties about the new approach, there was also:

- Interest in the benefits the approach might bring for land managers, particularly if it is about identifying opportunities rather than exerting control.
- Clear pointers for potential negative impacts that need to be mitigated (such as the mapping mentioned above and working collaboratively to identify ways of meeting National Park-wide targets for nature restoration, as explained in the notes of the land managers session on page 16).
- Support for the good work of the land management team with land managers.

The session seemed to be a positive stepping stone towards (a) broadening the discussion to a greater range of land managers, and (b) deepening it to explore more specific initiatives and locations and flesh out how new integrated approach could work. This could be in parallel or jointly with the area-based co-design workshops suggested in the preceding point.

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