

14.3 Policy Context

Job Name: Lomond Banks – Socio-economic, Tourism, Recreation and Public Access Chapter

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1 Policy Context

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 This appendix has been prepared on behalf of Flamingo Land Ltd by Stantec UK Ltd. It provides an overview of the policy assessment undertaken to support the assessment of likely significant socio-economic, tourism, recreation and public access effects from Lomond Banks ('the Proposed Development') on land to the north of Balloch.
- 1.1.2 The purpose of this appendix is to outline the available policy, guidance and research which is relevant to this socio-economic, tourism, recreation and public access assessment.
- 1.1.3 The appendix is structured as follows:
- Policy Context, Guidance and Standards; and
 - Research Review.

1.2 Policy Context, Guidance and Standards

- 1.2.1 The overarching planning policy framework applicable to this EIAR from the Proposed Development is outlined in **Chapter 4 – Legislative and Planning Policy Context**. The below provides an overview of the policies of specific relevance to this socio-economic, tourism, recreation and public access assessment.

1.3 National Policy

- 1.3.1 **National Planning Framework 3 (2014)**¹ describes the long term-vision for development and investment across Scotland over the next 20 to 30 years. It is the spatial expression of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy (2015) and highlights opportunities for rural development. It notes that part of the vision is to have successful and sustainable places.
- 1.3.2 NPF3 states that planning should address the development requirements of businesses and enable key opportunities for investment to be realised.
- 1.3.3 The Framework includes a strategy for development in the National Park Areas:
- *Scotland's two National Parks – Cairngorms, and Loch Lomond and The Trossachs – are special places. National Park Partnership Plans provide the strategic framework for coordinated delivery of the four National Park aims, supporting their role as exemplars of a*

¹ Scottish Government (2014). National Planning Framework 3.

partnership approach to increasing sustainable economic growth and providing multiple benefits for residents, visitors and the wider Scottish economy.

- *Our National Parks are sustainable, successful places. We want to see positive planning and innovation continue to strengthen communities, encourage investment, support tourism, deliver affordable rural housing, and encourage high quality placemaking and visitor experiences. They are also connected places, with programmed improvements to key routes including the A82 and A9, the scenic routes initiative, the development of the National Walking and Cycling Network, and other path network improvements.*

- 1.3.4 Following the Planning (Scotland) Bill receiving Royal Assent in July 2019, Scottish Ministers have been developing a new **National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)**². NPF4 will, for the first time, incorporate Scottish Planning Policy and will take on enhanced status as part of the statutory development plan. NPF4 will have a longer time-horizon, fuller regional coverage and improved alignment with wider programmes and strategies. Draft NPF4 is currently out for consultation until 31st March 2022, with a finalised version expected to be laid to parliament for approval in Summer 2022.
- 1.3.5 **Scottish Planning Policy (SPP) (2014)**³ sets out national planning policies which reflect the Scottish Ministers priorities for the operation of the planning system, and for the development and use of land. The document aims to contribute to the Scottish Governments goal of achieving sustainable economic growth.
- 1.3.6 SPP highlights that policies and decisions should be guided by a number of principles including appreciating the net economic benefit of a development and supporting the delivery of accessible business development, having regard to the principles of sustainable land use and supporting good design (Para. 29).
- 1.3.7 SPP also contains policies to support business and employment. SPP notes that the planning system should promote business development that increases economic activity (Para. 93). Sites that cater for different sectors and sizes of business are encouraged. Due weight to the economic benefit of the development also needs to be taken into account. Key sectors noted as opportunities for growth include tourism and financial and business services (Para. 94).
- 1.3.8 Published in 2015, the overall purpose of the **Scottish Government's Economic Strategy** is to deliver increased sustainable growth. In order to deliver this, one key priority is securing sustainable investment in business and infrastructure. The strategy highlights that it is critical to foster an environment that supports business growth and invest in sectors in which Scotland has an advantage, including tourism.
- 1.3.9 **Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation (2022)**⁴ sets out the priorities for Scotland's economy as well as the actions needed to maximise economic opportunities in Scotland. The Strategy outlines a range of priorities to 2032 to create a wellbeing economy; "a society that is thriving across economic, social and environmental dimensions, and that delivers prosperity for all Scotland's people and places".
- 1.3.10 Further, **Scotland Outlook 2030**⁵ – Scotland's future tourism strategy – posits an ambition to be the world leader in 21st century tourism. The strategy highlights a multitude of opportunities

² Scottish Government (2021). Draft National Planning Framework 4. Available online at: <https://www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/draft-npf4/>

³ Scottish Government (2014). Scottish Planning Policy. Available online at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scottish-planning-policy/>

⁴ Scottish Government (2022). Scotland's Strategy for Economic Transformation. Available online at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-strategy-economic-transformation/documents/>

⁵ Scottish Tourism Alliance (2020). Scotland Outlook 2030. Available online at: <https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Scotland-Outlook-2030.pdf>

arising from growth in the tourism sector in terms economic contribution; job creation; and workforce skills development.

- 1.3.11 In addition to the above policy considerations, the assessment has been carried out in accordance with the principles contained within the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 with regards to access rights, including the protection of Core Paths and Public Rights of Way. The Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 establishes a statutory right of responsible access to land and inland waters for outdoor recreation and crossing land. Under Section 13(1) of the Act, local authorities have a duty to “assert, protect and keep open and free from obstruction or encroachment any route, waterway or other means by which access rights may reasonably be exercised”. This emphasises the importance afforded to maintaining continuity of public access to recreational routes in the countryside.
- 1.3.12 Limited exceptions to this statutory right of access are set out within section 6 of the Act, with section 6(g)(i) specifically excluding access to land where “building, civil engineering or demolition works” are being carried out, and section 6(g)(ii) specifically excluding access to land where “works being carried out by a statutory undertaker for the purposes of the undertaking” are being carried out. However, Section 7(i) of the Act confirms that this restriction does not apply to Core Paths, which in the absence of a formal closure order must be kept open. Similarly, defined Public Rights of Way are legally considered to be roads, regardless of their current state and usage. Consequently, to temporarily or permanently close or divert a Public Right of Way it is necessary to promote a formal order under the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967.

1.4 Regional and Local Policy

- 1.4.1 The current statutory Development Plan is the **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Local Development Plan 2017-2021**⁶ (the LDP) which was adopted by the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNP) in December 2016. The current Development Plan Scheme notes that the intended adoption date for the next iteration of the LDP is 2024.
- 1.4.2 The LDP’s vision is focused on conservation, rural development and the visitor experience. Of relevance to this assessment, it calls for a *“high quality, authentic experience for visitors, with many opportunities to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural heritage within an internationally renowned landscape that compares to the best on offer around the world”*.
- 1.4.3 The LDP’s development strategy map designates Balloch as a location for Strategic Tourism Opportunities and allocates land across the Site for visitor experience related and mixed uses. Further, the LDP policy of most relevance is Visitor Experience Policy 1(a) which provides support for proposals forming a strategic tourism opportunity within Balloch.
- 1.4.4 The Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Visitor Experience planning guidance defines different types of tourism accommodation and infrastructures and states that a Business Statement demonstrating the viability and market demand for tourism development proposals *may require to accompany some proposals and sets out the expected context*.
- 1.4.5 In September 2020, the National Park published an indicative **Regional Spatial Strategy**⁷ for the Scottish Government to aid the preparation of NP4. The strategy emphasises that the park is a strategic asset for Scotland, and identifies a set of long-term strategic opportunities for the area that can deliver the following outcomes:
- **Climate and nature:** through investing in natural capital;

⁶ Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2017). Local Development Plan 2017-2021. Available online at: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/planning/planning-guidance/local-development-plan/>

⁷ Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2020). Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy. Available online at: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Indicative-Regional-Spatial-Strategy-Sept-2020.pdf>

- **The rural economy:** through tourism and business growth;
 - **Scotland's health and wellbeing:** through investing in new and improved infrastructure and active travel opportunities; and
 - **Scotland's people:** by enabling more opportunities for people to live and work here.
- 1.4.6 The **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Partnership Plan (2018-2023)**⁸ is the overarching vision to guide how those with a role in looking after the National Park will work together over the 5-year lifespan of the plan to ensure a successful, sustainable future. The plan sets out a vision to build upon existing opportunities to enjoy recreation activities and appreciate the area's natural and cultural heritage.
- 1.4.7 Of particular relevance, outcome seven outlines the National Park's aim to create a thriving visitor economy, with more businesses and organisations working together to create a world-class visitor destination. Moreover, priority 7.1 (Growing Tourism Markets) seeks to encourage new and established tourism businesses to innovate and collaborate by capitalising on growing markets.
- 1.4.8 The **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs Tourism Strategy (2012-2017)**⁹ sets out the aspirations for the tourism sector to 2017, aiming to inform the future direction of the tourism sector and the targets/goals it seeks to achieve. The strategy aims to:
- "To deliver a high quality, authentic experience for visitors with many opportunities to appreciate and enjoy the natural and cultural heritage within an internationally renowned landscape that compares to the best on offer around the world."*
- 1.4.9 The Tourism Strategy provides the tourism context for the **National Park Partnership Plan (2018-2023)**¹⁰ and is intrinsically linked to the LLTNP Outdoor Recreation Plan (2013-2017). The Tourism Strategy and Outdoor Recreation Plan share the same vision but are yet to be updated.
- 1.4.10 Cognisance has also been given to the **Balloch Charrette Report**¹¹ published in May 2016 which sets out the local communities' future priorities for Balloch. **Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Core Paths Plan 2010-2017**¹², which is currently in the process of being updated following consultation in 2018/19, has also been taken into account.

1.5 Summary of Tourism and Visitor Economy Sector Literature

- 1.5.1 The tourism industry is described as "a cornerstone of the Scottish Economy, and vital to the economic performance of towns, cities and regions across the length and breadth of Scotland" by the Scottish Tourism Alliance¹³. The tourism sector and visitor economy are an integral part of Scotland's business base and have significantly contributed to employment growth in recent years, in particular generating economic activity across rural locations. Furthermore, following

⁸ Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2018). National Park Partnership Plan. Available online at: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NPPP2018-23-web.pdf>

⁹ Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2012). Tourism Strategy 2012-2017. Available online at: https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/07/Our-Plans_Tourism-Strategy2012-2017.pdf

¹⁰ Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2013). Outdoor Recreation Plan. Available online at: https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/07/20151208-ORP-2013-2017-Working-Copy_4-no-RI.pdf

¹¹ 7N Architects (2016). Balloch Charrette Report. Available online at: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/Charrette-report.pdf>

¹² Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (2010). Core Paths Plan 2010-2017. Available online at: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/park-authority/publications/core-paths-plan/review-process/>

¹³ The Scottish Tourism Alliance (2018). Tourism in Scotland: The Economic Contribution of the sector. Available online at: <https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Tourism-Economic-Narrative.pdf>

the COVID-19 pandemic, the UK and Scottish tourism sector has witnessed an unprecedented rise in staycations and domestic tourism.

- 1.5.2 Many visits to Scotland can be attributed to the unique landscape setting, considered one of the nation's most highly valued assets¹⁴. Visit Scotland's surveys confirm that this is the single most important factor in attracting visitors. This is reflected in many of the plans and strategies above, which note the importance of utilising Scotland's natural attributes to grow the tourism and visitor economy.
- 1.5.3 It is not solely Scotland's inland natural beauty which serves as a key determining factor for prospective visitors. In June 2021, Visit Scotland¹⁵ published a topic paper on coastal tourism which examined the importance of coastal locations (including beaches, inland Lochs and waterways) to Scotland's world-renowned tourism offering. The paper highlights the lure of Scotland's coast for Scotland and UK based visitors and associated growing trend in visitor spend across the sector. Indeed, waterways have played an increasing role in tourism development in both urban and rural setting throughout the world. In Scotland, the use of iconic leisure developments has helped to catalyse regenerative impacts on both perceptions and reputation¹⁶ of the public and businesses.
- 1.5.4 In 2016, Visit Scotland published a refreshed Tourism Development Framework¹⁷ for Scotland. It outlines the *"role of the planning system in delivering the visitor economy."* In relation to the Proposed Development, the framework highlights that whilst the west side of Loch Lomond has seen significant investment in the hotel sector, *"further opportunities remain around the south of the Loch at the gateway to the National Park."* The framework also states that developments where a collection of activities such as eating, sleeping and recreation can be undertaken in one defined location offers significant economic opportunities as a result of the employment which they create. Moreover, the off-site spend and supply chain which these developments support is important.

¹⁴ Visit Scotland (2016). Tourism Development Framework for Scotland. Available online at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/policies/tourism-development-framework-dec16.pdf>

¹⁵ Visit Scotland (2021). Seas the Day! Exploring the appeal of Scotland's coastal destinations for visitors. Available online at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/research-papers/about-our-visitors/coastal-tourism-june-2021.pdf>

¹⁶ Lennon, J. (2017). Transforming Waterways: The Tourism-Based Regeneration of Canals in Scotland. In Hooper G. Heritage and Tourism in Britain and Ireland, pp. 85-97.

¹⁷ Visit Scotland (2016). Tourism Development Framework for Scotland. Available online at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/binaries/content/assets/dot-org/pdf/policies/tourism-development-framework-dec16.pdf>

