

## The Highland Council

Minutes of meeting of the **Tourism Committee** held remotely on **Monday, 6 December 2021** at **10.30am**.

### **Present:**

Mr G Adam  
Dr I Cockburn  
Mr J Gordon  
Mr A Henderson

Mr A MacInnes  
Mr H Morrison  
Mr D Rixson

### **Non-Members also Present:**

Mrs I Campbell

### **Officials in Attendance:**

Mr A Macguire, Head of Development & Regeneration  
Ms C Campbell Head of Performance and Resources, Performance and Resources  
Mr C Simpson, Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film, Development and Resources  
Ms L Joiner, Tourism Project Co-ordinator, Development and Resources  
Mr P Waite, Countryside Team Leader, Planning and Environment  
Mr S Manning, Principal Traffic Officer, Roads and Transport  
Ms D Sutton, Amenity Services Manager  
Mrs L Dunn, Principal Administrator, Performance and Governance  
Ms F MacBain, Committee Administrator, Performance and Governance

**An asterisk in the margin denotes a recommendation to the Council. All decisions with no marking in the margin are delegated to the Committee.**

### **Mr Gordon Adam in the Chair**

#### **1. Apologies for Absence Leisgeulan**

Apologies were submitted for Mr R Bremner, Mr J Bruce, Mr C Fraser, Mr S Mackie, Mr D Macpherson, Mrs M Paterson and Ms M Smith.

#### **2. Declarations of Interest Foillseachaidhean Com-pàirt**

**The following Members declared interests relating to all items on the agenda but, having applied the test outlined in Paragraphs 5.2 and 5.3 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, concluded that their interests did not preclude their involvement in the discussion:**

#### **Financial interests:**

Mr Gordon Adam - part owner of two self-catering units  
Mr John Gordon – Air BnB provider  
Mr Hugh Morrison – Hotel owner  
Mr Raymond Bremner - owner of an AirBnB (closed until next year)

**Non-financial interests:**

Mr Gordon Adam – Director of a glamping business

Mr John Gordon – Council Representative of Skye Connect

Mr Denis Rixson - Council's representative on the Isle of Rum Community Trust and as the Secretary of the Mallaig Heritage Centre

**3. UCI World Cycling Championships 2023  
Farpais Rothaireachd UCI na Cruinne 2023**

There had been circulated TC/10/21 dated 22 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the events were welcomed and would be of great benefit to Lochaber and the wider Highlands;
- attention was drawn to the fragility of the local transport network and assurance was sought and provided that early transport planning, including resilience in case of serious incidents and road closures, was being undertaken. Parking facilities also required consideration and a summary was provided of some discussions that were taking place; and
- assurance was sought that legacy schemes or infrastructure would be sought for local active travel and cycling initiatives.

The Committee **NOTED**:

- i. the proposal to host the downhill mountain biking element of the 2023 UCI Cycling World Championships in Highland; and
- ii. the different areas where the Council might be involved in the event.

**4. Proposal for a Visitor Management Plan for 2022  
Moladh airson Plana Rianachd Luchd-tadhail airson 2022**

There had been circulated TC/11/21 dated 22 November 2021 Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- the report and work undertaken were welcomed, as was the early funding agreement;
- confirmation was provided that the Visitor Management Plan 2022 would be amended as follows a) section 'Roads, Parking and Transport issues', reference to 'tolerance' should read 'intolerance'; b) there was a missing phrase in the section of the FAQ entitled, 'Why does the Council not use a clearway order to prevent cars, motorhomes etc parking on certain stretches of road?'; and c) to reflect the updated position regarding the Waste Disposal Unit at Ullapool;
- the ragging process required adjustment as some green-ragged items were underway rather than completed;
- the data and evidence gathered in 2021 was valuable although it was acknowledged that it had not been a typical season due to Covid-19 issues;
- capital investment was required in addition to service delivery;
- a corporate / legal response was required on possible action to be taken if landowners imposed unauthorised verge restrictions. This would be taken up in the first instance with the roads team;

- information was sought and provided on how local volunteer warden schemes would work and, while this was still being worked on, it was likely to vary from area to area;
- ranger training had not been undertaken by West Highland College for a variety of reasons including Covid-19 lockdown, staff availability, length of courses, and the ability to provide some training in-house;
- paper-based handouts for holiday makers were a useful tool for rangers to open conversation with visitors and as an alternative to the internet which might not be used so frequently on holiday;
- progress information was sought and provided on the public toilets at Bonar Bridge and Lairg, the community campsite at Balnakiel, near Durness, and the public toilets at Ardgay;
- discussion took place on whether increasing the comfort scheme payments would attract more participants and a summary was provided of planned efforts to increase the number of schemes, especially at hot spots; and
- the exemplary work undertaken on visitor management across Council departments was welcomed.

The Committee:

- NOTED** the information provided by each Service on progress in delivering the 2021 Visitor Management Plan actions as detailed in Appendix 1 to the report;
- NOTED** the results of the research undertaken by the Access rangers and with comfort scheme providers;
- AGREED** the priorities for a revised plan as outlined in the draft 2022 Visitor Management Plan attached as Appendix 4 to the report;
- AGREED** the ragging system be reviewed for future reports; and
- AGREED** to discuss with the roads department in the first instance possible sanctions against landowners imposing unauthorised verge restrictions.

## 5. Tourism Infrastructure Bun-structar Turasachd

There had been circulated TC/12/21 dated 22 November 2021 by the Executive Chief Officer - Infrastructure, Environment and Economy.

A presentation was provided by the Principal Officer – Europe, Tourism & Film, Development and Resources on the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan. Key issues included the structure of the plan, the 2020 consultation results, and the following hot spot areas (wider areas facing multiple issues at multiple sites as opposed to a single pressure at one site):

- Glen Etive and Glencoe
- Arisaig – Morar – Mallaig corridor
- Glen Nevis
- Isle of Skye
- Applecross and area
- North West Highlands (Loch Broom to Durness)
- Fortrose – Rosemarkie – Chanonry Point
- Aviemore to Glenmore corridor

During discussion, the following issues were raised:

- information was sought on how funding decisions for projects would be prioritised and this was still being developed. Within the Plan, it was likely wider issues would be included along with a separate section for specific areas. There might be an intermediary stage before funds were awarded to individual schemes;
- it should be clarified that the list of hotspots was dynamic and could be amended based on evidence gathered in future;
- it was important to guide people to new locations to reduce pressure on the hotspots, but also important to consider whether the infrastructure in those less visited places was able to cope with additional visitors;
- information was sought on when the viewpoint walls and signage would be completed on the Bealach na Bà road;
- engagement with Scottish Land and Estates in relation to tourism infrastructure and commercial opportunities should be undertaken; and
- the challenges in relation to parking were highlighted, with various examples provided. The advantages and drawbacks of Park and Ride schemes were considered.

The Committee:

- i. **NOTED** the current position with the Highland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund supported projects;
- ii. **NOTED** the final bids submitted to the 4<sup>th</sup> funding round that closed in September 2021;
- iii. **AGREED** that the eight areas defined by officers following public engagement and analysis of ranger data be considered as “hotspots” for the purposes of the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan;
- iv. **NOTED** the work under way to produce a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan by January 2022 and **AGREED** that authority be delegated to the Executive Chief Officer Infrastructure, Environment & Economy, in consultation with the committee chair, to approve the version to be submitted to VisitScotland;
- v. **AGREED** the dynamic nature of the list of hot spots be clarified in the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan; and
- vi. **AGREED** to involve Scottish Land and Estates in Tourism Infrastructure considerations.

The meeting ended at 12.05pm.