



Lochaber Tourism Infrastructure Plan

1st Draft

November 2020

Purpose

The Highland Council is producing a Highland-wide Tourism Infrastructure Plan but as part of this process has created a number of draft area plans for wider consultation with a view to these later being incorporated as distinct chapters in the Highland-wide plan. This is one of those area plans.

The Highland-wide Tourism Infrastructure Plan aims to provide a simple audit of relevant tourism infrastructure around Highland as well as identifying gaps in provision. Similarly, this plan will detail existing provision but will focus more on the gaps in provision around Lochaber. The plan has a particular focus on publicly provided infrastructure normally or commonly delivered by the Council, public sector partners or communities rather than facilities or services that are more commonly provided on a commercial basis by the private sector.

In some cases, it is appropriate to consider some forms of third-party / commercial provision as this may be necessary in order to help identify gaps in provision. These have only been included where the facility or service concerned is similar to facilities or services that might reasonably be expected to be provided by the Council and where these are made easily available to visitors that are not otherwise customers of the business concerned. As an example, toilets in a village hall made available to visitors are included but those in cafes, restaurants etc. are not unless they are recognised Highland Comfort Scheme Providers.

Plan structure

For each of the types of tourism infrastructure included in the plan a three-stage approach is used:

- **Existing provision** – a listing of existing provision is given based on a desktop audit and engagement with other Council officers and selected external partners
- **Proposed projects** – projects already under way or with plans in place for development in the near future
- **Possible gaps in provision** – an initial indication of possible gaps in provision is given. This is based on the knowledge and professional opinion of a number of officers and external partners but further engagement with local stakeholders is now being undertaken to refine these lists.

Types of Infrastructure

A number of different types of infrastructure that are used by visitors are currently provided by the Council. Some of these, while important to and used directly or indirectly by visitors, are not dedicated “tourism infrastructure”. These include infrastructure and facilities such as roads, parking, harbours, piers, slipways and waste / recycling centres. As usage of this infrastructure is much broader and Council consideration of operational details and future investment are driven largely by other factors these are not covered in detail here. However, in cases where such infrastructure is deemed to be primarily aimed at / used by visitors these have been included where considered relevant to the purpose of this infrastructure plan.

The types of infrastructure considered particularly relevant to visitors that are included in this plan are:-

- Parking
 - off road parking in popular tourism destinations (but excluding larger settlements where a significant amount of both on and off road parking is generally available)
 - off road parking at visitor sites, or access points for activities such as a hill walk.
 - roadside laybys where these are heavily used by visitors for an extended stop
 - Dedicated overnight parking for motorhomes (excluding commercial caravan / camping sites)
- Electric Vehicle charge points
 - Public sector provided charge points
 - Charge points provided by private businesses / others but made publicly available
- Public toilets
 - Council operated facilities
 - Facilities operated with support from the Council (Highland comfort scheme)
 - Other facilities made freely available to the wider public
- Motorhome waste disposal facilities
 - Waste facilities on commercial sites made available to non-residents (included in the audit to identify overall provision and thereby help identify gaps)
 - Standalone motorhome waste facilities
- Public Wi-Fi services
- Paths and trails

Parking

Existing provision

Across Lochaber there are many car parks or other public areas such as on road parking and laybys where cars can be parked. Many will be in larger communities and / or used almost entirely by local people for parking at their home or for work, shopping or accessing local services. While sometimes used by visitors these are not considered “tourism infrastructure” so are not included here. Similarly, roadside laybys typically used for a brief stop such as a rest stop or to take a photograph are excluded.

Parking areas where a visitor will normally leave their car for a longer period of time so as to visit a community, beach or other natural feature or to undertake an activity such as walking, cycling, water sports or fishing might reasonably be considered to be dedicated “tourism infrastructure”. Parking that meets this definition, whether operated by the Council or others is shown in the table below.

Town / village / area	Location	Town / village / area	Location
Lochaber			
Kinlochourn	Road end	Glengarry	Forest
Invergarry	Bridge of Oich	Invergarry	Glengarry Hall
Laggan	Laggan Locks	Strathan	Road end
Achnacarry	Cia-aig Falls	Gairloch	Village
Spean Bridge	Commando Memorial	Spean Bridge	Woollen Mill
Roy Bridge	Village	Loch Laggan	Creag Meagaidh
Mallaig	East Bay	Mallaig	West Bay
Morar	Bracorina	Morar	Tougal
Camusdarach	Camusdarach	Traigh	Traigh Beach
Arisaig	Village / waterfront	Glenfinnan	Viaduct access
Glenfinnan	Callop	Fassfern	Picnic area
Banavie	Banavie Locks	Torlundy	North Face Car park
Glen Nevis	Achintee	Glen Nevis	Visitor Centre
Glen Nevis	Lower Falls	Glen Nevis	Road end
Kilchoan	Ardnamurchan Point	Kilchoan	Sanna Beach car park
Strontian	Village	Corran	Loch Linnhe picnic area
Corran	Jetty car park	Kinlochleven	Kinlochleven picnic area
Kinlochleven	Foyers Rd	Ballachulish	Village
Glencoe	Village	Glencoe	Signal Rock
Glencoe	Achnambeithach	Glencoe	3 Sisters x 2
Glencoe	Pass of Glencoe	Glencoe	Lairig Eilde
Glencoe	Altnafeadh	Glencoe	Lairig Gartain
Glen Etive	Coileteir access	Glen Etive	Road end car park

Possible gaps in provision

In considering where the provision of parking does not meet current demand it is more common to find that some provision exists, but that capacity is inadequate rather than there being a gap in provision. There are however a few sites now becoming more popular with visitors and demand is arising for parking in locations that did not previously require it.

In order to relate possible gaps to existing provision, locations where parking exists but is not adequate for the demand experienced at certain times are shown with an **orange background**. Locations now seeing more visitors but where no dedicated parking is available and passing places or road verges are increasingly being used are shown with a **red background** in the table below.

Lochaber		
Kinloch Hourn	Loch Arkaig (road end)	Mallaig
Traigh beach	Sanna beach	Glencoe village
Glen Coe – (Devils staircase, The study, 3 sisters & An torr)	Glen Etive	

In most of the locations referred to above some additional parking provision is likely to be required if capacity issues are to be addressed. However, where only limited additional capacity is considered necessary there may be some “soft” approaches that could be used such as improving the delineation of individual parking spaces to ensure existing capacity is used as efficiently as possible.

Dedicated overnight parking for motorhomes

Existing provision

In addition to the wide range of commercially operated caravan and campsites a small number of locations around Highland offer fairly basic overnight stop locations, typically for a small charge. Loosely based on the French system of “Aires” these locations are designed for short stops (typically a single night while travelling). They are commonly found close a community so as to encourage visitors to make use of the businesses such as shops, bars or restaurants in the community. The range of facilities can vary but some will provide services such as fresh water, electric hook-up points or waste disposal. A small number of locations already exist where businesses actively offer this service in their own car park such as at Glencoe ski centre, Dundonnell Hotel and the Royal Hotel, Ullapool. However, there are very few established sites which are publicly provided, which are based in Sutherland and Caithness.

In addition to the established sites, Forestry & Land Scotland trialled a system during summer 2020 where a number of their car parks were made available for overnight parking by self-contained motorhomes. The choice of locations offered was dependent on a variety of factors including car park size, proximity of commercial campsites or, environmental constraints. Further details are available at <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/staythenight>. Further work to evaluate the success or otherwise of this approach is being carried out before any decisions are made on longer term plans. There is four locations based in Lochaber where this service was made available:

Lochaber		
Glengarry	Àrd-Àirigh, Loch Sunart	Garbh Eilean, Loch Sunart
Aoineadh Mor, Morvern		

There are numerous other locations across Highland where informal camping in motorhomes takes place. These range from urban / semi urban locations such as at Nairn harbour or Dornoch beach to rough parking areas remote from any community – e.g. alongside Loch Quoich in Lochaber, in the walkers car park below Quinag in Sutherland or at the road end at Dunnet Head in Caithness.

Proposed new provision

In addition to the above established site a number of additional sites that will offer dedicated overnight parking for motorhomes are currently in development around Highland. Unfortunately, during initial analysis there was no new publicly available provision identified as being developed in Lochaber.

Possible gaps in provision

Motorhome visitors are currently a growing market for Highland, and this, along with recently experienced pressures at some locations suggests some additional formal provision may be required. However, as mentioned above, numerous locations across Highland are already used for informal camping in motorhomes and it is not realistic to expect all of these to become formal overnight parking areas. There are instances where the locations currently used are not appropriate

and so some local provision of dedicated overnight parking, perhaps with related facilities may be appropriate.

It can be difficult to recommend specific gaps that require public provision as there is also already a commercial market in terms of existing campsites. Provision of more basic designated overnight parking areas could be considered a business opportunity for example for landowners, farmers or crofters who have suitable land or for businesses such as restaurants or bars that may wish to offer such a service to drive additional trade. Normally, if such a facility was to be provided by the Council and run commercially, this would only be done where there was some evidence of market failure meaning there was no alternative provision in that area. With there being a possible commercial market and this being a rapidly changing situation it is considered more appropriate at this time that the Council recognise that there is a general need for more provision and support others such as communities in providing facilities where they are keen to do so. The Council could then consider identifying gaps that still exist and that may be filled by public provision.

Electric vehicle charge points

Although not dedicated “tourism infrastructure” electric vehicle (EV) charge points have been included here in recognition of the importance that having a good network of charging points is in giving visitors traveling by electric vehicles the confidence to visit an area.

Existing provision

Highland has an existing network of EV charge points with many of these provided / maintained by the Highland Council and others provided by other public sector partners or private businesses. Many of these are available to the general public but some others, for example at a Bed & Breakfast operated in a private home, may only be available to their own guests. This list shows those which are available in Lochaber for wider public use.

Location		Council Owned?	S	F	R
Lochaber					
Mallaig	West Bay	✓	✓	✓	✓
Arisaig	Land Sea & Islands Centre		✓	✓	✓
Roy Bridge	Community Hall	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nevis Range	Nevis Range		✓	✓	
Nevis Range	HW Energy		✓	✓	
Corpach	Sea Lock		✓	✓	
Fort William	SEPA		✓	✓	
Fort William	An Aird car park	✓	✓	✓	✓
Fort William	Three Wise Monkeys climbing		✓	✓	
Kilchoan	Cal Mac Ferries		✓	✓	✓
Glenborrodale	Ardnamurchan Distillery		✓		
Kinlochleven	Memorial Hall car park		✓	✓	
Glencoe	Clachaig Inn		✓	✓	
Glencoe	Glencoe Mountain		✓	✓	✓

S – Standard

F – Fast charger
R – Rapid charger

Proposed new provision

A programme providing a wider network of EV charge points across Highland is currently under way which will see new or further charge points. Unfortunately, there is currently no new publicly available provision that has been identified as being developed in Lochaber.

However, further new or additional charge points have been proposed for the following locations in Lochaber, although specific plans have yet to be developed: -

Lochaber	
Arisaig	Fort William

Possible gaps in provision

With the use of electric vehicles growing there is anticipated to be demand for further charging points. This includes both: -

- Additional points in locations that have some existing provision but where provision may not meet current or anticipated levels of demand.
- New charge points in locations where charge points are not yet available.

The rate of growth in usage, allied with changes in battery technology which affect the range of EVs make it difficult to identify how quickly and / or how far apart new or additional provision will be required.

With increasing numbers of visitors travelling in electric vehicles the provision of EV charge points in a community is also seen to be a way of increasing dwell time and boosting economic benefits as visitors can be encouraged to use local businesses while their vehicle charges. In a similar way there is merit in considering whether charge points in communities might be complemented by provision at some key tourism sites. This could improve the visitor experience by allowing vehicles to be charged while the visitor undertakes their visit.

Many commercial attractions are expected to provide for their own customers and existing plans for new publicly funded provision are already in progress. These are based on Transport Scotland and Highland Council recommendations as well as public suggestions and include good coverage for visitors, so it is not considered that any activity beyond that already proposed is currently required. However, any plans for further phases of provision should continue to recognise the needs of visitors and this may warrant specific consideration of providing charge points at some visitor sites in future.

Public Conveniences

Existing provision

The Council currently operates and supports a network of public conveniences across Highland. A number of these are directly managed by the Council while others are operated by third parties

such as communities or businesses with some financial support from the Council through the Highland Comfort Scheme.

In addition, some businesses, communities and public sector partners manage visitor sites where toilet facilities are provided that could reasonably be described as being publicly available i.e. available to visitors without the visitor having to be a customer of the business or facility providing them. Those toilets that are publicly available in Lochaber are shown in the table below.

Location	Seasonal	Operator	Location	Seasonal	Operator
Lochaber					
Invergarry Hall	Y	CS	Rum	N	SNH
Mallaig	N	CS	Tougal	Y	HC
Traigh Beach	Y	Other	Muck	N	CS
Eigg	N	CS	Arisaig	N	CS
Spean Bridge	N	Other	Creag Meagaidh	N	SNH
Glenuig	Y	CS	Corpach (Kilmallie)	N	CS
Caol	N	CS	Fort William (Station Brae)	N	HC
Fort William (Viewfield)	N	HC	Glen Nevis Visitor Centre	N	HLH
Kilchoan	N	HC			
Acharacle	N	HC	Strontian	N	CS
Ardgour	N	CS	Corran	N	HC
Ballachulish	N	HC	Glencoe	N	HC
Kinlochleven	N	CS	Lochaline	N	HC

Operators: - HC – The Highland Council
 CS – Highland Comfort Scheme provider (community, business etc).
 FLS – Forestry & Land Scotland
 HLH – High Life Highland
 JMT – John Muir Trust
 SNH – Scottish Natural Heritage

Proposed new provision

Funding has been committed for Four projects in Lochaber to provide new publicly available toilet, part funded through the Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund but currently subject to conditions, such as planning consent which the group are currently working to address.

Lochaber			
Mallaig	N	Other	New Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund project providing community run facilities funded in round 1. Work underway.
Traigh Beach	N	Other	New Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund project providing community run facilities funded in round 1. Complete
Lower Falls, Glen Nevis	N	Other	New Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund project funded in round 2. Construction due autumn / winter 2020.

Isle of Eigg	N	Other	New Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund project providing expanded community run facilities funded in round 2. Construction due autumn 2020.
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Possible gaps in provision

In addition to the projects under way and proposed, it has been identified that some gaps still exist, either due to distance from the nearest facility or because there is a particular type of demand e.g. at a beach where visitors will commonly spend lengthy periods of time. Possible gaps that may warrant investigating options for new facilities or a Comfort Scheme arrangement with another operator are shown below. Those shown with a **red background** currently have no provision while those with an **amber background (none currently identified for Lochaber)** have facilities, but these may not always be adequate for the level of demand.

Lochaber		
Commando Memorial, Spean Bridge	Spean Bridge (village)	Duror / Kentallen area

Motorhome Waste facilities

Existing provision

Currently there is very limited provision of facilities for the disposal of motorhome waste except on formal caravan and camping sites. Many sites limit the use of these facilities to visitors staying with them overnight, but some also offer waste disposal to non-staying visitors – often for a small charge. As some sites only do this infrequently / on request or don't wish to publicise this service, it has been difficult to produce a definitive list of facilities. A survey of sites was attempted in winter 2019/20 with an incomplete response but based on this, the following table shows known availability of waste facilities in Lochaber for non-staying motorhome visitors.

Lochaber	
Linnhe Lochside Holidays	Glen Nevis Caravan and Camping Park

Proposed new provision

In Lochaber a further one location has plans in place to provide new facilities, part funded through the Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund:

Lochaber
Mallaig

Further plans are being developed by Kinlochleven Development Trust seeking funding from round 3 RTIF to provide a motorhome waste facility in Lochaber:

Lochaber
Kinlochleven

Possible gaps in provision

While it has been identified that more provision is required, defining precise gaps is more difficult. Most self-contained motorhomes can travel for around three days before needing to empty their waste tanks so there is not a need for facilities in every community, but rather a good network of facilities that is also well publicised to allow visitors to plan their stops accordingly. Suitable locations will also be dependent on other infrastructure being suitable – for example having a suitable sewage system in place.

Many communities have been in contact with the Council in recent months expressing an interest in providing such facilities and based on these approaches and feedback received from other sources including business groups and visitors the following locations may be ones that could be considered:

Lochaber		
Salen	Lochaline	Glencoe Village

Public Wi-Fi

Existing provision

Through the Inverness & Highland City Region Deal, the Council has installed public Wi-Fi in 16 Highland Communities whilst Brora also has a public Wi-Fi service previously installed as a pilot scheme by HIE. More recently, the Council was approached by the Scottish Government with an opportunity to deploy Public Wi-Fi at further sites along the NC500 route as currently internet connectivity is limited. The NC500 Wi-Fi proposal, which would connect into the current Council Project, and deliver a strategic network along the NC500 was commenced in spring 2020 but has been delayed due to the Covid-19 situation.

Existing sites in Lochaber are as shown in the table below in **green** with the proposed additional sites in **orange** (**Currently none identified in Lochaber**).

Lochaber
Fort William

Possible gaps in provision

Many other communities across Highland as well as visitors to these communities could benefit from public Wi-Fi networks. However, on the basis that it is unrealistic to expect that this could be provided in every community. However, it can be argued that some communities stand out on the basis of scale and as being more popular visitor destinations. In Lochaber the following location has been identified as an appropriate area for further Wi-Fi development:-

Lochaber		
Ballachulish	Kinlochleven	Mallaig

It should however be noted that any plans would need to consider how the rollout of other technologies such as 4G & 5G might influence need or demand and this may influence whether or not further investment in a wider Wi-Fi network was appropriate.

The Council has faced challenges in terms of the ongoing costs of maintaining the public Wi-Fi services in the locations where this has already been delivered. Similarly, this issue is still being addressed in relation to the wider rollout of sites along the NC500 as the Scottish Government support will only offer capital funding towards the setup of the new sites. With this in mind any further rollout of sites would need not just a Council capital funding allocation but would also need to be considered in the context of future resource implications for the Council. This may require the support of a third party to take on any further sites.

Paths and Trails

Existing provision

With many of Highland's visitors coming to the area specifically for walking holidays and most others doing some walking as a leisure activity while here, the network of paths and trails they use can be considered a key part of the area's tourism infrastructure.

Perhaps best known from a visitor perspective are the 3 formally designated national Long Distance Trails – The Great Glen Way, West Highland Way and Speyside Way – with the latter two also including sections that extend into other local authority areas. Other long distance routes such as the South Loch Ness Trail and Affric-Kintail Way also exist but are not formally designated in the same way and opportunities exist for further routes to be developed. Information on these can be found here;

https://www.highland.gov.uk/outdoorhighlands/info/1/long_distance_trails_in_the_highlands/3/long_distance_routes

Numerous other paths also exist and under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 the Council has a statutory duty to produce a Core Path Plan which records many of these. As the number of paths is counted in the hundreds and these are already recorded in the core path plans a complete list is not provided here but an interactive map of these is available at:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/outdoorhighlands/info/2/paths_in_the_highlands/1/paths_in_the_highlands with individual area maps also downloadable from:
https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1225/countryside_farming_and_wildlife/161/outdoor_access/4

Possible gaps in provision

The Council's obligations in relation to the Core Path Plan is for these to periodically be reviewed. This is done on a sub-regional basis with some reviews having recently taken place while others are still under way. As a formal process already exists for reviewing paths and that this can include the addition of new paths, it is deemed unnecessary to attempt to identify gaps through this tourism infrastructure plan. It is considered sufficient that this plan notes that paths are an important part of Highland's tourism infrastructure and that the needs of visitors as well as residents will continue to be considered in future revisions of the Council's Core Paths Plan.