

# Stronachlachar and Inversnaid Community Life Plan 2023



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# 1. INTRODUCTION

We the Community of Stronachlachar and Inversnaid have come together and produced this Life Plan in order to set out:

- Those **Important Things** (see 1.1) we hold in common to be a vital to the lived experience of our Community, and which we aspire to improve and safeguard for future generations.
- Our **Core Principles** (1.2), **Themes** (2.0) and **Guidelines** (3.0) for local development and action over the next 5-10 years, which we have agreed will ensure our Community improves as a vibrant, cohesive, functioning and sustainable Place to live and work.

Our Life Plan has been created over three consultations and online questionnaires held in Stronachlachar and Inversnaid during March 2019 (see Appendix D), and including a review and update in September 2023. These have involved the participation of over 60% of residents, representing over 90% of all households in the two Wards.

Our Wards have a rich mythology and history. We host the annual parliament of Scottish goblins in our Corrie of the Urisks, several monsters and faerie hills, and our largest Loch formed when the mountains wept at the murder of a local water deity, Katrine. Rob Roy was born, married and became an outlaw here. In the c18th we became the background to two of Sir Walter Scott's most famous works, the romantic hub of Scotland's first tourist industry, and the site of the grandest engineering project of the age, the Glasgow Water Scheme (see below).



Until around 20 years ago we were a thriving diverse Community built upon an economy split between Western Europe's largest sheep station and care of Glasgow's water supply. At the beginning of the 21st century this economic model came under threat by the onset of privatisation. At that time, residents came together in a desperate bid to purchase the land and save their community, but our plight was ignored in favour of private interests. The result was what we now term the second Clearances, with the number of local children dwindling until our school eventually closed in 2012, and many of our houses still lie empty or derelict. This experience, and others since, has caused us to fear the drastic changes that come about through decisions made by organisations and people who are not residents, but have considerable influence over this Place.

Nevertheless, our memory of being an independent and sustainable Community, and the vision and desire to rejuvenate this Place so it becomes so again, remains strong within us. While we are remote, rural and may lack dedicated community spaces, we are still a close-knit Community where everyone knows everyone. We also have a clear agreement on what is essential to this Place we call home, and what needs to happen to build a vibrant enduring Community with an excellent quality of life. We share a deep love for its world-renowned views, the wilderness that surrounds us, and our dark skies.

We cherish our peaceful, remote and wild nature, notably our legendary wild goat herd. Our Wards also feature some of the Southern Highland's most spectacular scenery, including Lochs Arklet, Katrine and Lomond, Ben Venue and Beinn a' Choin, the Inversnaid Falls, and the West Highland Way. It is from this history and the Important Things we share that we derive our Principles for this Life Plan, which in turn determine those Themes for Action which we believe will help us improve our Place. The metaphor of a tree is one way of thinking about these relationships.

Our Life Plan is our wish to preserve these things we most value and care for here, while also seeing our Community rejuvenate and thrive once more. We have a clear collective idea of what can be done to improve and enhance this Place, to see it become more vibrant again, with up-to-date amenities and services suitable for modern living and that is attractive for young families and others.

Our Life Plan expresses our collective wish to do this and looks 5–10 years into the future, setting out practical objectives to meet this delicate balance sustainably and effectively. It represents our will to have greater say and control over the things that affect us and our Community. It demonstrates our love and care for this Place, which is our home. Our vision and values are clear. We now look forward to putting things into practice and seeing the changes we wish for in our community.

Our Life Plan is broken down into three sections, wherein all things have been agreed by consensus, unless otherwise specified. In the remaining parts of the Introduction, we define those **Important Things** and **4 Core Principles** which provide the foundations of our Life Plan. In Section 2 we describe our aspirations for the next 5-10 years, under **4 Themes** for local action and development. In Section 3 we set out some **Guidelines for Local Economic and Housing Development** arising from these aspirations, which we have agreed can help ensure local development aligns with our Life Plan. Finally, there follows five **Appendices**, including; a timeline of Local History; three spatial planning maps which specify potential locations for new tourist signage and paths, and our preferred Exclusion and Development Zones; and lastly, details of the methodology used to develop our Life Plan.

## 1.1 OUR IMPORTANT THINGS

We have agreed by consensus the following **Important Things** which are an essential part of the lived experience of this Place where we work and make our homes, and underpin our health and well-being. As such we aspire to improve and safeguard them for present and future generations.

Our **Important Things** are:

- Our peace, tranquility and quality of life.



- Our beautiful landscape, and its open spaces and iconic views, including across Lochs Arklet or Lomond to the Arrochar Alps, across Loch Katrine from the Pier Cafe or Rubh Saonach, the Snaid Burn and Arklet Water, and the Inversnaid waterfall.
- The unspoiled wilderness of Lochs Arklet and Katrine.
- Our native woods, moorland, and its flora and fauna, particularly our ancient wild goat herd and other vulnerable local species.
- Our living Community, and neighbours who give us space but are there when needed.
- Our dark star-filled skies.
- Our history and heritage, and the deep roots, pride and inspiration this provides us, including our rich local mythology and literary associations, the Garrison of Inversnaid, The Bunkhouse / St Kentigerna's Parish Church, Inversnaid Hotel, The Royal Cottage and Glengyle, Culigart and Corriarklet Houses, Loch Arklet's military road and dam, features and buildings from the Victorian Water Scheme, and the Sir Walter Scott Steamship (see also Appendix A).
- The Pier Café as a central hub of our Community.
- Our outdoor activities, including walking and biking.
- Our many favourite places in the Wards.

## 1.2 OUR CORE PRINCIPLES

Their follows **Four Core Principles** which provide the foundations of our Life Plan, and a measure of any kind of related development (proposals and activities):

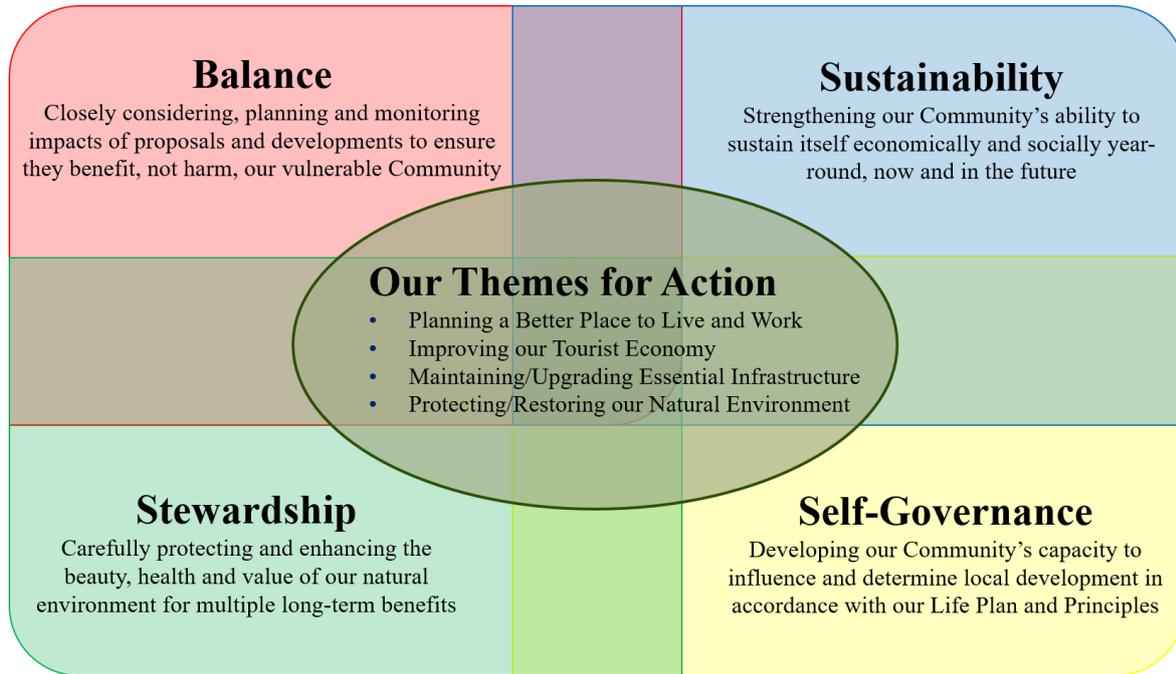
- **Balance:** Is the scale and content of this development properly considered, and monitored, such that we can be certain it will not cause the imbalance and negative consequences that decisions have had on our Community and environment in the past?
- **Sustainability:** Does this development clearly strengthen our Community's ability to sustain itself economically and socially year-round, now and in the future?
- **Stewardship:** Does this development contribute with necessary levels of care to the beauty, health and value of our natural environment, and therefore, to the long-term benefit of its residents and visitors, human and non-human?
- **Self-Governance:** Do we (or can we) have a level of influence over this development sufficient to ensure that it aligns with our other Principles and Life Plan?

## 2. OUR FOUR THEMES FOR ACTION

Our four Themes for action set out in greater detail our aspirations for improving our community, and are (1) Planning a better place to live and work; (2) Improving our tourist economy; (3) Maintaining and upgrading essential infrastructure; and (4) Protecting and restoring our natural environment.

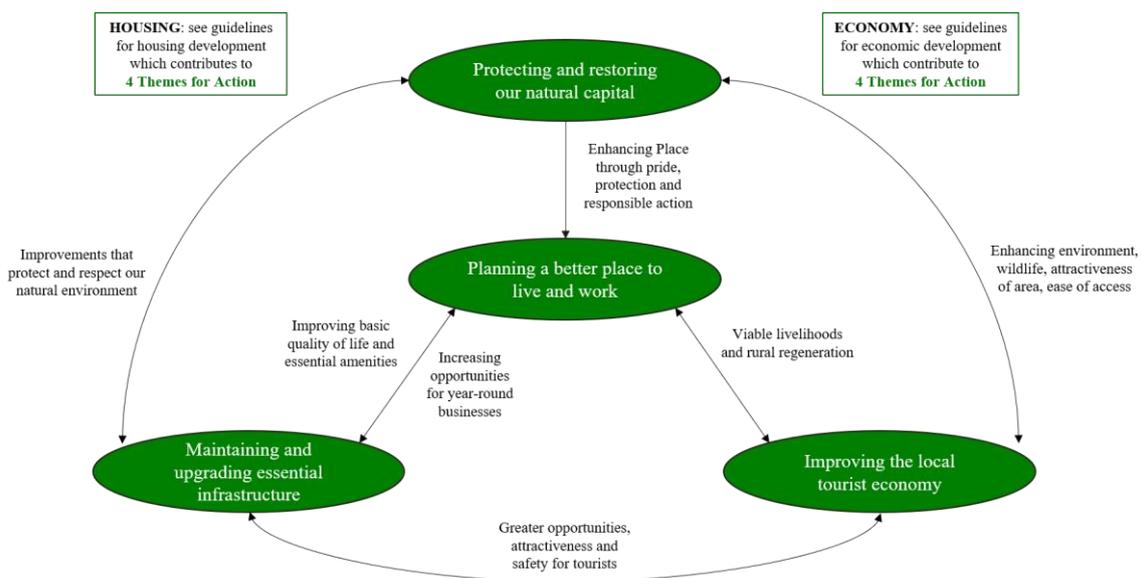
The graphic overleaf illustrates the relationship between our Core Principles and Themes for Action. It demonstrates how our Principles guide the activities within each Theme and, in turn, how the activities can strengthen and enhance these Principles in our Community. Our Principles also act as a lens, through which we can better understand the kinds of actions we want to see in our Place. As each Principle also relates to the others, we want to demonstrate how each Theme and Principle are intrinsically interdependent. By understanding these relationships and acting in accordance with them, we believe that our Community will grow and prosper in a genuine and sustainable way that is

beneficial to all. We hope that all within our Community and any non-resident will consider our Place in this holistic way, before deciding on or carrying out any activities and developments here.



It is equally true that our Themes are intrinsically related to one another and must not be seen as being distinct.

The diagram below demonstrates how each Theme depends on and has knock-on effects on every other. We ask that anyone with an interest in carrying out any activities with potentially lasting impacts on our Community, familiarise themselves with these relationships. Without an integrated understanding of each Theme, their interrelationships and interdependencies, we believe the necessary social, economic and environmental regeneration needed here will neither happen effectively, nor sustainably.



## 2.1 Planning a Better Place to Live and Work

We want to see this Place become a more vibrant Community better able to support permanent residents. This requires initiatives that can bolster and sustain economic activity, as well as creating amenities, which enable regeneration and community-building. Currently we are very dependent on a seasonal tourist industry, which faces challenges and needs greater support to better sustain the existing economy (see 2.2 Improving the Local Tourist Economy). We therefore feel a need for more year-round economic activity, which in turn can drive demand for appropriate and affordable places to accommodate local businesses and people. We also need amenities which make this Place a more active, attractive and vibrant Community, that people will want to move to or set up a business in, particularly spaces where we can come together to host and plan various activities. We believe a small, independent, thriving local economy precedes and undergirds other aspirations for development described in this Life Plan, and also that this will not come about naturally if left to market forces and outside interests. For this reason, we strongly commit to increasing our influence as a Community in the decisions that affect development in our Place.

At this time, we have identified **4 Priority Areas** that we believe will enable our Community to become a better Place to live and work:

**2.1.1 Year-round sustainable economic opportunities.** We would like to see more opportunities and support for local businesses, particularly those that;

- Sustain economic activity through the winter months (i.e. independent of seasonal tourism).
- Enable wildlife regeneration.
- Lead to Community regeneration or benefit, in line with our Life Plan.
- Support developments under Community ownership.
- Facilitate community transport, and a functional replacement for the DRT service, which we have lost since 2019.
- Other opportunities such as a health retreat/spa, craft distillery/brewery, \*adventure tourism (types/levels which we have agreed as a community are in balance/consonance with our principles, ‘important things’ and other aspirations), or live and work units for artists or craftspeople.

**\*Strong objections:** Adventure tourism can include hiking, mountain-biking, gravel-biking, fell-running, canyoning, mountaineering, fishing, kayaking, paddle-boarding, caving, rock-climbing, bird-watching, wild camping and wild-swimming. Some of us include such activities in our business propositions, and/or see them as an important economic opportunity for the community. Others have strong concerns about having too open a definition and door to adventure tourism in the Community Life Plan, due to the potential for harm to our ‘important things’ and ecology, particularly with regard to watersports on the wild lochs. As such, agreement on this matter remains to be discussed and resolved.

### 2.1.2 Community Action.

- **Establishing quarterly meetings involving the whole community** at intervals between Community Council meetings, to ensure progress of the Life Plan, and to create and nurture our shared vision and values.
- **Through a new Community Life Plan Working Group, cultivate better relationships with Strathard Community Council and other external authorities/parties with an interest in our Wards**, including creating processes and structures to form a unified voice for and from the community, getting better informed about the planning system, opportunities for

collaboration, where to apply pressure when necessary, and inviting relevant stakeholders to visit the area and discuss our Life Plan with us.

- **Forming Community Groups** to organise more opportunities to socialise (e.g. exercise classes, film screenings, stargazing, and farmers markets etc), or take forwards local action or projects, where ideas include a community orchard; improving what we have (e.g resurfacing cycle path); setting up local sharing schemes (e.g. food / ‘machinery ring’); and raising the profile of our Community and the Place we live through media (e.g. resident podcast profiles). One idea was to link up with Kinlochard community litter-picking days, to come together around addressing the issue across Strathard.
- **Bringing in funding to progress the Life Plan**, by creating a local trust and/or links with others (e.g. with Strathard Community Trust).
- **Investigate potential to consolidate local deliveries** (e.g. Amazon drop-off point), which may improve reliability of local services. Since 2019, this has deteriorated considerably due to accessibility issues with cost-per-delivery model for drivers. The issue highlights the crucial importance the quality of road access and associated challenges play in supporting residents and businesses (see 2.3.1).

### Our “Iconic View” of Arrochar Alps across Loch Arklet



## 2.2 Improving the Local Tourist Economy

We see significant and simple opportunities for improving the local tourist economy, while still maintaining it at a scale which ensures our important things remain protected for posterity.

Considering the rich history, wildlife and beautiful landscapes we have, we feel we are not maximising the visitor experiences which are potentially on offer. As a priority, therefore, we need more initiatives which focus on better maintaining our existing facilities, and encouraging visitors to stay longer, rather than staying short-term and putting pressure on our overburdened roads.

We have **6 Priority Areas** for improving the local tourist economy:

**2.2.1 Improving information and signage** in appropriate locations to better indicate local footpaths and trails, and/or bring to life the rich local history and heritage. This includes the proper upkeep of existing signage (see also 2.2.4). These improvements will support and facilitate access to the outdoors, as well as ensure the safety for visitors seeking adventures in the forests or hills (see a map of suggested sign locations for walkers/cyclists in Appendix B). It will also encourage a greater connection with and understanding of our Place, rooting visitors and residents more firmly in our long and colourful history. A number of benches placed in appropriate sites of history, where iconic views exist or simply where rest might be needed will also support visitors to enjoy the area. One idea was to install a map at the white gate ‘barrier’ at Stronachlachar, showing property locations to help visitors (and delivery drivers) locate their destinations. Improved signage may also deter antisocial behaviour, e.g. parking/overnighting in passing places, or leaving litter (see also 2.2.5 and 2.3.1).

**2.2.2 Improving access.** At present responsible access to our beautiful landscape to the south of Loch Arklet and the north of Loch Katrine, and to the Comer Estate, is prohibited by high deer fences and/or locked gates. This problem could be addressed simply by unlocking gates or having more frequent stiles, as well as indicating access points for paths on tourist maps, as proposed. Some have proposed that the south shore of Loch Arklet should be an exception to unrestricted access due to sightings of rare and vulnerable species, and its ecological sensitivity. We also propose the reintroduction of grazing cattle might provide a basis for the removal of some upland deer fences (see 2.4.1). In the meantime, we should aim to signpost and better maintain our core paths and tracks, which appear increasingly neglected since 2019.

**2.2.3 Revitalising existing tourist facilities.** There are opportunities for increasing local tourist interest by leveraging existing assets, without need for new development. One idea is to repurpose the closed RSPB visitor centre in Inversnaid as a community museum about Rob Roy/Glasgow Water Scheme. Another is to improve support for West Highland Way walkers, such as ‘tick-free’ summer camping spots, shelter in winter when the Hotel is closed, and repairing poor path sections around Inversnaid. As our main local hub, we would like to see the Pier Cafe better looked after by repainting the railings and the pier, and the completion of the already-funded Scottish Power project to enrich the ‘Smiddy’ headland and distract attention from pylons (which has not progressed since the Covid-19 pandemic). Many of our iconic viewpoints, which connect visitors to important aspects of our local cultural and natural heritage, are obstructed due to overgrown vegetation (e.g. Glengyle; Loch Arklet). We believe simple improvements of tourist hotspots such as these will significantly enhance the visitor (and our) experience of our place.

**2.2.4 Reducing levels of tourist rubbish and anti-social behaviour.** Services, signage, initiatives or support to keep the area tidy from rubbish are highly desired. Our area unfortunately suffers from rubbish beside roads, paths and parking areas brought in by tourists or contractors and not appropriately disposed of. This makes the place unattractive and gives the impression to visitors that the area is not sufficiently cared for. More rubbish bins and signage (see 2.2.2) located in popular

spots would help reduce the amount of litter. Anti-social behaviour also takes the form of parking/overnighting in, or improper use of passing places, which impacts significantly on access and road safety. It also includes inconsiderate wild campers, i.e. those who leave a mess or cause local disruption or disturbance.

**2.2.5 Improving new short-term lets (STL) licensing arrangements.** These are currently placing an onerous burden on local small-scale holiday-let/B&B owners in the Ward, who constitute a significant contributor to the local economy. The blanket national policy was developed for urban settings, and lacks sensitivity to the fragile nature of remote rural tourist economies. We believe this needs urgent review in light of the Scottish Government's principle of Rural Revitalisation, and our community would consider joining or supporting grassroots action towards remedying the issue. **\*Strong objection:** One resident in the hospitality business agreed with the scheme and believed it was important that all facilities, large or small, have good governance and are adhering to current regulations and legislation.

**2.2.6 Monitoring loch-based recreation and potential impacts on water quality and wildlife.**

Since 2019, we note a significant increase in use of Lochs Katrine and Arklet for wild swimming, boarding and kayaking. We feel it is important that this is closely regulated to ensure user safety (we have noted people getting into difficulty in areas where there is no mobile signal (see 2.3.2)), and to avoid potential impacts on wildlife or contamination of drinking water. **\*Strong objection:** Some felt Lochs Katrine and Arklet were the last two lochs in the area where wildlife (including rare bird species) has remained relatively undisturbed, and that this, and the fact they supply Glasgow's drinking water, represented a strong case for banning recreational use and maintaining them as nature reserves.

## 2.3 Maintaining and Upgrading Essential Infrastructure

A key criterion that both hinders and can enable our Community to flourish as a Place to live and work is the quality of our essential infrastructure. Being remote, we are acutely aware of our dependence on our road and communications for the essentials, such as an effective emergency response, access to medical/educational services, and general quality of life. They are also vital to our economic health and development. Decent internet/mobile access is now a general expectation for tourists, and important to their safety when exploring our wilderness. Our road requires improvement to support existing tourist traffic, let alone any increase. Without basic infrastructural improvements, we have genuine concerns about any further development in the area, as this would put extra pressure on a system already under significant strain. Additionally, poor roads and internet access currently create unfavourable conditions for attracting new residents or local enterprises to the area.

Our **6 Priority Areas** for upgrading and enabling essential infrastructure are:

**2.3.1 Road.** Our highest priority is the lifeline upon which our Community, visitors and economy depend, which is currently in a poor condition and unsafe. Since 2019 this is being exacerbated by a significant increase in volume and types of road users (campers, motorhomes and coaches), and anti-social parking, which is significantly impacting accessibility for residents and delivery drivers.

We feel strongly the road should not be widened. Specifically, the four areas which require urgent attention to resolve the issues are:

- **Repairing the road** including tarmac and potholes, which cause damage to vehicles, and are a danger to cyclists and drivers (and some stated hasn't happened since 1974!).
- **Improving passing places and/or parking.** This includes repairing existing passing places, particularly where pot-holes have formed at either end, adding new ones where necessary, ensuring all provide sufficient room for the frequent coaches using the road, and including them in winter ploughing/gritting regimes. Since 2019, there is increased antisocial parking/overnighting in parking places which further exacerbates accessibility and safety issues, which signage may serve to mitigate (see 2.2.2). We note the recent significant rise in the numbers of visitors' vehicles becoming stuck off-road which is related to these issues. Some believe improved parking provision along the road (e.g, at Loch Chon) could help alleviate these issues.
- **Addressing overgrown borders** including hedges, trees and grasses along the verges, which cause a narrowing of roads and impeded sightlines, which since 2019, has become out of control in places. Adequate monitoring, and holding those responsible to account, is considered essential for public safety.
- **Coach convoys;** while we recognise the importance and benefits of coaches bringing tourists in to the area, and the general courtesy of their drivers in allowing cars to pass, where a number travel together it can lead to major disruption and safety concerns for road users. We request they apply a policy of staggering coaches by 20min intervals, which would alleviate this. The other improvements proposed above would help mitigate impacts of coaches more generally.

**2.3.2 Communications infrastructure,** where basic improvements are vital to our economic viability and regeneration, and our future sustainability and resilience. While there have been recent improvements to our mobile phone coverage due to the installation of a new mast, most areas outwith

settlements are “dead spots”. Importantly these are along the B829 and Loch Chon’s north shore road, around Loch Katrine, and in the hills, where lack of coverage presents significant safety concerns for drivers, walkers, cyclists and loch users (which have increased significantly in numbers since 2019). For residents this is a daily concern, particularly for women or in winter months for those traveling on poorly-maintained, unlit roads (see also 2.3.1). Good internet and phone access are also a requirement for attracting and keeping visitors here, and the young families we need to sustain a vibrant Community. Currently no fibre broadband service exists, and given the economic challenges of building a successful business in a remote rural area, it is unfair that we are required to solve the problem of poor internet at our own expense by investing in satellite broadband. Moreover, as BT refuses to increase local landlines, a phone-less resident can now only acquire one by inheritance from a resident who has one. Poor communications are a huge disincentive to those thinking of visiting, moving or starting businesses here. However, we do require that the design and location of infrastructure is sensitive to our iconic views and landscape.

**2.3.3 Community Energy Projects:** We would support renewable energy generation for and by the community which make sustainable non-harmful use of our plentiful natural resources (e.g. wind, mini-hydro and solar), provided these are appropriately located and sized so as to protect our Important Things. This will lower energy costs or provide Community income for local residents and businesses.

**2.3.4 More joined-up thinking and action:** We have noticed evidence of siloed-thinking and action between authorities responsible for local infrastructural maintenance (e.g. ‘hedges’ and ‘edges’ appear to be the responsibilities of different parties). It would be of benefit for us to work with them to develop a more joined-up approach. This could represent a win-win for all parties, both by improving the quality of maintenance services, while increasing their efficiency and reducing their costs. We emphasise here, the dangerous absence of roadside maintenance since 2019 (see 2.3.1), and also the critical importance of carrying out activities at the correct time of year. i.e. not during bird nesting and wildflower blooming season.

**2.3.5 Medical services.** We aspire to have better access to the medical care and support we need. Our access to medical services has worsened since 2019, exacerbated by issues concerning roads and communications, which are vital in times of emergency. We also require a failsafe first response strategy, as our lives may depend on leveraging Strathard residents with first-aid/medical skills during the long wait for emergency services to arrive.

**2.3.6 Water supply (Inversnaid):** Residents of Inversnaid have noted the potential issues associated with streams drying up as a result of decreasing summer rainfall. While we cherish our natural water supply, and would not wish at this stage to join to the mains, we remain mindful of our changing climate and the potential challenges associated with future summer droughts.

## 2.4 Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment

The wilderness and wildlife which surrounds us, and the enjoyment, peace and tranquility they afford, are essential to the experience of this Place for our Community and for our visitors. It is because the quality of our natural environment underpins so many of our Important Things, as well as a successful tourist economy, that we aspire to take a greater role in its stewardship. Our goal in this is to ensure developments or improvements are appropriately scaled, sensitive to the finer detail, and work with our vulnerable native flora and fauna, and historically-rich landscape and iconic views. Our desired approach entails three strands; greater support for environmental restoration (including the reinstatement of heritage upland grazing practices), proper Community consultation by land owners on their management plans, and preservation of our dark skies. We believe this approach will not only contribute to the greater good by restoring the richness, stability and integrity of our natural environment, but can also create new development opportunities, provide environmentally-sound tourist attractions, while ensuring our cherished landscape is enjoyed, admired and respected by visitors and residents alike for posterity.

Our **3 Priority Areas** for protecting and restoring our natural environment are:

**2.4.1 Environmental Restoration** (Replacing 3.4.1 Support for Local Ecosystem Services): In light of Scotland's Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Strategy, we consider there to be a basic need for an optimal consensual 'net-zero' strategy for the land in our Ward.

**Of key related priorities, the most important is the protection and restoration of our peatlands,** through a programme of re-wetting, improved drainage practices, and the removal of non-native intensive commercial forestry in these areas. We aspire to see the removal of some deer fences, and the resumption of upland grazing practices (originally agreed by the Forestry Commission Scotland when they took the lease). It is noted that Forestry Land Scotland's new Loch Katrine Management plan does include provision for the reintroduction of cattle on uplands, and which may include North and South Loch Arklet. The majority of upland peatland areas in the ward have traditionally coevolved with pastoral farming practices. We believe the reintroduction of Highland Cattle –well-suited to the environment- could be a 'win-win': serving as a tourist attraction, food source, as well as helping to restore and regenerate peatland, as grazing animals have in the past, by regulating the growth of Molinia Grass, trees, and hedges. Without regulation and with increasing incidence of summer droughts, there is increasing risk of peatland drying and potentially catastrophic fires.

Since our first Life Plan in 2019, we also note other land management decisions and practices which do not seem consistent with national policy, or our core principle of Stewardship, and our priorities which stemmed from this. These include tree planting on peatland, wild goat culls, additional Sitka plantations, and inaction on peatland drying, overgrown Molinia grass and the related wildfire hazards; RSPB practices around draining and Rhododendron replacement; and a recent insensitive felling of stands of old trees to halt Larch disease. The desire to ensure a joined-up, coherent and continuous programme of environmental protection and restoration underpins our aspiration to collaborate meaningfully in all land management planning in the Ward (as set out in 2.4.2).

Some of us are motivated to participate directly in local ecological restoration, such as planting native woodland or assisting with the issue of tourist rubbish. However, we feel discouraged by support options, which appear to presume only large scale projects, investment of our own time or finances with no reward or certainty of recompense, and entail regulations which discourage our engagement. Yet with the right support we feel we are ideally-placed to participate in local environmental restoration. The local flora and fauna are an integral part of our everyday lives. We have intimate knowledge of environmental change or harm, of historical land use, of the natural assets valued by our

visitors, and of the special creatures with whom we share this Place, including our ancient wild goat herd, black grouse leks and pine martens.

We believe our care for the finer details could play a vital role in local environmental stewardship at a time in history when it has never been more important. This includes broader policy objectives such as Climate Change mitigation, flood management, conservation, and activities to enhance the value of the landscape for tourism. Some of us believe that protection of the delicate environment, including our water supplies and road condition as well as the ecology, is best achieved by maintaining overall visitor numbers at a smaller scale.

**2.4.2 Greater Involvement in Land Management Planning:** We are conscious and respectful of the fact that the majority of our Wards fall under the ownership of large landowners with a commercial purpose. However, this Place is also where our living Community, human and non-human, makes its home. To be excluded from local land management decisions which negatively affect our Important Things promotes unnecessary divisiveness, mistrust and cynicism. Since 2019, we have experienced good exemplars of collaborative planning –notably, FLS’s Loch Katrine Forest Management Plan. However, we have also seen disturbing examples of carelessness or neglect which are inconsistent with priorities described in 2.4.1 above, and our core principle of Stewardship. These often occur with little or no community consultation, and without any apparent regulation of, or accountability for, perceived abuses by landowning parties or organisations. We believe strongly that the inclusion of our Community in decision-making processes will in the long-run promote a more positive and productive partnership, as well as greater efficiency and reduced impact to our Important Things. Particular areas we feel would benefit from more meaningful consultation or discussion are:

- **The location of commercial forestry operations or deer fences**, to ensure preservation of iconic wilderness views, important local wildlife, and tourist experiences and access.
- **Wildlife culling.** While we acknowledge differing objectives, we cherish our wild goat herd, and wish to be sure all alternatives and perspectives are properly considered before any cull.
- **Rhododendron control.** It is understood that Rhododendron clearing is currently being carried out by the National Park under a 10-year agreement with relevant landowners in the area.
- **Effective maintenance of roadside vegetation** to avoid narrowing or impeded sightlines, and ensure road safety (see 2.3.1), while ensuring this is carried out at the correct times of the year, i.e. not during bird nesting and wildflower blooming season.

**2.4.3 Dark Sky Status:** We are unanimous in our agreement that our dark skies are one of our Important Things. Such views of the star-filled heavens have been a treasure, pleasure and inspiration for all times and peoples, and yet grow increasingly rare in the modern age. We therefore, aspire to formalise conditions which can preserve our experience of the night sky for our present and future generations of residents and visitors.

### 3. GUIDELINES FOR ECONOMIC & HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

### 3.1 Economic Development

Our criteria for appropriate economic development are listed below. These set out what we see as our community's most important economic development considerations in the area. They are also part of our wish to have greater say in the decisions that relate to local economic development, to ensure our Important Things are protected and improved, and that economic progress aligns with our Principles, and supports and enhances our Community as a Place to live and work.

#### **Guideline Planning Criteria for appropriate local economic development:**

- **New economic development is preceded by essential infrastructural improvements** which support a living and working Community first (see Maintaining and Upgrading Essential Infrastructure section above).
- **General exclusion zones** for new builds and economic developments (see Appendix C):
  - around the shores of Loch Arklet and Loch Katrine, including official camping zones
  - the area around the Garrison
- **Economic Zones** (see Appendix D):
  - **Within Inversnaid:** possible tourist attractions which leverage the existing RSPB visitor centre and car park.
  - **Within Stronachlachar:** provided developments make use of, or extend, existing assets, and help support year-round economic regeneration and permanent residency.
- **Improvements to tourist infrastructure**, including local signage / trails / benches; in order to draw attention to the rich local history and heritage, and encourage tourists to stay longer in the area, thereby improving viability of existing local businesses.
- **Communication infrastructure improvements**, which are sensitive to scenery such as using camouflaged mast design (e.g. as a tree), submarine cabling from West Loch Lomond or concealed satellite dishes, and/or which occupy locations which do not upset iconic views.
- **Moratoriums on new holiday-lets or accommodation**, which put pressure on the local community, economy and housing market, until we can better cater for long-staying visitors.
- **Small-scale community energy projects**, of an appropriate scale, location and design, with a mini-hydro scheme on the Arklet water put forward as a possible example.
- **Developments which improve local transport links** for residents and visitors might be supported, such as a small car ferry at Inversnaid or community transport
- **Extensions to existing buildings**, providing they do not impact negatively on our Important Things list and are in line with our Guidelines Planning Criteria for Housing (see below).

**Our rich heritage and natural environment: Rob Roy's birthplace, Glengyle House (left) and the island where he imprisoned the Duke of Montrose's factor (right).**



## 3.2 Housing Development

The criteria and conditions for what we feel is appropriate local housing are listed below. These are our priorities and preferences for the kinds of development we feel are appropriate or desirable in our area should a genuine and specific local housing need or demand arise. We see appropriate housing as being closely linked to community sustainability, and determined and enabled by improvements to essential infrastructure and our aspirations for an independent local economy. Indeed, our view is that a lack of local economic opportunities might be addressed in part through live and work units in appropriate places. We also consider it important for the Community to be able to provide social or affordable housing for families or people who choose to live, settle and work here in the longer-term. Finally, we believe strongly that there should be a presumption against new developments while there remains a large number of unused or disused houses locally which could be made available or renovated to provide affordable new homes, while revitalising our local heritage. Our aspiration to develop the old Stronachlachar storehouse under Community ownership exemplifies all of these aims.

### Guideline Planning Criteria for appropriate local housing

- **New development is preceded by essential infrastructural improvements** which support a living and working community (see Maintaining and Upgrading Infrastructure section)
- **Exclusion zones for new housing** around Lochs Arklet and Katrine shores (see Appendix C)
- **Use/restore/extend existing local housing stock** before new developments (see Appendix D)
- **Affordable housing for people who want to live and work here**, particularly young families who can help to keep the community vibrant
- **No housing which is not driven by a genuine and specific local need or demand**
- **No ‘social dumping’** or decanting of people here who have not chosen to live here
- **No speculative ‘for-profit’ or ‘second home’ housing developments**, which negatively impacts housing affordability for local residents or young families wishing to move here
- **No new holiday-lets** which put pressure on the Community, economy and housing market
- **No new developments** which do not also have the capacity to provide longer-term homes

### Guideline Planning Conditions (sections in priority order)

- **General conditions:** Dark sky status; Environmental impact assessment involving Community consultation required; Robust site analysis which takes account of impacts on views and setting; Maximum limits on number of new dwellings which can be built in the Wards over the duration of the next plan; Permissible, non-permissible housing needs.
- **Conditions applying to groupings:** Measures to ensure development is appropriate to, and does not dominate, scenery (particularly areas and views listed in the Important Things); Exclusion zones between new developments and existing housing, and sensitive approaches to the spaces between (e.g. landscaping); Other considerations which ensure appropriateness to setting, including scale and massing of units; limits on maximum number of units in groupings; and relationship to nearby housing design and patterns.
- **Specific design conditions:** To ensure building is consistent with surroundings and character of specific location; Non-standardised design of gardens, boundaries, parking areas, drives and access to avoid standard suburban development styles and layouts; Controls on placing of parking areas, drives and access ways; Definitions of appropriate/inappropriate building materials/styles; No ‘could be anywhere’ house designs and/or repetition of a limited number of similar type; Maintenance of existing features: e.g. verge, trees and stone boundary wall.

## APPENDICES

### Appendix A: Timeline of Our Local History & Heritage

700million years ago

#### Prehistory

**700m BC** In the Southern Hemisphere Gondwanaland split to form Iapetus Ocean. Upon which sediments from living things gather.

**430m BC** Three continents collide (England, Scotland and the Baltics) forming Highland Boundary Fault, pushing up rocks into a colossal mountain range (with 'gold' intrusions).

#### Ice Ages

**400,000-5000 yrs BC** - Loch Lomond valley glacier cuts off Inveruglas from Strathard (originally connected). Strathard and Strathgartney glaciers (join and parting near Stronachlachar) Whole area often covered except Ben Lomond. Due to isostasy and ice melt, sea reaches to Aberfoyle castle and Loch Lomond is a sea loch.

5000yrs BC

#### The Three Ages of Early Civilisation

100 yrs BC

#### Stone age

**c.3000yrs BC** The sea retreats and on the fertile soil grows a forest of giant oaks

#### Bronze Age

**c.2000yrs BC** Cup and Ring marked stones – Ledard

#### Iron Age

**c.1000yrs BC**  
Lochard Crannogs

0AD

**Romans and Early Mediaeval**

1000 yrs AD

**AD 70-211 Romans**

Romans cut down large swathes of the giant oak forest, which is a hiding place of the Caledonians

**AD211-1000 Picts (the painted people)**

Kingdoms and small farming communities: sheep and pigs, wheat, barley oats and rye, where cattle and horses were a sign of wealth and prestige. Celtic religion. Hunting with dogs and falcons. Tattooed warriors. May have rebuilt crannogs. Possibly in the kingdom of Fortriu

**Mediaeval Period**

**Normans**

Change of land ownership from clan culture with common land to ownership by the Crown where estates were 'granted' or 'forfeit' by Royal decree to chieftains

**c.1314 Nunnery**

Kil-mi-Cailleach nunnery (Cell of Nuns) at Holyhill on shore of Loch Katrine, built after Battle of Bannockburn in honour of St Fillan, protector of army at Bannockburn

**c14th 1362-1425 Murdoch Estate**

DM regent while James was captive and was executed upon his release

**c.14<sup>th</sup>-c16<sup>th</sup>** Large areas of the Caledonian Forest cleared for farming and later for charcoal for iron bloomeries

**c.14th** Earliest record of feral goats

**Grahams**

**1427 Earldom of Menteith** (Grahams)  
Hunting forest, while bulls, wolves, boar, deer

Beginnings of local iron industry : bloomery at Strone / Tinkers Loch)

1500

Post-medieval period (c. 1500 – c. 1800)

1800

<b>Grahams</b>	<b>Montrose</b>
<p><b>Feudal crofting system until 1750:</b> tacksman work for the estate who manage poor crofters, living with the animals, farming strips of land (gray oats, bere, flax and pease, small sheep and cattle).</p>	<p>houses of stones and turf,</p>
<p><b>c.17<sup>th</sup>:</b> Covenanters outdoor services in Strathard (in opposition to English Episcopalian Services)</p>	<p><b>c.18<sup>th</sup> -c19<sup>th</sup>:</b> Smugglers and illegal whiskey stills,</p>
<p><b>Late 1600s:</b> Portnellan Graveyard built</p>	<p><b>1745:</b> 2<sup>nd</sup> Jacobite Rebellion, Garrison partially destroyed by Rob Roy's son, James</p>
<p><b>1671-1734: Roy Roy.</b> Born Glengyle, married Mary McGregor of Corriearklet farm, became outlaw, hid in Rob Roy's cave, Ellen's Isle (clan refuge); Bealach nam Bò (pass under Ben Venue) used for hiding stolen cattle, Roy imprisons Montrose's factor on Factors Island.</p>	<p><b>1750-1850</b> Clearances and move to large sheep farms begins. (ruins at Loch Arklet)</p>
<p><b>1680-1880:</b> Graham's oakwoods (largest in Scotland) become commercially viable and large scale coppicing begins throughout Strathard and Strath Gartney</p>	<p><b>1790</b> Duke of Montrose builds Hunting Lodge, which became Inversnaid Hotel (Inversnaid).</p>
<p><b>1707:</b> Current Glengyle house built (previous may have been torched as punishment for the outlaw MacGregors)</p>	
<p><b>1718:</b> Following Jacobite Rebellion Garrison built (James Wolfe stationed there).</p>	

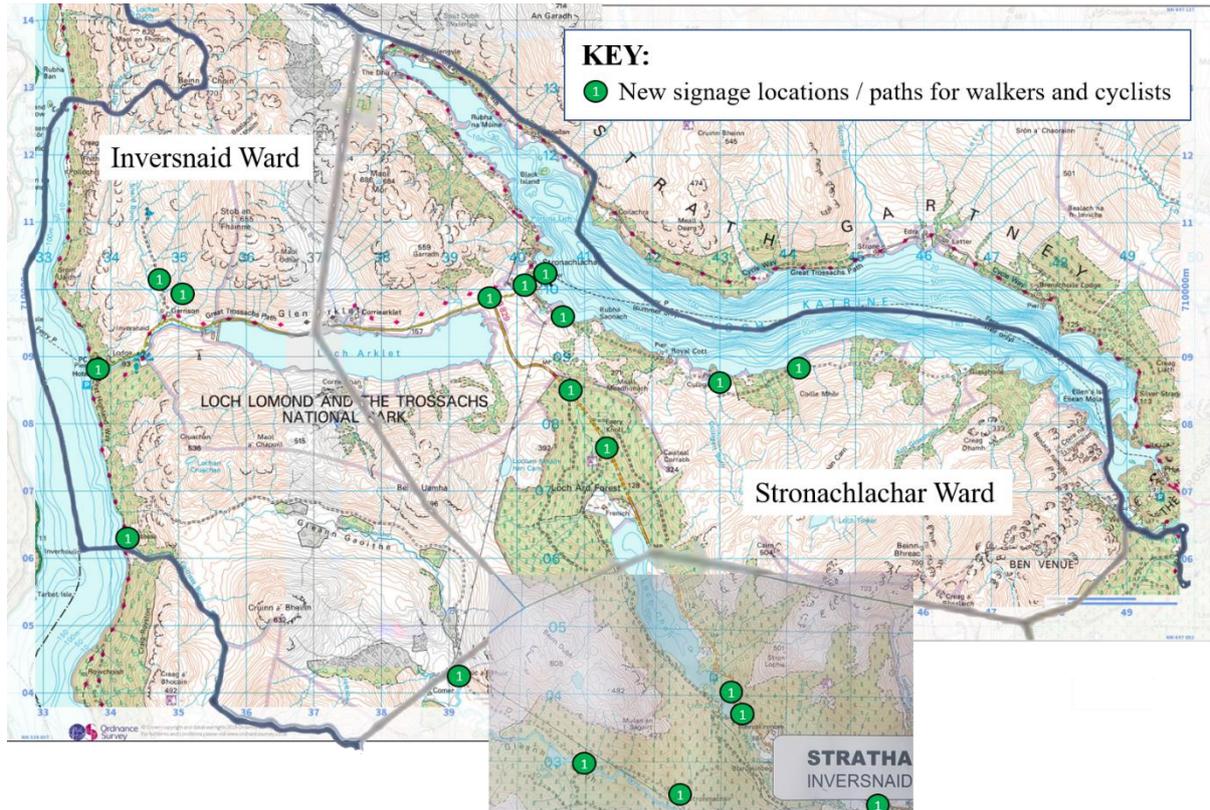
1800

Industrial / Modern

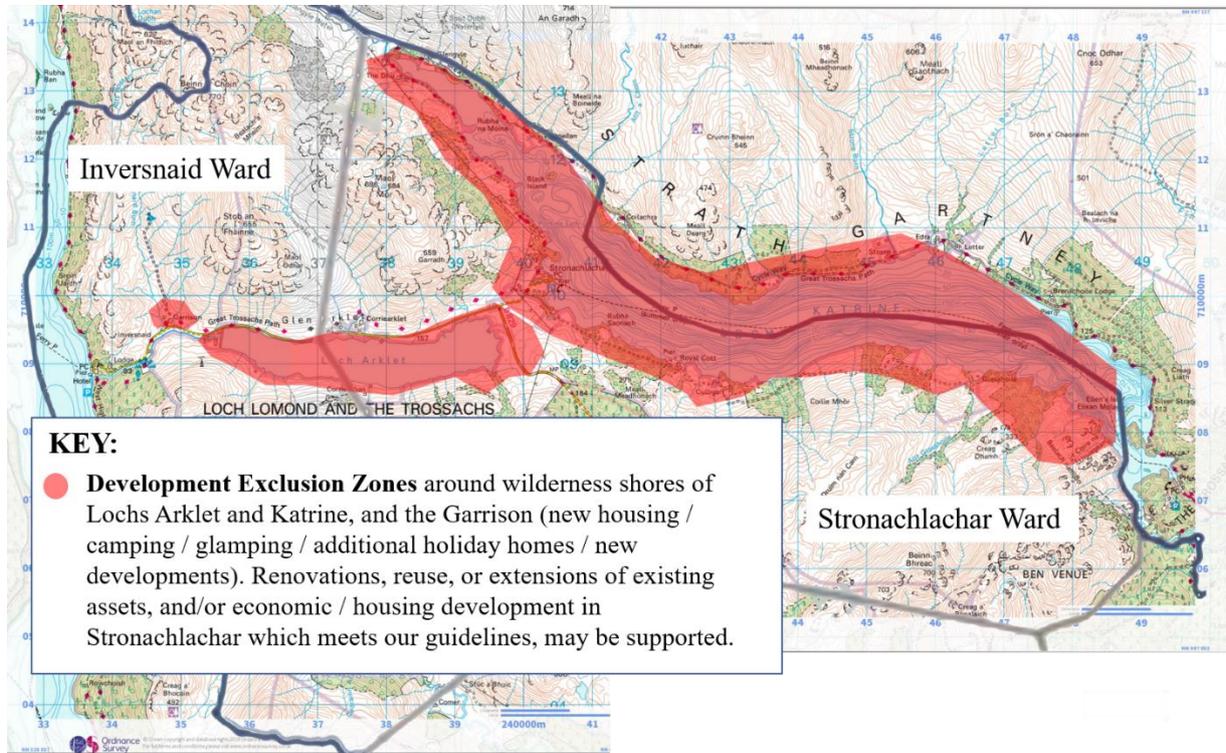
2000

<b>Montrose</b>	<b>Forestry Commission</b>
<p><b>1803:</b> Wordsworths visit on their 60 day walking tour of the UK</p> <p><b>1810;1817:</b> "Lady of the Lake" and "Rob Roy" published by Sir Walter Scott, driving first tourist industry</p> <p><b>1843:</b> Loch Katrine 'Water Witch' replaced by first paddle steamer 'The Gypsy'.</p> <p><b>1845-1850s;</b> 'Rob Roy' 'Clydebank' steamers on Loch Katrine. This and Loch Lomond steamers spark a thriving tourist industry. 1850 Thomas Cook (Britain's first travel agent) introduces first 'Tour of the Trossachs' (first 'notorious trip' run by his son, John).</p> <p><b>1856-1859; 1885; 1919:</b> Corporation of Glasgow, Loch Katrine water scheme: aqueducts; milestones, Water Board houses. 1859 Queen Victoria visits (for which Royal Cottage built. (1885) Loch Arklet dammed</p> <p><b>1869-1987:</b> Inversnaid Primary School opens, closes in 2012</p> <p><b>c.19<sup>th</sup>:</b> Ben Venue 'the miniature mountain' becomes one of the first popular trekking peaks</p> <p><b>1881:</b> Manley Hopkins (related to the MacGregors) writes Inversnaid poem</p>	<p><b>1858 (Callander) and 1882 (Aberfoyle)</b> railways create LL&amp;TT tours by train, steamers coach and horses (becoming the last horse-drawn coach service in Scotland, stopping in 1937)</p> <p><b>c.19<sup>th</sup></b> St. Kentigerna's Parish Church built, in the 1990s becomes outdoor centre for the Boy's Brigade, then the bunkhouse</p> <p><b>1899:</b> 'Rob Roy' is replaced with 'Sir Walter Scott' steamer (Loch Katrine Steamship Co. Ltd.) *1990s are peak of local tourism.</p>
<p><b>Local Monsters:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Corrie of the Urisks (or goblins), where the Urisks of Scotland gather to hold their annual parliament (they moved here from Lake of Mentieth by order of the Prior of Inchmaholme)</li> <li>• Katrine, a water deity who guarded a fountain at the base of Ben Venue, was murdered by the goblin king when she rejected his amorous advances. The fountain wept at the loss, forming the Loch which bears her name.</li> <li>• Fairy Hill above Loch Chon (Coir-shi'ian - the cove of the men of peace - go alone round it on Halloween towards the left, to be admitted into their subterranean abodes)</li> <li>• Goblin hill above Loch Lomond (Creag a' Bhocairn)</li> <li>• Kelpie of Loch Tinker</li> <li>• Water Bull of Loch Chon</li> </ul>	<p><b>World War II:</b> Munitions dump (Nissan open-ended huts throughout Strathard, gun emplacements at Inversnaid</p> <p><b>1945+:</b> FS purchase French and other land in the two wards</p> <p><b>1999/2012:</b> RSPB purchase Inversnaid land for reserve</p>
<p><b>Inversnaid</b> meaning "Mouth of the needle stream" - the Snaid burn being called after a snathad, or needle in Gaelic.</p> <p><b>Stronachlachar</b> meaning "Stonemason's Point or Nose"</p>	

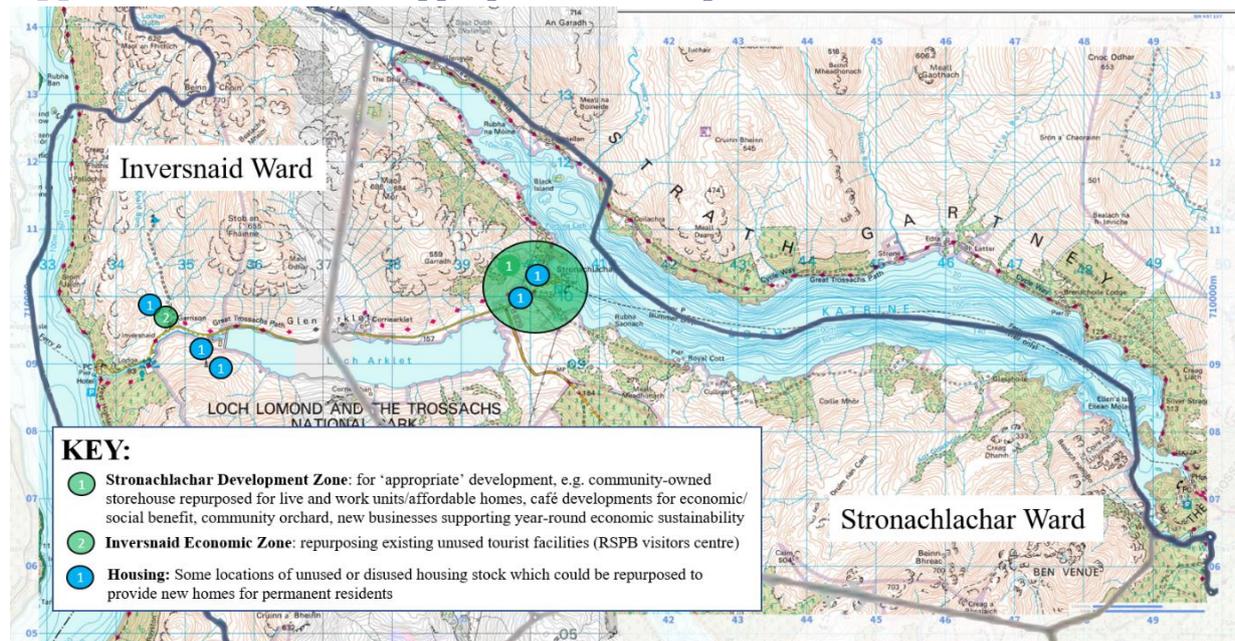
### Appendix B: Map of New Signage Locations / Paths for Walkers and Cyclists



### Appendix C: Exclusion Zones



## Appendix D: Zones for ‘Appropriate’ Development



## Appendix E: Overview of Stronachlachar and Inversnaid Life Plan Process

The Stronachlachar and Inversnaid Life Plan is the outcome of a resident-led consultation initiated by Strathard Community Council, with funding support from Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park. It has been created over three community discussions held at the Stronachlachar Pier Café in March 2019 and September 2023, with follow-up online questionnaires. The process was designed and facilitated by the Community Chartering Network (CCN). Each consultation was followed-up by an outcomes document written by CCN and all participants were invited to amend or object to any part of these written summaries. Online questionnaires for those who could not attend the consultations were created for contributions and comments to be included in the Life Plan. Between the consultations and online questionnaires, over 60% of residents inputted into the original Stronachlachar and Inversnaid Community Life Plan, representing over 90% of the households in the Wards. For the Community Life Plan upgrade meeting, which took place in September 2023, again directly involved the participation of a majority of residents in the Ward. The present version is the outcome of all that was discussed and agreed.

The consultations covered a wide range of issues and subjects relevant to the two Wards. They began with a look back over the history and heritage of the Place from the geological past to the present (see Appendix A). This aimed to put into context and shed light on the current conditions and nature of Place in order that residents could reflect on the present and consider the future.

The primary focus of the consultations was to give space for residents to discuss significant developmental issues and to find consensual points of agreement on what was most important to the life of the community. These were then used as a basis for articulating shared aspirations for future local development and action. Only what has been consensually agreed by residents, has been included in the Life Plan document. Where any objections to what has been consensually agreed in the consultations have been raised, these have been noted in the Life Plan.

We are aware that the Life Plan document represents a ‘snap-shot’ of the Community’s aspirations and wishes at its time of creation. The Life Plan itself is seen and understood as a process of

engagement and activity, rooted in and guided by the aspirations expressed in this document. We have acknowledged to update the Life Plan document as and when this becomes necessary and to treat it as part of our process of community-building and Place-making, rather than as an end point in itself.

## Appendix F: SICLP changes following the September 2023 meeting, including amendments in response to comments and objections from the follow-up questionnaire.

### CONTINUING THE STRONACHLACHAR AND INVERNSNAID COMMUNITY LIFE PLAN (SICLP)

**Question 1.** Is the SICLP framework –important things, principles and themes– still something we want to take forward as a community?

*It was agreed unanimously by all attendees to take the SICLP forward, and it was proposed that **the Sir Walter Scott Steamship** should be added to our “Important Things”.*

### IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

**Question 2.** What important changes or new information since 2019 must we consider in assessing our priorities? *It was agreed that the changes had been significant, as follows:*

- **Worsening road quality and safety:** tarmac deterioration, potholes, poorly-maintained passing places and overgrown borders, causing narrowing and impeding sightlines.
- **Increase in visitor traffic:** exacerbating road wear-and-tear; accessibility issues due to breakdowns, accidents, volume and types of users (campers/motorhomes/coach convoys/cyclists), and improper use of passing places.
- **Growing incidence of antisocial behaviour:** including parking/overnighting in, and improper use of, passing places; levels of litter; and inconsiderate wild camping.
- **Decreasing reliability of delivery services,** considered attributable to combination of accessibility issues (see above) with cost-per-delivery model for drivers.
- **Climate action and ecological restoration an urgent policy priority,** while noting local land management practices since 2019 which do not seem consistent with national policy or our SICLP. These including tree planting on peatland, wild goat culls, additional Sitka plantation, lack of action on peatland drying, overgrown Molinia grass and the related wildfire hazards; RSPB practices around draining and Rhododendron replacement; and a recent insensitive felling of stands of old trees to halt Larch disease. That said, for residents who participated, the FLS’s facilitation of the new Loch Katrine Forest Management Plan was held up to be an exemplar of the right ecological principles-in-action and of codesign with the community.
- **Rising recreational use of Lochs Katrine and Arklet** for wild swimming, boarding and kayaking, welcomed in the main, albeit with concerns regarding user safety, impacts on water quality, and absence of any regulation/monitoring.
- **Some tourist areas are lacking/need attention,** notably, the railings around the Pier Café need upkeep; iconic viewpoints and paths are overgrown and obstructed; and the Scottish Power project to improve the “Smiddy” headland has not progressed since Covid-19.
- **Need for better communications infrastructure remains:** While a new mast has enabled some improvements, there is still no fibre broadband (residents are dependent on expensive satellite broadband for a decent signal), and most areas have no mobile coverage, representing a serious health and safety issue for residents and visitors.
- **New and onerous short-term lets license requirements,** developed in, and to regulate, urban settings, are placing a considerable additional burden on the local tourist industry.
- **Additional pressures on accessibility,** due to the loss of effective DRT, the lack of alternative public transport and the growing cost of fuel.
- **Other issues,** included concerns about privacy and safety caused by drone flyers near residences.

**AMENDMENTS TO THE SICLP PRIORITIES**

**Question 3:** What priorities / guidelines need to be added, removed or amended, and why?

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed out.**

**2.1 Planning a Better Place to Live and Work**

PROPOSED CHANGES (all previous references to the Stronachlachar Storehouse have been removed):

**2.1.1 Year-round sustainable economic opportunities.** We would like to see more opportunities and support for local businesses, particularly those that;

- Sustain economic activity through the winter months (i.e. independent of seasonal tourism).
- Enable wildlife regeneration.
- Lead to Community regeneration or benefit, in line with our Life Plan.
- Support developments under Community ownership.
- Facilitate community transport and a functional replacement for the DRT service, which we have lost since 2019.
- Other opportunities such as a health retreat/spa, craft distillery/brewery, ~~adventure tourism~~, or live and work units for artists or craftspeople.
- ~~Provide essential goods for daily life e.g. a Community shop.~~

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed out.**

**2.1 Planning a Better Place to Live and Work (continued)**

PROPOSED CHANGES (all references to the Stronachlachar Storehouse have been removed):

**2.1.2 Community Action.**

- Establishing quarterly meetings involving the whole community at intervals between Community Council meetings, to ensure progress of the Life Plan, and to create and nurture our shared vision and values.
- Through a new Community Life Plan Working Group, cultivate better relationships with Strathard Community Council and other external authorities/parties with an interest in our Wards, including creating processes and structures to form a unified voice for and from the community, getting better informed about the planning system, opportunities for collaboration, where to apply pressure when necessary, and inviting relevant stakeholders to visit the area and discuss our Life Plan with us.
- Forming Community Groups to (previously, 2.1.4) organise more opportunities to socialise (e.g. exercise classes, film screenings, stargazing, and farmers markets etc), or take forwards local action or projects, where ideas include a community orchard; improving what we have (e.g. resurfacing cycle path); setting up local sharing schemes (e.g. food / 'machinery ring'); and raising profile of our Community and the Place we live through media (e.g. resident podcast profiles, famous film locations). One idea was to link up with Kinlochard community litter-picking days, to come together around addressing the issue across Strathard.
- Bringing in funding to progress the Life Plan, by creating a local trust and/or links with others (e.g. with Strathard Community Trust).
- Investigate potential to consolidate local deliveries (e.g. Amazon dropoff), which may improve reliability of local services. Since 2019, this has deteriorated considerably due to accessibility issues with cost-per-delivery model for drivers. The issue highlights the crucial importance the quality of road access and associated challenges play in supporting residents and businesses (see 2.3.1)

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed out.**

**2.2 Improving the Local Tourist Economy****2.2.1 A temporary moratorium on building new holiday lets**

**2.2.1 Improving ~~tourist information and signage~~** in appropriate locations to better indicate local footpaths and trails, and/or bring to life the rich local history and heritage. This includes the proper upkeep of existing signage (see also 2.2.4) ~~such as the information point for Glengyle House from which the House is no longer visible due to overgrown vegetation.~~ These improvements will support and facilitate access to the outdoors, as well as ensure the safety for visitors seeking adventures in the forests or hills (see a map of suggested sign locations for walkers/cyclists in Appendix B). It will also encourage a greater connection with and understanding of our Place, rooting visitors and residents more firmly in our long and colourful history. A number of benches placed in appropriate sites of history, where iconic views exist or simply where rest might be needed will also support visitors to enjoy the area. One idea was to install a map at the white gate 'barrier' at Stronachlachar, showing property locations to help visitors (and delivery drivers) locate their destinations. Improved signage may also deter antisocial behaviour, e.g. parking/overnighting in passing places, or leaving litter (see also 2.2.5 and 2.3.1).

**2.2.2 Improving access.** At present responsible access to our beautiful landscape to the south of Loch Arklet and the north of Loch Katrine, and to the Comer Estate, is prohibited by high deer fences and/or locked gates. This problem could be addressed simply by unlocking gates or having more frequent stiles, as well as indicating access points for paths on tourist maps, as proposed. We also propose the reintroduction of grazing cattle might provide a basis for the removal of some upland deer fences (see 2.4.1). In the meantime, we should aim to signpost and better maintain our core paths and tracks, which appear increasingly neglected since 2019.

## 2.2 Improving the Local Tourist Economy (continued)

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed-out.**

**2.2.3 Revitalising existing tourist facilities.** There are opportunities for increasing local tourist interest by leveraging existing assets, without need for new development. One idea is to repurpose the closed RSPB visitor centre in Inversnaid as a community museum about Rob Roy/Glasgow Water Scheme. Another is to improve support for West Highland Way walkers, such as 'tick-free' summer camping spots, shelter in winter when the Hotel is closed, and repairing poor path sections around Inversnaid. As our main local hub, we would like to see the Pier Cafe better looked after by repainting the railings and the pier, and the completion of the already-funded Scottish Power project to enrich the 'Smiddy' headland and distract attention from pylons (which has not progressed since the Covid-19 pandemic). Many of our iconic viewpoints, which connect visitors to important aspects of our local cultural and natural heritage, are obstructed due to overgrown vegetation (e.g. Glengyle; Loch Arklet). We believe simple improvements of tourist hotspots such as these will significantly enhance the visitor (and our) experience of our place.

**2.2.4 Reducing levels of tourist rubbish and anti-social behaviour.** Services, signage, initiatives or support to keep the area tidy from rubbish are highly desired. Our area unfortunately suffers from rubbish beside roads, paths and parking areas brought in by tourists or contractors and not appropriately disposed of. This makes the place unattractive and gives the impression to visitors that the area is not sufficiently cared for. More rubbish bins and signage (see 2.2.2) located in popular spots would help reduce the amount of litter. Anti-social behaviour also takes the form of parking/overnighting in, or improper use of passing places, which impacts significantly on access and road safety. It also includes inconsiderate wild campers, i.e. those who leave a mess or cause local disruption or disturbance.

**2.2.5 Improving new short-term lets (STL) licensing arrangements.** These are currently placing an onerous burden on local small-scale holiday-let/B&B owners in the Ward, who constitute a significant contributor to the local economy. The blanket national policy was developed for urban settings, and lacks sensitivity to the fragile nature of remote rural tourist economies. We believe this needs urgent review in light of the Scottish Government's principle of Rural Revitalisation, and our community would consider joining or supporting grassroots action towards remedying the issue. \*Strong objection: One business owner agreed with the scheme and considered it important that all hospitality facilities however large or small have the correct governance and are adhering to all current regulations and legislation.

**2.2.6 Monitoring loch-based recreation and potential impacts on water quality.** Since 2019, we note a significant increase in use of Lochs Katrine and Arklet for wild swimming, boarding and kayaking. While this is welcomed in the main, we feel it is important that this is closely regulated to ensure user safety (we have noted people getting into difficulty in areas where there is no mobile signal (see 2.3.2)), and to avoid potential contamination of drinking water. \*Strong objection: Some felt Lochs Katrine and Arklet were the last two lochs in the area where wildlife (including rare bird species) has remained relatively undisturbed, and that this, and the fact they supply Glasgow's drinking water, represented a strong case for banning recreational use and maintaining them as nature reserves.

## 2.3 Maintaining and Upgrading Essential Infrastructure

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed-out.**

**2.3.1 Road:** Our highest priority is the road lifeline upon which our Community, visitors and economy depend, which is currently in a poor condition and unsafe. Since 2019 this is being exacerbated by a significant increase in volume and types of road users (campers, motorhomes and coaches), and anti-social parking, which is significantly impacting accessibility for residents and delivery drivers.

We feel strongly the road should not be widened. Specifically, the two four areas which require urgent attention to resolve the issues are:

- Repairing the road including tarmac and potholes, which cause damage to vehicles, and are a danger to cyclists and drivers (and some stated hasn't happened since 1974!).
- Improving passing places and/or parking. This includes repairing existing passing places, particularly where pot-holes have formed at either end, adding new ones where necessary, ensuring all provide sufficient room for the frequent coaches using the road, and including them in winter ploughing/gritting regimes. Since 2019, there is increased antisocial parking/overnighting in parking places which further exacerbates accessibility and safety issues, which signage may serve to mitigate (see 2.2.2). We note the recent significant rise in the numbers of visitors' vehicles becoming stuck off-road which is related to these issues. Some believe improved parking provision along the road (e.g. at Loch Chon) could help alleviate these issues.
- Addressing overgrown borders including hedges, trees and grasses along the verges, which cause a narrowing of roads and impeded sightlines, which since 2019, has become out of control in places. Adequate monitoring, and holding those responsible to account, is considered essential for public safety.
- Coach convoys; while we recognise the importance and benefits of coaches bringing tourists in to the area, and the general courtesy of their drivers in allowing cars to pass, where a number travel together it can lead to major disruption and safety concerns for road users. We request they apply a policy of staggering coaches by 20 min intervals, which would alleviate this. The other improvements proposed above would help mitigate impacts of coaches more generally.

## 2.3 Maintaining and Upgrading Essential Infrastructure (contd)

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed-out.**

**2.3.2 Communications infrastructure:** where basic improvements are vital to our economic viability and regeneration, and our future sustainability and resilience. While there have been recent improvements to our mobile phone coverage due to the installation of a new mast, most areas outwith settlements are "dead spots". Importantly these are along the B829 and Loch Chon's north shore road, around Loch Katrine, and in the hills, where lack of coverage presents significant safety concerns for drivers, walkers, cyclists and loch users (which have increased significantly in numbers since 2019). For residents this is a daily concern, particularly for women or in winter months for those traveling on poorly-maintained, unlit roads (see also 2.3.1). Good internet and phone access are also a requirement for attracting and keeping visitors here, and the young families we need to sustain a vibrant Community. Currently no fibre broadband service exists, and given the economic challenges of building a successful business in a remote rural area, it is unfair that we are required to solve the problem of poor internet at our own expense by investing in satellite broadband. Moreover, as BT refuses to increase local landlines, a phone-less resident can now only acquire one by inheritance from a resident who has one. Poor communications are a huge disincentive to those thinking of visiting, moving or starting businesses here. However, we do require that the design and location of infrastructure is sensitive to our iconic views and landscape.

### 2.3 Maintaining and Upgrading Essential Infrastructure (cont) **Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed-out.**

**2.3.3 Community Energy Projects:** We would support renewable energy generation for and by the community which make sustainable non-harmful use of our plentiful natural resources (e.g. wind, mini-hydro and solar), provided these are appropriately located and sized so as to protect our Important Things. This will lower energy costs or provide Community income for local residents and businesses.

**2.3.4 More joined-up thinking and action:** We have noticed evidence of siloed-thinking and action between authorities responsible for local infrastructural maintenance (e.g. ‘hedges’ and ‘edges’ appear to be the responsibilities of different parties). It would be of benefit for us to work with them to develop a more joined-up approach. This could represent a win-win for all parties, both by improving the quality of maintenance services, while increasing their efficiency and reducing their costs. We emphasise here, the dangerous absence of roadside maintenance since 2019 (see 2.3.1), and also the critical importance of carrying out activities at the correct time of year i.e. not during bird nesting and wildflower blooming season.

**2.3.5 Medical services:** ~~Finally,~~ We aspire to have better access to the medical care and support we need. Our access to medical services has worsened since 2019, exacerbated by issues concerning ~~is linked to the issues of~~ roads and communications, which are vital in times of emergency. We also require a failsafe first response strategy, as our lives may depend on leveraging Strathard residents with first-aid/medical skills during the long wait for emergency services to arrive.

**2.3.6 Water supply (Inversnaid):** Residents of Inversnaid have noted the potential issues associated with streams drying up as a result of decreasing summer rainfall. While we cherish our natural water supply, and would not wish at this stage to join to the mains, we remain mindful of our changing climate and the potential challenges associated with future summer droughts.

### 2.4 Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed-out.**

**2.4.1 Environmental Restoration (Replacing 3.4.1 Support for Local Ecosystem Services):** In light of Scotland’s Climate Emergency and Biodiversity Strategy, we consider there to be a basic need for an optimal consensual ‘net-zero’ strategy for the land in our Ward. **Of key related priorities, the most important is the protection and restoration of our peatlands,** through a programme of re-wetting, improved drainage practices, and the removal of non-native intensive commercial forestry in these areas. We aspire to see the removal of some deer fences, and the resumption of upland grazing practices (originally agreed by the Forestry Commission Scotland when they took the lease). We note that Forestry Land Scotland’s new Loch Katrine Management plan does include provision for the reintroduction of cattle on uplands, and which may include North and South Loch Arklet. The majority of upland peatland areas in the ward have traditionally coevolved with pastoral farming practices. We believe the reintroduction of Highland Cattle –well-suited to the environment– could be a ‘win-win’: serving as a tourist attraction, food source, as well as helping to restore and regenerate peatland, as grazing animals have in the past, by regulating the growth of Molinia Grass, trees, and hedges. Without regulation and with increasing incidence of summer droughts, there is increasing risk of peatland drying and potentially catastrophic fires.

Since our first Life Plan in 2019, we also note other land management decisions and practices which do not seem consistent with national policy, or our core principle of Stewardship, and our priorities which stemmed from this. These include tree planting on peatland, wild goat culls, additional Sitka plantations, and inaction on peatland drying, overgrown Molinia grass and the related wildfire hazards; RSPB practices around draining and Rhododendron replacement; and a recent insensitive felling of stands of old trees to halt Larch disease. The desire to ensure a joined-up, coherent and continuous programme of environmental protection and restoration underpins our aspiration to collaborate meaningfully in all land management planning in the Ward (as set out in 2.4.2).

Some of us are motivated to participate directly in local ecological restoration, such as planting native woodland or assisting with the issue of tourist rubbish. However, we feel discouraged by support options, which appear to presume only large scale projects, investment of our own time or finances with no reward or certainty of recompense, and entail regulations which discourage our engagement. Yet with the right support we feel we are ideally-placed to participate in local environmental restoration. The local flora and fauna are an integral part of our everyday lives. We have intimate knowledge of environmental change or harm, of historical land use, of the natural assets valued by our visitors, and of the special creatures with whom we share this Place, including our ancient wild goat herd, black grouse leks and pine martens.

We believe our care for the finer details could play a vital role in local environmental stewardship at a time in history when it has never been more important. This includes broader policy objectives such as Climate Change mitigation, flood management, conservation, and activities to enhance the value of the landscape for tourism. Some of us believe that protection of the delicate environment, including our water supplies and road condition as well as the ecology, is best achieved by maintaining overall visitor numbers at a smaller scale.

### 2.4 Protecting and Restoring our Natural Environment (cont)

**Amendments: Additions are underlined and removals are crossed-out.**

**2.4.2 Greater Involvement in Land Management Planning:** We are conscious and respectful of the fact that the majority of our Wards fall under the ownership of large landowners with a commercial purpose. However, this Place is also where our living Community, human and non-human, makes its home. To be excluded from local land management decisions which negatively affect our Important Things promotes unnecessary divisiveness, mistrust and cynicism. Since 2019, we have experienced good exemplars of collaborative planning –notably, FLS’s Loch Katrine Forest Management Plan. However, we have also seen disturbing examples of carelessness or neglect which are inconsistent with priorities described in 2.4.1 above, and our core principle of Stewardship. These often occur with little or no community consultation, and without any apparent regulation of, or accountability for, perceived abuses by landowning parties or organisations. We believe strongly that the inclusion of our Community in decision-making processes will in the long-run promote a more positive and productive partnership, as well as greater efficiency and reduced impact to our Important Things. Particular areas we feel would benefit from more meaningful consultation or discussion are:

- The location of commercial forestry operations or deer fences, to ensure preservation of iconic wilderness views, important local wildlife, and tourist experiences and access.
- Wildlife culling. While we acknowledge differing objectives, we cherish our wild goat herd, and wish to be sure all alternatives and perspectives are properly considered before any cull.
- Rhododendron control. ~~Inversnaid requires a properly articulated and supported programme.~~ It is understood that Rhododendron clearing is currently being carried out by the National Park under a 10-year agreement with relevant landowners in the area.
- Effective maintenance of roadside vegetation to avoid narrowing or impeded sightlines, and ensure road safety (see 2.3.1), while ensuring this is carried out at the correct times of the year, i.e. not during bird nesting and wildflower blooming season.

**2.4.3 Dark Sky Status:** We are unanimous in our agreement that our dark skies are one of our Important Things. Such views of the star-filled heavens have been a treasure, pleasure and inspiration for all times and peoples, and yet grow increasingly rare in the modern age. We therefore, aspire to formalise conditions which can preserve our experience of the night sky for our present and future generations of residents and visitors.