



16th August 2022

Caroline Strugnell  
Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority  
Carrochan  
Carrochan Road  
Balloch G83 8EG

Dear Caroline,

**Application ref 2022/0157/PPP: Erection and operation of a mixed-use tourism and leisure development-West Riverside and Woodbank House, Balloch**

On behalf of the Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs, the independent conservation and heritage charity covering the National Park, I am writing to confirm our conditional support for this outline planning application for major tourism and leisure development in Balloch.

This area is wedged between the older part of Balloch, the River Leven, the southern shores of Loch Lomond, Drumkinnon Wood and the A82 and it has been zoned for tourist and leisure development in Local Development Plans and various policy documents for a considerable period. The removal of Drumkinnon Wood area from the latest planning application submission; the reduction of the height of the building mass next to Balloch Pier, the removal of housing from the grounds of Woodbank House and the restoration of the Grade 1 listed building and associated outbuildings for holiday accommodation, are all welcome improvements on the previous scheme.

We are aware as far back as the mid-1980s the first Loch Lomond Local (Subject) Plan for Tourism, Recreation and Conservation, which was prepared and adopted by a consortium of four local authorities, identified much of this site as an area with tourism and recreation development potential. This followed on from the 1949 Clyde Valley Regional Plan prepared by Sir Patrick Abercrombie that identified Balloch as the location for the development of a major West Highlands gateway tourist and recreational resort.

It is also important to note the site used to be in fragmented ownership and, as recently as the 1980s and 1990s, West Riverside was largely derelict land that had previously been used for a mix of industrial uses including gravel workings, a silk dye factory, a railway line link to Balloch Pier with substantial railway sidings, as well as a 60-berth static caravan holiday park near what is now the Duncan Mills Slipway. The former Woodbank House Hotel and outbuildings, a grade 1 listed building, have also been



lying derelict for many years and regularly feature on the national register of buildings at risk.

Scottish Enterprise was encouraged to purchase West Riverside for comprehensive tourist and leisure development purposes as it was recognised continued fragmented ownership would result in ongoing planning blight with Balloch not realising its full potential as a high quality and appealing tourist destination and gateway to Loch Lomond. A considerable sum was spent by Scottish Enterprise on land reclamation and the phase 1 Loch Lomond Shores tourism development, and it was envisaged this would be followed by a phase 2 on much of the land that is the subject of this current outline planning application with better transport linkages between the centre of Balloch, Balloch Pier and Loch Lomond Shores.

We consider this is the optimum and possibly the last location on Loch Lomondside for major tourist and recreation development as it has the benefit of being right next to a public transport hub with easily accessible rail, bus, and waterbus services. There is a real opportunity here to develop a truly sustainable development with an imaginative and forward-thinking travel and transport plan that could make a positive contribution to the climate and nature emergency strategies for the Loch Lomond area and help address the traffic concerns being raised in some consultation responses.

It should be possible as part of the development to adopt proposals that maximise the use of public transport services and minimise the use of cars. We strongly recommend the preparation of a bold travel and transport action plan is a planning condition of any outline planning consent granted for this development.

There are good examples elsewhere such as Center Parcs, Lake Garda and in Alpine villages where visitors are encouraged not to use their cars and considerable success has been achieved by providing sufficient activities on site to deter car travel and to provide attractive alternatives to the car for getting out and about. As part of the *Alpine Pearls* carefree holiday villages project 23 'green villages' work successfully together on sustainable mobility initiatives. The proposed Lomond Banks development could be the catalyst for an imaginative and collaborative Loch Lomond sustainable mobility initiative which is badly needed in the Loch Lomond area to encourage modal shifts from cars to other forms of transport and to reduce the carbon footprint of tourist and day visitor movements.

We welcome the commitment to provide indoor leisure facilities and a boat house for water-based activities that can be used by local residents and we would recommend that a planning condition is attached to any consent which guarantees community use of the facilities and at a reasonable prices which are accessible to all. The availability of indoor recreational facilities, including a leisure pool/water park, should also help boost the year-round occupancy level of the range of tourist accommodation on site and help underpin year-round employment opportunities.



We are also pleased at the amount of public access being retained across the site with no plans to install gated boundaries restricting site access given the potential of the site to encourage more members of the public to enjoy walks and cycling safely close to Loch Lomond and with strategically important trails such as the Three Lochs Way and John Muir way passing through the site

We welcome the £40 million tourism led development plans coming forward for Balloch at the present time as the village is facing an uncertain and challenging future as a thriving tourist destination. At present, despite the village being one of the main gateways to the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park, it is not realising its full tourism potential as a green and sustainable 'must visit' tourist destination and there is an urgent need to regenerate and strengthen the appeal of the village to support and sustain existing businesses and the associated jobs, as well as creating many additional year-round employment opportunities for residents of West Dunbartonshire which are easily accessible by public transport.

In summary, our main reasons for conditionally supporting this outline planning application are as follows:

1. the proposals are comprehensive, of a high quality and are in accordance with the zoning in the current and previous Local Development Plans;
2. this is the optimum location on Loch Lomondside for major tourist and recreation development as it is right next to a public transport hub with easily accessible rail, bus, and waterbus services and potential to create a truly sustainable and green tourism destination;
3. the proposed development will help to strengthen Balloch's appeal as a year-round tourist destination with a range of tourist accommodation, activities and indoor wet weather facilities which should encourage longer staying visitors;
4. the development will create a significant number of new jobs for the local community, which are easily accessible by public transport, and help sustain many jobs in existing businesses that will benefit from more tourists staying overnight in the village longer with the associated spin-off spend;
5. the site will remain open for the public to safely enjoy for tourism and recreational purposes with an improved network of paths and commitment to provide indoor and outdoor water-based amenities that can be used by local residents as well as visitors;
6. an attractive civic amenity space surrounded by mixed-use buildings will be created at Station Square and add greatly to the appeal and vitality of the village centre.



This is consistent with some of the thinking and indicative plans that emerged from the Balloch Charrette;

7. the inclusion of a transport link by monorail from the new Station Square opposite the railway station to a point near Balloch Pier and Loch Lomond Shores is welcome and addresses one of the priorities to improve connectivity between the village centre, Balloch Pier and Loch Lomond Shores identified in the Balloch Charrette; and
8. we welcome the inclusion of proposals for the 12-acre Woodbank House Estate as the historic house, outbuildings and grounds have suffered from years of neglect. There is now a real prospect of the façade of the house being restored and, along with the outbuildings, being converted sympathetically for use as tourist accommodation.

In conclusion, we consider the proposals have much to commend them with a range of benefits for the village of Balloch, the Vale of Leven and the wider Loch Lomond area. However, we recommend the opportunity should be taken to attach some conditions to any planning consent granted to ensure green tourism and community benefits are fully realised. The production and adoption of an ambitious but realistic green travel and transport plan would be very beneficial as would legally binding conditions relating to public and community access to outdoor and indoor recreational amenities and facilities.

We trust National Park Authority Board members will approve the application so that the full potential of Balloch as a high quality green and sustainable visitor destination and a pleasant place to live and work can be realised.

Yours sincerely,

*James Fraser*

James Fraser  
Chairman  
Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs  
*Working for the benefit of people and nature in Scotland's first National Park*