Loch Lomond Banks Refusal of Planning Application

Friday 27 February, 2026

Regarding Land at Pier Road, Ben Lomond Way and Old Luss Road, Known as West Riverside and Woodbank House, Balloch, G83 8QX

Erection And Operation Of A Mixed-Use Tourism And Leisure Development Including Refurbished Tourist Information Building; Up To 60-Bedroom Apartment Hotel; Up To 32-Bedspace Budget Hotel, Up To 104 No. Self-Catering Holiday Lodges; Restoration And Redevelopment/Conversion Of Woodbank House And Attendant Listed Structures For Up To 21 Self-Catering Holiday Apartments (Subject To Other Necessary Consents); Leisure Pool, Waterpark, Spa; Restaurants, Hot Food Cafe And Retail Areas; Craft Brewery Inc

As a long-established independent conservation charity which works in and around the LL&T national Park, we have consistently supported this planning application because it has always been clear to us that with its minimal frontage on the loch, the site's previous planning history of being zoned for leisure and recreation and its situation within an existing envelope of development, it would have zero negative impact on the special qualities of Loch Lomond and its wider surrounding area. On the contrary, it would help to absorb the visitor pressures which already exist elsewhere and has the capacity to deliver many conservation and economic benefits to the area.

Their Chairman, John Urquhart said,

"We are disappointed, but not much surprised by Mr McKee's decision to refuse the Lomond Banks planning application -conveniently before the Holyrood elections in May, in what we suspect is a politically motivated gambit which stands against good sense and all the planning evidence.

"The Green Party has very successfully turned this planning application into a political football, with "Saving Loch Lomond' never being much about the merits of the planning facts, but much more about whipping up a sensational vote catching narrative. However, Mr Greer's trumpeting of success may be premature as the ancient woodland and flooding grounds for refusal cited by Mr McKee are weak and will not stand up to legal analysis should the developer decide to follow the court option which is now open to them.

There is almost no ancient woodland on the site, most of it having been cleared well before the 19th Century. A remaining agricultural shelter belt was mostly removed during the mid-20th Century by sand and gravel excavation. Ironically, what has saved the fragmentary narrow strip that now remains is the INEOS Finnart-Grangemouth oil pipelines which cross the site. The woodland which has colonised the former caravan site, rail yards and sand pits is recent. It is nonetheless one of the site's primary assets which the developer wants to retain with compensatory planting nearby or onsite to make up for any trees lost agreed at the detail stage, because, after all, the application was always only an outline proposal. The same goes for the

flooding issue. Most of the site is above maximum flood levels and mitigation measures for anything built lower down could readily have been developed at the detail stage.

It is a great pity there has been so little exploration of the many economic, heritage and habitat benefits which could and should flow from such a proposal. The National Park's planners have seemed largely blind to that, and the scheme's huge potential has never been

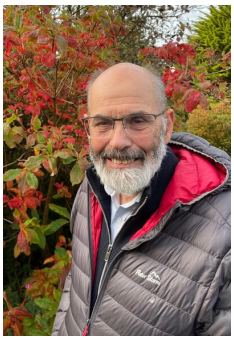
properly examined. Instead, many people have swallowed the populist "Save Loch Lomond" bait, including it seems, the National Park's Board.

In an effort to insert some balance, we outline here some examples of the kind of "planning gain" which would have been (and may yet be) available if only there was some leadership, ambition, imagination and, dare we say it, partnership.

They include:

Considerable local economic benefit including many good quality jobs during construction and then long-term operation of the business. Increased footfall would also benefit struggling Lomond Shores, Balloch and Alexandria retail and eatery businesses. Conservation of Woodbank House's 18th century façade. Improved woodland management. Promotion of Red Squirrel population versus Grey. Rewilding

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of Stoneymollan Burn. Support for conservation efforts around Paddle Steamer Maid of The Loch and its heritage slipway, steam winch and Balloch Pier. Conservation of Old Balloch Station. Existing woodland walks lit and maintained. Re-established public transport link between Balloch and Balloch Pier. Strengthening of woodland wildlife corridors around southern end of Loch Lomond. Former (now disused) Gateway Centre repurposed to provide wet weather/indoor sports facilities for Lomond Banks residents (and the public). Facilitated by a bridge or ferry connection to Lomond Shores at Balloch Pier, repurposing of disused Balloch Castle as a café, shop, interpretation and visitor information centre. Assistance with efforts to improve peak time traffic flows at local A82 pinch points. Substantial tourism levy income to the local authority.

It is highly unlikely any of these developments will ever occur without this kind of development”

For more information on rewilding the Stoneymollan Burn, see page 13 of the latest edition of our magazine, “Voice”, available online at https://www.lochlomondtrossachs.org.uk/voice-magazine

Ends

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