

**ARGYLL AND BUTE COUNCIL  
DEVELOPMENT AND ECONOMIC GROWTH**

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**MASTERPLAN REPORT 24/00604/MPLAN**

**DUNOON & KILBRIDE HILL STRATEGIC MASTERPLAN**

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**(A) INTRODUCTION**

The Dunoon Project Limited is a registered community-based charity that has produced a strategic masterplan, in consultation with the local community and key stakeholders to guide the development of a new tourist and recreation attraction on Kilbride Hill, Dunoon (also to be known as 'The Dunoon Project'). The Strategic Masterplan identifies a set of broad and overarching development principles to deliver the vision of creating: *"The place for nature-based world class adventures, attracting visitors to our thriving community connected to an outstanding environment"*.

The long-term aim of The Dunoon Project is to guide the development of a sustainable, world-class outdoor activities hub on the surrounding hills and forests to re-establish Dunoon as one of Scotland's premier tourism destinations. The objective is to increase tourism by attracting new visitors to the area and persuading those visitors who usually pass through Dunoon on their way to other destinations in Argyll and Bute (and beyond) to stay in the town. This will boost the local economy by increasing local tourism spend, supporting business development and job creation opportunities. To achieve these objectives, the indicative proposals for the Dunoon Project to be developed incrementally over a period of 20 years include:

- A new 'gondola' style cable car from the site of the former Glenmorag Hotel to the summit of Kilbride Hill where a 'Top Station' will be located;
- A 'zip wire' facility that will travel down the hill, passing alongside Bishops Glenn Reservoir where educational and community facilities will be located (alongside potential hydro-power);
- Extensive new trail works comprising of c.40km of new designated mountain biking and walking routes and upgrades to pre-existing trails;
- Potential new range of zero carbon accommodation including tent pitches and eco-camping pods / woodland cabins;
- The potential for the use of hydro-power/ renewable energy to power the gondola system; and
- Potential large-scale re-wilding including the protection and enhancement of existing peat land environments.

The areas of Bishop's Glen Reservoir and Kilbride Hill are currently used for recreational and leisure purposes, hosting a variety of local groups. In addition, Active Argyll note that

there are currently 14 mapped mountain bike trails on the hills totalling to c.8.7km of mountain bike specific trails. Of these, 12 are marked as 'Black or Expert Grade' and two are marked as 'Blue or Moderate' cycling trails. Two of the black-graded trails lie north of the site and are outwith the indicative strategic masterplan boundary.

### **Land ownership and finance model**

In terms of ownership, the masterplan details that both land acquisition and land agreements will be required to deliver the project. The former Glenmorag Hotel site and the adjacent 'Fairy Glen' site have been acquired to deliver the Glenmorag Base Station and some of the proposed new accommodation and site parking. The Dunoon Project Limited is in negotiation with local land owners to agree options to enable the project to gain access to further required land parcels on Kilbride Hill. The largest landowner within the area is Forestry Land Scotland (FLS), who support the proposals in principle and are exploring options for the long-term lease of the Corlarach Forest for The Dunoon Project. This would provide the major parcel needed for to deliver the route of the gondola and potential new trails within the area, in addition to providing the land to separate existing commercial forestry operations from recreational use.

The ambitious nature and scale of the project means that not all the required funding (estimated at c.£50m) has yet been secured and significant future investment from public and commercial partners will be required to enable delivery, most likely in a phased approach. The project has been financed in its initial stages by grants from Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the UK Government Community Renewal Fund and Community Led Local Development Funds (administered by Argyll and Bute Council). In the long-term, the project intends to create a financial vehicle to manage ongoing investment and community profit sharing (which will occur via a grant system to be managed and distributed locally on an annual basis by the Dunoon Project Limited). The Dunoon project also intends to use social impact and sustainability targets which extend beyond the financial measures of success, which is supported in line with the community wealth policy of NPF4.

### **Community and stakeholder engagement**

The Dunoon Project Ltd has undertaken several phases of community engagement since 2017 when the initial 'charette' was held to discuss the potential for the project. Further events have included:

- Four stakeholder workshops on 9<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> March 2022
- Two public open days at Queens Hall on 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> September 2022 with over 500 visitors, where questionnaires were made available for deposit 2 weeks after the event and 263 completed questionnaires were received.

The proposals have been developed in response to the comments received from local community and key stakeholders. These comments suggested: the creation of a new hub at Glenmorag; variation in accommodation offer; extending and connecting the town; creating an extensive trail network and creating a planet positive development with an educational element. Further consultation would be undertaken at the detailed design stage for each of the key sites as part of the planning process. There is potential for future planning applications to be major applications (as defined by the Town and Country Planning (Hierarchy of Developments) (Scotland) Regulations 2009), if this is the case, Pre-Application Consultation (PAC) and Proposal of Application Notice (PAN) reports will also be required.

## Form of the masterplan

The Scottish Government defines Masterplans as:

*'a plan that describes and maps an overall development concept, including present and future land use, urban design and landscaping, built form, infrastructure, circulation and service provision. It is based upon an understanding of place and it is intended to provide a structured approach to creating a clear and consistent framework for development'* (PAN 83).

The Scottish Government endorses the use of Masterplanning in general, but considers that it is especially useful for large sites and in areas/sites which are going to undergo substantial change, have multiple uses, or are sensitive in environmental or landscape terms. Given the spatial and temporal scales of the proposed project and the woodland and hillside location, which although not statutorily protected, is more environmentally sensitive than an urban location, a masterplan approach is welcome.

Argyll and Bute Council Technical Note 01: Masterplanning (TN01, June 2016) requires masterplans within identified Strategic Masterplan Areas in the Local Development Plan to enable co-ordinated delivery of large scale, multi-phased and strategically important developments. Although this site is not identified in Local Development Plan 2, it has potential to support the Dunoon Regeneration and Area for Action (A1004). It is also a 'large scale proposal' with mixed use proposals and complex issues and a masterplan approach is therefore appropriate to demonstrate how the proposed development will relate to the wider area and how the project would be phased. The TN01 sets out that a masterplan approach is necessary for *"Proposals outwith an allocation or PDA which propose a phased approach or involve complex issues and which may impact on the identified issues highlighted in the SMA schedule or Action Programme"*.

The submitted Dunoon and Kilbride Hill Strategic Masterplan comprises a series of illustrative plans and accompanying written text describing how the project will develop. It demonstrates a clear understanding of place and it is intended to provide a structured approach to creating a clear and consistent framework for future development in this location based on a set of **key principles**:

- **Landscape and Marine Gateways:** Establish 6 identified marine or landscape gateways to the site which link into public transport networks. The core Marine Gateways are: Dunoon Pier, The Glenmorag Hotel and the Western Ferries Terminal. These are all connected by the coastal link of the A815. The key landscape gateways include fire road network accesses as follows: to the South at Bullwood Road, centrally at the entrance to the Glenmorag Reservoir and to the North, a path at Alexander Street (this gateway provides the most direct relationship to Dunoon town centre).
- **Safety Separation and Integration:** New development must mitigate the identified potential 'collision points' (p.63) between users through safety mechanisms such as early warning systems, trail design, clear signage and information strategy across the site, which displays relevant safety information, trail grading information and reinforces good etiquette for all users. Clear sign posting also facilitates way finding.

- **Landmarks and Nodes:** Glenmorag Base Station and Kilbride Hill Top Station should be viewed as landscape nodes and new hubs/multifunction mixed-used areas with accessible public realm providing core facilities essential for outdoor activities. Any development should be architecturally significant, recognisable and of high design quality.
- **Access for All:** The Gondola style uplift facilitates equal access for all to Kilbride Hill. Future trail designs will incorporate accessibility measures such as enhanced trail widths and safe, well located rest stops.
- **Opportunities for Accommodation:** Incorporated within the masterplan to support the project and meet an identified need for variation in the local accommodation offer for camping, caravan hook-up and luxury eco-camping pods.
- **Biodiversity Enhancements:** The majority of Kilbride Hill is used for commercial forestry purposes with regular felling of large areas. However, there is significant potential for c.9.7ha peatland renewal in addition to rewilding of a c.8.2ha felled site which is closely linked to existing and potential trail locations.

## Key Sites

The Strategic Masterplan identifies three key sites, providing indicative designs for these to demonstrate potential options for the quantum of development, the zoning and circulation and development blocks and built form. The intention is that these form an illustrative base on which more detailed proposals can be developed in the future as funding is secured and land agreements finalised. These designs feature four phased 'options' for each site which will allow the proposals to grow and develop incrementally, with planning applications likely to be required as each site moves through temporary to permanent future development proposals:

- Glenmorag Base Station - with core facilities (ticket office, tourist information, showers changing and wash stations) as well potential commercial, cafe, retail and mixed-use space. The base station will also contain the final finishing point for the zipline and a 'pump track' and feature an activated 'plaza' and links to existing features in West Bay (e.g. ABC car park and West Bay Play Area).
- Bishops Glen Reservoir – zip line, hydro power station, WC and changing facilities education centre and nature watching structures.
- Kilbride Top Station – zipline, gondola top station (including potential for café and viewing platform, WC/changing facilities, workshop for bike repair) biodiversity enhancements.

Other components of the masterplan include:

- Public Transport Strategy
- Public Realm Strategy
- Wayfinding Strategy and Public Art
- Trail Structure

The Dunoon and Kilbride Hill Strategic Masterplan has been prepared to support the progress of The Dunoon Project, which will require significant future financial investment to enable delivery. The Strategic Masterplan provides an appropriate framework for

delivery of development in a flexible, phased format which the Council can consider and endorse as a further material consideration in the determination of future planning applications for the site. As future planning applications come forward, further detailed site-wide supporting information will be required in relation to transport and parking, flood risk and drainage, biodiversity, servicing (including utilities and waste management) and community benefit as highlighted in Section F of this report.

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## **(B) RECOMMENDATION**

It is considered that the components of the proposed Strategic Masterplan including the vision, principles and indicative site designs are appropriate for the sustainable development of the site area. The indicative site designs provide a framework to guide more detailed future planning applications.

It is recommended that the strategic masterplan be endorsed and shall form a material consideration in the determination of future planning applications. Given the outline nature, the strategic masterplan should be updated as developments are approved at the site in conformity with the masterplan which prove to have implications for the delivery of development within the remainder of the site.

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## **(C) CONSULTATIONS**

### **Area Roads Authority**

While the Area Roads team is generally supportive of the proposal, further detail is required on the locations that are to connect to the adopted road network and in particular, the main centre at the West Bay on the former Glenmorag Hotel site. This would include, but not be limited to, carriageway junction layout, footway access details, sightlines, drainage proposals, off-street parking capacities and public utility connections to existing or for new i.e. electricity, gas, phone, water and sewage.

Before any planning application is submitted, a transport management plan should be undertaken which details how the site will be accessed by all transport modes and how parking will be managed in and around the site. Detailed information should be provided on the proposals in the 'temporary' phases of the masterplan delivery to utilise vehicular uplift to the summit of Kilbride Hill, particularly where this will require upgrades to existing single-lane roads and forestry tracks. This assessment should include the 'worst case' or 'maximum' impact scenario as a result of the proposals.

### **Flood risk and drainage**

Elevations at the site range between approx. 500m AOD at Bishop's Hill in the west and 5m AOD at the A815 road in the east. A number of small water courses flow through the site, including Balgaidh Burn, Badd Burn and Morag's Fairy Glen. The site is partially overlain by the indicative limits of fluvial flooding, as per the SEPA Future Flooding Maps, with extents overlying the channels of the Balgaidh Burn watercourse and the Bishops Glenn reservoir. The proposed building station for one of the zip wires is located within this fluvial flood extent. It is recommended that this be relocated so that it is outside of the flood extent, ideally at least 12m from the Balgaidh Burn. All other watercourses within the

site have catchment areas of less than 3km and are not accounted for in the SEPA Fluvial Maps. The indicative limits of surface water flooding overlay with the lower-laying channels of the Badd Burn, Berry Burn and Fairy Glen, as well as at a number of small areas around the site. It is noted that the proposed ground for the proposed campsite and buildings for gondola infrastructure are not overlain by the surface water flood extents which is welcome.

The proposed mountain bike trails cross over the watercourses in a number of places. These should be designed in a way so as not to reduce the existing capacity of the channel, and if possible be designed to convey the 200 year plus climate change flow.

No drainage design plans have been provided. The creation of mountain bike trails could increase the surface water run-off from the hillside. Therefore, it is recommended that drainage water is designed in line with CIRIA C753. At the campsite, surface water drainage should be designed such that post-development surface water runoff does not exceed the pre-development surface water. Email response dated Friday 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

### **Public Protection**

Environmental Health have advised that they can provide advice relating to licensing, food hygiene and health and safety. They have not raised any objections regarding any of the specified developments. Standard planning conditions are likely to be required to ensure the quantity and quality of private water supplies serving the developments at the planning application stage. Email responses dated 8<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

### **Core Paths Team**

Supportive of the strategic masterplan as the proposals could be a great asset for the area. Provide clarification that other than on designated Downhill Mountain Bike Routes, the Land Reform Scotland Act 2003 provides the public with a legal right of responsible, non-motorised access to most land, including the existing forestry roads and paths within the proposed masterplan area. In addition, there are a number of Core Paths within the proposed masterplan area including: C210(b) Dunoon to Bishop's Glen loop, C229(a) Berry Burn to Bishop's Glen, C228(a) Corlarach loop trail to Bishop's Glen and C306(c) (b) Morag's Fairy Glen. The proposed base station would also be within joining distance of the C207 Sandbank to Toward path. The proposals should protect and where possible, enhance these routes and work to improve wider connections through additional link implementation, signage and path improvements.

The Core Paths team will be happy to provide more detailed feedback on the site-specific planning applications. Email response dated 3<sup>rd</sup> July 2024.

### **ABC Estates and Land**

The Council's Estates team supports this ambitious project for the boost it would provide to the Dunoon area. However, it is noted that there are Council land holdings within the proposed masterplan area and the process of acquisition or leasing, granting rights or oversailing requires early engagement with the estates team. The Council's assets can also be subject to existing tenancies, agreements or wayleaves and for complex projects such as this we would suggest allowing a minimum of 12 months for any new proposals to be considered, approved and formalised. Email response dated 29<sup>th</sup> August 2024.



Officer note: The endorsement of this masterplan is without prejudice to any land acquisition or leasing arrangements which would proceed separately and independently of the planning process.

### **West of Scotland Archaeology Service**

The proposals would appear to raise only minor archaeological issues depending on the scale of developments that are ultimately proposed. There are a few recorded sites within the area to be avoided and a ground survey would be required at an initial stage to determine whether unrecorded remains are present. Larger areas of proposed ground disturbance would require intrusive evaluation in advance of any development. Planning conditions could be used to deal with these matters when the planning applications come forward for the individual sites. Email response dated 7<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

### **SEPA**

No objection and provide further detail for scoping of individual issues such as peat and peatland impacts, Outline Peat Management Plan, water environment, flood risk, Groundwater Dependent Terrestrial Ecosystems, Forest removal and forest waste, Pollution prevention and environmental management. Emailed letter dated 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2024.

### **NatureScot**

Do not offer formal comment as the Proposal falls below threshold as it is not located within the range of national or international designations. Instead offers advice on wider countryside issues relating to ornithology, other protected species, peatland and biodiversity enhancements. Emailed letter dated 11<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

### **RSPB**

Support the dynamic and inspiring masterplan but disappointed that it lacks focus on nature-based outcomes to enhance well-being. Most of the site is currently managed for commercial forestry and there are many opportunities to improve habitats for biodiversity such as the creation/restoration of peatland, open ground and native woodland, scrubland within and beyond the site. There is potential for this site to impact on golden eagles and the masterplan should employ a suitable consultant and engage with the Argyll Raptor Study Group and NatureScot to ensure the proposals do not impact on these protected species. The masterplan should also incorporate proposals for the biodiversity enhancement in line with NPF4 Policy 3 and there are opportunities for Native Atlantic rainforest restoration within the area, requiring rhododendron removal. Emailed letter dated 12<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

### **Scottish Forestry**

No objection but require ongoing engagement as proposals are developed due to the impact on the woodland asset. Scottish Government policy (NPF4 Policy 6) only supports woodland removal where it would achieve significant and clearly defined additional public benefits and where this is accepted; a package of compensatory planting may form part of this balance. The removal of large areas of woodland will not be supported and forest design guides will need to be considered for any parts of the proposals which will pass through existing forestry. There is an overlap in consenting processes for development within a forest. Ongoing consultation and discussion should ensure a clear consenting route for any proposals.

The appropriate consenting route for the management felling required to accommodate construction of the Development would be managed through the planning system. However, there may be knock on effects in design planning resulting from the development in the wider forest area and any felling and restocking, not directly required for the development should follow the usual consenting routes under the Forestry and Land Management (Scotland) Act 2018. Emailed letter dated 22<sup>nd</sup> August 2024.

**South Cowal Community Council (4.7.2024)**

South Cowal Community Council fully supports this application and feel that the project should be a tremendous boost for the local economy.

**Dunoon Community Council**

No response received.

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**(D) PUBLICITY**

The masterplan has been advertised in the Dunoon Observer – publication date 24<sup>st</sup> May 2024, expiry date 21<sup>st</sup> June 2024. One letter of support has been received.

**(E) REPRESENTATIONS**

One expression of support has been received from Alan Stewart, 4<sup>th</sup> July 2024 which is summarised as follows:

South Cowal Community Council fully supports this application and feel that the project should be a tremendous boost for the local economy.

*Comment: Noted.*

Full details of this representation can be view on the Council's website [www.argyll-bute.gov.uk](http://www.argyll-bute.gov.uk)

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**(F) ASSESSMENT**

**1. List of all Development Plan Policy considerations taken into account in assessment of the masterplan**

**PAN 83 - Masterplanning**

**National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) (Adopted 13th February 2023)**

NPF4 Policy 1 – Tackling the climate and nature crises

NPF4 Policy 2 – Climate mitigation and adaption

NPF4 Policy 3 – Biodiversity

NPF4 Policy 4 – Natural places

NPF4 Policy 9 – Brownfield, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings

NPF4 Policy 11 – Energy



NPF4 Policy 14 Design, quality and space  
NPF4 Policy 13 – Sustainable transport  
NPF4 Policy 20 – Blue and green infrastructure  
NPF4 Policy 22 – Flood risk and water management  
NPF4 Policy 25 – Community wealth building  
NPF4 Policy 26 – Business and industry  
NPF4 Policy 29 – Rural development  
NPF4 Policy 30 – Tourism

### **Argyll and Bute Local Development Plan 2 (LDP2) (adopted 28th Feb 2024)**

LDP2 Policy 02 – Outwith Settlement Areas  
LDP2 Policy 04 – Sustainable Development  
LDP2 Policy 05 – Design and Placemaking  
LDP2 Policy 06 – Green and Blue Infrastructure  
LDP2 Policy 08 – Sustainable Siting  
LDP2 Policy 09 – Sustainable Design  
LDP2 Policy 10 – Design: All Development  
LDP2 Policy 14 – Bad Neighbour Development  
LDP2 Policy 21 – Sites of Archaeological Importance  
LDP2 Policy 22 – Economic Development  
LDP2 Policy 23 – Tourism Development, Accommodation, Infrastructure and Facilities  
LDP2 Policy 32 – Active Travel  
LDP2 Policy 34 – Electric Vehicle Charging  
LDP2 Policy 35 – Design of New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access  
LDP2 Policy 37 – Development Utilising an Existing Private Access or Private Road  
LDP2 Policy 38 – Construction Standards for Public Roads  
LDP2 Policy 39 – Construction Standards for Private Access  
LDP2 Policy 40 – Vehicle Parking Provision  
LDP2 Policy 41 – Off Site Highway Improvements  
LDP2 Policy 55 – Flooding  
LDP2 Policy 59 – Water Quality and the Environment  
LDP2 Policy 60 – Private Sewage Treatment Plants and Wastewater Drainage Systems  
LDP2 Policy 61 – Sustainable Drainage Systems (Suds)  
LDP2 Policy 62 – Drainage Impact Assessments  
LDP2 Policy 63 – Waste Related Development and Waste Management  
LDP2 Policy 73 – Development Impact on Habitats, Species and Biodiversity

#### Land Use Designations in LDP2:

- Zoned as Settlement and Countryside Area
- Within Dunoon Regeneration Area (Diagram 1)
- Area for Action 1004 Dunoon – Town Centre/Waterfront/West Bay
- Strategic Economic Investment Location (Diagram 5: Economy)
- Dunoon Tourism Development Opportunity (Diagram 6: Tourism)

#### Other Relevant Policy Considerations:

- ABC Technical Note 01 – Masterplanning (2016)
- [ABC Technical Note – Biodiversity \(Feb 2017\)](#)
- [ABC Technical Note 06 Sustainability Technical Notes and Checklist](#)
- [ABC Technical Note 07 Sustainable Buildings Checklist](#)
- [Argyll & Bute Council Economic Strategy Refresh \(2024-2034\)](#)

## 2. Settlement Strategy

The proposed masterplan site lies partly within the Dunoon Settlement Area (where the Glenmorag Base Station is proposed) with the remainder of the masterplan area and strategic sites (including Bishop's Glenn Reservoir and Kilbride Hill Top Station) located within the Countryside Area as defined in LDP2.

The proposed development of the Base Station within the Settlement Area on the site and grounds of the now demolished Glenmorag Hotel, would broadly comply with LDP2 Policy 01 – Settlement Areas, which makes provision for redevelopment of brownfield sites which are compatible with surrounding uses; provides access, service areas, infrastructure for existing, proposed or potential future development; is of an appropriate scale and fit for the size of settlement in which it is proposed; and, respects the character and appearance of the surrounding townscape in terms of density, scale, massing, design, external finishes and access arrangements.

The principle of development for eco-tourism and leisure uses on the Bishops Glen and Kilbride Hill Top Station key sites is likely to be acceptable in a countryside location provided any future planning application effectively demonstrates that it is “*sustainable development... of an appropriate scale, design, siting and use for its countryside location*” in accordance with LDP2 Policy 02 Part A (parts B and C are not applicable). As the strategic masterplan is outline in nature and the proposals for the key sites provide only indicative siting and floorplans, further detail will be required on all proposed aspects of development as the key sites come forward to allow assessment against LDP2 Policy 02.

LDP2 also requires all new development proposals to be assessed against Policy 04 - Sustainable Development policy which states that developer should demonstrate compliance with the following principles:

- a) *Maximise the opportunity for local community benefit, including the creation of district (renewable) heat networks, where viable;*
- b) *Make efficient use of vacant and/or derelict land including appropriate buildings;*
- c) *Support existing communities and maximise the use of existing infrastructure and services;*
- d) *Maximise the opportunities for sustainable forms of design including minimising waste, reducing our carbon footprint, increasing energy efficiency, solar panels, ground, water and air source heat pumps and other forms of renewable energy generation;*
- e) *Avoid the use of locally important good quality agricultural land;*
- f) *Utilise public transport corridors and active travel networks;*
- g) *Avoid the loss of important recreational and amenity open space;*
- h) *Conserve and enhance the natural and built environment and avoid significant adverse impacts on biodiversity, natural and heritage assets;*
- i) *Respect the landscape character of an area and the setting and character of settlements;*
- j) *Avoid places with significant risk of flooding, tidal inundation, coastal erosion or ground instability; and*
- k) *Avoid having significant adverse impacts on land, air and water environment.*

Any future applications that come forward within the Strategic Masterplan area will be required to complete the sustainability checklists in the technical notes which accompany the plan (See LDP2 TN06 Technical Note: Sustainability Checklist and LDP2 TN07 Sustainable Buildings).

### 3. Location, Nature and Design of Proposed Development

Dunoon is the largest settlement on the Cowal Peninsula adjoined by Sandbank and Kirn to the north. To the south, lie the smaller linear settlements of Innellan and Toward. All settlements on the Cowal Peninsula are connected by the coastal road A815. Dunoon fronts onto the Clyde Estuary and has both passenger (Calmac) and vehicular ferries (Western Ferries) services to Gourock and Greenock.

There are a number of walking routes and informal mountain biking trails that are currently being improved by Active Argyll on the Kilbride Hill and around Bishop's Glenn Reservoir. These lie to the north of the proposed Glenmorag Base Station and within the wider strategic masterplan area. Kilbride Hill and Bishop's seat are the tallest points on the Cowal Peninsula and are within walking distance of Dunoon. There are areas of commercial forestry including Bishop's Glen Forest and Corlarach Forest (managed by Forestry Land Scotland on behalf of Scottish Ministers) within the northern area of the Strategic Masterplan and a number of existing forestry tracks and fire access routes through the forested area on the hill are proposed to be included within the network of trails.

Adjacent to the proposed Glenmorag Base Station there is an Argyll and Bute Council car park (including the only long stay HGV and coach parking for the town), opposite the West Bay waterside playspace. Further discussions will be required at the detailed application stage to ensure the ongoing functionality of these spaces and integration with the proposed development.

Dunoon is designated in LDP2 as a Regeneration Area, Strategic Investment Area, Tourism Development Opportunity and LDP2 Area for Action 1004 recognises the need for community and tourism-based activity around the Dunoon Town centre/Waterfront/West Bay area. The ambition to develop a world class tourism facility at the southern end of Dunoon is supported in line with the economic regeneration objectives of Argyll and Bute LDP2 and the adopted Argyll and Bute Economic Strategy (2024) which notes the importance of tourism as a key growth sector for the area. The proposals for a 'planet positive' resort which include a hydro-electricity generation plant are particularly welcome in line with NPF4 Policy 1 'Tackling the climate and nature crises' and NPF4 Policy 2 'Climate mitigation and adaptation'.

#### Indicative Site Designs/Phasing 'Options'

The Strategic Masterplan identifies three key sites and provides indicative design 'options' to form an illustrative base on which more detailed future proposals can be developed. Each indicative site masterplan features 4 flexible phased options (not timescale-specific) including outline building and infrastructure footprints which will allow the proposals to grow and develop incrementally from temporary to permanent structures as the resort develops.

- **Glenmorag Base Station:** Option 1 includes temporary, moveable structures with a temporary 'pump track' and an initial vehicular uplift to Kilbride Hill towards more permanent, land mark structures (including the landing structures for the zipline and gondola uplift) and public realm to create an activated pedestrianised streetscape in Options 2 and 3. By Option 4, accommodation has been added and

the potential for wider integration of the site with adjacent land has been incorporated.

- **Bishops Glen Reservoir:** Option 1 explores how vehicle uplift would function in the absence of the Gondola uplift and zipline, with temporary structures provided on the southern edge for outdoor learning. Option 2 explores the integration of a building to provide hydro power for the gondola with incorporated education space and potential for lookouts/hide structures on the south bank of the reservoir and other changing facilities/wc and community use structures. Option 3 adds the zipline and gondola infrastructure and Option 4 incorporates eco-accommodation around the reservoir.
- **Kilbride Top Station:** Option 1 would focus on laying the base trail works to the hill, including upgrades to existing trails and small-scale installation of signage/information boards and temporary seating and shelters. Option 2 would integrate permanent small-scale buildings with core facilities (WC, bike repair and café) which would meet the temporary vehicular drop from the fire road. Option 3 would entail the installation of an ambitious major building at the 'Top Station' and associated infrastructure for the gondola and zipwire. Option 4 seeks to introduce additional biodiversity measures.
- **New trail network of c.40km** to offer a wider range of trails and routes, catering for all abilities to ensure an inclusive experience. Trails would include walking, running and mountain biking routes. Safety issues and management of conflicts with commercial forestry operations will need to be carefully considered through a appropriate Recreational and Forestry Management Plans.

Given the indicative nature of the proposals, a number of further detailed supporting studies will be required to support future planning applications. It will be necessary to undertake landscape impact evaluations of the proposals for Bishop's Glen Reservoir and Kilbride Top Station as these come forward to fully assess the landscape impacts, however, it is noted that the proposal does not lie within a designated landscape area. It is considered that the wider economic growth and regeneration aims may constitute an appropriate 'exceptional case' argument for any localised landscape impacts, provided the proposals are of an exceptional design quality. It is also noted that all biodiversity enhancements should be front-loaded into any future planning applications which should be accompanied by detailed Biodiversity Mitigation and Enhancement Strategy.

## Materials

The Strategic Masterplan sets out an indicative building materials palette of timber cladding, stone and masonry, metal cladding, gravel and compact aggregates, stone tiles, timber walkways and platforms and green and living walls all of which would be appropriate in the proposed setting. In terms of architectural strategy, the detailed design of all proposed buildings and structures will be tailored to the specific location in compliance with the design policies in LDP2 however, the principles of Life Cycle Assessments, quality landmark buildings and a modern vernacular style are all welcome.

Developments for each of the indicative site designs will require the submission and proper assessment of planning applications with adequate supporting material.

However, it is recommended that this Strategic Masterplan be endorsed and given material weighting to be used in the assessment of such planning applications.

#### **4. Economic Development, Tourism and Community Benefit.**

Paragraph 5.10 of Argyll and Bute LDP2 notes the important contribution made by tourism to the local economy and that the future sustainable growth of tourism has the potential to support local services and facilities, transport infrastructure, as well as cultural and heritage events and facilities. Sustainable growth in the visitor economy is one of the key planks of the National Tourism Strategy and the National Tourism Framework, the aim of which is to support the increased sustainable growth in the visitor economy at national and local level.

LDP2 Policy 23 – Tourist Development, Accommodation, Infrastructure and Facilities establishes that there is a presumption in favour of new or improved tourist facilities and accommodation where:

- *The development is in a form scale and location which is consistent with its surroundings; and*
- *The proposals respect and integrate well with the landscape/townscape character and amenity of the surrounding area; and*
- *They are located in accessible locations, taking into account the scale and nature of the proposed development, and include proposals to widen the options for sustainable travel to access them (including public transport, cycling or on foot); and*
- *They are well related to the existing built form of settlement areas or the existing development pattern outwith the settlement areas and avoid dispersed pattern of development unless the developer has demonstrated a locational requirement based upon the need to be near to the specific tourist interest being exploited and that the proposed development will not undermine these interests.*

The masterplan area is not designated for tourism uses, however, LDP2 sets out clear recognition of the role played by windfall development to support the economy of our rural and island areas. This is due in part to the nature of many industries in Argyll and Bute, which are closely related to a natural or localised resource e.g. aquaculture, renewables, distilleries, tourism and in part due to the nature of our remote rural area (para 5.3). It is noted in LDP2 that a flexible approach to Regeneration Areas is required and this proposal would clearly support the Dunoon Tourism Development Opportunity and Area for Action 1004 which references West Bay – the site of the Glenmorag Base Station.

LDP2 Policy 25 – Tourism Development Opportunities and LDP2 identifies Dunoon in Diagram 6 as having significant potential for the sustainable growth of the Argyll and Bute tourism industry. The policy notes that priority will be given to those developments which make use of previously developed sites, locations which are accessible by a variety of means of transport, where there is existing infrastructure capacity, and /or where a proposal will fill a recognised gap in the identified tourism network. It is considered that the proposed masterplan would meet these policy requirements.

Furthermore, LD2 Policy 26 – Informal Public Outdoor Recreation and Leisure Related Development supports Development which provides for enhanced informal public outdoor recreation and leisure facilities and attractions or provides improved opportunities for outdoor access. Particularly, where an identifiable shortfall is addressed or a positive contribution to the tourism network and visitor experience can



be made. The Strategic Masterplan with its proposed improvements to wider walking and cycling routes throughout and beyond the master plan sites would comply with the spirit of LDP2 Policy 26. However, given the outline nature of the masterplan, further detailed information will be required at the planning application stage to ensure that the proposal can be satisfactorily integrated into the landscape with no adverse landscape, environmental, access, or servicing impacts.

NPF4 Policy 25 – ‘Community Wealth building’ supports development proposals linked to community ownership and management of land. Future planning applications should be supported by a Community Wealth Building Strategy, which clearly establishes the role of the local community in the development and ongoing management of the proposals, as well as any ‘profit sharing’ mechanisms.

## **5. Biodiversity and woodland removal**

Given the strategic nature of the overarching masterplan and the indicative nature of the proposals for the three identified ‘strategic sites’, the comments provided by statutory consultees will need to be considered in detail and addressed in any future iterations of the masterplan/site specific briefs and should be fully addressed in any future planning applications to progress the masterplan proposals.

In particular, the strategic masterplan makes reference to ‘biodiversity improvements’ and identifies 9.7ha area of peatland on Kilbride Hill as a potential peatland restoration project in addition to 8/2 ha of felled area to the south of the site which could offer a large-scale biodiversity enhancement including native species planting. NatureScot note that the Proposal lies within the temperate rainforest/‘oceanic zone’ and as such habitat creation favouring rainforest biodiversity such as lichens and bryophytes could be beneficial (e.g. ravine/riparian woodland expansion).

These proposals are supported in principle and should be further developed to strengthen the biodiversity offering of the overall project in line with the requirements of NPF4 Policy 3 and LDP2 Policy 76. In preparing future planning applications, the applicants should ensure that the proposals comply with LDP2 Policies 77 and 78 relating to the loss of woodland by demonstrating that any necessary felling to create trails or other areas will be mitigated in line with the sequential approach. In addition, advice provided by Scottish Forestry on consenting procedures should be taken into account.

NatureScot and RSPB have indicated the presence (or potential presence) of a legally protected species, and this would be an important consideration in decisions on future planning applications. If there is evidence to suggest that a protected species is present on site or may be affected by a proposed development, appropriate steps must be taken to identify, assess and, where appropriate, mitigate the development impact upon such concerns. The level of protection afforded by legislation must be factored into the planning and design of the development and any impacts must be fully considered prior to the determination of any planning applications.

The detailed advice provided by NatureScot, SEPA and RSPB should therefore be considered and all appropriate further surveys and assessments provided to support any future planning applications including:

- Peat surveys



- Ornithology surveys i.e. Schedule 1A/A1 species (golden eagle, hen harrier) and the potential for cumulative impacts from proposed developments in the wider landscape.
- Biodiversity mitigation and enhancement proposals.

While the principles of the masterplan are supported, further information on biodiversity impacts will be required to progress the masterplan to the detailed design stage. Further detailed discussions on scheme design are recommended with NatureScot, SEPA and RSPB prior to the submission of any detailed planning permission to ensure the masterplan delivers the maximum biodiversity enhancements in line with National Planning Policy. As a general point, future planning applications associated with the Strategic Masterplan should demonstrate the earliest consideration and delivery of biodiversity enhancements.

## **6. Flooding, drainage and risk assessments**

A number of small water courses flow through the site, including Balgaidh Burn, Badd Burn and Morag's Fairy Glen. The site is partially overlain by fluvial flooding, as per the SEPA Future Flooding Maps, with extents overlying the channels of the Balgaidh Burn watercourse and the Bishops Glenn reservoir. The proposed building station for one of the zip wires is located within this fluvial flood extent. It is recommended that this be relocated ideally at least 12m from the Balgaidh Burn. All other watercourses within the site have catchment areas of less than 3km and are not accounted for in the SEPA Fluvial Maps. The indicative limits of surface water flooding overlay with the lower-laying channels of the Badd Burn, Berry Burn and Fairy Glen, as well as at a number of small areas around the site. The construction of additional trail systems and any further development should control and mitigate surface water run-off from the hill and it will be important to ensure that where trails cross water courses, these are not narrowed. A detailed drainage and flood risk strategy is needed in line with LDP2 Policy 62 – Drainage Impact Assessment to ensure any additional surface water does not create further loading on the reservoir or the area of potential adverse flood risk found at Blagdaigh Burn.

Given the outline nature of the Strategic Masterplan, little detail is provided on water supply or waste water servicing. LDP2 Policy 60 - Private Sewage Treatment Plants and Wastewater Drainage Systems specifies the requirement for development to connect to public sewers unless a connection is not feasible.

Any future proposals will be regulated under the building standards to ensure that they are capable of being provided to a safe, effective and appropriate technical standard. SEPA are responsible for authorising and regulating discharges to watercourses and they will assess and control pollution, including any possible cumulative impact. At this stage there is no indication that any of the proposal will have a significant adverse impact on the environment with regards flood risk or drainage. Consideration should also be given to peat landslide risk within the masterplan area in line with LDP2 Policy 51.

The proposals within the Strategic Masterplan are not considered to raise material issues with regard to LDP2 - Policy 55 'Flood Risk' as well as NPF4 – Policy 22 'Flood risk and water management'. These matters can be adequately addressed at the detailed application stage.

## **7. Road Network, Parking and Associated Transport Matters**

The core network of fire roads and trails within the area of Kilbride Hill is relatively well established. The fire road network has 3 key access points, 1 from Kilbride or Crochan Road, via Bishop's Glen Reservoir, which is the most direct access within the site. There is also an access point to the North of the site, via the A885 near Ferry Road and the South from Bullwood Road passing Ardhalow Battery. There is also a large area of woodland currently under commercial forestry operations, which is accessed via the fire road network.

Access to the site for vehicles is limited by Kilbride Road, and internally within the Glenmorag site by a short steep single-track access. This may require improvements or upgrades to accommodate vehicle traffic. The existing Argyll and Bute Council Glenmorag Car Park accessed off Kilbride Road has the potential to serve or be linked to the project – although this site is currently the only long stay coach and HGV parking facility in the town and this function will need to be protected. Proposals for accessing the site should take consideration of LDP2 Policy 35 – Design of New and Existing, Public Roads and Private Access, LDP2 Policy 37 – Development Utilising an Existing Private Access or Private Road, LDP2 Policy 38 – Construction Standards for Public Roads and LDP2 Policy 39 – Construction Standards for Private Access.

Dunoon has a well-established road network, but additional private motor vehicle movements due to increased visitors to The Dunoon Project may be challenging to accommodate. Any early stages of the project reliant on vehicular uplift to Kilbride Hill will require impact assessments (particularly where neighbouring properties may be impacted). Parking management will be an important consideration – both on and off site and any future proposals should consider the requirements of LDP2 Policy 40 – Vehicle Parking Provision and LDP2 Policy 41 – Off Site Highway Improvements.

However, the project aspires to deliver active travel and the draft public transportation strategy encourages users to cycle / walk directly from the ferry to the project, or use local bus services to gain access to destinations. All future proposals should incorporate active travel measures in line with LDP2 Policy 32.

The area roads engineer has been consulted and initial comments have been provided. They have advised that the situation will be continually reviewed as each of the phases/planning applications are brought forward with regard to the capacity of the exiting road network and available parking spaces within Dunoon. A Traffic Management Plan and Waste Management/Service Plan will also be required to support any future planning applications.

## **8. Bad Neighbour Development**

Some of the proposals, such as the campsite and gondola have the potential to cause odour or noise nuisance. Public Safety can offer the applicants advice on this as well as licencing, food hygiene and health and safety matters. The principle of a tourism facility is considered to be acceptable and there is no indication that this stage that such a use would be incompatible with the surrounding area, provided careful consideration is given to managing potential conflicts at the detailed design stage. Planning applications would be subject to consultation with Public Safety and assessment under LDP2 Policy 14 – Bad Neighbour Development.

## **9. Phasing**

The Strategic Masterplan sets out a 'Long term phasing strategy' which is outcome-related (the indicative site designs provide non-timescale specific development phases):

- Phase 1 2023/24: Strategic masterplan developed, submitted and possible temporary planning permissions sought.
- Phase 2 2024/2027: Core infrastructure installed (gondola, uplift, trail improvements and new accommodation), applications for further development submitted, public transport improvements to support increasing visitor numbers.
- Phase 3 2027/2035: Project well established, opportunities to improve trail and accommodation offer.
- Phase 4 2035/37: Trails begin to expand further to western side of the Peninsula along Loch Striven, biodiversity enhancements established and widened, Ferry and integrated transport hub at Gourock operational.
- Phase 5 2037/42: Dunoon recognised as a Marine Gateway to Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park

This proposed phasing is indicative, given the dynamic nature of the overall proposals and the uncertainties surrounding funding. While the flexible approach to phasing is noted, it is expected that required supporting infrastructure improvements are likely to need to be carried out commensurately with the scale of development as each phase/strategic site progresses. Some element of whole-site planning (including a number of supporting studies) will be required at the outset to support any future planning applications for this proposed masterplan area.

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## **(G) CONCLUSION**

The vision of the Dunoon and Kilbride Hill Strategic Masterplan to deliver a world-class outdoor recreation and tourism attraction is supported. The Strategic Masterplan considers how the proposal would develop incrementally and integrate within the town and wider area. The Strategic Masterplan gives appropriate consideration to settlement strategy policy, access requirements, landscape, infrastructure and compatibility between existing and potential future uses.

A full assessment of the siting, massing, building design, landscaping, access, water supply, drainage arrangements for developments within the masterplan area will be assessed via future application(s) for planning permission. A number of plans will be required to address forestry and recreational management, transport impacts, biodiversity mitigation and enhancement and community benefit to support any future planning briefs or planning applications for the key sites.

There are no objections from consultees and no objections have been submitted following the requisite public consultation period for the masterplan.

It is therefore concluded that the Strategic Masterplan document should be endorsed.

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## **(I) IMPLICATIONS**

Policy: None  
Financial: None  
Personnel: None  
Equal Opportunities: None

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**Date:** 09.10.2024

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**Date:** 09.10.2024

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