



GLENFINNAN TRAVEL MANAGEMENT PLAN

West Highland Community Rail
Partnership

 **ANSONS**
consulting

UNDERSTANDING
& CHANGING
HOW WE TRAVEL



RECORD OF AMENDMENTS

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1 Executive Summary

Introduction

In January 2023, Ansons Consulting was commissioned by the West Highland Community Rail Partnership to work towards the 'Identification of Travel Management Solutions for Glenfinnan on the Road to the Isles'¹. The commission was carried out between February and April 2023.

The Glenfinnan Travel Management Plan aims to respond to challenges that Glenfinnan is experiencing due to high volumes of visitor traffic. In recent years, the village has experienced a surge in visitor numbers as people are drawn to watch the Jacobite steam train cross the Glenfinnan viaduct following its use in the Harry Potter film franchise in the early 2000s. Since then, there has been an estimated tenfold increase in visitor levels, with numbers peaking in recent years at around 500,000 per year in 2019. The resulting high volumes of cars have caused substantial challenges for the residents of Glenfinnan and other users of the A830, which passes through the village.

In line with the requirements of the project brief, Ansons aimed to document the problems caused by visitor traffic and propose a set of short-term and long-term actions to address them. This research included a review of relevant data and literature, in addition to stakeholder interviews and a workshop, resulting in contributions from 20 organisations being recorded. A site audit, which involved visits to key landmarks and problem hotspots in Glenfinnan, was also conducted.

Context

Parking and traffic management

The Glenfinnan community car park built in 2020 has helped to alleviate the village's traffic management problems, in addition to providing a source of revenue for community initiatives and empowering the local community. However, according to numerous sources, the capacity of Glenfinnan's official car parking facilities is still exceeded at peak times, particularly during the months of July and August, leading to ongoing problem parking and related traffic challenges at these times.

The community and National Trust car parks, Glenfinnan's two main parking facilities, are located side by side but are run as separate entities. This arrangement may create obstacles to implementing management measures aimed at optimising the use of the facilities and better responding to demand. Furthermore, there is very limited space for coaches and minibuses to park relative to current demand. This affects the visitor experience and limits scope for encouraging more visitors to arrive by coach and minibus.

Additional traffic management measures, including a temporary clearway order and reduction in the speed limit from 60 to 40mph, have been introduced in recent years. However, it has been found that levels of parking regulation enforcement on the A830 and Glenfinnan's minor roads do not respond adequately to improper and illegal parking.

¹ The project received funding from the Glenfinnan Community Council, the Glenfinnan Station Museum, the Highland Council, the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS), the National Trust for Scotland, ScotRail and the West Highland Community Rail Partnership.

Public communications and visitor experience

Information about visiting Glenfinnan is dominated by social media and tourism websites outside of community control, while the Glenfinnan community currently have very limited means of communicating with the visitor market. There is no official online platform welcoming visitors to Glenfinnan to curate visitors' experience and there is no definition of or single voice regarding the visitor experience, with the result that visitors are left without a full understanding of their travel and tourism options. As such, there are important untapped opportunities to use public communications to influence visitor behaviour.

Glenfinnan has stunning natural scenery, historical significance, and visitor attractions and activities which provide a diverse offer. This provides potential for expanding and promoting Glenfinnan's visitor offer in a way that encourages more visitors to plan for a longer trip and arrive by public transport, rather than planning trips by car with the intention of staying only long enough to see the steam train.

Other findings

There is a lack of data available on some important factors influencing travel management, including on the visitor market, and demand for parking and public transport.

There has been little ownership of the challenges generated by visitor traffic in Glenfinnan on the part of stakeholder organisations, leaving the local community to lead efforts aimed at addressing the problem. A lack of higher-level engagement could hamper future efforts to respond to these challenges. However, Glenfinnan's international profile (and value as a tourist draw) should also provide an opportunity to garner support at a national level for improving the travel management situation in the village.

Glenfinnan Travel Management Plan

The plan aims to achieve five key objectives:

- enhance public communications;
- manage car parks more effectively including through the more integrated management of community and NTS facilities and use of more effective payment and monitoring systems;
- provide coach parking facilities to accommodate demand and working with coach industry;
- develop and implement an effective traffic management plan; and
- commission research to improve understanding of visitor behaviours and measure performance against indicators to allow further refining of the Plan.

The plan is structured around four overarching areas of intervention:

1. Public communications

The focus of this area is on conducting marketing and communications research with visitors, leading to the creation of a community and visitor experience narrative and the development of a public communications plan. A key stage in this process will be the convening of a senior-level public communications summit and the formation of a multi-agency public communications group with the aim of galvanising the communications representatives of the key stakeholders to become the custodians of the transport communications plan. Once these steps are complete, the communications plan will be implemented through the use of social media and a dedicated 'Visit Glenfinnan' website. The enhanced public communications will enable a more visible deterrent to poor parking practices, facilitating

improved enforcement, in addition to informing the public on parking and public transport options and Glenfinnan's visitor offer.

2. Parking management

Improvements in car park management have the potential to optimise the use of existing facilities, in addition to providing the means of collecting highly useful data on visitor patterns and improving the visitor experience. It is recommended that the possibility of combining National Trust and community parking facilities be explored, a step which could lead to a number of benefits, among them a unified parking regime. The installation of an automatic number plate recognition (ANPR) system in the community car park is also recommended. Initially, this could provide the means for monitoring and data collection to improve understanding of demand. It could then also be used for payment and enforcement of parking fees, and potentially for prebooking and variable tariff systems. It would also enable more effective (including real-time) public communications on parking to inform drivers on busier periods and times when the car park is full. Finally, steps should be taken to prioritise coach parking access. Recommendations are provided on the monitoring and evaluation of coach parking and the importance of considering more provision in the existing facilities.

3. Traffic management

Managing parking and traffic on A830 and local roads is critical to the success of the Travel Management Plan. It is recommended that a traffic management summit be organised, bringing together local and national organisations, including the main actors involved in enforcement. The focus should be on exploring optimal approaches to parking regulation enforcement and coordinating a highly visible set of responses, which would be publicised through social media as part of the public communications action plan. Publicity can also highlight alternatives to using cars and risking fines, such as public transport. Recommendations are also given on existing enforcement measures, with a focus on improving signage and considering other more visible parking regulation indicators.

4. Transport and infrastructure improvements

Consultations and studies conducted prior to the commissioning of this Travel Management Plan have considered a range of potential measures to address Glenfinnan's traffic-related challenges. Among them have been the setting up of new public transport services and the addition of further parking facilities in Glenfinnan.

It is **not recommended** that that additional public transport services (such as park & ride) be developed or additional overspill parking (such as that previously proposed at Callop) be built in the first instance. There is a need to effectively communicate with visitors, enhance the management of existing car parking and improve traffic management **before** considering additional measures.

2 Introduction

In January 2023, Ansons Consulting was commissioned by the West Highland Community Rail Partnership, with support from other third sector and public sector funders, to work towards the 'Identification of Travel Management Solutions for Glenfinnan on the Road to the Isles'². The commission was carried out between February and April 2023, resulting in the development of the Glenfinnan Travel Management Plan.

The Travel Management Plan aims to respond to challenges that Glenfinnan is experiencing due to high volumes of visitor traffic. Glenfinnan is a site of longstanding historical significance, which for years has attracted visitors interested in viewing its monument to the 1745 Jacobite Rebellion and enjoying the area's stunning scenery. However, in recent years, the village has experienced a surge in visitor numbers as people are drawn to watch the Jacobite steam train cross the Glenfinnan viaduct. An already iconic image, the sight of the steam-powered locomotive crossing the 21-arch bridge was propelled to worldwide fame following its use in the Harry Potter film franchise in the early 2000s. Since then, there has been an estimated tenfold increase in visitor levels, with numbers peaking in recent years at around 500,000 per year by 2019, making it one of the most highly visited attractions in Scotland outside of Edinburgh and Glasgow.

The resulting high volumes of visitor traffic have caused substantial challenges for the residents of Glenfinnan and other users of the A830, which passes through the village. As per the project brief, Ansons aimed to document the problems caused by visitor traffic and propose a set of short-term and long-term actions to address them. This process included a review of relevant data and literature. The it also resulted in contributions from 20 organisations from the public, private and third sectors³ collect via interviews and a workshop. The stakeholder interviews were conducted with representatives of 16 organisations, while the workshop, which took place in Glenfinnan in March 2023, was attended by 15 participants, providing an opportunity to present preliminary findings and potential interventions, and collect feedback and opinions from the participants. A site audit was also conducted in March 2023 and included visits to key landmarks and problem hotspots in Glenfinnan with the aim of improving understanding of the areas traffic volume challenges and sense checking earlier research findings.

This report is structured as follows.

- Section 3 provides context, including on visitor numbers, transport, relevant national and regional policies, and public communications. It also documents problems, impacts and constraints related to managing high volumes of visitor traffic in Glenfinnan.
- Section 4 contains the Travel Management Plan, detailing interventions under four main areas: public communications, parking management, traffic management, and transport and infrastructure improvements.
- Section 5 provides an estimate of costs associated with the proposed interventions.

² The project received funding from the Glenfinnan Community Council, the Glenfinnan Station Museum, the Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (HITRANS), the National Trust for Scotland, ScotRail and the West Highland Community Rail Partnership.

³ Glenfinnan Community Council, Glenfinnan Estate, ScotRail, West Coast Railway Company, The Highland Council, HITRANS, the National Trust for Scotland, Galmstrup Architects, Loch Shiel Cruises, Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO, Shiel Buses, Forestry and Land Scotland, BEAR Scotland, Timberbush Tours, Morar Community Council, Mallaig Community Council, Kilmallie Community Council, Maynes Coaches and Edinburgh Coach Lines.

3 Context

3.1 Glenfinnan

Glenfinnan is located in the Lochaber region at the head of Loch Shiel. A site of considerable historical significance as the starting point of the Jacobite Rebellion in 1745, it is home to the Glenfinnan Monument, which commemorates this event. The village is connected by road by the A830, commonly referred to as 'The Road to the Isles', and by the West Highland Rail Line.

Glenfinnan has a population of 115 people, 74 of whom are working aged, while 19 are under 18 and 22 are over 66 years of age. It has a total of 95 properties, 58 of which are permanently occupied. Of the remainder, 23 are holiday rentals, four are holiday homes, and six are public buildings, including the National Trust for Scotland Visitor Centre, a railway station and Station Museum, a church, two hotels and the 'Jetty Hut', a community-run meeting space. Five additional buildings are under construction or with planning consent.

3.2 The brief

As stated above, estimates indicate the Glenfinnan Viaduct now attracts in the region of 500,000 visitors annually, many of whom converge on the village during a 12-week peak season.

Despite recent efforts to deal with the influx, serious ongoing problems are being generated as pressure on the area grows. According to the project brief, these problems include excessive numbers of cars parked on verges and in front of access roads; disruption to the flow of traffic on the A830; hazardous vehicle manoeuvres resulting from drivers rushing to reach the viaduct on time to see the steam train; damage to roadside verges; erosion of the hillside overlooking the viaduct; and adverse mental health effects on villagers.

Local actors have responded with a number of measures, including:

- Reduced speed limits and additional signage and bollards, in addition to efforts to systematically document the problems created by motorists.
- The building of a new 110-space community-run car park in Glenfinnan.
- The building of a footbridge and improvements to footpaths giving access to the viaduct.

Despite these efforts, Glenfinnan continues to be overwhelmed by the influx of vehicles, which still exceeds parking capacity at peak times. As a result, the Glenfinnan Community Council requested assistance from the West Highland Community Rail Partnership (WHCRP) to commission consultancy work which would inform future action, with the evidence compiled and solutions proposed by the consultancy team to be used to inform future requests for government support.

According to the 2022 Highland Council Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan⁴, there is local consensus on the need to address the issue of limited parking, but little consensus on how to respond. Proposed solutions include building additional parking facilities at the sites and establishing park and ride schemes from places such as Callop and Fort William. However, such approaches must consider issues including limited land availability, potential land use conflicts and the need for effective

⁴ The Highland Council (2022). 'Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan'. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14389/strategic_tourism_infrastructure_development_plan_for_highland

promotion to ensure uptake. Likewise, proposals to address limited coach parking, including creating a drop-off area, must overcome questions of funding and the management of remote coach parking.

3.2.1 Objectives

As per the project brief, the commission was to produce a Glenfinnan Travel Management Plan providing robust documentation of the problems and identifying a set of workable shorter-and longer-term solutions. More specifically, the work was to include a numeric and graphic presentation of the findings, in addition to a costed plan of suggested remedies that consider the potential impact on neighbouring communities.

3.3 Tourism

3.3.1 Visitor numbers and profile

As explained, the crossing of the Jacobite steam train over the Glenfinnan Viaduct draws in hundreds of thousands of visitors annually, with number having increased dramatically in recent years⁵.

Despite drawing hundreds of thousands of onlookers, a year, there is no clear ownership of the visitor attraction that the Glenfinnan Viaduct has become, and no singular source of information for travelling to see the attraction. The steam train service is run by the West Coast Railway Company, while the railway line and viaduct is owned by Network Rail and the land surrounding the bridge is owned Glenfinnan Estate. Although the West Coast Railways website provides information on the timing of the steam train passing over the viaduct, little other information is given about travelling to Glenfinnan⁶.

The National Trust for Scotland (NTS) visitor centre, which has a café, gift shop and toilets, in addition to providing information on the Glenfinnan Monument, also receives significant numbers of visitors, though these high volumes are reportedly closely linked to the popularity of the steam train and viaduct.

According to multiple sources, a significant majority of the visitors passing through the NTS centre and car park are drawn primarily by the steam train and viaduct. Visitor arrival in the village largely tends to coincide with the passing of the steam train, with people often moving directly to one of the viewing points and stopping to use the NTS centre as a source of refreshments and toilet facilities. Though some remain at the NTS attraction for longer to benefit from the opportunity to learn about the monument, a significant majority stay in Glenfinnan only for long enough to see the train, a stay lasting for between one and one and a half hours. Multiple sources concur that visitors are often in Glenfinnan on the one-off basis, passing through the village as part of a larger itinerary with the principal aim of photographing or filming the steam train.

Visitors tend to amass in two main areas to view the train. A main viewpoint to the north-west of the viaduct and accessed via the 'Viaduct Trail' attracts crowds of an estimated 500 plus people at peak times (see Figure 1)⁷. A second NTS viewpoint is found to the south of the viaduct, close to the Visitor Centre and can accommodate around 200 people. Further information is provided on access to the main viewpoint in Section 3.3.

⁵ The Highland Council (2022). 'Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan for Highland'. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14389/strategic_tourism_infrastructure_development_plan_for_highland

⁶ West Coast Railway Company (2023). 'Frequently asked questions'. Available at: <https://westcoastrailways.co.uk/faq>

⁷ The viaduct trail was built in 2012/13 by the Glenfinnan museum with funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund, LEADER, and the Railway Heritage Trust, while a 2019 upgrade and building of the viewing areas was commissioned by the WHCRP and funded by Network Rail and ScotRail.

Figure 1. Visitors watching the steam train on the hillside overlooking the Glenfinnan Viaduct



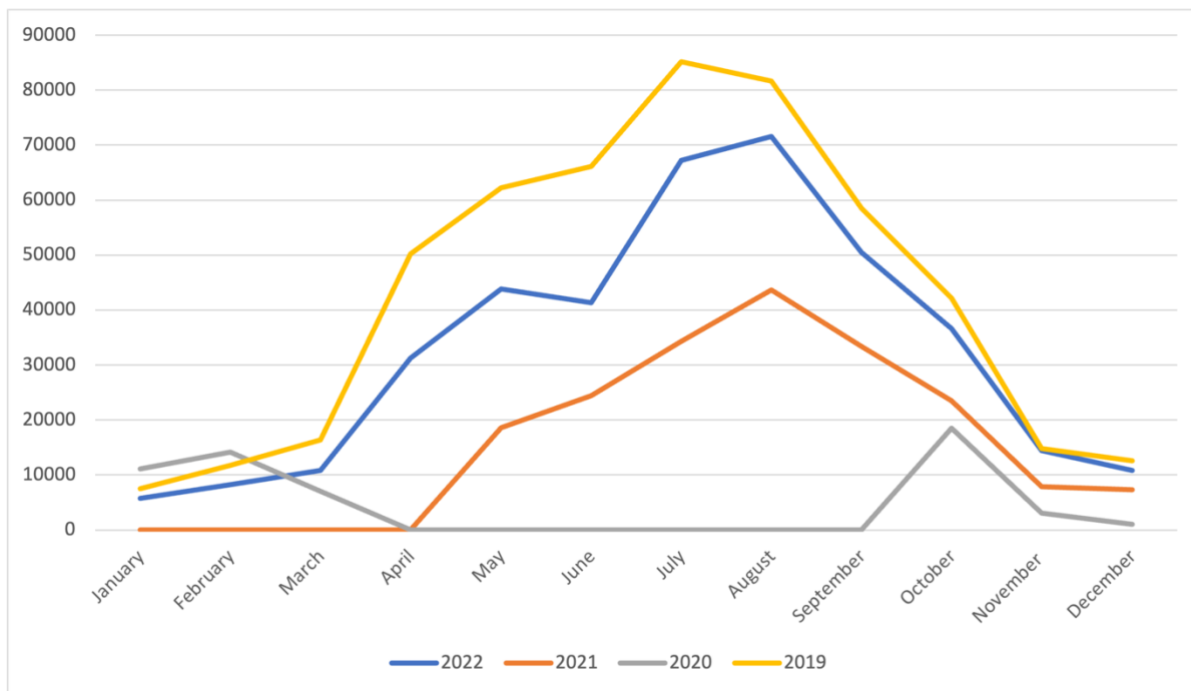
Source: West Highland Community Rail Partnership. Photograph taken on 9 August 2022

In 2019, the visitor centre attracted over 460,000 visitors, an estimated 22% rise on the previous year. Indeed, according to the Moffat Centre's Visitor Attraction Monitor, Glenfinnan Monument's visitor numbers multiplied by nearly 2.5 between 2015 (187,437 visitors) and 2019 (462,235), making it the second most visited paid-for attraction in the Highlands and fifth in Scotland⁸. In more recent years, the visitors' centre has experienced a dip, followed by a rebound in tourist numbers corresponding with the COVID-19 pandemic. Indeed, in 2022, the centre recorded a 30% increase in footfall in comparison with the year before (rising from 292,981 to 381,386 visitors). The 2022 figures placed the Glenfinnan Monument 11th nationally among visitor attractions and second after Stirling Castle among attractions outside Glasgow and Edinburgh⁹. In seasonal terms, peak visitor figures are observed in July and August. In August 2019, over 85,000 visitors visited the NTS centre averaging 2,742 visitors a day (see Figure 2).

⁸ Visit Scotland (2020). 'Insight Department: Highland Factsheet 2019'. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/research-insights/regions/highlands>

⁹ Association of Leading Visitor Attractions (ALVA) (2023)

Figure 2. NTS Glenfinnan visitor centre monthly total visitor numbers, 2019-2022



Source: National Trust for Scotland (2022)

The Glenfinnan Monument itself can be accessed at a rate of six people an hour and at a cost of £5. Access is only possible for an hour in the morning and an hour in the afternoon due to staffing and practical limitations, though it is possible to pre-book. Access to the visitor centre is otherwise free. The visitor centre is designed to accommodate between 60,000 and 100,000 visitors a year and the current rate of use therefore significantly exceeds its intended capacity, and a new centre is planned.

3.3.2 Other attractions

Additional attractions in the village include the Glenfinnan Station Museum and St Mary and St Finnan church (open daily). The Station Museum is open from April to October and has a gift shop and tearoom. In addition, boat trips of between two and six hours are operated on Loch Shiel by Loch Shiel Cruises. The cruises predominantly take place between April and October and occur mostly from Tuesday to Friday. The area also boasts some attractive active travel offerings. The Cape Wrath Trail has become an increasing draw for long-distance walkers, with the 230-mile trail passing through Glenfinnan¹⁰ and drawing in some hikers to spend the night in the village.

Accommodation in Glenfinnan takes a variety of forms, including self-catering cabins, houses, pods and hotels, which are generally only open during the tourist season. The Prince's House Hotel and Glenfinnan House Hotel also provide dining options, but this too is only available during the tourist season.

There are no public toilets in Glenfinnan. The NTS Visitor Centre toilets are intended to be for the exclusive use of their visitors, though access to the facilities is also open to others when the centre is open. The following map shows the location of Glenfinnan's main visitor attractions.

¹⁰ Walk Highlands (2023). 'The Cape Wrath Trail'. Available at: <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/cape-wrath-trail.shtml>

Figure 3. Map of Glenfinnan



Source: Google Maps

3.4 Policy context

This section contains a review of relevant national and regional policies and plans.

3.4.1 National policy

In aiming to encourage visitors to Glenfinnan to access the village using alternatives to private cars, the development of a Glenfinnan Travel Management Plan aligns with national objectives to reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions and reduce inequalities through access to sustainable transport options for tourism and local communities.

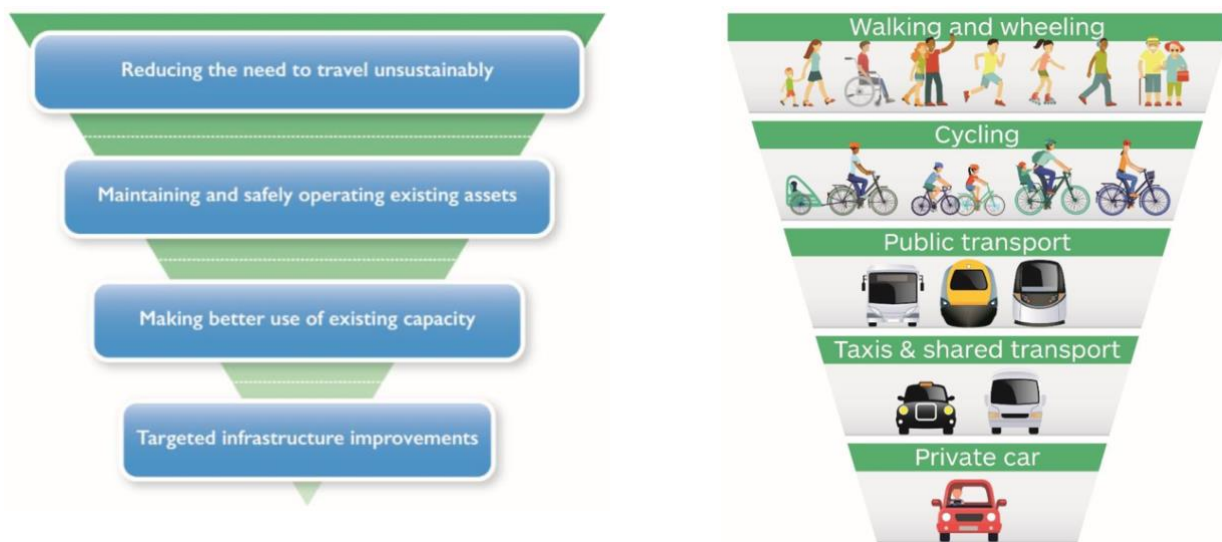
Scotland's 2018-2032 Climate Change Plan¹¹ commits to reducing GHG emissions by 75% by 2030 with respect to 1990 levels, and to contributing to net zero emissions by 2045. Relevant goals in place to achieve these overarching objectives include reducing car kilometres by 20% and helping to ensure that sustainable transport will be an instinctive first choice by 2032. The plan states that by 2032 travel

¹¹ Scottish Government (2020). 'Update to the Climate Change Plan 2018-2032'. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/securing-green-recovery-path-net-zero-update-climate-change-plan-20182032/>

should have moved from instinctively using private cars to a society which embraces more walking, wheeling, cycling, public transport and shared transport options.

The National Transport Strategy 2020-2040 (NTS2)¹² contains a series of findings related to tourism and relevant to the rural context, including that tourists from within the UK, including other parts of Scotland, mainly travel by road, and that Scotland's rural communities are witnessing deteriorating road networks, particularly at natural and cultural attractions as levels of tourism increase. It also states that transport options that focus on reducing inequalities and supporting sustainable travel should be prioritised, emphasising the role of active travel and aiming to encourage tourists and others to travel by sustainable means. The National Transport Strategy highlights the importance of managing transport demand and embedding behaviour change and clearly states that the Scottish Government will not build infrastructure to cater to unconstrained increases in traffic volumes. The NTS2 includes both a sustainable investment and a sustainable travel hierarchy, as shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. National Transport Strategy Sustainable Investment and Sustainable Travel Hierarchies



Source: National Transport Strategy 2020-2040 (NTS2)

Transport Scotland's Sustainable Transport Projects Review 2 (STRP2)¹³ recommends building on existing programmes to deliver local, regional and national initiatives that raise awareness of sustainable transport options and support people in making the most appropriate choices for their journeys. Its recommendations focus on improving active travel infrastructure, influencing travel choices and behaviour, enhancing access to affordable public transport, decarbonising transport, increasing safety and resilience, and strengthening connections.

The importance of sustainable travel and transport options is also emphasised in the Scottish Government's Fourth National Planning Framework¹⁴, where it is highlighted that the need to travel unsustainably should be reduced, transport systems should be decarbonised, and active travel should be promoted. This framework includes transport as a significant challenge in Scotland's north and west coast area, considers the upgrading and provision of additional active travel infrastructure to be

¹² Transport Scotland (2020). 'National Transport Strategy 2'. Available at <https://www.transport.gov.scot/publication/national-transport-strategy-2/>.

¹³ Transport Scotland (2022). 'STRP2 Final Summary Report'. Available at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/media/52681/final-summary-report-28-december-2022-stpr2.pdf>

¹⁴ Scottish Government (2021). 'Scotland 2045 Fourth National Planning Framework'. Available at: <https://www.gov.scot/publications/scotland-2045-fourth-national-planning-framework-draft/>

fundamental to the development of a sustainable travel network, and recognises that extending the availability of transport services may be required to support local communities and visitors.

Key documents outline the role of the tourism sector in achieving sustainability goals. The Scottish Tourism Alliance's report Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future¹⁵ states that Scotland's tourism sector will make a full contribution to the country becoming a net-zero society by 2045. To achieve this, visitors should be supported in accessing user-friendly sustainable transport options, routes and itineraries, a goal which will require improved collaboration between Scotland's destinations, and enhanced planning and coordination between the tourism sector and transport operators.

Visit Scotland's Visitor Management Strategy for Scotland¹⁶ aims to develop a Scotland-wide strategic and coordinated approach to visitor management which aligns to its goals for responsible and sustainable tourism. This is to be achieved through a range of strategies which include informing and educating visitors, investing in Scotland's current and future visitor management infrastructure and services and trialling low-cost, low carbon and integrated transport solutions at key locations to reduce traffic management, parking issues and carbon emissions.

3.4.2 Regional plans and strategies

The Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership's (HITRANS) Regional Transport Strategy¹⁷ includes the high-level objectives of supporting sustainable economic growth and reducing barriers to participation in employment, learning, social, leisure, health and cultural activities. Specific travel objectives include improving the quality, accessibility, availability and integration of travel, whilst improving safety and tackling capacity constraints. By delivering these objectives it aims to protect the environment and mitigate adverse impacts of transport and travel, while improving health and wellbeing.

The HITRANS strategy aims to develop sustainable access to popular tourist sites in the region collaboratively with other stakeholders. It identifies seven main areas of work for the tourism sector, of which five are of particular relevance to Glenfinnan: meeting visitor expectations, promotion of transport routes as attractions, integration of timetables, providing sufficient capacity and catering for growing market, such as those travelling in motorhomes and cycle-based tourism. Boosting the role of buses, rail, ferries, community transport and active travel to provide access for tourism is recognised as important for enhancing the region's economy, as is managing growing demands on the travel system in pressure points in the Highlands.

Of additional relevance is the Highland Council's Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan¹⁸, which has objectives for tourism infrastructure projects of alleviating existing or anticipated visitor pressures and delivering an enhanced visitor experience. According to the plan, any tourism infrastructure project should be carbon conscious, and project proposals should support non-car-based travel options wherever possible. Infrastructure developments should be strategic, recognise the physical, social and environmental carrying capacity of tourism sites and ensure these constraints are respected, while becoming part of the landscape.

¹⁵ Scottish Tourism Alliance (2020). 'Scotland Outlook 2030: Responsible Tourism for a Sustainable Future'. Available at: <https://scottishtourismalliance.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Scotland-Outlook-2030.pdf>

¹⁶ Visit Scotland (2021). 'Visitor Management Strategy for Scotland'. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/aboutus/what-we-do/working-in-partnership/visitor-management-plan>

¹⁷ Hitrans (2017). 'HITRANS Draft Updated Regional Transport Strategy May 2017'. Available at: https://hitrans.org.uk/Strategy/Regional_Transport_Strategy

¹⁸ The Highland Council (2022). 'Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan for Highland'. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14389/strategic_tourism_infrastructure_development_plan_for_highland

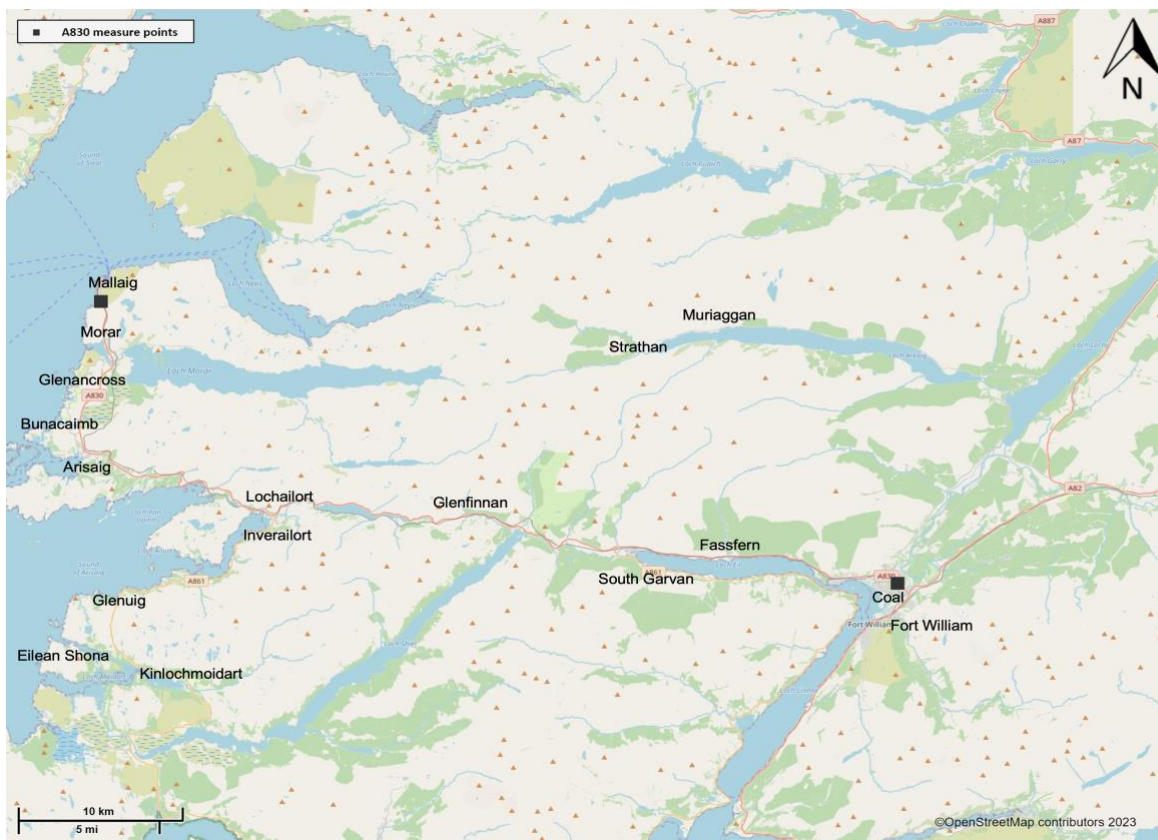
Finally, the Highland Council's West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan¹⁹ has a vision to improve connectivity and transport in the region. It supports more transport mode options and easier interchange between different transport modes, and any developments should be easily accessible.

3.5 Transport context

3.5.1 Roads

Glenfinnan's location places it on a major tourism corridor, 'the Road to the Isles'. A busy trunk road, the A830 also experiences high volumes of resident and commercial traffic. Approximately 26 miles to the west, Mallaig is a strategically important ferry terminal with regular services to the isles of Skye, Rum, South Uist, Eigg, Canna and Muck. Sixteen miles to the east, Fort William is a regional centre and popular tourist destination.

Figure 5. Glenfinnan's location on the Road to the Isles



i The black squares at Mallaig (the Mallaig bypass) and Blarmor, near Caol illustrate the location of the Transport Scotland traffic count sites used as sources for this report.

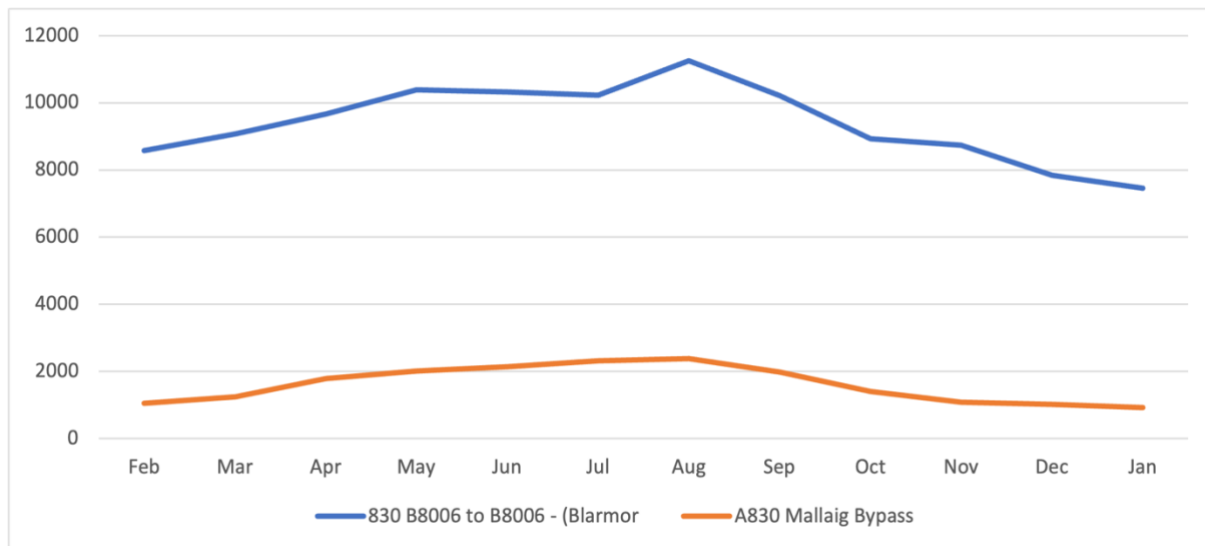
Road traffic volumes on the A830 are found to peak in August, with higher levels evident between April and September (see Figure 6).

Vehicle volumes are significantly higher at the point to the east of Glenfinnan. It should be noted that the two traffic count sites closest to Glenfinnan are located at Blarmor and the Mallaig Bypass (see Figure 5)

¹⁹ The Highland Council (2019). 'West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan'. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/21199/westplan_adopted_september_2019

therefore limiting the accuracy of the data with regard to the stretch of the A830 running through Glenfinnan.

Figure 6. Average traffic volume (number of vehicles per month, both directions), 2022-2023



Source: Transport Scotland (2022). 'Land use and transport integration in Scotland (LATIS) data'

Heavy goods vehicle (HGV) traffic on the A830 is generated by industries including fish farming and forestry. On average, 7% of traffic that passed the Blarmor point in the above-analysed 2022-23 period was comprised of HGVs, while around 13.5% of traffic measured on the Mallaig bypass fell into this category.

Glenfinnan experiences steady flows of HGV traffic. Examples include the haulage firm Ferguson Transport, who average 11.6 return trips through Glenfinnan every day of the week, with higher frequencies between May and September, coinciding with the steam train season²⁰. Additionally, Forestry and Land Scotland transport about 20,000 tonnes of timber through Glenfinnan a year, amounting to over 700 loads²¹. The seafood company, MOWI, also generates a considerable volume of traffic along the A830 due to its fish farming operations in the area, including on Loch Shiel. Peak flows occur on the quarterly bases when, for four weeks at a time, between five and 16 lorries a day transport fish along the road. In addition, the company's operations lead to a steady flow of other vehicles delivering goods such as feed and oxygen²².

3.5.2 Public transport

Rail

Glenfinnan station is on the single-track West Highland Rail Line. At the time of writing, ScotRail runs four daily train services through Glenfinnan in each direction between Monday and Saturday (three on Sundays) (see Table 1 and Table 2). Passenger numbers for Glenfinnan Station varied considerably in the years between 2019 and 2022, with a peak of 13,864 passengers in 2019. Passenger numbers dropped

²⁰ Ferguson Transport and Shipping (2023)

²¹ Forestry and Land Scotland (2023)

²² MOWI Scotland Ltd (2023)

significantly during the COVID-19 pandemic, to under 2,000 in 2020-21 but have been on an upward trajectory since then, with about 8,000 recorded in 2021-22²³.

West Coast Railways run the Jacobite steam train service between Fort William and Mallaig from April to October. There is one daily return during the months of April and October, while between May and September two daily return services are run. The train runs seven days a week. Standard return fares from Fort William to Mallaig as of March 2023 are £57²⁴. Demand for the steam train is high, according to West Coast Railways, with services usually being fully booked and an average of around 750 passengers per day.

Bus

Shiel Buses run services through Glenfinnan connecting Fort William and Mallaig. Four daily services run in each direction from Monday to Friday, while there are two services on Saturdays and none on Sundays. Buses stop at two designated points in Glenfinnan, outside the Prince's House Hotel (near the Station Road entrance for travel to Fort William and opposite Station end for travel to Mallaig), and at the Slatach Road End (for travel to Mallaig, while for travel to Fort William the stop is at the entrance to the Glenfinnan Estate Road)²⁵.

Coach tours

A large number of coach companies run tours which take in Glenfinnan. These include Discover Scotland Tours, Edinburgh Coach Lines, Highland Explorer Tours, Lochs and Glens, Maynes Coaches, Radical Travel, Shiel Buses, Timberbush Tours, Hairy Coo Tours and Rabbie's Tours.

Interviews and surveys conducted with tour operators, and a review of the Get Your Guide website reveal that most tours are between one and four days in length²⁶. Stops in Glenfinnan often last between one hour and an hour and a half. They are timed to coincide with the steam train crossing the viaduct and are intended to give passengers just enough time to see the train, while not occupying too much time in what are often tight itineraries. The number of services provided by coach companies consulted varied between two a week and over ten, and most send both full size coaches, in addition to medium-sized coaches and/or minibuses. Tours generally depart from the central belt, often Edinburgh.

3.5.3 Parking

For many years, the largest car parking facilities in Glenfinnan were provided by the NTS. The car park adjoining the visitor centre has 60 spaces for cars and three coach bays. In addition to cars and buses, the parking is offered to motorhomes. At the time of writing, charges were £3.50 per car and £6 per motorhome, per day.

In 2020, a community-owned car park was built, funded by the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) and LEADER, and project managed by the Highland Council²⁷, with the aim of responding to the need for more visitor parking in Glenfinnan. The car park is managed by the Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO), Glenfinnan Community Facilities. The car park is built on land leased from Glenfinnan Estate and is directly adjacent to the NTS car park. It has space for 110 vehicles, including ten

²³ It should be noted that these passenger figures are based on sales of tickets to Glenfinnan and do not consider passengers using Interrail passes or highland or Scotland Rover tickets, or passengers who may choose to alight in Glenfinnan for a visit on route to another destination.

²⁴ westcoastrailways.co.uk (2023). 'The Jacobite'. Accessed on 27 March 2023 at <https://westcoastrailways.co.uk/jacobite/steam-train-trip>

²⁵ AECOM (2021) 'Fort William to Glenfinnan Walking and Cycling Routes'

²⁶ getyourguide.co.uk (2023). 'Glenfinnan'. Accessed on 15 March 2023 at https://www.getyourguide.co.uk/glenfinnan-1160590?p=1&sort=popularity&order&searchContext=TRIP_ITEM_WEB&activity_type=other-dayTrip-multiDayTrip

²⁷ Car park construction and Highland Council project management cost a total of £ 384,832. Of this total, the RTIF provided £280,725 and LEADER provided £104,106.

motorhomes, but does not admit coaches or minibuses. Parking fees are £3.50 for cars and £6 for motorhomes for a full day and are collected using parking meters, which were installed in May 2021 and accept either cards or cash. Official opening hours for the car park are from 7am to 10pm and overnight parking is not permitted.

The car park had a turnover of around £180,000 in 2022, of which between £60,000 and £70,000 was spent on general running costs²⁸. The income funds the wages of three 'Glenfinnan Ambassadors' who work in the car park between the end of March and the end of October. Their role includes welcoming visitors and providing parking assistance and information on local attractions, in addition to the daily cleaning and maintenance of the car park. The ambassadors are not charged with enforcing the payment of parking fees. Revenue has also been used for maintenance and improvements, including the construction of a picnic area and new pathways²⁹

Besides the two main parking sites described above, smaller facilities are found at other points in Glenfinnan. The Station Museum has a small car park which can accommodate around ten to 12 vehicles. The Church of St Mary and St Finnan also has a small private parking area located directly off the A830 with space for around six vehicles, while the Prince's House Hotel offers parking for clients. There is also a small informal car park located a short distance along a logging road which joins the A830 approximately two miles to the east of Glenfinnan, which is accessed via a bridge across the Callop River. However, access to Glenfinnan from this site involves a walk along the busy A830, which does not have an adjoining pedestrian path.

3.5.4 Active travel

Active travel infrastructure in and around Glenfinnan includes several routes. A path and pedestrian bridge linking the community car park and the viaduct was completed in March 2021 to provide a safe route for pedestrians wishing to walk from the new car park to the main viewpoint overlooking the viaduct³⁰. The path connects with a riverside walk path built by Glenfinnan Estate and the Viaduct Trail, which was funded by the Station Museum. The viaduct trail provides a route to the Station Museum via a 1.4km hillside footpath, which provides the option of a circular route that allows walkers to return to either the NTS or community car parks via the pavement along the A830 (see Figure 7). The trail was built in 2012 but has undergone a significant upgrade in recent years.

The Callop bridge and boardwalk, which forms part of a Highland Council core path and boardwalk, runs past the Glenfinnan Monument passing eastwards along the Callop River, providing the only off-road foot and cycle path between Glenfinnan and the east side of Loch Shiel and connecting to the Cape Wrath trail (see Figure 7). The path is managed by Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) and has been closed since 2021 when structural flaws were found in the footbridge. Reopening the bridge is dependent on funds which so far have not been made available.

There are limited safe cycling routes in the area, with the A830 being a busy trunk road that is not likely to be suitable for many cyclists. The idea of extending the National Cycle Network to incorporate a 'Route to The Isles' has been considered and a recent feasibility study by AECOM has explored various options for a walking and cycling route between Fort William and Glenfinnan³¹. Three potential routes have been proposed, predominantly made up of a roadside shared user path with options to the north

²⁸ Costs include staff wages, insurance and the maintenance of ticket machines. Annual rent for the land on which the car park is built amounts to £100 per year.

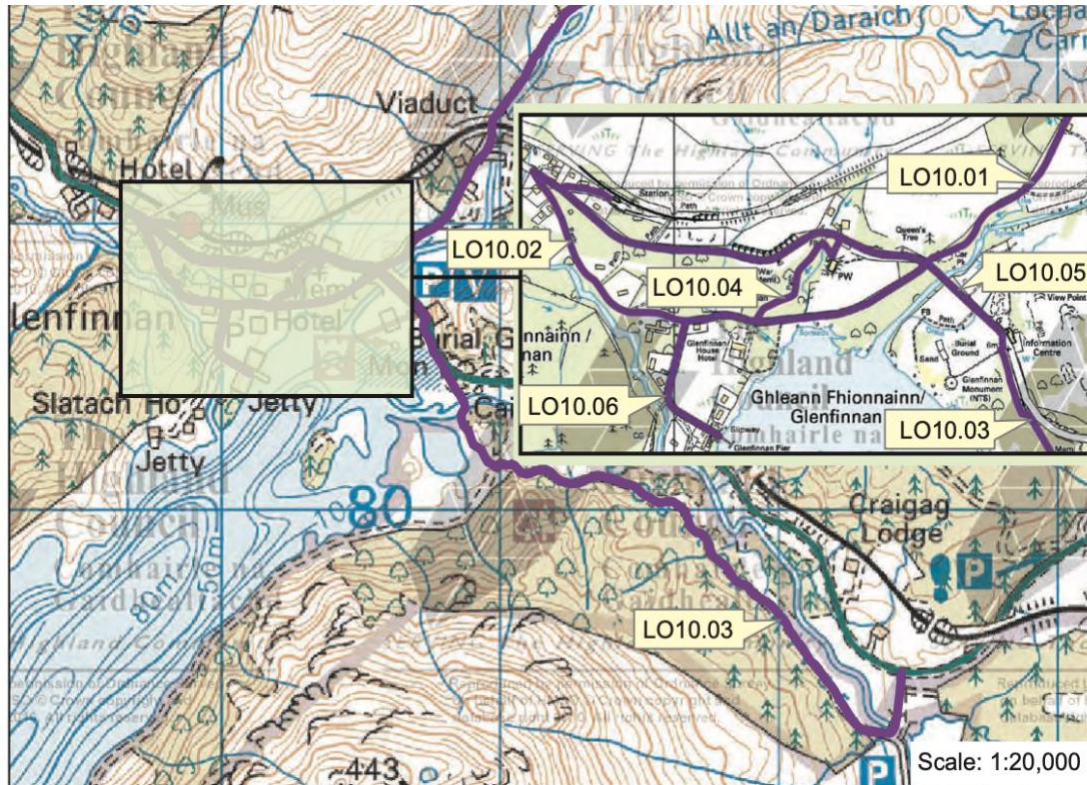
²⁹ £50,000 was spent on general maintenance and improvements over 2021 and 2022.

³⁰ Funding for the footbridge was provided by the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund, Highland Council Discretionary Fund and fundraising efforts by Glenfinnan Facilities SCIO to cover the total cost of £83,080.

³¹ AECOM (2021) 'Fort William to Glenfinnan Walking and Cycling Routes'.

and south of the A830. It is not known whether these proposals have been taken forward, with AECOM suggesting that they would not be constructed until at least 2024 if they are funded. Active travel infrastructure is explored further in Section 3.4 on problems and constraints.

Figure 7. Core paths in the Glenfinnan area.



Path No.	Path Name/Route	Path Type	Length (kms)
LO10.01	Glenfinnan Estate Road	track (tar)	4.1
LO10.02	Village Access Track	stone track	1.3
LO10.03	Car park to Callop	boardwalk/forest track	2.8
LO10.04	St Mary's Church to Glenfinnan House Hotel	track	0.3
LO10.05	Pavement on A830	tarred pavement	1.1
LO10.06	Road to pier	tarred road	0.3

Source: Highland Council.

3.5.5 Public communications

A number of organisations providing tourist information have dedicated Glenfinnan webpages. Visit Scotland's Glenfinnan page provides links to 'Things to do near Glenfinnan', accommodation and the Jacobite steam train service but does not provide travel advice or information on public transport options³². The Visit Fort William website's 'Welcome to Glenfinnan' page meanwhile, features references to the viaduct and steam train, in addition to the Glenfinnan Monument, but practical information is limited to providing links to accommodation sources³³.

³² VisitScotland.com (2023). 'Glenfinnan'. Accessed on 27 March 2023 at <https://www.visitscotland.com/info/towns-villages/glenfinnan-p236571>

³³ Visitfortwilliam.co.uk (2023). 'Welcome to Glenfinnan'. Accessed on 27 March 2023 at <https://visitfortwilliam.co.uk/pages/welcome-to-glenfinnan-cbe418e9>

The National Trust webpage on 'Planning your visit' to the Glenfinnan Monument provides more information. This includes links to Google Maps to assist in planning trips by car, public transport, cycling and walking, in addition to references to local bus and train services, and the 'short walk' between the railway station and the visitor centre. It also includes advice on allowing adequate time to park if planning a trip to watch the steam train, as the car park is closed when full³⁴. The Forestry and Land Scotland web page for Glenfinnan also has travel information, including on public transport (bus services from Fort William) and parking (at the NTS Visitor Centre), along with suggestions for active travel activities³⁵.

3.6 Problems, impacts and constraints

In the sections above, some key factors feeding into Glenfinnan's traffic management challenges have been described; a significant growth in visitor numbers, limited parking capacity and heavy traffic along the trunk road passing through the village all play contributing roles. In this section, specific problems are identified, in addition to the impacts that they have on the Glenfinnan's community, environment and visitor experience. Key constraints that may arise in addressing these problems are also highlighted, along with previous and proposed solutions that have been documented in the course of the research.

3.6.1 Parking

Demand versus capacity

In 2019, Glenfinnan's traffic problems had reached something of a peak. Residents report experiencing severe disruption to their everyday lives during the steam train season, particularly at peak holiday times. The disruption resulting from irresponsible parking practices and high volumes of traffic, which was added to by motorists searching for scarce parking places, included blocked access to and exit from residences and places of work, significant time added to otherwise relatively short journeys and, at times, conflicts with visitors.

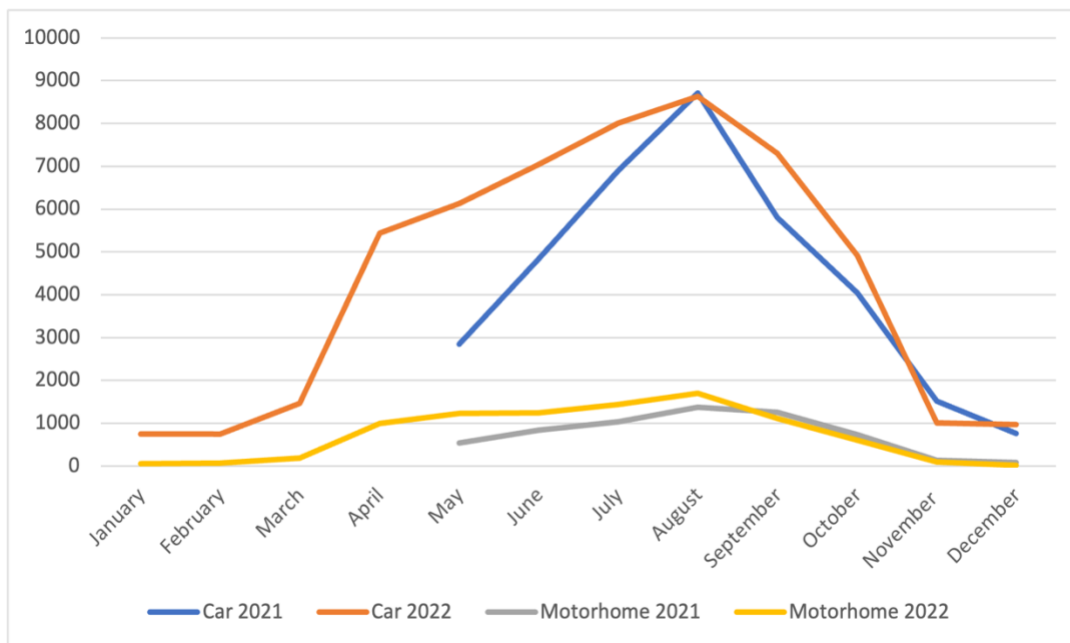
Since the building of the community car park in 2020, sources report that the situation has been significantly improved during much of the year. This said, car park capacity is still exceeded during peak times, most notably in July and August, when there are still considered to be unacceptable levels of problem parking and congestion, according to numerous sources. Indeed, during busy times, the car parks are reported to often be full by mid-morning, as drivers have arrived early to secure themselves a space, leading to lines of cars parked alongside the road.

The following graph illustrates the fluctuation in demand for parking spaces in the community car park over the course of a year. Use of the car park peaks in August, with over 8,500 cars parked during this month in 2021 and 2022. Use by motorhomes also peaks in August, with an average of just over 1,500 parked in August 2021 and 2022. This works out as an average of 329 vehicles a day, of which on average 50 are motorhomes (see Figure 8).

³⁴ nts.org.uk (2023). 'Glenfinnan Monument: Planning your Visit'. Accessed on 27 March 2023 at <https://www.nts.org.uk/visit/places/glenfinnan-monument/planning-your-visit>

³⁵ forestryandland.gov.scot (2023). 'Glenfinnan'. Accessed on 27 March 2023 at <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/glenfinnan>

Figure 8. Numbers of vehicles paying for parking in community car park, 2021-2022



Source: Glenfinnan Facilities SCIO (2023)

A survey conducted by Glenfinnan Community Facilities in July 2018 provides some insight into the extent to which parking demand may still exceed capacity at times. The survey counted vehicles searching for parking spaces in the NTS car park between 10:30am and 12:30pm on the 10th of the month, recording 245 cars and 27 motorhomes in this time, when only 83 official parking places were available in Glenfinnan. Since then, the community car park has added significantly to capacity, though vehicle volumes recorded in the survey would still appear to outstrip the additional 110 spaces by a considerable margin.

The recent impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on visitor numbers should also be noted. As seen in Section 3.2, visitor numbers to the NTS visitor centre, which provide something of a proxy for numbers of visitors arriving to see the steam train, dropped considerably in 2020 from a 2019 peak. Though recovering strongly in 2021 and 2022, recorded visitor levels have yet to reach the same levels. If they do, yet more severe problems may be experienced at peak visitation times.

Coaches

Currently, the only official parking facilities for coaches are found at the NTS Visitor Centre, where there are three coach bays, while the community car park does not admit coaches. A significant proportion of visitors to Glenfinnan arrive by coach. The NTS estimates that 40% of visitors to its centre arrive by this means. Data for 2019 and 2022 shows that July is the peak month for coach demand in the NTS car park (see Figure 9). In 2018, numbers peaked at over 700 over the course of the month, giving an average of more than 22 coaches per day. Levels in 2022 were slightly lower at over 600 coaches over the month, 20 per day. There are three coach bays in the NTS car park and none in the community car park.

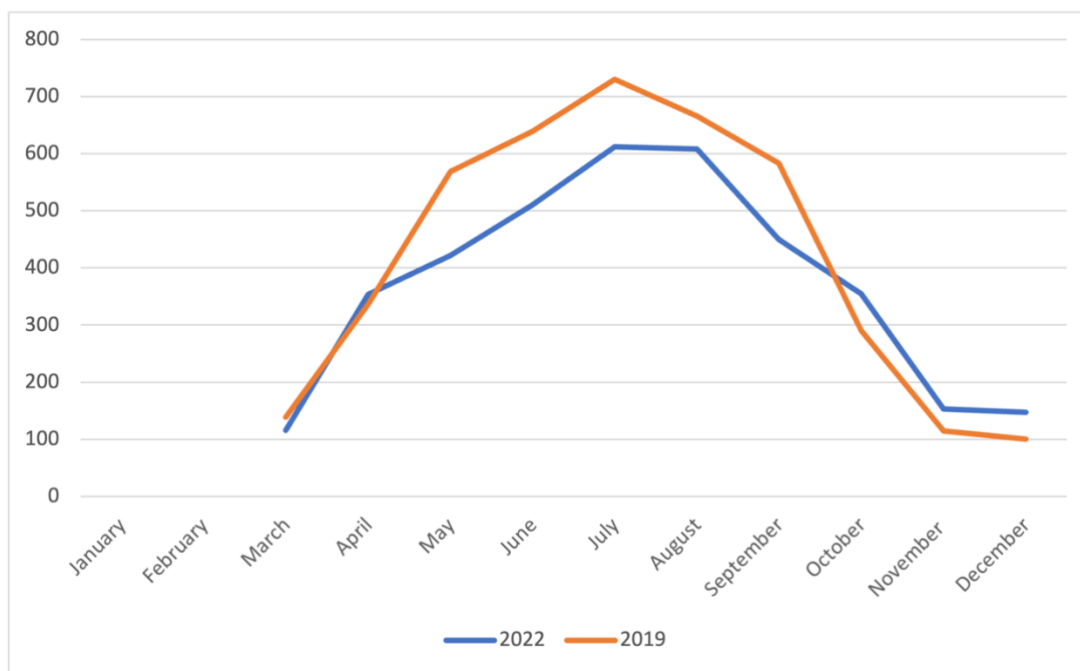
Coach operators consider there to be a lack of provision for coach parking in Glenfinnan, based on interviews and surveys conducted with operators and other informed sources. Comparisons were made with other national visitor attractions, such as Urquhart Castle and Eileen Donan Castle, which were considered to have significantly more space allocated for coaches.

In order to respond to the high demand, the NTS allows as many buses as possible to fit into their designated coach parking area. The parking is organised by the drivers themselves and can result in as many as 12 vehicles at a time (including coaches, medium-sized coaches and minibuses) occupying the area. The lack of space and chaotic conditions in the coach area at times can reportedly lead to unsafe practices and inconvenience for other car park users.

The NTS does not traditionally charge for coaches to use their car parks, though this position is apparently subject to annual review. It was indicated by one source that, at the current time, it would be difficult to justify charging coaches, given the inadequacy of the parking conditions. Likewise, the option of prebooking would be ruled out under current circumstances, given the small number of available bays.

The car park being full can result in coaches slowing and stopping on the A830 as their drivers assess the situation. At times, passengers are even dropped on the roadside. This situation is exacerbated by a shortage of turning points for coaches on the road. Reportedly there are no places to turn for several miles along the stretch of the A830 in question.

Figure 9. Number of coaches using NTS Glenfinnan Visitor Centre car park by month, 2019 and 2022



Source: National Trust for Scotland (2023)

One solution to the above-described coach parking issues proposed by the NTS is the building of a new parking facility in the Callop area on the edge of Glenfinnan, located approximately two miles to the southeast of the Glenfinnan Monument and Visitor Centre following the Callop River. The proposed site is located at a point where a logging road meets the A830. However, there has been some opposition locally to the use of the site and the building of yet more parking facilities. Furthermore, the site is in an area that will reportedly be protected under the planned Glenfinnan Biodiversity Enhancement Project, which forms part of Network Rail's sustainability strategy.

3.6.2 Road safety and congestion

According to local sources, hazardous vehicle behaviour on the trunk road is commonplace, particularly during busier periods. The flow of traffic is frequently slowed or stopped by drivers dropping off

pedestrians in response to full car parks. Meanwhile, some minor roads, such as Slatlach Road, are frequently used for turning vehicles around or dropping visitors off. Some coaches and minibus operators are also known to drop off passengers on the trunk road, which causes a safety risk³⁶.

Figure 10. Example of driver dropping off pedestrians on Slatlach Road



Source: Glenfinnan Community Council

Tourists are also often observed standing on the Slatlach Bridge to view the steam train and consequently blocking the road and causing a hazard to drivers (Figure 11).

BEAR Scotland are scheduled to carry out maintenance work on a number of bridges in the area, including the Slatlach Bridge, with plans to increase the height of the parapets to 1.5m, which should limit visibility considerably and may deter many from trying to see over the top.

³⁶ The Highland Council (2022). 'Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan for Highland'. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14389/strategic_tourism_infrastructure_development_plan_for_highland

Figure 11. Pedestrians Crowding on the A830 Slatach Bridge



Source: Glenfinnan Community Council

In addition to safety issues, widespread congestion issues cause disruption to everyday life. Residents and local businesses report disruption, with delays and short journeys taking many times longer than they should, including on minor roads.

It has been suggested by multiple sources that improved signage, which is easier to read and more suited to the international visitor market, would help to reduce driver uncertainty and the need to change course and slow down. Related to this, it has been indicated that a combination of widespread reliance on satnav among drivers completely unfamiliar with the area, and inaccurate locations provided by the technology (the point indicated on the map often causes drivers to overshoot the car parks) leads to increased traffic and an increased likelihood of dangerous manoeuvres.

Figure 12. Examples of problem parking and congestion on the A830 junction with Station Road



Source: WHCRP

The following photographs taken at points on the A830 in Glenfinnan provide examples of improper and irresponsible parking practices, illustrating the potential for parked vehicles to create hazards for pedestrians and other road users (see **Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 13. Examples of problem parking along the A830 through Glenfinnan



Source: WHCRP and Glenfinnan Community Council

3.6.3 Traffic management measures

Community efforts have resulted in the two key traffic management measures in recent years. In 2020, a 40mph speed limit was introduced along the A830 as it passes through Glenfinnan, marking a reduction from the national speed limit, which had been in place previously.

Secondly, a series of temporary clearway orders were put in place for 6.4km of the A830 through Glenfinnan, covering the periods from 30 April 2021 to 31 October 2021, and 2 June 2022 to 10 December 2022^{37,38}. A further temporary order will be put in place between 3 April 2023 and 3 October 2024³⁹, while a permanent order, which can take up to 12 months to process, is also planned.

Despite high expectations, the clearway orders have failed to adequately reduce the incidence of problem parking on the A830 through Glenfinnan, according to multiple sources. Enforcement of the order is considered to be lacking, while signage signalling that restrictions are in place is minimal to non-existent. With the exception of six stretches of the region's 11 A-roads (which fall under the Highland council's control as part of decriminalised parking regulation measures) the enforcement of parking

³⁷ legislation.co.uk (2021). 'The A830 Trunk Road (Glenfinnan) (Temporary Clearway) Order 2021'. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2021/194/made>

³⁸ legislation.co.uk (2022). 'The A830 Trunk Road (Glenfinnan) (Temporary Clearway) Order 2022'. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2022/189/contents/made>

³⁹ transport.gov.scot (2023). 'The A830 Trunk Road (Glenfinnan) (Temporary Clearway) Order 2023'. Available at: <https://www.transport.gov.scot/road-order/the-a830-trunk-road-glenfinnan-temporary-clearway-order-2023/>

regulations on trunk roads is the responsibility of Police Scotland^{40,41}. Adding additional signage would appear to be an option and it has been indicated that signage was limited in order to avoid excessive verge side clutter.

Parking regulation enforcement on Glenfinnan's minor roads, such as Slatach Road, is controlled by the Highland Council. Problem parking on these routes is also a serious issue. At the time of writing, double yellow lines are not in place anywhere in Glenfinnan, though their use on minor roads in the village would seem to be an option. In their absence, residents have resorted to measures such as traffic cones and posts (see Figure 10) and putting up temporary signs.

In spring 2023, a pedestrian crossing will be added near the NTS Visitor Centre, and the adjacent pavements will be widened.

3.6.4 Public transport

The focus of Systra's recent study on 'Fort William Opportunities around Rail' was to assess the feasibility of operating additional railed services in the Fort William area. The study identified a number of options for increasing services (up to three extra ones per day), including the possibility of services that would arrive at Glenfinnan at 09.24 and 12.03⁴².

There are several factors which potentially limit scope for additional services. Securing funding for new services is one of the most significant. Also, the West Highland Line has a single-track with a small number of passing loops, therefore limiting the capacity. Nevertheless, one of the passing loops that do exist is at Glenfinnan Station. The station also has an active goods siding with a head shunt. This siding sees occasional use by permanent way vehicles and private land cruise trains. Train crew availability, timetable planning rules and available rolling stock also currently place limitations on increasing capacity on the line⁴³.

The following tables show the timings of the public buses and service trains in Glenfinnan at the time of writing in relation to the timings of the Jacobite steam train crossing the viaduct (see Table 1 and Table 2). Bus and train services pass through the village at fairly regular intervals during the day, but their timing requires that visitors wishing to see the steam train and arriving by public transport will likely have to spend a few hours in the village.

⁴⁰ 'Policy Note: The Road Traffic (Permitter Parking Area and Special Parking Area) (Highland Council) Designation Order 2016. SSI 2016/245'.

⁴¹ legislation.gov.uk (2023). 'The Road Traffic (Permitted Parking Area and Special Parking Area) (Highland Council) Designation Order 2016'. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ssi/2016/245/schedule/1/made>

⁴² Systra (2021) 'Fort William Opportunities around Rail'

⁴³ Systra (2021) 'Fort William Opportunities around Rail'

Table 1. Current timings of public transport and the Jacobite Steam Train through Glenfinnan (west bound)

West bound	Mon - Fri	Saturdays	Sundays
Service train	9.05	9.05	
Bus	10.30		
Jacobite steam train, Apr – Oct (approx.)	10.58*	10.58	10.58
Service train	12.46	12.46	12.46
Jacobite steam train, May – Sept (approx.)	13.25*	13.25	13.25
Bus	13.55	13.55	
Bus (school days to Treslaig)	15:50/52		
Bus	16.10	16:00	
Service train	16.55	16.55	16.55
Bus	18.10		
Service train	22.47	22.46	22.47

Source: Ansons Consulting

*Times indicate when the steam train arrives at Glenfinnan station. The train reportedly crosses the viaduct approximately ten minutes before its arrival at the station.

Table 2. Current timings of public transport and the Jacobite Steam Train through Glenfinnan (east bound)

East bound	Mon - Fri	Saturdays	Sundays
Service train	6.55	6.55	
Bus	8.05		
Bus (school days)	8:20		
Bus	9.55	9.55	
Service train	11.01	11.01	10.59
Bus	12.55	12.55	
Jacobite steam train, Apr – Oct (approx.)	15.00	15.00	15.00
Bus	16.40		
Service train	16.54	16.54	16.54
Jacobite steam train, May – Sept (approx.)	17.45	TBC	17.45
Service train	19.04	19.04	19.04

Source: Ansons Consulting

*Times indicate when the steam train arrives at Glenfinnan station.

The Lochaber Bus Partnership Fund has explored the possibility of a park and ride from Fort William to Glenfinnan, but the idea has met with several constraints, including timetabling, vehicle and driver capacity, and funding. The low availability of land for parking facilities in Fort William is also an issue.

3.6.5 Public Communications

As described in Section 3.2, the provision of travel information is lacking on some relevant websites. The provision of travel advice on how to get to Glenfinnan is not currently managed in a coordinated way and there is no ownership of the public communications sphere, as required to mount effective communication activities.

There is anecdotal evidence of a strong dependence on social media and blogs for obtaining information about visiting Glenfinnan, increasing the potential for visitors to rely on misleading or inaccurate information when planning their trips, and representatives of the Glenfinnan community have apparently directly contacted some sources to request that the amend or remove information of this type.

Tripadvisor lists the viaduct as one of its 'Essential Glenfinnan' activities and the attraction won a Tripadvisor Travellers Choice Award in 2022. In the website's 'About' section the only information given is that the suggested duration of visit is less than one hour⁴⁴.

The viaduct and steam train has also reportedly featured in past promotional material issued by Visit Scotland, leading to community members contacting the agency to request that it no longer be used, in an attempt to reduce the flow of visitors.

A lack of an official 'Visit Glenfinnan' website or social media presence contributes to an information vacuum and also presents an important opportunity for improving public communications to the benefit of the community. Importantly, the current owner of the Visit Glenfinnan URL is reportedly willing to give it over to the community for use.

In summary, the challenges with respect the marketing and communications aspect of the visitor experience are:

- inconsistent and uncoordinated information across multiple communication channels from multiple stakeholders;
- a lack of proactivity in ensuring visitors access the relevant information;
- no 'single source of truth' in relation to the visitor experience;
- a lack of definition about the travel options and behaviours visitors are encouraged to adopt (e.g. regarding arrival times and modes) and so it is left to visitors to decide; and
- a disconnected stakeholder environment with respect to communication with the public on visitor experience and a lack of focus for driving through activity.

3.6.6 Active travel

A need to improve and maintain active travel routes in Glenfinnan has been highlighted by several sources. As explained above, a light-controlled pedestrian crossing and widened pavement outside the NTS Visitor Centre are planned for spring 2023, reflecting the need to provide for the large numbers of pedestrians crossing at this point.

The FLS owned bridges and board walks connecting Glenfinnan with the Callop area to the southeast of Glenfinnan need repairs. The bridges in particular present a problem as they are currently closed, preventing people from crossing the river on foot. The cost to repair the boardwalk is very high, in part

⁴⁴ tripadvisor.co.uk (2023). 'Glenfinnan Viaduct'. Available at: https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g1029082-d2643233-Reviews-Glenfinnan_Viaduct-Glenfinnan_Lochaber_Scottish_Highlands_Scotland.html

as it is on the boundary of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), adding to the cost of deconstructing and replacing the existing structure, and a lack of funds is delaying repair. Some stretches of the Viaduct Trail are also in need of maintenance.

There is a lack of cycle route provision connecting Glenfinnan to other settlements and the majority of the paths in the village are not well suited to cycling⁴⁵. AECOM's Fort William to Glenfinnan Walking and Cycling Route feasibility study (2021) was commissioned by HITRANS in partnership with the West Highland Community Rail Partnership and Lochaber Environmental Group. It aimed to explore route options for a safe active travel path between Fort William and Glenfinnan as an alternative to the A830 Trunk Road to encourage everyday journeys by foot, bicycle and train. Three options for a future shared use path were proposed and political support was gathered. A proposed project plan suggests that design stages could continue until 2024, when construction could begin, but it is unclear how the projects may be funded.

3.6.7 Visitor experience

Parking difficulties are widely acknowledged by tourists, as reflected in negative comments on TripAdvisor and Google Map reviews. Frequent references are made to needing to arrive early to find a space and some comments refer to parking on the side of roads and / or dropping pedestrians at dangerous places.

Informed sources consider there to be a mismatch in expectations between what visitors anticipate before arriving and the reality that meets them. Visitors are required to walk through the busy parking area with reversing vehicles, creating a chaotic and potentially stressful experience. The tendency for many tourists to stay for only a short visit contributes to the limited visitor experience. Tour companies often only allocate short periods of time for the visit to Glenfinnan and consider that there is little demand for spending longer there.

The NTS Visitor Centre is intended for significantly smaller numbers of people and as explained in earlier sections, due to be replaced by a larger facility.

3.6.8 Availability of data

During the course of the research, the importance of having more robust data in a number of subject areas has become apparent. The following areas have been identified as priorities:

- Visitors: including data on trips origins and destinations, transport preferences, age, group size, travel and tourism information sources, duration of stay in Glenfinnan, mode of arrival and opinion of experience in Glenfinnan.
- Parking (in official car parks): including length of stay, time of arrival and departure, daily demand, number of day and times when car park capacity is exceeded, compliance with payment requirements and demand by vehicle type.
- Coaches: including daily and monthly totals (already produced for NTS car park), timing of arrival and departure, duration of stay, size and operator. Also, insight from operators and drivers on how Glenfinnan is incorporated in tours, whether or not there is a willingness to pay for parking and ways of improving access should be focuses of the survey.
- Traffic management: including number of instances, location and nature of problem parking.

⁴⁵ AECOM (2021) 'Fort William to Glenfinnan Walking and Cycling Routes'.

- Rail: including number of passengers alighting at and departing from Glenfinnan by service. Currently these figures are not available and may require the installing of technology (e.g. pedestrian counters) at Glenfinnan Station.
- Traffic flow: as explained above, the closest traffic counters are located a considerable distance away from Glenfinnan. Closer counters to the east and west of Glenfinnan would allow for more greater insight into visitor patterns.

The list of subject areas and points corresponding with each are not exhaustive. Additional details on actions around data collection are provided in Section 4.

3.7 SWOT analysis

The findings described in previous sections were subject to a SWOT analysis in order identify strengths, weakness, opportunities and threats relevant to the development of the Travel Management Plan. These are shown in the following table and were used to inform the plan detailed in Section 4.

SWOT	Implications
Strengths	
Coach tours	A significant proportion of visitors arrive by coach, which is an efficient way of bringing visitors to the site.
Community organisations	Glenfinnan boasts well-organised and capable community organisations that have a strong history of mobilising around traffic management challenges.
Community car park	The community car park has helped to alleviate traffic problems, provided a source of revenue for community initiatives and empowered the local community.
Active travel infrastructure	Walking paths connect a number of attractions in Glenfinnan, such as the viaduct, the monument and visitors centre and the Station Museum, providing alternative options for getting around the village and strengthening the visitor offer.
Visitor offer	Glenfinnan has stunning natural scenery, historical significance, and visitor attractions and activities (e.g. the Glenfinnan Monument, Loch Shiel Cruises, the Station Museum, hiking) providing a diverse visitor offer.
Parking and traffic measures	Measures including the clearway order, reduction in the speed limit and planned pedestrian crossing and pavement widening contribute towards travel management goals and potential further improvements.
Weaknesses	

Lack of visitor facilities	The NTS visitor centre is not designed for the volume of visitors experienced. While toilets are provided in the visitor centre, these are not available when the centre is shut.
Limited parking capacity	Capacity in official car parking facilities is still exceeded at peak times, leading to ongoing problem parking and related traffic challenges.
Public communications	There is no 'official' on-line platform welcoming visitors to Glenfinnan to curate visitors' experience. Information about visiting Glenfinnan is dominated by social media and tourism websites outside of community control, while the Glenfinnan community currently have very limited means of communicating with the visitor market. There is no definition of or single voice regarding the visitor experience with the result that visitors are left without understanding what their options are with regards to travel and visitor activities.
Lack of data	There is a lack of data available on some key factors influencing travel management. This includes detailed data on visitors (e.g. age, gender, number travelling together, reason for and duration of trip, ultimate destination, how the trip is planned, sources of information, etc.) and parking demand (willingness to pay more, flexibility in timing of visit, likely impact of enforcement, etc).
Inter-car park coordination	The two main car parking facilities are run as separate entities, presenting some obstacles to a more coordinated response to parking demand and potentially causing confusion for visitors.
Coach parking provision	There is very limited space for coaches and minibuses to park, relative to current demand. This affects the visitor experience and limits scope for encouraging more visitors to arrive by coach and minibus.
Enforcement	Visible regulation enforcement is an important deterrent to problem parking. Sources have indicated that current levels of enforcement are not adequate given the extent of Glenfinnan's challenges.
Opportunities	
Visitor communications	Opportunity to use public communications to influence visitor behaviour: developing and implementing a clear plan for communicating to the public about their travel options both getting to and travelling around the area will help ensure visitors travel around the area in a manner and at a time that suits all.
Car park management	There is potential for features such as prebooking, variable and increased charges and Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) technology to enhance the management of the car park to optimise capacity, increase revenue and collect much better management data. The layout of the car park could be improved to accommodate demand from coaches. In addition, clearly designated parking bays is likely to

help ensure the capacity of the car parks is maximised, by reducing incidence of cars parking across more than one space.

The NTS and community car park could be run as one integrated car park to improve visitor experience, traffic management and realise operational efficiencies.

Community car park revenue	Some of the revenue from the community car park could potentially be invested in measures such as visitor communications and traffic management, although this is dependent on Glenfinnan Community Facilities deciding to fund this type of activity.
International profile	Glenfinnan's international profile (and value as a tourist draw) has contributed to its traffic challenges but may also provide an opportunity to garner support at a national level for addressing the travel challenges its popularity has generated.
Policy alignment	The aims of encouraging sustainable and active travel, both to and around Glenfinnan, align with national and regional transport and tourism policies. This could help to gather support among stakeholder organisations.
Enhanced visitor offer	Glenfinnan has more to offer besides the steam train and viaduct, including scenery, history and hill walking. Other attractions in the village include the Station Museum, the St Finnan and St Mary Church, and cruises on Loch Shiel, while the West Highland Line, due to its world-famous scenery, is an attraction in itself. This provides great potential for expanding and promoting Glenfinnan's visitor offer.
Community element	The community-run nature of Glenfinnan's new car park, and the present and future initiatives it funds, could be more highly publicised to help garner and reinforce public support.
Greater use of existing public transport provision	Glenfinnan is currently serviced by trains and buses (both provide four services in each direction each weekday), providing scope for promoting greater visitor use of public transport based on current provision.
Commercial opportunities for transport providers	If it is established that there is sufficient demand for additional public transport services, there may be potential opportunities for transport providers to gain commercially.
Threats	
Funding	Some interventions proposed in the Travel Management Plan could be funded by revenue from the community car park. However, revenue from the car park is insecure. It could be disrupted or eliminated by events beyond the SCIO's control while, what the net revenues can be spent on is constrained by the charitable purpose lodged with the Scottish charities' regulator, OSCR, and by conditions of the lease.

Rebounding visitor numbers	Visitor levels to the viaduct dropped during the pandemic, as they did at many tourist sites, and may well not have fully recovered to their pre-COVID levels in subsequent years. As such, it remains to be seen whether car park capacity may come under increased pressure during coming tourist seasons.
Opposition to additional parking	The idea of building additional parking facilities in Glenfinnan has previously been met with some local opposition. Further future efforts to pursue this option would very likely have to contend with opposing views.
Ownership	There has arguably been a lack of ownership among stakeholder organisations of the challenges generated by visitor traffic in Glenfinnan, leaving the local community to direct efforts aimed at addressing the problem. A lack of higher-level engagement may hamper ongoing efforts.
Volunteer burnout	Though the Glenfinnan community includes proactive members who have made significant advances in responding to transport management challenges, the ongoing success of this approach is threatened by the high demands placed on these volunteers.

4 Travel management plan

4.1 Strategic Aim

The travel management plan aims to identify an effective approach to managing the impact of car-based visitor travel on the Glenfinnan community, balancing the needs of the community with those of visitors, and supporting an increase to the sustainability of the visitor economy in a way that protects the local community, and its neighbours, from the potential negative effects of high volumes of visitors arriving by car.

4.2 Objectives

It is recommended that the overall approach to managing visitors should:

- Reduce the incidence of excess private cars arriving and parking inappropriately by managing car parking effectively, having effective traffic management in place (ensuring visitors do not park outside designated car parks); and by providing information to help visitors plan trips to avoid busy times.
- Encourage more coach visits, as an efficient way of bringing people to site (by making adequate provision for coach parking and collaborating with the coach industry).
- Encourage longer visitor stays, in order to reduce traffic management issues associated with large volumes of arrivals/ departures at same time, and to ensure more benefit to the local economy in terms of greater visitor spend.
- Provide high quality, comprehensive public communications to provide a better introduction to Glenfinnan to show the range of activities available and to help visitors plan their visit more effectively.
- Collect better data to understand visitor flows and visitor behaviours, in order to refine the management approach.

More specifically, this can be achieved by:

- enhancing public communications;
- managing car parks effectively through integrated management of community and NTS facilities and use of more effective payment and monitoring systems;
- providing coach parking facilities to accommodate demand and working with coach industry;
- developing and implementing an effective traffic management plan; and
- commissioning research to improve understanding of visitor behaviours and measuring performance against indicators to allow further refining of the Travel Management Plan.

The performance indicators used to measure progress towards the plan's objectives are:

- reduction in improper and illegal parking.
- community experience improved (from ongoing feedback from community).
- visitors engaging with 'official' on-line information (from online metrics).

- increased duration of visitor stays and awareness of / participation in other activities (from surveys).
- growth in coach visitor and public transport arrivals.
- Improved visitor experience (from surveys).

Specifically, it is **not recommended** that that additional public transport services (such as park & ride) be developed or additional overspill parking (such as that proposed at Callop) be built in the first instance. There is a need to effectively communicate with visitors, enhance the management of existing car parking and improve traffic management **before** considering additional measures. The rationale behind this assertion is further explained in Section 4.3.

4.3 Interventions

The travel management plan has been structured around four overarching areas of intervention:

1. Public communications
2. Parking management
3. Traffic management
4. Transport and infrastructure improvements

In the following paragraphs, an overview of the proposed interventions in each area is provided. Section 4.4 then indicates the proposed timelines for the delivery of each intervention and Section 4.5 provides a detailed action plan.

4.3.1 Public communications

a. Contract a marketing communications agency

We advocate the commissioning of a marketing communications agency to assist conducting researching and then developing a Public Communications Plan so as to provide the much needed focus for ensuring quality communication with the public. Experience shows that much can be achieved in influencing behaviours simply by ensuring there is a concerted effort in defining a narrative, and then amplifying that across the appropriate communication channels of multiple stakeholders in an integrated manner. It is envisaged that the appointed agency would take forward the tasks identified below. The estimated budget for the work to be carried out by the agency, corresponding with actions b to f in the following paragraphs is provided in Section 5.1.

b. Public communications and marketing research

Understanding the visitor market and how visitors obtain their information about Glenfinnan is a key step in designing an effective public communications plan. This could begin with the following steps:

- Undertake marketing and communications research with visitors (and the local community) to improve understanding of information sources and visitor profiles (origin, itineraries, motivations, etc.). This could also test visitors' likely responses to planned communications approaches, as well as other solutions put forward in the wider plan. The research should take place over the 2023 summer season via face-to-face interviews over up to ten days.

- Undertake additional in-depth interviews with communications representatives from all key stakeholders, including Visit Scotland, ScotRail, CalMac, National Trust for Scotland and Forestry and Land Scotland.

c. Instigate a Multi-Agency Communications Working Group through a ‘Public Communications Summit’

A senior-level summit should be convened, bringing together key stakeholders whose ongoing collaboration is required for the successful delivery of the Public Communications Plan. The organisations should include Visit Scotland, Transport Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland, CalMac Ferries, Shiel Buses, the Highland Council, and Forestry and Land Scotland.

The aim will be to forge an agreement that commits parties to promoting responsible visitation and the existence of traffic control measures. It would set the foundations for the creation of an ongoing Multi-Agency Public Communications Group with the aim of galvanising the communications representatives of the key stakeholders to become the custodians of the transport communications plan (see below), to confirm the narrative and its key messages and to oversee ongoing transport communications activity.

Further details on the organisation of the public communications summit are provide in Section 4.4 on Delivery.

d. Develop overall visitor and community experience (including travel) narrative and key messaging

With stakeholders, prepare an overall narrative for visitor and local community travel, along with a key (transport) messaging matrix to act as the framework for all communications.

The narrative would aim to give visitors a sense of what they should expect from their time in Glenfinnan, and attempt to shape the decisions they make regarding transport options and choice of activities and behaviour once they arrive.

e. Develop an overall Public Communications Plan for travel and wider experience

Using the outcomes of the market research and one-to-one conversations with stakeholders communications representatives, and applying sound best practice, the development of a 12-month communications plan should be commissioned.

f. Contract a public communications officer / outsource public communications management

It is recommended that the management of the public communications plan be outsourced to a marketing communications agency. This work would include coordination of the public communications plan and the posting of content and maintenance of social media accounts.

g. Delivery of the Public Communications Plan

The detailed actions and timings would be determined during the development stage of the plan. However, core elements that will need to be taken forward include:

- i. Develop and implement a dedicated Glenfinnan website

A ‘Visit Glenfinnan’ website could include information on topics such as how to get to the village (emphasising public transport options), parking information, links to official Glenfinnan social media accounts, information on what can be done in the local area (besides seeing the train, and including

provision of day-trip itineraries) and other useful tourist information and tools, such as journey planners (i.e. a 'one-stop shop' for visitor information). The estimated budget for the development and maintenance of the website is provided in Section 5.2.

ii. Live-Streaming of the Steam Train

This may help to generate traffic to the website, in addition to providing an alternative to an in-person visit to the viaduct for some people (e.g. those who are unable to park in the village). The feasibility and practicality of setting up a camera should be explored in consultation with stakeholders including Network Rail and Glenfinnan Estate.

iii. Proactive social media

As part of a broader communications strategy, social media can be used to disseminate information about parking regulations, as well as enforcement measures and activities. It can also be used to help generate traffic to the proposed Visit Glenfinnan website. A more proactive approach toward social media should also include collaboration with partner organisations to encourage the promotion of official Glenfinnan accounts, and work with travel influencers to encourage the use of up-to-date and accurate information.

Responsibility for managing the social media activity could be taken on by a dedicated communications officer or could be outsourced to a marketing communications agency, as is proposed in this plan.

iv. Define and promote an enhanced visitor offer

Public communications efforts should include the promotion of an enhanced visitor offer. By informing some visitors that there are clear benefits to staying longer in Glenfinnan, and making it seem the natural choice given all that the village has to offer, peak flows of visitors moving in and out of the village at times closely corresponding to the steam train passing can be reduced. Moreover, the argument for using existing public transport services to access Glenfinnan, with extra time necessarily spent in the village, can be reinforced. Indeed, the offer should also promote the opportunity to travel across the Glenfinnan Viaduct on a service train from Fort William, while itineraries can be designed to correspond to timeframes matching with return train and/or bus journeys.

Itineraries could include other Glenfinnan attractions, such as the Station Museum and tearoom, the Church of St Mary and St Finnan, Loch Shiel Cruises, as well as local active travel routes, including the upper stretches of the Viaduct Trail, and the Glenfinnan Monument and visitors' centre. The development of the offer should involve stakeholders including local business owners and transport providers such as Shiel Buses and ScotRail.

It should be noted that providing some additional facilities for visitors, such as public toilets and potentially additional shelters, should be seriously considered as part of the offer in order to support the idea of extended trips.

v. Other

While we imagine the above as being the key early initiatives, there will be a range of other potential interventions that should emerge through the development of the communications plan. While the following is not intended to be exhaustive these could include:

A visitor journey planner: consider the role of journey planner for visitors which includes correct and bespoke information for people to plan their a-to-b journey, and could link to promoting specific accommodations, points of interest and so on. This would be promoted as an alternative to using Google Maps or other platforms.

On day travel communications protocols: develop an approach to ensuring that if and when there is significant travel disruption in Glenfinnan that this information is relayed quickly through all available communication channels to advise those either thinking about travelling to or through the area to consider alternatives.

4.3.2 Parking management

As explained in Section 3.4.1, the community car park has made a significant contribution to Glenfinnan's official car park capacity, helping to mitigate the issue of improper and illegal parking. This said, at peak times, car park capacity continues to be exceeded by what is reportedly a considerable margin, leading to ongoing traffic management issues. This section contains steps to enhance car park management with the aim of capitalising on existing capacity to the fullest extent possible, and putting in place measures for when capacity is exceeded.

a. Car park facilities coordination

Though there may be practical, legal and administrative challenges to overcome, combining the community and NTS car parks would be beneficial. Currently, drivers are faced with the confusing prospect of two car parks side by side and may enter one to search for a space, before having to leave and enter the other to repeat the process.

Combining the facilities would offer several benefits, including:

- enabling a unified parking management regime to be introduced, including charging and enforcement;
- providing financial and operational efficiency savings;
- allowing for the creation of separate entry and exit accesses, with potential benefits for traffic flow and safety.
- allowing for better monitoring of car park occupancy in order to provide real time information for approaching drivers (see traffic management section below); and
- potentially enabling an increase in capacity through more efficient use of the land.

It is recommended that Glenfinnan Community Facilities and the NTS, explore the option of combining their parking under a revenue splitting agreement, which could reflect the number of spaces available on each of their respective land areas.

In the interim, it is suggested that measures for enhancing the management and operation of the community car park are developed through the following elements:

b. Automatic numberplate recognition

It is recommended that a barrierless automatic numberplate recognition (ANPR) system be installed to manage the community car park. This would convey a number of potential advantages, as follows:

- ANPR will collect more detailed information on the arrival time, departure time and hence duration of stay of individual vehicles, on a day-by-day basis. This will also provide occupancy figures so that the times when the car park reaches or exceeds capacity can be identified.
- ANPR provides a better visitor experience by making payment for parking easier. Visitors can potentially pay within 24 or 48 hours of their visit. The ANPR payment kiosks can be formatted in several languages and also ask one or two questions about the nature of a visit, which can help build further insight into visitors.
- A payment enforcement service can be introduced in association with the installation of ANPR, which typically encourages very high levels of compliance.
- ANPR could also facilitate the introduction of pre-booking of parking if there were a decision to move to this in the future.

In the first instance, it is recommended that ANPR cameras are installed in the community car park as soon as possible in order to start providing better information on visitor parking behaviour in advance of potentially using the ANPR system for charging and enforcement in the 2024 season.

c. Communications on car parking availability

An ANPR system would enable easier communication on the availability of car parking before visitors arrive. First, through the visitor website and social media channels, times of day and year when the car park is likely to become very busy could be communicated and visitors encouraged to consider planning their visit for a less busy time.

Second, when the car park fills, information could be passed to the website and social media platforms to communicate that there is no parking availability. This information could also be passed to variable message signs (VMS) on the A830.

d. Pre-booking of parking

The option for prebooking of parking could be considered as a longer-term measure, but should only be done once more effective management of the car parks (as described above) has been introduced. Pre-booking of parking would require additional management measures to be in place. It would require operation via a specialist prebooking company such as Just Park or Your Parking Space.

It would be necessary to decide whether prebooking would apply to the whole car park or only a section of it. It would also require the installation of physical barriers so that only pre-booked vehicles could enter the car park, which could be run automatically via ANPR or manually by staff (e.g. Glenfinnan Ambassadors). If physical barriers were to be used, there would have to be consideration of any traffic management issues, such as the potential for queuing vehicles on the A830. The car park entrance might need remodelling to accommodate this.

Alternatively / additionally, it may be decided that a section of the car park is cordoned off for prebooking and that tariffs are used as an incentive (for example, prebooked parking is offered at a discount compared to people paying on arrival).

The decision of whether to introduce prebooking would require careful consideration and feasibility work. It should only be considered once the initial parking management and visitor communications have been put in place.

e. Tariff setting

Tariffs could be used to further incentivise desirable behaviours. If, in order to enact the Travel Management Plan, there is a need for capital investment and ongoing operational costs, tariffs could be raised to pay for this. Similarly, as mentioned above, if there continues to be a problem with demand exceeding capacity, raising tariffs could be used as a demand management tool.

f. Prioritising coaches

As described above, a significant proportion of visitors are estimated to arrive by coach, but coach parking capacity does not meet demand. Coaches should be prioritised as a mode of transport and parking provision should be improved, both to reduce problems associated with congestion and safety, and to facilitate a larger proportion of visitors arriving by this means.

The following measures are recommended:

- Monitor coaches using the NTS car park, including number arriving, timing, duration of stay, size and operator.
- Conduct surveys with coach operators to understand how visits to Glenfinnan fit into their tours and interview drivers about how access to coaches can be improved.
- Assess the option of providing coach parking in the community car park. This step may be influenced by the outcomes of discussions on car park coordination, as described above, and / or any decisions taken by the NTS regarding coach parking provision. This step would also require consultation with car park planners.
- Increase the number of coach bays available between the community and NTS car parks based on assessed demand. This could involve providing a number of fixed bays in addition to setting aside an overspill area at peak times.
- Assess whether there would be benefits attached to prebooking for coaches based on to what extent the newly created capacity is satisfying demand.

4.3.3 Traffic management

Managing parking and traffic on A830 and local roads is critical to the success of the Travel Management Plan. If visitors continue to ignore traffic regulations and park on the main road and on smaller village roads, and to block access, it fails to alleviate some of the core problems and undermines the management approach.

It is recommended that the following steps be taken.

a. Traffic management summit

It is recommended that a traffic management summit be organised, bringing together local and national organisations, including the main actors involved in enforcement. The focus should be on exploring optimal approaches to parking and traffic violation enforcement, and coordinating a highly visible set of responses, which are to be publicised through social media as part of the Public Communications Action Plan. The aim should be to use the relevant agencies' enforcement activities in Glenfinnan, coordinated and timed to maximise on visibility and coverage, to create a more effective deterrent to problem parking. Publicity can also highlight alternatives to using cars and risking fines, such as public transport.

More specifically, it is proposed that:

- The local MSP be approached with a request to convene the summit, therefore helping to increase the profile of the event.
- Key organisations to invite: should include (but not be limited to) the Highland Council, Police Scotland, British Transport Police, BEAR Scotland, Glenfinnan Community Council, Glenfinnan Community Facilities, the National Trust for Scotland and Transport Scotland.
- The summit could be organised to take place during a peak visitor time and in Glenfinnan.
- The summit should aim to establish proactive and reactive enforcement measures and an incident responses plan for when parking capacity is exceeded. It should lead to a partnership agreement between the parties on the coordination of enforcement measures.

b. Enforcement measures

Based on the research conducted in the development of this Travel Management Plan, and current enforcement measures in place, the following initial recommendations are suggested:

i. A830 clearway order

- The new temporary clearway order on the A830 through Glenfinnan, which is due to come into place in April 2023 for 18 months, should be reinforced with more adequate signage. The amount of signage would appear to be insufficient, and the existence of a clearway should be more clearly highlighted.
- In addition, the international nature of the visitor market should be considered when selecting signs to help ensure clearer understanding of parking regulations. This could include maximising the use of symbols rather than lettering.

ii. Minor roads and access points

- Inappropriate parking on local roads such as Slatach Road, could be managed through the use of double yellow lines and it is recommended that this option be explored in consultation with the Highland Council.

iii. Variable message signs

- Discuss with BEAR Scotland the potential to provide variable message signs (VMS) on the A830 on the approaches to Glenfinnan to carry appropriate messages. This could point drivers to the website, warn drivers that Glenfinnan becomes very busy at peak holiday times, and provide real time messages in the event that the car park is full.

c. Data collection

As explained in Section 3.2, it is recommended that further data on improper and illegal parking be sought. More specifically, it is proposed that instances of problem parking should be systematically logged at peak visitor times.

Surveys can be conducted by the community with the assistance of volunteers, though consideration could also be given to outsourcing the service to a traffic management company. The surveys should be conducted systematically over a period of days or weeks (for example 1-2 days per week for one to two months over peak visitor season) in order to provide more robust data than a one-off count may provide.

This data would assist in demonstrating to enforcement agencies and other relevant stakeholders the extent of any ongoing problems with improper / illegal parking and could be used to inform discussions around enforcement measures by providing information on problem parking hotspots and peak times.

4.3.4 Transport and infrastructure improvements

a. Public transport and additional parking facilities

As explained in earlier sections, prior plans have reported on ideas including the addition of public transport services, namely a park & ride scheme between Fort William and Glenfinnan. They have also included the construction of additional parking facilities, with a site in the Callop area approximately two miles to the southeast of the Glenfinnan monument identified as a possible location⁴⁶.

It is recommended that prior to considering these additional measures it is necessary to:

- Enhance the management of existing car parks to optimize their capacity and help distribute the arrival of visitors. This step should be supported by well-planned and coordinated public communications and better, more visible enforcement of parking regulations.
- Collect more comprehensive and detailed data on visitors, which will help to establish whether there is sufficient demand for additional transport services.

This approach therefore aims to optimise the use of existing resources before considering the use of potentially more costly options. In addition, a number of potential drawbacks and potential barriers to implementation related to these options have been identified, as explained in the following paragraphs.

i. Fort William-Glenfinnan Park & ride

The establishment of a park & ride service from Fort William would meet with a number of challenges. To begin with, the travel distance and time from Fort William is significant, therefore making the service costly to provide. Also, as a popular visitor destination, Fort William has existing parking capacity issues and so the practicality of providing parking there to intercept visitors to Glenfinnan would be an issue.

Furthermore, there is limited data on the way in which visitors are incorporating a trip to Glenfinnan. For instance, are they making there-and-back trips from the Fort William direction? Visitors who are following this approach are more likely to be amenable to using public transport, rather than driving, than visitors who are passing through Glenfinnan on their way to the west coast. Currently, for visitors arriving by car, the prospect of stopping at Fort William and transferring to a bus, which would take longer and is likely to be more expensive than parking at Glenfinnan, is an unattractive proposition, unless the availability or cost of parking at Glenfinnan is restrictive and the bus is cheaper. Branding the bus around Harry Potter and offering some tour guiding information may, for instance, help to persuade some motorists to switch mode.

ii. Visitor rail shuttle

A visitor rail shuttle would be a welcome addition to sustainable access to Glenfinnan but demonstrating demand requires the collection of additional visitor and passenger data. Tighter

⁴⁶ The Highland Council (2022). 'Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan'. Available at: https://www.highland.gov.uk/news/article/14389/strategic_tourism_infrastructure_development_plan_for_highland

management of traffic and parking at Glenfinnan would make this a more attractive potential option for visitors.

iii. Additional parking facilities at Callop

The additional facilities could be set up to serve as either an overspill car park with a shuttle bus, or as a remote coach parking facility. Facilitating coach access to Glenfinnan should be a priority for reasons outlined above. However, there would be a need for a coach turning and drop-off area to be built in the area around the Glenfinnan Monument and visitor's centre to support this use.

If new facilities were built to serve as a parking overspill site, it would require some form of shuttle bus service. The parking and bus shuttle would most likely need to be considerably cheaper than the existing on-site parking. Also, consideration would have to be given to a prebooking system in order to manage the peak flows of people arriving immediately before the steam train crossing.

Finally, the Callop site is reportedly to be covered by an area to be protected under the planned Glenfinnan Biodiversity Enhancement Project, which forms part of Network Rail's sustainability strategy.

Active travel routes

The building of new walking paths and improvement of existing paths have been key steps in responding to visitor desire to view the viaduct and steam train. The continued improvement and adequate maintenance of existing active travel routes can feed into the enhanced visitor offer, supporting the option of exploring the village on foot, following arrival on public transport, and encouraging access to other visitor sites in the village. It is recommended that funding be sought for future maintenance and improvement work in order to ensure the visitor offer of active travel routes is fit for purpose.

4.4 Delivery

This section provides more detailed information on the delivery of the Travel Management Plan, with regard to project management and the timelines for proposed measures. This includes an action plan detailing performance indicator and the actors responsible for individual actions. It is also proposing potential sources of funding for interventions in the areas of public communications and parking management.

4.4.1 Project management

It is proposed that the plan be led by a constituted community organisation, with oversight, input and guidance provide by a dedicated Travel Management Plan Steering Group, which will be comprised of members of key partner organisations and key stakeholder organisations, reflecting the multifaceted nature of Glenfinnan's travel management challenges. Two high-profile events were proposed in Sections 3.3.1 and 3.3.3 to facilitate the forging of partnerships around some of the plan's core areas: the traffic management summit and the public communications summit.

In addition to being the instigator of these events, other key responsibilities of the steering group would include, but may not be limited to:

- developing and implementing a funding plan, using sources proposed in this report as a base.
- appointing a marketing communications agency to carry out actions detailed in Section 4.1.
- commissioning the development of a Visit Glenfinnan website.

- overseeing the implementation of the public communications plan.
- monitoring the coordinated enforcement of traffic regulations in Glenfinnan;
- encouraging the adoption of enhanced car park management measures, including the use of ANPR, by the community car park;
- facilitating discussions between the NTS and GCF on the coordination of their car parks (as required); and
- evaluating the outcomes of the plan based on data collected in the course of its implementation.

A timeline indicating the proposed timeframes and sequencing of actions is provided in Section 4.5.

4.4.2 Funding sources

Potential funding sources are outlined in the following paragraphs, organised around the Travel Management Plan's areas of intervention.

a. Public communications

Visit Scotland's **Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF)** was established by the Scottish Government and is managed by Visit Scotland on its behalf⁴⁷. The RTIF supports collaborative projects aimed at improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Scotland that are facing pressure on their infrastructure and communities as a result of tourism.

Only local authorities and national park authorities can apply for funding directly, though community groups can apply via their local authority if they have an eligible project.

It is recommended that funding be sought from the RTIF for the public communications interventions forming part of the Glenfinnan Travel Management Plan, based on the following criteria set out by Visit Scotland:

- Glenfinnan is an existing 'visitor pressure point'.
- A 'strategic need is met or gap addressed' by the proposed actions.
- The plan contributes to the provision of quality visitor facilities.
- The plan is aligned to a 'carbon-conscious approach' as it encourages the use of more sustainable travel options.
- The plan contributes to 'community capacity building' and 'effective partnerships and collaboration'.

The Paths for All **Smarter Choices, Smarter Places (SCSP) Open Fund** provides grants to encourage people to choose more sustainable transport options⁴⁸. It is open to third and community sector organisations and provides grants of between £5,000 and £100,000, which need to be match funded.

It is recommended that the option of applying to this funding source for public communications interventions be explored.

⁴⁷ visitscotland.org (2023). 'Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund'. Available at: <https://www.visitscotland.org/supporting-your-business/funding/rural-tourism-infrastructure-fund>

⁴⁸ pathsforall.org.uk (2023). 'Open Fund'. Available at: <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/open-fund>

b. Parking management

It is proposed that measures aimed at enhancing the management of the community car park should be funded by Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO. The ongoing improvement of the parking facilities is in the interest of the Glenfinnan community due to their potential for optimising the use of the parking facilities, therefore contributing to ongoing efforts to deal with Glenfinnan's traffic management. Furthermore, there is an established funding stream for car park improvements and maintenance.

d. Transport and infrastructure improvements

Paths for All's **Ian Findlay Path Fund** is a grant fund for community and third sector organisations aimed at the improvement of path networks to increase walking, wheeling and cycling⁴⁹. Grants of between £10,000 and £1,000,000 are offered to for projects which improve the accessibility and resilience of paths to make it easier for people to choose active travel. Match funding of 30% is required, though 15% can be in-kind.

To qualify, projects must demonstrate they satisfy some of the following criteria:

- Demonstrate that they will make it easier for people to choose active travel and public transport to reduce dependency on car usage.
- Improve accessibility and resilience of existing paths between homes, community facilities, active travel routes and public transport facilities.
- Remove barriers to make existing paths more accessible to more people.
- Link paths to community destinations such as homes and public transport connections.
- Improve and create routes to aid the development of 20-minute neighbourhoods.

⁴⁹ pathsforall.org.uk (2023). 'Ian Findlay Path Fund'. Available at: <https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/community-paths/cmp-grants/ian-findlay-path-fund>

4.4.3 Action plan

Public communications

Key Area	Recommended Action	Performance Indicator(s)	Timing	Main actor(s)
Appoint marketing communications agency	Contract a tourism-oriented marketing communications agency to conduct visitor marketing research, develop the public communications plan and oversee the ongoing delivery of associated communications efforts.	Marketing communications agency contracted	Q2 2023	Steering group
Communications and market research	Commission research to improve understanding of the visitor market and where visitors obtain information on Glenfinnan.	Base of information reinforced on key aspects of the visitor market and visitor information sources	Q2 and Q3 of 2023	Steering group
Development of public communications plan	Commission development of a public communications plan informed by research findings. Key steps towards developing the plan include constituting a multi-stakeholder travel comms working group and creating an overall community and visitor experience narrative.	Public communications plan developed.	Q3 and Q4 of 2023	Steering group, communications consultancy
Public communications summit	Hold public communications summit with key stakeholders.	Public communications summit held. Agreement to promote responsible visitation and traffic enforcement measures signed.	Q4 2023	Steering group

Communications officer / service	Hire a communications officer or outsource communications plan delivery.	Communications officer hired or service contracted.	By Q4 2023	Steering group
Visit Glenfinnan website	Create a flexible 'Visit Glenfinnan' website which would be a central source. of information on travel to Glenfinnan, parking options, visitor offer, etc.	Visit Glenfinnan website launched.	By Q1 2024	Steering group, web developer
Live streaming of steam train	Assess the technical and legal requirements for setting up a camera and live feed. Link the live stream to the Visit Glenfinnan website.	Live stream of steam train accessible on Visit Glenfinnan website.	By Q1 2024	Steering group, web developer
Social media accounts	Set up official Glenfinnan accounts on major social media.	Accounts established on social media including Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok.	By end of Q1 2024	Social media manager /social media management service
Define enhanced visitor offer	Develop an enhanced visitor offer to encourage longer stays and higher levels of public transport use, including through suggested itineraries, comprehensive visitor information and, if possible, tailored public transport tickets.	Enhanced visitor offer developed.	Q4 2023 and Q1 2024	Steering group, public communications consultancy
Promote enhanced visitor offer	Promote newly developed offer via social media and Visit Glenfinnan website.	Enhanced visitor offer featured on Visit Glenfinnan website and published in social media posts.	From Q1 2024 to Q4 2025	Communications officer/ service, social media officer/ management service

Implementation of public comms plan	Apply public communications measures according to the newly developed plan.	Target number of weekly social media posts met. Number of social media followers per account. Reach, as well as level and type of engagement on social media accounts. Social media accounts and website linked to key stakeholders.	From Q1 2024 to Q4 2025	Communications officer/ communications management
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Car park management

Key Area	Recommended Action	Performance Indicator(s)	Timing	Main actor (s)
Car park coordination	Hold consultations with the NTS, Glenfinnan Community Facilities and other relevant actors, such as Glenfinnan Estate and Highland Council, to explore potential for more coordinated car park management and possibly even a combined facility.	Roadmap for increased coordination of parking facilities.	Q2 2023	Steering group, NTS, Glenfinnan Community Facilities
ANPR cameras and monitoring	Install a mobile automatic number plate recognition system in the community car park for the purposes of monitoring and data collection.	Advanced car park data collected.	Q2 and Q3 2023	Glenfinnan Community Facilities, ANPR provider
ANPR for charging and enforcing	Install fixed ANPR system and use it collect payments from drivers using the community car park	Payment collected via ANPR. Levels of car park fee compliance increased.	Q4 2023 to Q4 2025	Glenfinnan Community Facilities, ANPR provider
ANPR-facilitated parking communications	Provide advice through the Visit Glenfinnan website and social media channels indicating when the car park is likely to be full to encourage travel at	Real-time parking update system set up. Data-informed information on busy times and advice on alternative timing provided via website and social media.	From Q4 2023 to Q4 2025	Glenfinnan Community Facilities, social media officer/social media management services,

	quieter times. Provide real-time updates through the same channels and on VMS indicating when car parks are full.			Communications officer / communications management service
Additional parking management tools	Assess potential use of prebooking and tariff setting in the community car park once effective use of the above-described car park management measures is established.	Feasibility study into prebooking and tariff-setting options conducted.	Q4 2024 and Q1 2025	Glenfinnan Community Facilities
Coach monitoring	Monitor coaches using the NTS car park at peak times, including total numbers, timing, duration of stay, size and operator.	Data collected on peak time use of NTS car park by coaches.	Q2 and Q3 2023	Steering group, National Trust for Scotland
Survey of coach operators	Conduct surveys with coach operators to understand how visits to Glenfinnan fit into their tours and interview drivers about how access to coaches can be improved.	Coach operators surveyed.	Q2 and Q3 2023	Steering group, National Trust for Scotland
Assessment of coach parking facilities	Assess the option of coach parking provision in the community car park, in consultation with car park planners and the NTS.	Findings of coach monitoring and operator survey evaluated. Car park planner and NTS consulted.	Q4 2023 and Q1 2024	Glenfinnan Community Facilities, National Trust for Scotland

Traffic management

Key Area	Recommended Action	Performance Indicator	Timing	Actor responsible
Traffic management summit	Hold summit with main traffic enforcement actors, including Police Scotland, British Transport Police, the Highland Council and BEAR Scotland, and ideally convened by local MSP, to explore approaches to traffic enforcement and coordinate future	Traffic management summit held. Glenfinnan Traffic Management Partnership Agreement signed. Enforcement activities timetabled.	Q3 2023	Steering group, MSP, Police Scotland, British Transport Police, Highland Council, BEAR Scotland

	responses to traffic management challenges in Glenfinnan.			
Coordinated traffic management and comms approach	Implement a coordinated approach to traffic enforcement and public communications, as per the Glenfinnan Traffic Management Partnership Agreement forged during the traffic management summit.	Enforcement measures agreed on during traffic management summit put in place. Enforcement activities carried out as per timetable agreed on at traffic management summit. Enforcement measures publicised via social media and Visit Glenfinnan website and enforcement activities shared in real time via social media.	Q1 2024 to Q4 2025	Police Scotland, British Transport Police, Highland Council, BEAR Scotland, communications officer /communications management provider, social media officer / social media management provider
Data collection	Organise survey of improper or illegal parking.	Instances of problem parking counted and logged systematically over peak visitor period.	Q3 2023	Steering Group

Transport and infrastructure improvements

Key Area	Recommended Action	Performance Indicator	Timing	Actor responsible
Assess further transport and infrastructure options	Evaluate progress made towards the Travel Management Plan's objectives, based on parking data provided by ANPR and the incidence of problem parking, congestion and other traffic management issues. Assess potential visitor demand for additional public transport, based on marketing and comms research.	Relevant visitor, passenger and parking data reviewed.	Q4 2025	Steering group

4.5 Timeline

The following chart indicates the timing and sequencing of proposed interventions.

		2023			2024				2025			
	Key area	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
Delivery	Form Travel Management Plan steering group											
	Develop a funding plan											
Public communications	Appoint marketing communications agency											
	Conduct communications and marketing research											
	Develop public communications plan											
	Public communications summit											
	Contract communications officer / service											
	Develop Visit Glenfinnan website											
	Set up live streaming of steam train											
	Launch Visit Glenfinnan website											
	Launch social media accounts											
	Define enhanced visitor offer											
	Promote enhanced visitor offer											
	Implement public communications plan											
Car park management	Consultations on car park coordination											
	Set up ANPR cameras and monitor parking											

	Set up and use ANPR for charging and enforcement											
	Implement ANPR-facilitated parking communications											
	Assess demand management tools											
	Monitor coaches in NTS car park											
	Conduct survey of coach operators											
	Assess location and number of coach parking spaces											
Traffic management	Traffic management summit											
	Implement concerted comms and enforcement											
	Conduct survey of improper / illegal parking											
Transport and infrastructure	Assess transport and infrastructure options											

5 Costing of interventions

This section provides estimated budgets for four travel management plan components described in Section 4, namely:

- Visitor marketing
- Public communications
- a 'Visit Glenfinnan' website
- ANPR

The estimates cover the initial set-up and running of each of the four components.

5.1 Visitor marketing and public communications

This estimates the cost of procuring work by a marketing communications agency to carry out the public communications interventions described in Section 4.3.1. It includes visitor marketing and communications research, the development of a visitor and community experience narrative and public communications plan, and the running of a public communications summit leading to a Multi-Agency Communications Working Group. It also includes the setting up of social media accounts and ongoing outsourced communications management costs, which would include the running of social media⁵⁰.

It uses estimates which are based on similar previous work and is intended only to act as a guide. The communications management costs are based on the contracting of outsourced services, which would be provided on a part-time basis.

Item	Quantity	Unit price	Total
Set-up costs			
Research and comms plan development			
On-site visitor survey	1	£10,000	£10,000
Stakeholder interviews	6	£200	£1,200
Narrative working and stakeholder working	1	£2,500	£2,500
Communications plan development	1	£4,500	£4,500
Definition of enhanced visitor offer	1	£1,200	£1,200
Social media			
Strategy planning	1	£150	£150
Set-up	Per platform	£200	£800*
Total			£20,350
Operating costs			
Communications management (inc. social media)	Per month	£625	£ 15,000**
Total			£15,000
Scheme total			£35,215

*Cost assumes management of four platforms

⁵⁰ This costing presumes that management of four social media platforms would be outsourced and is based on online research into social media management packages. The estimates are based on more comprehensive management packages, reflecting the importance given to public communications in the Travel Management Plan.

**Total for 2024 and 2025.

5.2 Website

This costing covers the development of a Visit Glenfinnan website and its running costs for three years. In addition to the initial costs of web development, search engine optimisation and marketing, it includes the annual costs associated with the website's domain name, server hosting fees, the website security provided an SSL Certificate and maintenance fees. The unit prices are estimates based on web research on typical prices, and are intended to provide an approximate guide. In recognition of the website serving a nationally significant site, we have recommended a relatively high-end budget for the development of the site.

Item	Quantity	Unit price	Total
Set-up costs			
Website development	1	£15,000	£15,000
Search engine optimisation (SEO) and marketing	1	£100	£100
Total			
Operating costs			
Domain name	Per annum	£20	£60
Hosting	Per annum	£240	£720
SSL Certificate	Per annum	£50	£150
Maintenance & content updates	Per annum	£2,000	£6,000
Total			
Scheme total			£22,030

5.3 ANPR

This costing covers the installation of a fixed ANPR system for the community car park, and its maintenance for three years. This is the provider's recommended approach and there may be additional fees attached to planning permission⁵¹. We would also recommend exploring the possibility of using a mobile ANPR unit, which may not require planning permission, for the purposes of monitoring parking behaviour in the 2023 season, before beginning to use a fixed system for charging and enforcement in 2024.

Item	Quantity	Unit price (ex VAT)	Total (ex VAT)
Set-up costs			
ANPR System 2 lanes	1	£4,200	£4,200
4m galvanised pole or 5" larch post to suit	1	£395	£395
Installation and civils	1	£1,490	£1,490
Payment kiosk	2	£6,450	£12,900
Installation and civils	1	£2,090	£2,090
Total			£21,075
Operating costs			
Maintenance	Per annum	£1,913	£5,739
Total			£5,739
Scheme total			£26,814

⁵¹ The estimate was provided by Park with Ease Ltd.

