

FEASIBILITY STUDY
FOR
A PROPOSED COMMUNITY ACQUISITION AND
DEVELOPMENT OF
LAND AT CALLOP, GLENFINNAN



29th April 2026

Duncan MacPherson
Raeburn Farquhar Bowen
Rural Design
LUC
Willie McGhee
Faye MacLeod
Calum MacLeod

Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
2. Methodology.....	6
Desk-Based Research.....	6
Stakeholder Interviews.....	6
Technical Assessments.....	7
Community Consultation	7
3. Key findings from stakeholder consultations	8
Stakeholder Consultation	8
Impacts of Increased Volume of Visitors and Traffic	8
Callop Car Park	10
Related Facilities	11
Path/Boardwalk Development.....	12
Sustainability and Capacity	12
Community Consultation Meeting.....	13
Site Layout Options	14
Building Options	15
4. Callop Mobility Hub Development Options	16
Parking	16
Coaches.....	16
Cars & Minibuses	17
Shuttle Service	18
Ticketing & Revenue Management	18
Cycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure.....	20
Campervan Aires	21
Aire or Improved Provision?.....	22
Risk Management	22
Business Space	22
Development Context	22
Potential Demand	23
Discussion	23
5. Illustrative Hub Layout Options	25

Site Characteristics	25
Option Commonalities.....	25
Discussion & Conclusion	32
6. Alternative Solutions	33
Rail Siding.....	33
Light Rail.....	33
7. Callop Woodland	34
Physical description	34
Woodland management.....	35
Rural skills, volunteering, environmental education	37
Rural Skills.....	37
Volunteering	38
Environmental education.....	38
Employment, enterprise and costs	38
Employment	38
Enterprise.....	39
Costs	40
Income.....	40
8. Active Travel Links to Glenfinnan	42
Boardwalk Reinstatement	43
Design Options	43
Cost Estimates	43
9. Financial Analysis	45
Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO & Glenfinnan Enterprises Ltd – Existing Car Park.....	45
Financial Illustration	46
Callop car park income	46
Car park operating expenses.....	47
Campervan Aires	47
Business Units.....	48
Summary of Options.....	49
10. Project Development Challenges.....	51

Ownership of Roadside Strip	51
Transport Scotland	53
Consent to Develop on Peatland and Natural Heritage Issues	53
Other Planning Issues	55
11. Funding Opportunities	56
1. Scottish Land Fund.	56
2. Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant Fund	56
3. Highland Council Capital Discretionary Fund.	56
4. Highland Coastal Communities Fund	56
5. Highlands & Islands Enterprise.....	57
6. Private Grant-making Trusts.	57
Appendices	58
Appendix 1 – List of Consultees	59
Appendix 2 - Thematic Summary of Stakeholder Comments	60
Appendix 3 - Callop Consultation Responses– 26 th February 2026.....	68

1. Introduction

The Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO (GCF) wishes to purchase an area of land near Glenfinnan from Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) using the Community Asset Transfer (CAT) process.

The land identified for study comprises two adjacent parcels of land covering a total area of approximately 27.76ha. The larger parcel of 23.57ha is mainly woodland on ground adjacent to the River Callop, and the smaller parcel of 4.19ha is a combination of wet heath and deeper peat land on land adjacent to the A830 trunk road approximately 1 ½ miles east of Glenfinnan at Callop.

The purposes of this feasibility study are to explore the viability of creating a mobility hub at Callop and of connecting this to the major tourism attraction of the Glenfinnan Viaduct through the provision of a Park-n-Ride system and active travel options, and also to explore the community benefit that could arise from owning the land. These benefits include the potential for reinstating a former boardwalk that ran through part of the woodland, community involvement in woodland management and additional community facilities and services provided.

The desired outcomes from the project include a sustainable transit system that resolves the current chaotic and unsafe parking practices along the A830, the elimination of “wild toileting” and other undesirable side effects of mass tourism, and the creation of new employment opportunities for local people.

2. Methodology

A combination of desk-based and primary research methods have been used to collect and analyse data to inform the feasibility study's analysis and conclusions.

Desk-Based Research

Desk-based research was undertaken to inform the strategic context within which potential community ownership of Callop sits. This principally involved reviewing extensive prior studies that have been carried in order to address the traffic situation in Glenfinnan.

Key information sources included:

- Glenfinnan Vehicle Count Data, 21/08/23 – 16/09/23
- Glenfinnan Travel Management Plan, Ansons 2023
- NTS Glenfinnan Traffic Management Options Report, Sigma PM, 2025
- Fort William Opportunities Around Rail, Systra, 2021
- Hitrans – Viaduct Via Rail, Systra, 2025
- The Highland Council Pre-Application Advice for Local developments Ref: 25/04140/PREAPP
- Traffic data
- NTS Glenfinnan Visitor Experience, Galmstrup Architects, 2023
- East Loch Shiel land Management Plan Scoping, Forestry and Land Scotland, 2025

Stakeholder Interviews

Interviews were conducted with representatives of the following organisations and individuals:

- Glenfinnan Community Council
- Glenfinnan Station Trust
- The Dining Car at Glenfinnan Station
- MOWI
- The Stage House B&B
- Chef/Manager of The Dining Car/former chair of the Community Council & GCF Trustee)
- St Mary and St Finnan Roman Catholic Church
- Factors of Conaglen Estate and Fassfern Estate
- Hitrans
- Forestry and Land Scotland
- The Highland Council Planning Department
- Shiel Buses

A full list of consultees is contained in appendix 1.

Technical Assessments

Specialised technical assessments were also undertaken regarding the following:

- An examination of parking and access requirements for the land at Callop.
- A site appraisal and design options study on the entirety of the proposed land area.
- An architectural study of options for building provision at the mobility hub at Callop.

Community Consultation

Following the background research, stakeholder interviews and technical assessments, the information was brought together in a feasibility study which presented a range of options available to the community in terms of transit hub layout, intensity of building development at the transit hub and opportunities for managing the associated woodland. A consultation event was held in The Jetty Hut, Glenfinnan on 25th February 2026 at which the options were shared and discussed with community members.

3. Key findings from stakeholder consultations

Stakeholder Consultation

Semi-structured conversations were conducted with representatives of stakeholder organisations during January and February 2026. The sample of organisations was identified in agreement with Glenfinnan Facilities SCIO and was designed to ensure engagement with a range of relevant local, regional and national organisations and individuals. They included:

- Glenfinnan Community Council
- The Dining Car
- National Trust for Scotland
- Forestry and Land Scotland
- Glenfinnan Station Museum Trust
- Highlands and Islands Transport Partnership (Hitrans)
- Glen Alladale Estate
- Glenfinnan House Hotel
- The Stage House B&B
- Fassfern Estate
- MOWI Scotland Ltd.
- Craigag Lodge
- Boardwalk Restoration Project
- The Church of St Mary and St Finnan

The conversations covered the following core themes:

- Impacts of increased volume of visitors and traffic
- Additional car-parking and related facilities
- Path/boardwalk development
- Sustainability and capacity

Impacts of Increased Volume of Visitors and Traffic

The steam train passing through Glenfinnan has been a tourist attraction for nearly 30 years. However, the significant increase in visitor numbers to the area is a relatively recent phenomenon. One fuelled by the iconic status conferred upon both the train and Glenfinnan Viaduct by the global popularity of the Harry Potter films and a post-COVID pandemic upsurge in visitors. Prior to the release of the Harry Potter films, Glenfinnan was not an especially well-known tourist destination, to the extent that a small community co-operative, Visit Glenfinnan was established in the early 2000s to encourage more visitors to the area. As one interviewee ruefully noted, *‘be careful what you wish for’*.

The ‘*tsunami of visitors*’ descending on the small community of Glenfinnan in recent years was described by another interviewee as ‘*a double-edged sword*’. Tourism is viewed as a necessity for many local businesses, but the uniqueness of Glenfinnan’s situation brings two distinctive types of visitors. Firstly, ‘experiential tourists’ who see Glenfinnan as a destination and want to spend an extended period of time there (including overnight stays). Secondly, ‘checkbox tourists’, only interested in seeing the steam train crossing the viaduct, capturing the image on their smart phones and leaving Glenfinnan soon afterwards.

There was widespread acknowledgement amongst interviewees that both types of visitors need to be catered for in a way that is sustainable for the Glenfinnan community. That need is underscored by the significant disruption to village life experienced in the summer months because of the influx of ‘checkbox tourists’, as noted by interviewees:

‘August is the worst for visitor volume. Probably because there are a lot of people on holiday from all over the world. They arrive in Glenfinnan totally stressed and the driving and parking that happens is absolutely off the scale. The actual rudeness and the absolute disregard for people that are living and working in the area and the impact on traffic that has to go through there.’

‘You feel disrespected and trampled on. So, it’s not a good thing for the general psyche of the village.’

One interviewee indicated that the viaduct was not an organised visitor attraction and was unusual in that visitors had to be at the location at a specific time for the experience of seeing the steam train crossing. They suggested that adds to the ‘*crazy pressure*’ locally.

On the busiest days such pressure is generated by cars being parked illegally on damaged verges, or blocking driveways and other access points, or simply being abandoned as visitors run along the road towards vantage points as the steam train approaches. Commercially operated coaches and other tour-providers add to the pervading sense of chaotic congestion when their customers disembark, often on the road. Several interviewees also highlighted health and safety risks caused by the traffic congestion, highlighting the potential difficulties of getting emergency vehicles to accidents if needed. Interviewees also highlighted the negative environmental impacts

of cars and coaches leaving their engines running to give the impression they are not parking.

Aside from the stress generated by such congestion, local people are said to adapt their own travel times out of Glenfinnan when traffic into the village is at its peak.

Specifically, they tend not to leave before 10am as it is impossible to overtake due to the constant flow of incoming traffic with visitors coming to see the steam train cross the viaduct at 11am.

Callop Car Park

There was consensus amongst interviewees regarding both the need for additional car parking to help alleviate current demand and regarding the envisaged site at Callop being the most appropriate location for it. Interviewees expressed a hope that more parking choice would mean that people would be more relaxed. There was also a belief among some interviewees that some of the same problems regarding verge parking would remain as the Callop site would not be large enough to meet all demand. However, it would provide another option for use. In such circumstances, it was suggested by one interviewee that Bear Scotland would have to physically prevent vehicles from parking by installing obstructions on the verge.

A new car park at Callop was not considered likely to have any detrimental effect on the existing timber felling operations in the area. However, some technical issues regarding the proposed site in Callop were raised by interviewees. One highlighted the issue of access suitability and the potential need to improve sightlines due to the curve in the road. The scope for an extra lane to help right-turn entry was also highlighted although recognised as a potentially costly measure.

Several other issues of relevance to the car park were also raised by interviewees. They included a view from one interviewee that coaches should be allowed to go into the National Trust for Scotland car park but not gain access to the proposed car park in Callop.

Another interviewee speculated whether it might be possible to pre-book a space in the community car park in the village at an elevated price for a guaranteed spot.

It was also suggested that creating an extra car park required co-ordinated information and promotion of a 'park and ride' shuttle bus service. One interviewee said that such information should include advanced signage warning when the village car park was full and highlighting the need to use the 'park and ride' service. Another suggested that the proposed *'shuttle bus needs to go to the station and through the village to a car park above the station where there is a turning space'*. Some of the practicalities of running a 'park and ride service were also highlighted by an interviewee. Specifically, the

frequency of the service and where to wait for it coming back to the Callop car park. A related suggestion was to also promote electric bikes and a woodland walk as active travel options if the path on the adjacent area of land in Callop is also (re)developed.

Related Facilities

There was broad agreement amongst locally based interviewees on the need for toilet facilities to be located at the proposed car park in Callop. Similarly, the possibility of including parking and related facilities (i.e. charging points, shower block, waste disposal) was viewed favourably by interviewees. One interviewee suggested that servicing motorhomes and campervans would meet an existing demand which they suggested was partly linked to the popularity of the North Coast 500 route. Another interviewee saw the provision of such parking spaces as beneficial if it alleviated current campervan blocking of the forest road which is disruptive to commercial traffic going to the onshore site for the MOWI fish farms.

The possibility of also including retail provision at the proposed car park in Callop drew more mixed views from interviewees. There was overall agreement that any such new provision would not lead to the displacement of current provision due to the high volume of visitors coming to the village. Several interviewees also noted the lack of available land within the community's control to develop additional facilities.

One interviewee advocated a phased approach to any such provision, stating:

'We need to crawl before we start running. It needs to grow organically.... First and foremost, we need overflow parking with a park and ride... [with the subsequent possibility of] a small retail area, possibly a café.'

Another interviewee suggested:

'[S]pace on a new camping site to have a sort of cafe\retail\craft, sort of all-in-one facility where you could get small souvenirs, that would be open seven days a week. So you can still get a bowl of soup and a sandwich on a Sunday and you can visit the toilets. I think the village needs that and it would hopefully take away from the pressure within the village itself and allow the villagers to still go about their day-to-day work.'

The same interviewee said that Glenfinnan was viewed as a disappointing destination for ‘experiential’ visitors due to its lack of facilities and a central ‘hub’, noting that *‘it either needs to be a focal point and a destination, or nothing happens at all and it suffocates itself’*.

The possibility of including retail space for selling local crafts and other services was also highlighted by several interviewees, as was the possibility of providing a community-owned space for skills development. However, it is important to note that not all interviewees were in favour of including retail provision as part of the proposed car park development. Two interviewees stated:

‘We are happy about the site. We are very worried about having anything above parking there. Toilets great. But a cafe? I think that takes away a very precious space and also means you need much more of a development on a really quite precious site in terms of the ecology. [We] also don't like ‘out of the village’ developments. Retail units have been described to us and we're definitely not in favour of that.’

Another interviewee said that they were ‘*not excited*’ by the potential inclusion of a retail element at Callop but could see the attraction of building that into the overall planning of a new car park.

Path/Boardwalk Development

There was broad consensus amongst interviewees in support of purchasing the second area of land adjacent to the proposed car park site to develop a walking/cycling route to the village. One interviewee expressed an ambition to proceed with the boardwalk project as soon as the land is purchased, ideally via the SCIO. They also suggested that the project could go ahead even if the wider car parking project does not proceed or is delayed. There was also recognition that the path should be fully accessible for people of all abilities and that including a bike-hire facility at the proposed car park in Callop could further encourage active travel.

Sustainability and Capacity

The issue of how the SCIO can remain financially viable in the long-term was raised, with one interviewee suggesting that it will require more than a car park to achieve that. The potential scope for the SCIO to also focus on other facilities, assets and services for

community benefit was also raised. Separately, the SCIO's capacity to manage the current project was highlighted by one interviewee, who stated:

'Having dealt with quite a number of community groups in the past, I have to say that this community is by far the best I've ever come across in terms of the experience that they've got. [T]hey are hugely proactive and obviously experienced and are doing it for all the right reasons.... So, I've got no qualms about the ability of this community to take this on and continue it on'

As noted above, Callop is viewed by interviewees as the best site for the proposed car park. However, some concern was expressed about the financial implications of being left with a 'redundant' car park if the steam train were to stop operating leading to a decline in visitor numbers. Conversely, it was also felt that another operator would most likely take over the service were that to happen.

It was also noted by one interviewee that a new car park and related facilities may bring employment in Callop, but perhaps not be for the local community in Glenfinnan. The same interviewee highlighted the need to emphasise the environmental benefits of the proposal to enhance the viability of any funding bids to support its completion.

Community Consultation Meeting

A 'drop-in' community consultation meeting was held in Glenfinnan on February 26th, 2026, to get views on four specific mobility hub options for Callop which have been prepared by the consultancy team.

Participants provided views in relation to various aspects of the different mobility hub opportunities. The comments are provided in full in Appendix 3. The following is a summary of individual comments, rather than general emerging themes.

To reduce **environmental impacts**, a preference was expressed to contain as much traffic as possible in Callop. Option D was considered preferable by one participant to avoid the flood plain and the possibility of gravel being washed away. It was also suggested that designs should reflect historic links.

The boardwalk should be '**wheelchair accessible**' to meet the 'mobility' ethos of the proposed hub.

Capacity issues were also highlighted. It was suggested by one person that 250 car parking bays would be required on a Bank Holiday weekend and that maximum parking capacity was required, with preserving the village being a priority. More capacity for motorhomes was also highlighted, with a suggested increase from 10 to 20 bays. The

need to provide electric hook-ups for mobile homes was queried due to the perceived '*prohibitive*' cost of providing electricity.

Traffic management issues to consider included local resources to manage the basics of parking etc. and to act as bus workers. One comment indicated that in the view of the writer a light rail connection is the only long-term solution along with a ban on parking in the village. It was also suggested that to be successful, a strong Glenfinnan preventative system needs to operate. It was recognised that traffic is difficult to police with the A830 being a main road. The issue of price and other mechanisms to keep visitors at Callop was also highlighted.

Other traffic management suggestions included prohibiting campervans, motorhomes and cars from parking in the village unless pre-booked with a pass. One comment stated that it would also be essential to have a car park at the west end of the village and a bus shuttle going through the village with a stop at the station. It was also suggested that an alternative walking route would be less attractive due to time constraints faced by most visitors.

General comments included the need to have parking as the priority with ancillary services and a need to clarify timescales. A further suggestion was to turn Callop into a reason to spend a day in Glenfinnan with 'Harry Potter' only being an element of the experience rather than the prime focus.

At a practical level, it was felt important to have lined bays in the car park. It was also suggested that the campervan aires and toilets should be located further east. A further suggestion was that more land should be purchased if the price is right to ensure future proofing.

Site Layout Options

Participants were asked for their views about the various site layout options presented at the meeting.

Several comments were made in relation to **access**. Specifically:

- Whether the old road could be used for entrance and then exit at the current road.
- Access seems to be 'bottle-necky'. Pedestrians need to be kept separate.
- Concern that the Callop entrance with toilets could cause a bottleneck.
- The possibility of having a layby at the entrance to enable passing cars/lorries.

Option D was the preferred option of those who made written comments as follows:

- D preferred but would suggest more land is included to allow expansion.

- D option with necessary alterations according to regs + Planning advice
- Option D. Interesting to note 34 fewer car spaces if coach parking added.

Building Options

Participants were also asked for their views about the building options presented at the meeting for consideration.

Comments on **capacity** included favouring the idea to expand the space and having an open plan shop and café to allow for multiple businesses to share the space.

Comments on **design** included having toilets accessible through a café/shop to encourage footfall in retail spaces. Another comment was that unisex toilets and showers are best.

Several comments relating to **facilities provision** suggested that electrics and washing machines are unnecessary as they will encourage stays that are longer than single overnight stays, when Callop is not intended as a site/destination. It was also highlighted by one response that the permanent café was least favoured in the village survey – yet appears on all 4 options D. One comment asked whether there would be a space for the ranger/proposed apprentices/school groups indoors (space inside a building).

Only two comments were provided in relation to **building design preference**. One comment expressed a preference for Option 1, indicating that commercial/retail provision was '*non-essential*'. The other comment stated, '*Prefer something like Option 3 – some individual units to see how this goes – workshop/retail units for crafters/artisans/food*'.

4. Callop Mobility Hub Development Options

The land at Callop offers the opportunity to provide parking, mode of transport transfer, and a range of services onsite. This section explores the various opportunities in detail.

Parking

The primary need of the site is to provide parking for vehicles. Here we first explore the issues associated with that provision.

Coaches

There have been different suggestions made as to who should be accommodated on site, with some thinking that coach provision should be made at Callop, while the majority think that this be provided for in Glenfinnan, close to the NTS Visitor Centre.

Having reviewed the prior studies and considered the potential operation of the Callop site it would be logical for the provision of parking for coaches to be focussed on Glenfinnan for the following reasons:

- The decanting of coach passengers at Callop to then board a bus introduces inherent inefficiencies. It adds in the unloading and loading of passengers but still requires a bus to take those passengers into the village. In doing so it would add in time to a hard-pressed coach schedule for little, if any, benefit in reducing vehicle numbers heading into the village. The principal problem lies instead with large numbers of cars with smaller numbers of passengers.
- The addition of coach passengers to the Park & Ride bus service would increase the requirement for bus provision and associated drivers, adding considerably to the cost of providing the service.
- It is likely that at peak times the service would not be able to cope with the level of demand leading to delays, low customer satisfaction levels and negative social media comment on the service. This could encourage car drivers to revert to old habits of abandoning vehicles on the A830.
- It is likely that there would be considerable pushback from coach drivers and companies and a level of non-compliance; drivers could still exercise their right to use the A830 and decant their passengers by the roadside, leading to continued public safety issues.
- If coaches are not prioritised at Glenfinnan there will be a greater number of cars able to park there. This will create an increased number of vehicle movements within the village and will send mixed signals to car drivers. The more cars that can park in Glenfinnan the greater the incentive to drive there first to see if there is a space.

Taking these issues into account the logical location for coaches is within the existing two car parks, adjacent to the visitor centre. There could be some accommodation made for coaches at Callop to allow for parking in extreme cases where the coach provision in Glenfinnan is full, or for when the river floods and space in Glenfinnan is either constrained or closed completely.

Cars & Minibuses

The accompanying LUC report identifies the need for a target of 170 spaces to accommodate vehicular needs. These will be needed for peak times so that at quieter times it can be expected that a lesser portion of the car park will be used. Noting that cars have been growing in size and that rural areas tend to have a larger proportion of larger SUV-type vehicles the designs prepared by RaeburnFarquharBowen (See section 5) have a parking bay size of 6m x 3m, rather than the typical standard of 5m x 2.5m. A further larger bay size of 8m x 4m is also required for larger vehicles such as minibuses belonging to private users and campervans stopping to visit the viaduct. Overnight provision for campervans is discussed below.

Longer Stay

Viaduct visitors are currently typically spending no more than two hours on site. Therefore, the turnover of cars in the car park will be rapid. However, there will also be those who are looking to stay for much of the day, or indeed several days.

As well as the visitors to the viaduct there are two other groups who will look to use the car park that involve longer stays. taking advantage of the opportunity to switch to active travel modes which GCF wishes to encourage; whether that is to head into Glenfinnan or walk the hills or cycle the forest roads to the south. Glenfinnan is also the start point for a modest but significant number of people who take a two or three day walk to Inverie through the remote Bounds of Knoydart,¹ with the potential to return to the start point via public transport via Mallaig. Some may also go further, following the Cape Wrath Trail. At least some of the people in these groups will be ones who are currently using the small parking area to the south of the Callop River and which FLS and others would like to see closed off.

These people will require appropriate ticket pricing that covers a vehicle for a full day and for longer periods of up to a week. As longer stay visitors are not the cause of the intense congestion and GCF wishes to promote a slower and more thoughtful form of tourism it is logical to price tickets by the day and not by shorter time periods. This will also act as an encouragement to intended short-term viaduct visitors to stay longer if they become aware of other reasons to linger in the area. It would also be appropriate to

¹ The writer walked this route many years ago, leaving his car in the former car park on the west bank of the river Finnan.

charge only a slightly higher rate (say £10) for multi-day stays in order to discourage inappropriate parking elsewhere.

Shuttle Service

The site is approximately 1.5 miles from Glenfinnan and therefore a shuttle service will be required² to transport passengers from Callop to Glenfinnan. Shiel Buses suggested that a single low floor bus could operate on a 15-minute timetable shuttling from Callop to Glenfinnan with a potential 10-minute service at busy times. This could be supplemented by the 500 service from Fort William to Mallaig calling in to uplift additional passengers. The company is of the view that this approach should be profitable and therefore would not require a subsidy. Given the numbers of people visiting Glenfinnan and the short round trip it is reasonable to expect this to be the case. GCF could therefore come to an agreement with a private company to operate the service at its own risk.

Assuming a maximum capacity of 70 people sitting and standing in a large low floor bus the maximum throughput rate would be in the order of 280 to 350 people per hour in either direction for a single bus, with modest additional capacity provided by the service bus. If numbers of people arriving in cars parking at Callop exceed this level queues will develop and waiting times be extended if there is only one bus available. This would be a distinct risk at times, particularly in advance of the 10.45 steam train so a second bus may be required. Key to maximising turnaround times will be ensuring that the shuttle bus is able to move with the minimum interference from cars looking for parking.

Ticketing & Revenue Management

The maximisation of throughput on the buses will be enabled if everyone purchases a ticket prior to boarding; whether electronic or paper. These could then be shown to the driver or scanned automatically on entry. To ease the process for users it would be logical to have a single ticket for parking and riding on the bus. GCF could manage this by agreeing a price for the bus service at the start of each season, collecting the revenues and passing them on to the bus operator. Such a system would also have the side benefit of ensuring compliance with parking charges without the need to check cars for tickets.

The second area to consider for shared ticketing and revenue is with the National Trust for Scotland. In this case, rather than charging for 2 services (parking and shuttle) it

² Active travel options are considered at section 8

would be collecting joint revenues from a single pooled parking resource. There are several potential benefits here:

- The creation of a single combined car park at Glenfinnan would enable the rationalisation of access to a single-entry point, instead of the current confusing two entry situation.
- The SigmaPM report noted that a reorganisation of the car park could produce extra capacity for 22 cars, 6 coaches, 2 minibuses and 2 motorhomes (or equivalents).
- The pooling of car parking area at Glenfinnan would allow for the most appropriate parking layout and pedestrian routes to be created, enabling a more intuitive pedestrian movement than is currently possible. It could also resolve the issue of coaches parked so close to the visitor centre building that they obscure the access points to it.
- GCF currently employs 3 people at peak and NTS 2.5 or thereabouts in their respective car parks. It is possible that a combined Glenfinnan car park would be able to make efficiency savings, requiring fewer staff to manage a better organised layout which is not operating over capacity (as at present) because Callop is also available.
- A combined team over two sites would allow for staff to co-ordinate with one another, switch from one site to another as required, and allow for all staff to work to the same protocol and be trained to the same standard.
- Pooling the car park will also share risk between the two parties. It would equalise the risk of any one type of vehicle generating less revenue than another and would

The pooling of parking space could be done most simply by agreeing to divide revenue according to the total amount of space committed by each party to the joint parking venture. Such a type of system already operates at the Bayfield car park in Portree where the annual income is adjusted to deduct the transaction fees, annualised costs (to cover maintenance and running costs of the site) less capital loan repayments with the net income then being split on the basis of the percentage of car parking spaces in the ownership of each party (community company & Highland Council). A Memorandum of Understanding should be drawn up to outline how the arrangement would operate which would outline matters of responsibility and liability such as:

- Insurance
- Obligations
- Who employs parking attendants
- Term of the arrangement
- Repair responsibility and cost
- Signage

- Definition of net income and how this is distributed

Cycle and Pedestrian Infrastructure

GCF wishes to encourage visitors to use active travel options to travel onwards to Glenfinnan and to use Callop as a base from which to access the local countryside. The Callop site is ideally placed to support this as it is already an access node for different users.

The adjacent forest road that exits the A830 travels west then south-west down the shores of Loch Shiel, connecting back to the trunk road network at Polloch, allowing for a circular day trip around Ardgour by continuing on the road network. Alternatively, there is the option to head south on the Conaglen estate road and then path over to Conaglen itself which has a wide gravel road for a further 10 miles to the shore of Loch Linnhe. On the north side of the A830 there are a range of tracks through the forest and onto open ground beyond on the Fassfern Estate.

Callop is the preferred starting point for hillwalkers to access the nearby Corbetts of Sgorr Craobh a' Chaorainn, Sgurr Ghiubhsachain and Stob a' Bhealach an Sgriodain, and the Grahams of Meall na Damh and Glas Bheinn. The most commonly used guidebooks published by the Scottish Mountaineering Trust³ direct walkers to the existing car park to be used as a start point, as do websites such as Walk Highlands⁴.

In creating a new car park within 100m of the existing one these two groups of users will be well serviced and there will be no incentive for them to park informally elsewhere.

To encourage active travel to Glenfinnan safe pedestrian/cycle routes will be required through the site (see Section 5) and in addition to parking stands for bikes there is the opportunity to provide a public bike repair stand with integrated tools⁵ to help cyclists service bikes while in the area.

Bike Hire

It is unclear what level of demand there may be at this stage for bike hire on site.

However, given the extremely high number of visitors, it would only require a very small percentage of them to wish to hire a bike to generate a significant demand. A preferred

³ <https://scottishmountaineeringpress.com/product/the-corbetts-smc/> and <https://scottishmountaineeringpress.com/product/the-grahams-the-donalds/>

⁴ <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/fortwilliam/sgurr-ghiubhsachain.shtml>

⁵ See for example: https://securecyclostore.com/product/public-bike-repair-stand-with-pump-mantis-classic-ral5002-blue/?gad_source=1&gad_campaignid=22202445275&gbraid=0AAAAAC-qDtzgX0YhI53eizfr29CVON9o5&gclid=CjwKCAiAwNDMBhBfEiwAd7ti1Bskgf0YuZubliVYQ7efLZzYb776w_LwMZyT8t4FA-31mx1PjjPKDBoCXGYQAvD_BwE

first option may be to offer the opportunity for a private business to operate a bike hire business on site. This would reduce the burden of management on the community which wishes to focus on ensuring the parking operation runs successfully. It would also offer the opportunity for a mountain/trail biking enthusiast to develop a business in a highly attractive location.

If no tenant is forthcoming GCF could seek to manage the bike hire facility itself, potentially using staff who could combine this side of the work with traffic management duties.

Campervan Aires

Aires are low-cost designated sites for campervans and motorhomes that provide basic services such as water and waste disposal for users. In providing these services they fall between the full-service campsites which typically provide toilets, washrooms and other services, and so-called 'wild' camping where vans simply park at the side of the road or in a secluded spot on an informal basis, with no payment being made to the landowner.

The nearest campsite to Glenfinnan is Linnhe Lochside Holidays⁶ which is a major full-service campsite with "Pitches set in terraced gardens overlooking Loch Eil and the Narrows". It offers:

- pitches with electricity
- Toilets and showers
- Shop
- Laundry
- Waste disposal point
- Wifi

The charges for a typical van with 2 adult occupants are £41.50/night.

In contrast an aire would provide a simpler offering for a lower price. This is a quite different segment of the market and would likely attract people who would otherwise park up in random locations and make no payment. In providing waste disposal it would also mitigate the risk of a portion of these campers disposing of their waste illegally. On the Isle of Harris, the North Harris Trust operates an Aire⁷ adjacent to the Trust's recycling facility and council depot, for which it charges a flat rate of £20 which includes

⁶ <https://www.linnhe-lochside-holidays.co.uk/touring/touring/>

⁷ <https://www.north-harris.org/urgha-aire>

electrical hook-up. Payment is made via a card operated ticket machine with tickets to be displayed. Alternatively, an online booking system such as freetobook <https://en.freetobook.com/> can be used to generate business in advance and assist with site management.

The provision of 10 pitches with electricity and water but no other facilities would generate £21,600 at a 60% occupancy rate over a 180-day season. If no electricity were provided a charge of £15/night might be more appropriate which would result in lower revenues of £16,200. Further revenue could be gained from charging for waste disposal for non-resident vans who are passing through the area.

Aire or Improved Provision?

There is an opportunity for GCF to offer an improved provision without aiming at the standards of a full-service campsite. The creation of a toilet block for day users of the car park means that this facility could be available overnight for campervan users as well. If showers were included the service being offered becomes a superior one to that of an aire. The extra cost of cleaning 2 shower units in addition to the toilet cleaning would be fairly low. In this circumstance a rate of £30/nt might be more appropriate.

Risk Management

In needing to create a car park to accommodate the maximum number of vehicles coming to Glenfinnan each day there is considerable risk for GCF SCIO that a downturn of interest in the Glenfinnan viaduct could have a disproportionate impact upon income. If this were to happen the presence of the campervan pitches will help to spread the risk by providing an alternative income stream. In designing the parking spaces to be 3m wide the opportunity is left open for the SCIO to create additional pitches if some of the parking were no longer required by grassing over very second parking space and creating pitches with a 6m gap between them.

Business Space

Development Context

- There are currently no business premises available to let within Glenfinnan and there are no proposals to develop new space by any public sector actor. This creates considerable difficulty for the local community in trying to create new economic opportunities and provide suitable products and services for both locals and visitors.
- The local manager of the National Trust for Scotland (NTS) Visitor Centre has indicated that it would like to provide some retail space for local businesses within its redeveloped building.

- The Pre-Application Advice from The Highland Council states:

“A small ancillary retail element may also be supported, provided it remains subordinate to the primary use and does not undermine nearby centres.”

“Full details of retail development will need to be provided at future application stage, however, a limited, community-focussed retail element may be capable of support provided it serve as an ancillary operation to the car park use and that it will primarily serve users of the facility, or visitors already coming to the locality rather than acting as a new trip-generating destination. Its scale and design should be appropriate to the rural setting, and that the proposal will need to demonstrate that it will not have any significant adverse impact on the vitality or viability of existing centres.”

Potential Demand

GCF convened a group of interested parties to discuss the level of interest there may be in securing business space with 7 businesses taking part. The group met twice in January 2026, visited community developments in Skye on 5th February 2026 and held a third meeting the following day. After reflecting on discussions and what they had learned one party concluded that occupying space at Callop would not be appropriate for their business.

The note of the meeting of 6th February sees the group favour an initial community shop to sell local products with an accompanying “food to go” provision. This approach would accord with building designs options 1&2 prepared by Rural Design (see accompanying document).

The group would also like to see a grouping of business units to meet current expressed needs but recognise that this might be a challenge to achieve planning approval. GCF has raised the potential for this with THC planning department and the officer has indicated that he will prepare an addendum on business unit provision to accompany the extant Pre-Application Advice that has been given.

A grouping of temporary units is explored in Option 3 and more permanent buildings in Option 4 of the building design approach.

Discussion

The provision of additional retail and production facilities in a location with extremely high numbers of visitors will undoubtedly bring significant gains. These will be in the

areas of revenue generated, jobs created and supported, providing additional goods and services to locals and visitors, and enhancing the visitor experience.

While recognising the above, GCF was clear in its brief and subsequent discussions that the provision of the appropriate level of car parking is the principal and most pressing priority for the community. It also wishes to resolve the problem as quickly as possible. Therefore, it will wish to be careful in its approach to the scale of development for several reasons:

- The more retail and production facilities that are sought the greater the risk that planning approval for the project will either not be given or may be delayed.
- Greater levels of development may be more likely to cause objections from neighbours to the proposal.
- Greater levels of infrastructure will require higher capital investment which may make it harder to achieve financial closure and delay construction start.
- The nature of the site with significant peat cover and low soil permeability means that sewage treatment will not be straightforward.

Counterbalancing the above is the argument that some funders e.g. HIE, RCGF (see section 11) have a primary focus on economic development and numbers of jobs created and may find it easier to support a project with greater outputs.

In practice, the highest revenue streams from this project and therefore the greatest economic benefit to the community will come from the parking charges that are levied. The forthcoming guidance from THC can also be expected to give a steer on what may be an upper limit on what is considered acceptable on site.

The high cost of construction and the relatively low return from building rentals would suggest that a level of retail provision for local businesses provided by NTS should be welcomed, as this will reduce the demand for the SCIO to provide space and allow it to concentrate on other community priorities.

In conclusion, unless there are strong indications from statutory bodies to the contrary it would be logical to aim to deliver a modest level of provision as a first stage and add in further provision at a later date if this is permissible and demand is clearly present. The scale of need and demand can be further clarified following the NTS design process when it will become clearer just how much space it is available to provide to local businesses.

5. Illustrative Hub Layout Options

In order to explore the options for delivering the facilities required and desired by GCF the team developed 4 options for the site to illustrate the types of layouts that could be delivered and the opportunities and limitations of each design. Full details are given in RaeburnFarquharBowen's Callop Site Appraisal & Design Options accompanying study.

Site Characteristics

The site has a large rocky outcrop in the centre which is a distinctive feature. The designs keep this feature rather than seeking to remove it for two reasons:

- As the site is in a rural area and adjacent to an SSSI it is appropriate to work with the landscape, rather than against it, and to moderate the intensity of development to a level that is suitable for a rural area.
- It is estimated that it would cost in excess of £300,000 to remove the outcrop and that the necessary work including blasting would be problematic, especially with the closeness of the A830.

The south eastern corner of the site is in an area identified by SEPA as a flood risk zone, and it is also an area of deep peat. Different options explore development in that zone or leave it undeveloped.

Access is via the existing FLS forest road and then the eastward spur which terminates in low lying peatland to the east of the site. A barrier would be installed across the FLS road beyond the entry point to the proposed car park to prevent access to unauthorised vehicles. The barrier would be positioned so as to allow articulated vehicles with trailers to stop without impeding traffic behind seeking to enter the car park.

Option Commonalities

Each option caters for normal parking, accessible parking, minibuses and overnight parking for campervans. Toilet and waiting facilities are provided in a services building. The extent of the building is explored in Rural Design's accompanying study.

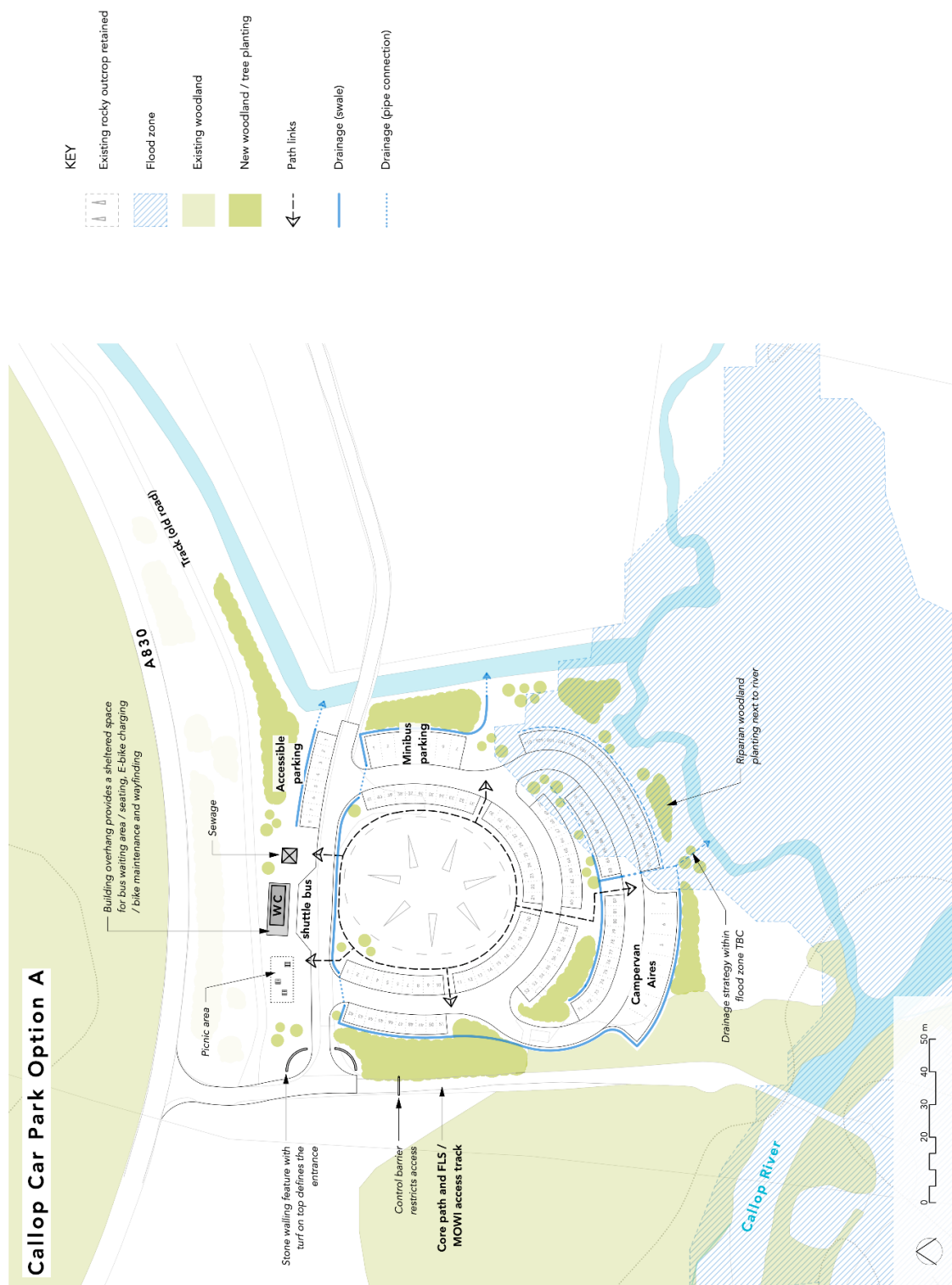


Figure 1: Option A

Option A works within the constraints of the site proposed in the brief bounded by the Callop River to the south and the tributary to the east. The building providing toilets and services is to the north of the access road between the accessible parking and the campervan aires. It provides for:

- 110 parking bays
- 8 accessible parking bays
- 7 minibus bays
- 7 campervan aires

The above provision includes for parking within the flood zone. This is potentially problematic as GCF has found on its site in Glenfinnan where flooding has washed away materials which need to be replaced. It is also not desirable that gravel and fines get washed into local watercourses.

The layout allows arriving cars to see where they will be getting the bus and pedestrian routes aim to separate people and cars within the parking area as much as possible.

The 125 parking bays provided fall somewhat short of the 170 recommended by LUC to cover anticipated needs. If Option A were to be implemented there would be a real risk that provision would be insufficient, people would continue parking by the side of the A830 and thereby encourage future visitors who could park in the car park not to do so.

The positioning of the services building and the pick-up/drop off point for the shuttle would require users to cross the access road, increasing the risk of delays for the bus and arriving vehicles and the risk of pedestrians and vehicles coming into contact.

Option B is a development of Option A, seeking to provide further overspill provision to the east of the identified site on ground that was formerly forested, but is now earmarked for peatland regeneration by FLS. The accessible parking bays are located where the campervan aires were in Option A and the aires are moved to the east of the site adjacent to the overspill parking.

It provides:

- 174 parking bays
- 9 accessible parking bays
- 10 minibus bays
- 7 campervan aires

This option provides sufficient parking to cover anticipated needs but still has a significant number of parking spaces within the flood zone. The campervan aires are now a little distance from the toilet block.

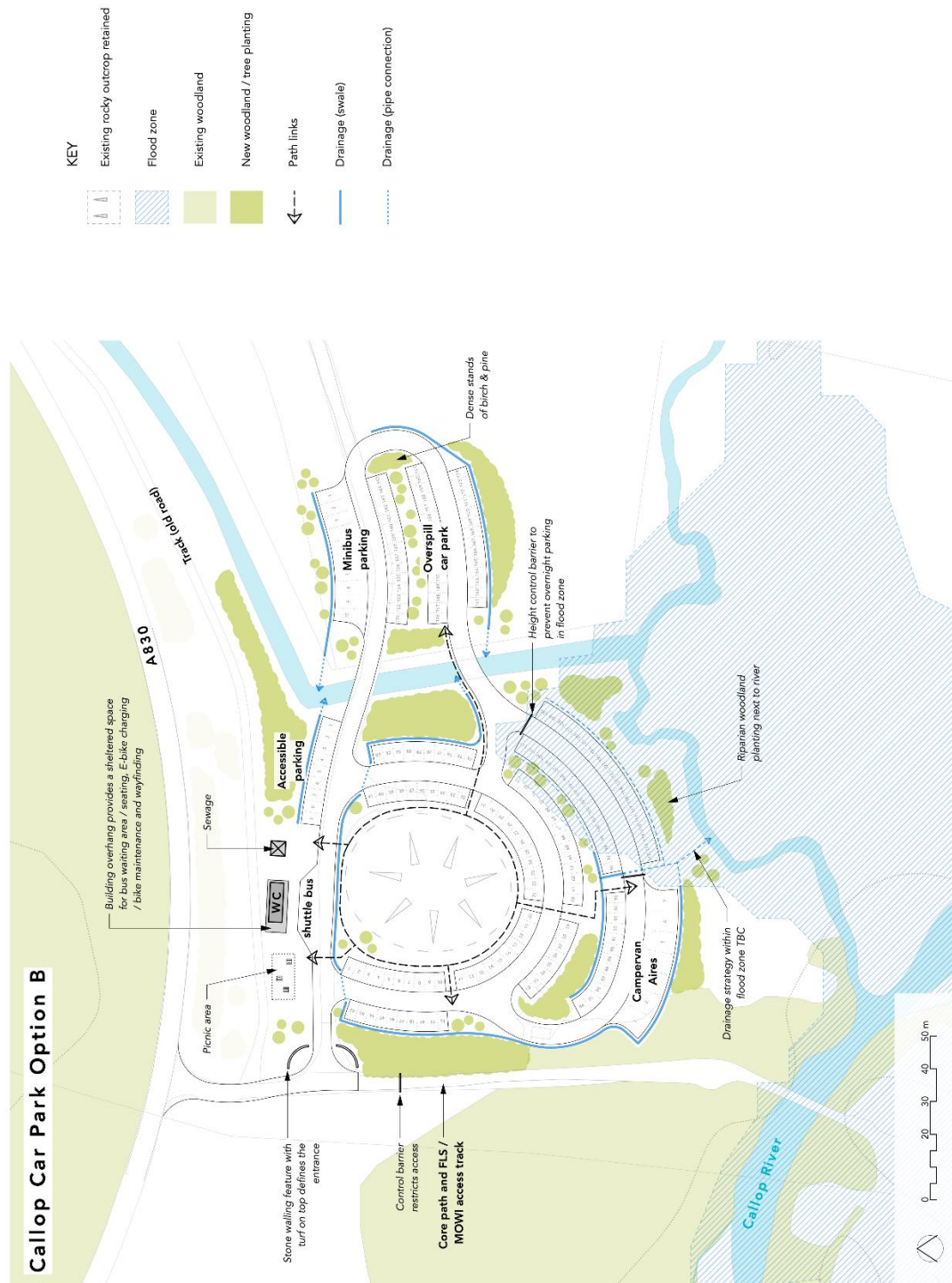


Figure 2: Option B

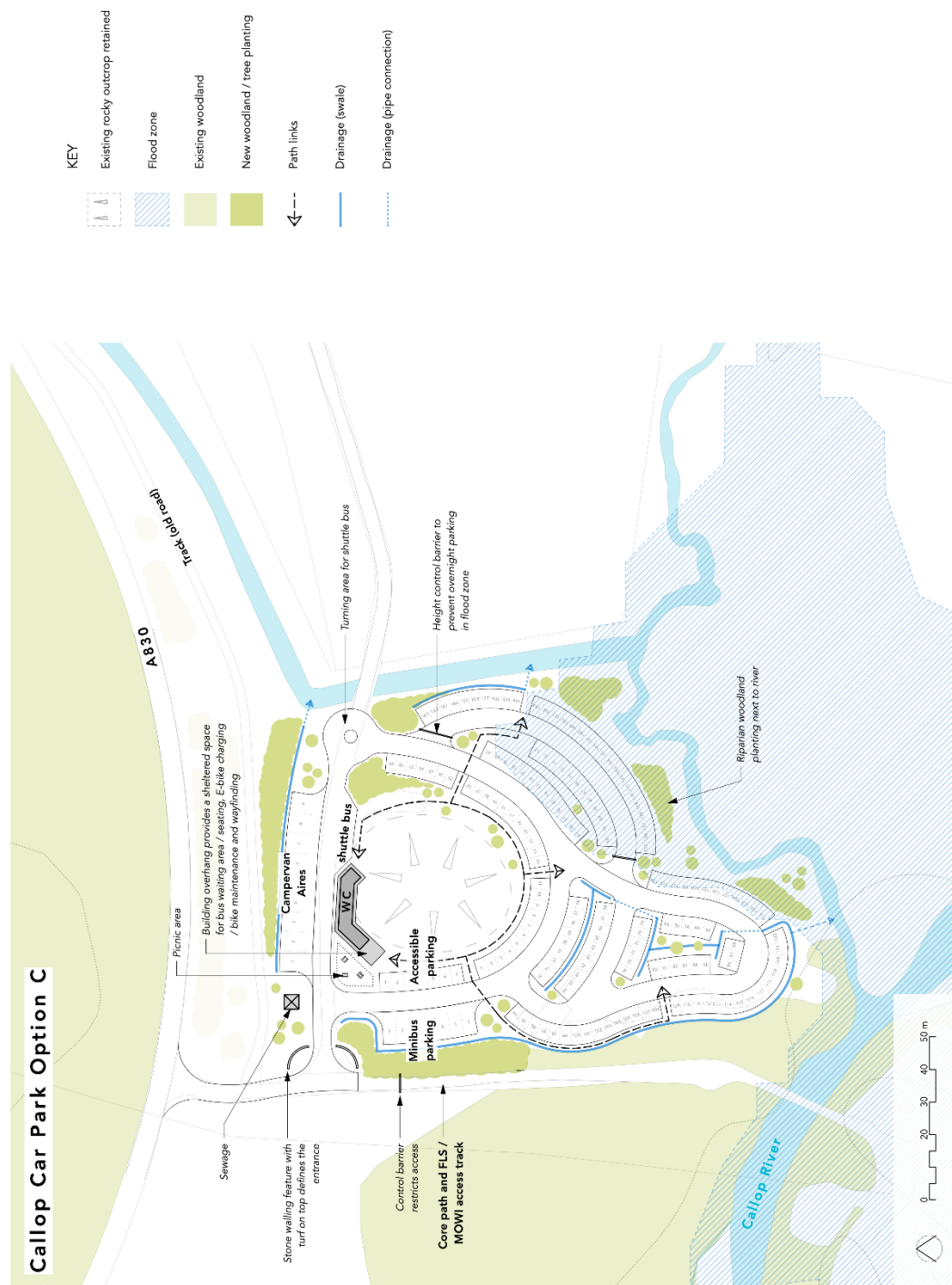


Figure 3: Option C

In **Options C & D** the services building and the pick-up/drop-off point are on the south side of the access road. A turning area is introduced to allow the shuttle bus to enter the site, turn and pick up passengers. The campervan aires are placed on the north side.

Option C provides:

- 163 parking bays
- 7 accessible parking bays
- 7 minibuss bays
- 9 campervan aires

This achieves the desired 170 spaces within the smaller footprint but 43 of these are within the flood risk zone. Two barriers are provided to prevent access to the flood risk area during heavy rain events and at night time.

The siting of the building allows for passengers to be picked up without having to cross the main access road.

The campervan aires are separate from other uses but close to the services building for easy access.

Option D differs from the other options in that it avoids the flood risk zone altogether. Like Option B it has an overspill provision to the east of the site. The diagram also highlights an area for further potential overspill parking provision in the future should demand continue to increase.

Option D provides:

- 167 parking bays
- 7 accessible parking bays
- 7 minibuss bays
- 9 campervan aires

Like Option C the siting of the building allows for passengers to be picked up without having to cross the main access road.

The campervan aires are also separate from other uses but close to the services building for easy access.

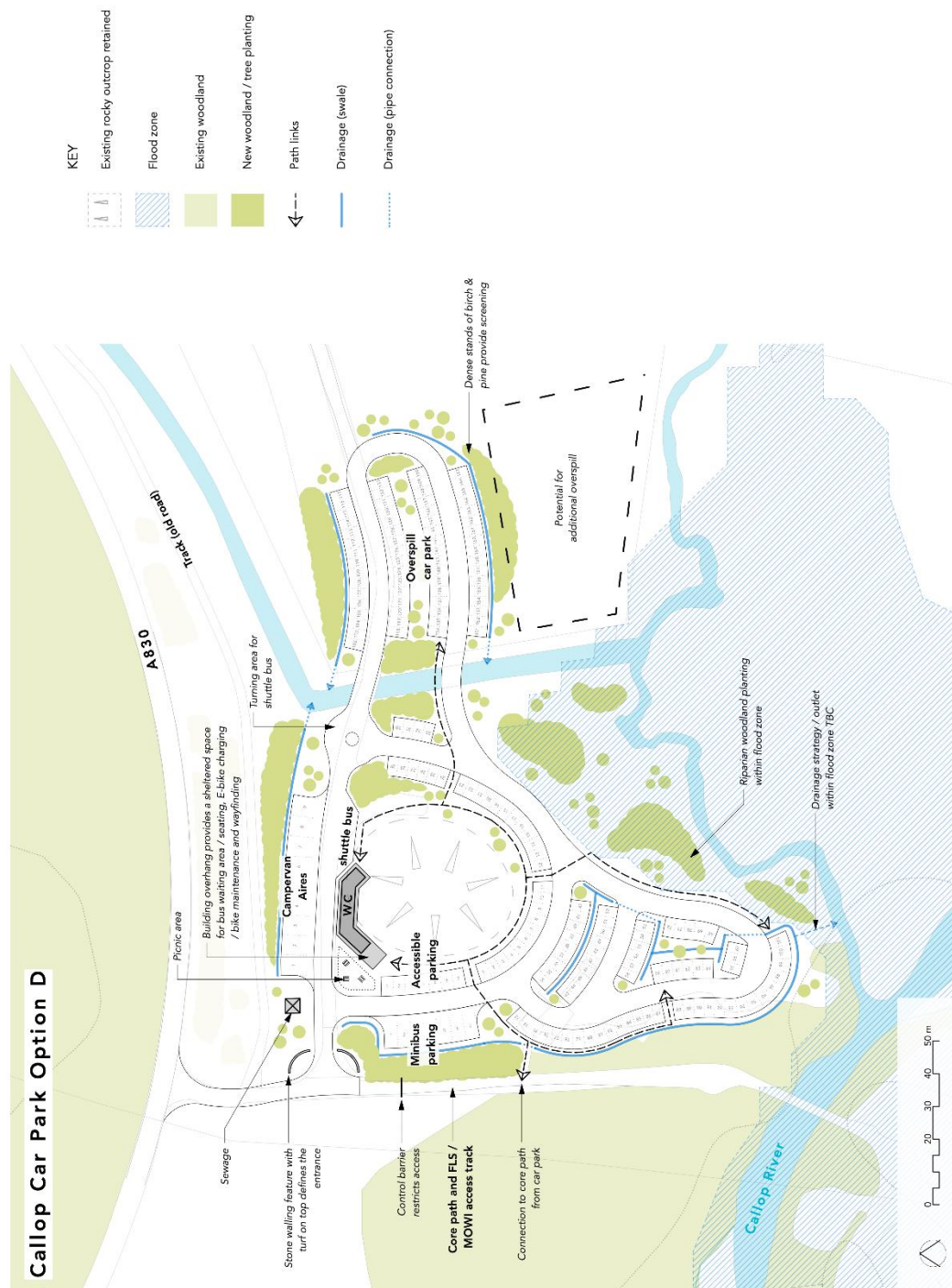


Figure 4: Option D

Discussion & Conclusion

The four options described above explore ways for providing much needed parking and onward transport for those visiting the Glenfinnan Viaduct. They also look at ways for providing overnight campervan facilities for those vans which will be displaced from the FLS parking area to the south of the Callop River.

Option A does not provide enough parking space for the expected demand and can be discarded. The location of the services building in Option B is less than ideal and risks compromising turnaround times for the shuttle bus and safety for pedestrians.

Options B & C have a weakness in that they achieve the required numbers through building on land that is likely to flood. The existing community car park in Glenfinnan floods and has to be closed at times. In such circumstances it would be preferable to be able to host traffic displaced from that site at Callop, but Options B&C are likely to have curtailed capacity during the same rain events.

Option D avoids the area likely to flood and offers the opportunity for future expansion within a clearly defined area, should this become a necessity. Given the explosive growth in traffic seen in the area it would be prudent to plan ahead and allow for expansion with a design that maximises resilience against expected weather events.

6. Alternative Solutions

The brief for this study was clear in that the mobility hub focus was to be based on the Callop site and to operate with a shuttle bus to Glenfinnan. Two other options were raised during the study that are briefly considered here.

Rail Siding

One suggestion that was made was for the construction of a rail siding at Callop and to use that to provide a shuttle service to Glenfinnan. The railway runs close to the site and could therefore potentially provide a service either as an alternative to or complementary to a bus shuttle.

Discussions with HiTRANS identified a number of issues that would make the delivery of a successful service this way challenging:

- Main attraction is seeing steam over the viaduct from the hill/below, not travelling over it on diesel unit
- For park n ride trains could not be frequent enough versus bus and would have therefore have limited capacity
- A project would need to be done east of the overbridge on the A830, and would probably require a siding of 175m.
- There is an uphill gradient from Callop to Glenfinnan making it more difficult and slower for a train to gain momentum
- A feasibility study for a similar project at Faslane estimated the capital cost to be £8m+

While a project may be technically viable, the capital costs involved and the potential development time mean that it could not provide an answer to the immediate congestion crisis that Glenfinnan faces, and that at best it would only likely prove to be a partial solution and not a replacement for a shuttle bus service.

Light Rail

In response to earlier community engagement carried out in August 2025 a suggestion was made for a light rail service to run from between callop and the NTS Visitor Centre. GCF followed this up and found that indicative costs for this type of infrastructure are in the region of £20-30m/km with many projects exceeding this. The suggestion was discussed with HiTRANS in November 2025 but was ruled out as being a non-starter due to the technical, financial and political challenges that would be associated with it.

7. Callop Woodland

Sections 4&5 have considered the key issues related to developing the park and ride facility at Callop. Sections 7&8 will now explore the Callop Woodland and considers its role as a potential community asset and as an active travel link to between Callop and Glenfinnan. This assessment is laid out in 4 sections:

- 1. Physical description**
- 2. Woodland Management**
- 3. Rural skills, volunteering, environmental education**
- 4. Employment, enterprise and costs**

Physical description

The boundaries and rationale for choice of Callop Area A are described in the footnote⁸ below.

Callop (area A) extends to 22.54 hectares south of the Callop River, it contains fen, swamp and wet grassland, stands of riparian trees, open bodies of water and higher drier land, including knolls, with mixtures of tree species over bracken, blueberry, acid grassland and heather.

The riparian woodland fringe includes scarce habitat – Alder (*Alnus glutinosa*) woodland on floodplains – with Common Alder, Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*) and Willow species (*Salix caprea*, *Salix, cinerea* and others). On higher, drier ground, up from the floodplain and next to the forest road, vegetation includes Downy birch, Willow, Rowan (*Sorbus aucuparia*), Sessile oak (*Quercus petraea*) and Scots pine (*Pinus Sylvestris*, var *Scotica*). There are three lochans on the floodplain south of the river, including Lochan Dubh-ghlaic, and when the site was visited in December most of the western portion – joining Loch Shiel – was under water. The site includes Caledonian Woodland Habitat, as detailed by Forestry and Land Scotland Land Management Plan (LMP) – East Loch Shiel LMP⁹, notably on the Torran Giubhais promontory.

Walking northwest on the forest road, from the small car park on the south side of the bridge, which provides forest and Cona Glen estate cottage access, on the flat, at roadside, there are pockets of Downy birch (*Betula pubescens*) some over bracken, this

⁸ Area A (22.54 ha) is part of the ground identified in the FLS map system as Forest:519 Block:51. Specifically that area bounded on the south by the northern verge of the forestry track (so that the track is NOT included in the CAT request), bounded on the north, by the south bank of the River Callop. Bounded on the west by a line extending in a south-south easterly direction from grid reference NM90845 80322 to grid reference NM 90960 80077, that line being chosen specifically to avoid overlap with the Special Protection Area that covers the whole of Loch Shiel and its banks, and bounded on the east by the line of the forest road as it turns North East to cross the bridge over the River Callop at grid reference NM 92428 79223.

⁹ [East Loch Shiel Land Management Plan | Forestry and Land Scotland](#)

above the fens and wet grassland of the floodplain. As the ground rises next to the road, (heading west), tussock grassland dominates the floodplain riparian habitats with patches of bracken on higher drier ground. Downy birch is common and there is the odd Sessile oak and occasional Scots pine. Where trees dominate, the stands may best be described as open woodland, Downy birch and alder on the floodplain, and oak-birch-pine on a series of promontories that overtop the floodplain. The areas of higher ground have a mix of bracken, blueberry and heather vegetation, one appears to be an extension of Sroine Garbhe, and the other, the more northerly is called Torran Giubhais. Both named promontories have paths, a well-used and existing circular path on Torran Giubhais and a disused ex FLS created path on Sroine Garbhe.

Natural regeneration of trees was not immediately evident across much of the site, however, there is good anecdotal evidence (from an experienced local forester), that there is regeneration of Sessile oak, albeit somewhat suppressed due to deer browsing, this mostly on the morainic knolls. Natural regeneration was abundant on Torran Giubhais, this perhaps because of the paths and human traffic which may discourage deer, and much regeneration was on steeper slopes. Beech (*Fagus sylvatica*), Rowan, Downy birch, Holly (*Ilex aquifolium*), appeared plentiful, beech and birch having grown beyond browse height.

The Callop area is covered by a number of conservation designations, including the Ardgour Pinewoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC)¹⁰, the Loch Shiel SSSI¹¹ and the Loch Shiel Special Protection Area. The latter Loch Shiel designations pertain principally to the oligotrophic nature of Loch Shiel and the number of breeding Black-throated Divers¹². Additional notified features include native pinewood, upland oak woodland, the bryophyte assemblages and Chequered skipper butterflies.

The Ardgour pinewoods SAC¹³ specifically identifies native Scots pine stands, at the north of Loch Shiel, as is present on Torran Giubhais, and to a lesser extent on Sroine Garbhe. It also identifies the Alder, alluvial forests, as notified – of which there is only 14.81ha within the 1,645.96ha of SAC area. A proportion of these floodplain Alder woodlands are likely within the Callop area.

Woodland management

The Callop area identified by GCF for purchase from FLS has high conservation value, which is according to NatureScot (SNH) condition assessment surveys compromised

¹⁰ [conservation-advice-package.pdf](#)

¹¹ [sssi-citation.pdf](#)

¹² [spa-citation.pdf](#)

¹³ [site-management-statement.pdf](#)

by a mix of environmentally damaging factors including, high levels of deer browsing and the presence of invasive exotic plants, such as *Rhododendron ponticum*.

Active management of Callop will provide opportunities for volunteering and training, thus delivering a mix of ecological and socio-economic objectives, however such management is, to an extent, reliant on the quality of site access. The site has access from two points –

1. From the north, Glenfinnan Visitor Centre, along a path that is need of some TLC, to a bridge over the Callop River, and thence up a path on to Torran Giubhais and beyond the FLS haul road. Boardwalk has been removed by FLS and could be reinstated (dealt with elsewhere). This access could be used by work parties, school groups and guided walks, accessing the site on foot, and,

2. From a small car park, on the south side of the bridge connecting the forest road to the A830 (FLS single point of access to Glenhurich Forest). This access is used by large lorries for timber haulage and for transporting fish farm feed and live/processed fish. Access solely along the length of the FLS forest road for woodland management is less than optimal. It would be desirable, over time, to create linked paths, walkways from the small car park, northwest across the site.

Management activities will include, but not be limited to the following, and can be carried out and supervised by a GCF employed Community Ranger/Project officer, guided by experienced community members working with volunteers, trainees and apprentices,

- Conserving and expanding woodland and protecting naturally regenerating trees such as Sessile oak, Holly and Scots pine. This by erecting small scale deer fenced exclosures (10m*10m) around groups of regenerating trees and building individual tree boxes/cages around individual tree saplings (see Training below),
- Removing exotic invasives including *Rhododendron ponticum*, this may also apply to Beech, *Rhododendron* bushes can be cut back and glyphosate plugged or sprayed,
- Access construction and path maintenance – although access is covered in section 8 of this report it is worth noting that short sections of linked path/boardwalk, taking pedestrian volunteers and trainees away from the forest road, is key to accessing much of the site. This can be done by building short sections of boardwalk using local material (timber cut from locally sourced larch), and constructing short path sections by cutting back vegetation (trimmer and brush cutter training),
- Seed collecting – pine, alder and oak seed collection for a small local tree nursery (see Business Opportunities),

- Training in Rural Skills for young people – as well as equipping young people with Lantra certified skills, training can be used as a management mechanism to carry out maintenance tasks, such as vegetation management – linking to potential Rhododendron based clearance on neighbouring Estates, path and board walk construction and maintenance, tree care – including protecting natural regeneration and new planting,
- Seasonal guided walks and educational visits. Guided walks can be themed i.e., historical, biodiversity or landscape/geology. Educational visits can tie in with Environmental education provision, see below.
- In the event of Red deer continuing to impact the site it may be necessary for GCF to consider options relating to deer culling. Whilst there may be a legal impediment on FLS doing so at present, this may not be the case on community owned land.

Rural skills, volunteering, environmental education

Rural Skills

Woodland management at Callop can be carried out through the provision of rural skills courses for young local people, and older folk if there is demand. A suitably qualified Community Ranger/Project officer, employed by the community group, can manage a rural skills training programme. Such a programme can be designed for secondary pupils, say from Mallaig High School and/or Lochaber High School; with the Community Ranger providing the organisation and oversight of LANTRA certified courses for young people, such as, basic chainsaw, pesticide spraying and quad biking. Other examples of rural skills courses include rope access and stock/deer fencing and could include mobile saw milling and timber handling – a local estate has a mobile sawmill and there are experienced and trained local people available to coordinate this activity.

Youngsters may be drawn from CDT Department courses – if taught in local secondary schools – or from SVQ courses. The presence of UHI in Fort William, which offers Countryside Skills and Rangering SCQF 5¹⁴, could provide trainee partnership working, and /or candidates for Modern Apprenticeships (see Employment). Alternatively, links to other Lochaber based groups such as Lochaber Hope¹⁵ and Lochaber Rural Education Trust¹⁶ could assist in identifying potential candidates for rural skills training.

A comparator for this type of training is Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust (HPCLT) who have successfully run Rural Skills courses for 8 years, working closely with

¹⁴ [NQ Countryside Skills with Ranger Training SCQF 5 \(Fort William and Abriachan\) course](#)

¹⁵ [Training | Lochaber Hope](#)

¹⁶ [Lochaber Rural Education Trust](#)

the Rural Skills Department at Breadalbane Academy. To date some 84 young people have been trained, and gone on to find employment, most in the land-based sector. Most youth on these courses are 16-19 years old, are often not fully engaged with academia and have a leaning towards land-based industries such as gamekeeping, farming and forestry. The HPCLT course has attracted funding from SSE, local wind farms and Scottish Charitable Trusts and has culminated in two annual Modern Apprenticeship places (see Employment below).

Volunteering

Volunteer working is an excellent way to engage the wider community and members of the public and to give people an appreciation of the value of the Callop environment. Working in small teams to achieve environmental improvement, albeit in sometimes unglamorous tasks, is a way to provide a feeling of worth and wellbeing from working outside.

A volunteering programme can facilitate outdoors opportunities for Glenfinnan and beyond for more mature members of the community, notably recent retirees, as well as for part time workers and those interested in acquiring outdoor skills and gaining associated health and well-being benefits.

Environmental education

Callop can offer environmental education activities such as tree planting days, bug hunts, pond dipping and outdoor events for local Primary Schools, such as Arisaig, Lady Lovat, Mallaig, Banavie, Caol, Inverlochy and Bun-Sgoil Gàidhlig. A Community Ranger, employed by the GCF, could liaise with local schools and establish the potential demand/need for environmental education and lead school-based activities. There are local community links, at Glenfinnan, to the Lochaber Rural Education Trust LRET¹⁷, whose audience includes local Primary Schools and the LRET may also be a route to young people seeking Rural Skills Training.

Employment, enterprise and costs

Employment

GCF Employee - GCF could employ a Community Ranger/Project officer to oversee land management and outreach activities (training, volunteering and education). This post could operate on a 3-day week. One day running volunteering activities/educational activities (on site or at a local school), one day with trainees/apprentices), and one day administration and co-ordination.

¹⁷ [Lochaber Rural Education Trust](#)

Apprentices - GCF could provide an extension to the Rural Skills training concept, by employing two young people, for a year, as Modern Apprentices. This type of working has been pioneered by Highland Perthshire Communities Land Trust (HPCLT) who are working with local partners, Forestry and Land Scotland, National Trust for Scotland at Ben Lawers and the Dalchosnie & Kynachan Estate, to provide Rural Skills Modern Apprenticeships for those who have successfully completed the [Dùn Coillich Rural Skills Traineeship](#).

Apprenticeships operate across land held by the partner organisations, and this is entirely feasible at Glenfinnan with FLS as neighbours and partners at Callop, the presence of NTS at Glenfinnan and the potential for working with a friendly/likeminded local estate, such as Glenaladale Estate. In the past Glenfinnan Estate hosted Outward Bound youngsters.

A yearlong apprenticeship could offer young people the opportunity to earn a wage and gain an industry-recognised qualification. Two posts could be made available per year on a fixed term contract, resulting in a Modern Apprenticeship in Rural Skills SCQF (Scottish Credit & Qualifications Framework) Level 5.

Enterprise

The land area at Callop (excluding proposed car park area) does not offer much in the way of local enterprise opportunities, the woodland is not in great shape and there is little scope for extracting timber for local use, such as firewood. There are however, a number of iconic local trees with historical links.

Tree nursery - the modest number of old native Scots pine at Callop are likely remnants of the South West Group of native pinewoods (as detailed in the SSSI and SAC references above), which are considered genetically distinct from those found elsewhere in Scotland. These trees could provide a valuable source of genetically different Scots pine seed for growing on in a local nursery. The recently retired Glenfinnan Estate Manager (Alistair Gibson) is experienced in cone collection, seed extraction and seedling growing. Whilst raising small numbers of seedling may not generate large amounts of income, there is scope for using locally grown seedlings, rather than seedlings brought into the area, for expanding the Callop pinewoods, and there could be potential for small batches of seedlings to be potted up and sold at the NTS Glenfinnan Centre. This also applies to local Sessile oak and Common alder seed and seedlings. Trainees and apprentices could be involved in such an endeavour.

Biochar/charcoal – as above there is little if any scope for using trees on the SSI and SAC land for timber, firewood or biochar/charcoal. There is a local estate, Glenaladale, who are looking at the economic potential for using Rhododendron wood, from clearance, in a new biochar enterprise. This could link to the Callop, either through trainees or apprentices, gaining experience in vegetation management. And if the

enterprise were successful then it could provide employment for trainees and apprentices after completing their time at Callop within a GCF programme.

Costs

The following costs have been extrapolated from actual costs (at HPCLT) for a part time Community Ranger / Project officer, to manage the Callop site and run a trainee and apprenticeship programme.

GCF Costs of Callop Trainee and Apprentice Scheme	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Totals
Wages				
Project officer (£19/hr (£34,580)+ pension contribution) 4 days per week	22428	22428	22428	67284
Apprenticeship Costs				
Wages (28hr week @Real living wage (£12.60/hr) (£18,345.6)+ pension)	37118	37118	37118	111354
Training fund (£1.5K per apprentice)	3000	3000	3000	9000
Travel apprentices (50 miles/week)	1200	1200	1200	3600
PPE (boots/waterproofs/thermals)	600	600	600	1800
RSS Apprentice admin and Assessment	5400	5400	5400	16200
Traineeship Costs				
Trainee training	4829	4829	4829	14486
Trainee travel (Minibus hire @ £150/day for 30 days)	4500	4500	4500	13500
Trainee PPE (£50/trainee)	400	400	400	1200
Project Overheads				
Staff Travel	1800	1800	1800	5400
Insurance (employers and public liability)	1200	1200	1200	3600
Office costs	2000	2000	2000	6000
Educational/public events/guided walks	400	400	400	1200
Maintenance/Materials/tools	1200	1200	1200	3600
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	86074.5	86074.5	86074.5	258224

Income

Income projections are somewhat generalised, and more research is required on what funds may be available locally, and at a regional level. The HPCLT example relies heavily on local SSE Wind Farm funding, a very large Perth based funder, with priority given to

Perth and Kinross, and Perth and Kinross Council, who administer an employability fund.

For GCF, Highland Council could be a potential source of funding for employability, however it is unclear what HCs commitment is to youth training and employment – their web site does not function¹⁸. A search for Highland Council grant funding for youth takes you to Play Parks¹⁹ and volunteering funds are directed towards National Lottery funding. The Highland and Islands Environment Foundation²⁰ is a source of funding for communities taking environmental action and the Community Action fund²¹, within the National Lottery, can fund between £20k and £250k. Alternatively Young Start²², also with the National Lottery, offers between £20k and £100k.

¹⁸ [Page not found – Highland Council](#)

¹⁹ [Play parks in the Highlands - Highland Council](#)

²⁰ [Grants Archive - Highlands & Islands Environment Foundation](#)

²¹ [Community Action | The National Lottery Community Fund](#)

²² [Young Start | The National Lottery Community Fund](#)

8. Active Travel Links to Glenfinnan

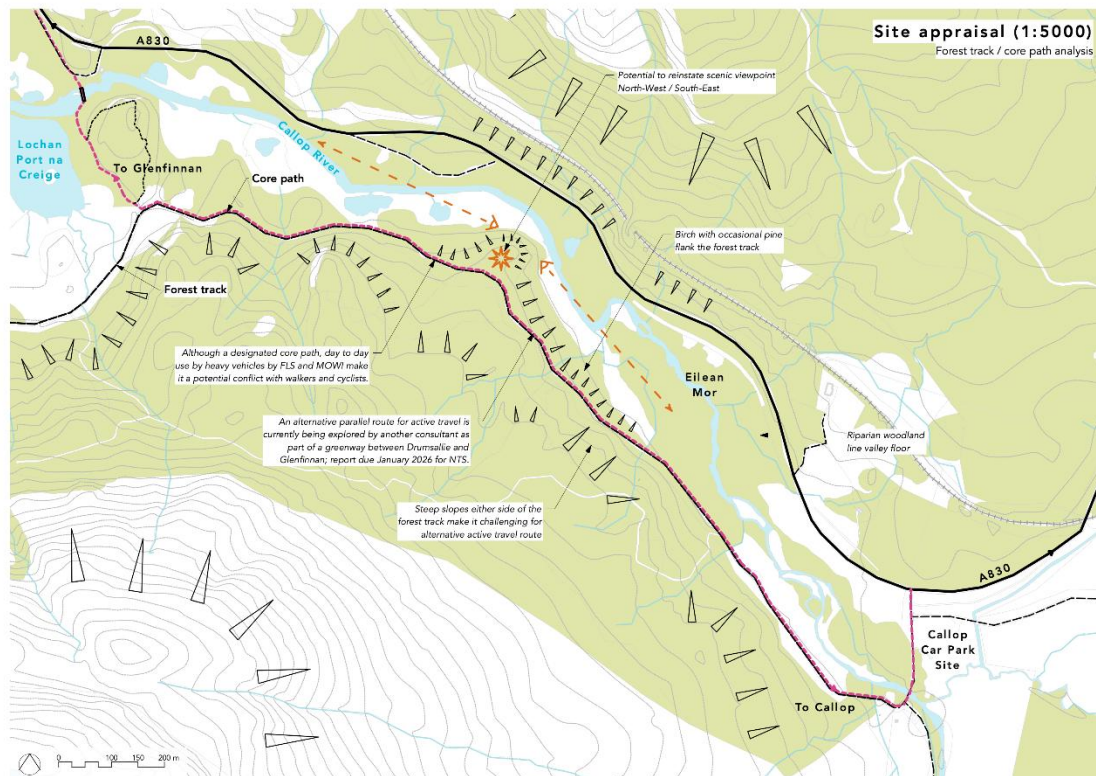


Figure 5: Core path from Callop to Glenfinnan

The potential mobility hub site at Callop has historically been linked to Glenfinnan via a Highland Council designated core path (Figure 5) which is the forest road heading north-west to Loch Shiel, running roughly parallel to the A830, then a short linking section from the forest road to a bridge over the Callop river, followed by a boardwalk to the NTS Visitor Centre in Glenfinnan.

There are three current issues with this route that have an impact upon its suitability as an all-abilities route to Glenfinnan:

- The route ascends 20m and then descends 20m between the two locations with gradients steeper than preferable.
- The linking section used to include a boardwalk which was removed by FLS after it initially decayed due to lack of maintenance and was then severely damaged in a storm.
- The road is a haul road for timber with expected major harvesting operations using the road over coming years. Therefore, FLS have concerns over public safety with lorry/pedestrian/cyclist interactions.

The separate Glenfinnan Greenway study is considering options for creating an active travel route from Drumsallie (approx. 2 ½ miles east of Callop) to Glenfinnan, which is part of a wider aspiration to extend the National Cycle Network from Fort William to Mallaig. The study is still to be published but the routes from the east under consideration all converge at Callop and there is an option being considered that would pass through the Callop woodland and would require the reinstatement of the boardwalk.

Boardwalk Reinstatement

The boardwalk case would undoubtedly be strengthened if it was ultimately chosen as the preferred active travel route. However, it has an important role on its own as a key facilitator for locals to enjoy the area, walking from Glenfinnan to Torran Giubhais. The reinstatement of the boardwalk would enable a circular walk to be enjoyed once again which would allow people to walk around Torran Giubhais, giving them significant views over to Loch Shiel and eastwards along the Callop River. This would also make for an excellent walk for visitors who had chosen to take the shuttle bus to Glenfinnan but nevertheless wish to explore more of the local area.

Design Options

RaeburnFarquharBowen have outlined 2 options for reinstating the boardwalk:

- **Option A** offers a minimum specification with a width of 1.5m extending to 3.5m in specific viewpoint areas. It would have a raised edge on sections that were less than 600mm above ground level and a handrail on sections above 600mm above ground level.
- **Option B** would have a minimum width of 2.5m widening out to 4m in places. This option complies with Cycling by Design guidance for a two-way shared remote track (min 2.5m width - ideal 4m width).

Option B would be preferable if significant numbers of cyclists are expected (as would be the case with this route being the preferred active travel route between Callop and Glenfinnan).

Cost Estimates

The price of replacing the boardwalk can be estimated from the Paths for all 2023 Pricing Guide²³ which provides detailed specifications and price ranges e.g. £200.50-£245/m² for a low-level timber boardwalk with edge rails and £244 to £248.50/m² for raised timber boardwalk with handrails. Given the remoteness of the location and the

²³ <https://walkingscotland.org.uk/resource/path-projects-estimating-price-guide/>

fact that the boardwalk will be built over partially flooded areas it is appropriate to use the figure at the upper end of the range.

Option A

- Total area of 473m² comprising 185m² without handrail and 288m² with handrail
- £127,261 for timber construction
- £152,806 for recycled plastic construction

Option B

- Total area of 729m² comprising 293m² without handrail and 436m² with handrail
- £195,827 for timber construction
- £234,926 for recycled plastic construction

There is an approximate 20% cost uplift for using recycled plastic, but it is a more durable material and would result in lower long term maintenance costs.

9. Financial Analysis

Glenfinnan Community Facilities SCIO & Glenfinnan Enterprises Ltd – Existing Car Park

The community company and its trading subsidiary have been operating a 100 space car park in Glenfinnan since spring 2021 and has been highly successful and provided much needed income to help support the community company's development activities.

The capital cost of the car park and equipment was £525,000 with construction primarily funded by grants from RTIF & LEADER.

A summary of the trading performance for the 4 years ended 31 May 2025 is provided below:

Glenfinnan Car Park				
Car Park Income (net of VAT)				
	31/5/25	31/05/24	31/5/23	31/5/22
Turnover	349,647	270,057	212,371	181,651
Wages	95,066	60,008	39,682	22,439
Rent	142	245	175	596
Light & heat	49			
Hire of plant & machinery	975	845		
Telephone	1,088	814	500	350
Insurance	4,078	3,748	2,580	2,133
Post & stationery	529			
Advertising		377		
Repairs & renewals	28,599	4,082	14,241	3,410
Sundry	908	153	118	
Accountancy	2,739	1,372	1,200	
Professional fees		300		618
Protective clothing	480	861	570	
Training		2,105		500
Finance costs	37,853	27,153	19,477	15,762
Depreciation	30,569	30,167	28,878	27,910
Total Expenses	203,075	132,230	107,421	73,718
Net profit	146,572	137,827	104,950	107,933

Turnover has continued to increase year on year with increased tourist numbers putting additional pressure on the facilities provided. 3 individuals are now provided with employment as car park attendants during the summer months with 2 of those retained on a part-time basis during the winter months.

In the 24/25 year additional repairs were required which is to be expected as the car park is now established and has begins to show some wear and tear. Funds will need to be set aside on an annual basis to cover ongoing maintenance.

The 2025 actual financial performance per month has also been summarised below and informs the base case scenario for a new car park facility.

Profit and Loss by Month														
Glenfinnan Enterprises Ltd														
1 January 2025-31 December, 2025														
	January 2025	February 2025	March 2025	April 2025	May 2025	June 2025	July 2025	August 2025	September 2025	October 2025	November 2025	December 2025	Total	
Income														
1 Car Park Sales	8,523	5,097	11,487	38,000	47,108	45,604	53,358	56,088	45,421	33,098	8,123	8,267	360,173	
Expenses														
229 Rent			25			25					25		75	
230 Rates & Water	65	65	65	65	65	260	195	130		130	130	130	1,300	
233 Light & Heat		37	12								38	12	99	
255 Wages	3,425	3,790	8,896	9,663	10,413	10,170	12,308	11,599	10,803	16,863	6,736	6,733	111,399	
Pension	72	67	204	208	219	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	770	
Taxes	263	-	217	914	-	191	227	201	191	296	148	148	2,363	
263 Telephone & Internet	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	600	
264 Post & Stationery			529					450					979	
272 Repairs & Renewals	184	3,909	3,357	2,204	5,638				8,063	330			23,685	
280 Sundry			37		100					199		56	392	
285 Accountancy	348	1,735		174			174		34	2,025			4,490	
326 Protective clothing			480			241						683	1,405	
378 Bank Charges											25		25	
379 Transaction fees	921	550	1,241	4,104	5,088	4,925	5,763	6,057	4,905	3,575	877	893	38,899	
Purchases	323	96		285		283		5,142		1,089		515	7,734	
Report on transport infrastructure									1,775				1,775	
Total for Expenses	5,651	10,082	15,810	16,753	21,573	16,146	18,718	23,629	25,821	24,557	8,030	9,220	195,990	
Net Operating Income	2,872	- 4,986	- 4,324	21,247	25,535	29,458	34,641	32,458	19,600	8,541	94	- 953	164,183	
Other Income														
130 Interest Received		0	3	1	201		1	0			4	0	210	
Total for Other Income	-	0	3	1	201	-	1	0	-	-	4	0	210	
Net Income	2,872	- 4,985	- 4,320	21,248	25,737	29,458	34,642	32,458	19,600	8,541	97	- 953	164,394	

Financial Illustration

A financial illustration has been prepared to consider how the income and expenditure of a new car park at Callop may work once the car park is fully operational using the 2025 existing Glenfinnan base case scenario as a starting point.

Callop car park income

It is assumed that the pattern of income at Callop will follow a similar seasonal and daily pattern as it does in the existing car park albeit that there will be increased revenue

from an additional 167 spaces versus the existing 100 spaces. Income is based on 143 spaces though as the LUC Transportation Note suggests that a minimum target of 143 spaces is required, but possibly up to 170 to provide some future-proofing, therefore it is prudent to use the lower target figure for financial projections.

However, given that it is expected that the existing car park will continue to provide parking which is in closer proximity to the local attractions, therefore Callop with a higher capacity may not fill each space as many times in the day. The assumption has therefore been made that the income will be reduced by 20% per space. This 20% reduction is informed by the LUC report. However, given that the demand peaks in July & August, the shoulder months of April & October have been adjusted by a 40% reduction and May, June & September by 30% reduction to ensure that the projected income is not overstated when there is still some potential capacity at the original car park.

It is also assumed that this new car park will only operate in the 7 main summer months as it does not make sense to operate this larger car park when the original car park is much quieter in the winter months.

Car park operating expenses

Car park operating expenses have been informed by the known costs from the existing car park. For most expenses, this assumed that there is a similar level of operating costs for the two car parks, including the same number of car park attendants. The car park is likely to be closed in the winter months, however, as with the original car park, there is anticipated to be some wage costs over the winter as there will be management costs required to prepare for the next season and as with the existing car park the community company has a desire to retain staff even on a part time basis over the winter as a good employer and to maintain continuity of staffing into the subsequent season.

The transaction fee costs however are based on a percentage of the income level to reflect the existing arrangement.

A monthly profit and loss illustration has been prepared using Option D for the new car park at Callop. In addition, the various options are shown with annual income and expenditure figures illustrating options A-D for various car park sizes plus variations of option D for different scale of infrastructure added for business units (options D1 – D4).

Campervan Aires

Options A-D for car parking includes some scope to include campervan Aires. An annual income and expenditure illustration has been prepared showing the potential

income generated from this additional revenue source. Options A & B include 7 aires and options C & D include 9 aires.

It is assumed that the Aires will also include electricity hook-ups, but there are also illustrations for income on the basis of not providing electricity, and also an option for additional revenue should shower facilities be provided at a later stage of the Callop development. This option is a possibility in plan D2 where showers are provided alongside the toilet block.

Callop							
Projected Annual Income & Expenditure							
Campervan Aire						Option D2	
		With electricity		Without electricity		With showers	
Income		9	7	9	7	9	7
Campervan hook-ups	£20 per night, seasonal, 60% occupancy, Net of VAT	16,200	12,600	12,150	9,450	24,300	18,900
		16,200	12,600	12,150	9,450	24,300	18,900
Expenditure							
Campervan hook-up electricity	10% provision	1,620	1,260			1,620	1,260
Cleaning	1hr per day x 26 weeks x £25 plus on costs					5,233	5,233
Admin	4hr per week x 26 weeks x £25 plus on costs	2,990	2,990	2,990	2,990	2,990	2,990
		4,610	4,250	2,990	2,990	9,843	9,483
Net surplus		11,590	8,350	9,160	6,460	14,458	9,418

Business Units

Options D1 – D4 show plans for varying levels of development at Callop including business units which would be rented out to third party businesses to operate on the site. It is assumed that these would be provided as basic units with flexibility for the tenants to fit out the units as required for the business that they plan to operate from that location.

Rental income from these units is illustrated at a basic level of £120 per square metre for the purposes of these projections on the basis that it would be mutually beneficial for the tenants and GCF to have the units occupied and provide additional services to car park users, however, this would be the minimum level of rent suggested. Rent level would need to be considered at the time that the units are built and being occupied to reflect a reasonable market value rent at that time and the standard of fitout provided to the tenants.

It is assumed that utility costs would be covered by the business unit tenants.

Annual rental income is summarised below:

Callop					
Business Units					
		Option	Option	Option	Option
Sq. mtrs.		1	2	3	4
Small café		50	50	50	50
<i>Small shop (no)</i>			1	3	5
Small shops			30	90	150
<i>Multipurpose (no)</i>				1	2
Multipurpose				35	70
Total sq. mtrs.		50	81	175	270
Annual rent @ £120 per sq. mtr.		6,000	9,720	21,000	32,400
<i>Trailer unit spaces</i>				3	
Trailer unit site rental				9,000	
Total income from business units		6,000	9,720	30,000	32,400

Summary of Options

A summary of the profit and loss accounts for the various options are summarised below incorporating the income from campervan Aires and business units as well for illustrative purposes.

This illustration only takes into account the operating income and expenditure but none of the capital costs or further development opportunities that may be taken forward in relation to environmental restoration or forestry projects.

These operating figures do however show that additional operating revenue ranging from £9K - £122K could be generated on an annual basis.

Annual profit and Loss									
Glenfinnan Enterprises Ltd									
	A	B	C	D	D1	D2i	D2ii	D3	D4
Income									
Callop Car Park income	180,460	273,425	273,425	273,425	273,425	273,425	273,425	273,425	273,425
Campervan Aires net surplus	8,350	8,350	11,590	11,590	11,590	11,590	14,458	11,590	11,590
Business unit rental					6,000	9,720	9,720	30,000	32,400
Total income	188,810	281,775	285,015	285,015	291,015	294,735	297,602	315,015	317,415
Expenses									
229 Rent									
230 Rates & Water	3,240	3,240	3,240	3,240	3,240	3,240	3,240	3,240	3,240
233 Light & Heat	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640	2,640
Insurance	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000	6,000
255 Wages	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000	124,000
263 Telephone & Internet	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
264 Post & Stationery	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
272 Repairs & Renewals	18,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000	24,000
280 Sundry	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600	600
285 Accountancy	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400	2,400
326 Protective clothing	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200	1,200
378 Bank Charges	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50	50
379 Transaction fees	19,490	29,530	29,530	29,530	29,530	29,530	29,530	29,530	29,530
Total for Expenses	179,420	195,460	195,460	195,460	195,460	195,460	195,460	195,460	195,460
Net Operating Income	9,391	86,315	89,555	89,555	95,555	99,275	102,142	119,555	121,955

The figures above illustrate the operation once it is established to illustrate the expected operating potential of the site. It is expected that this might take a few years to build up, therefore the next stage of the process will build up a realistic 5 year operating income and expenditure projection depending on the favoured design option chosen.

Wage costs could potentially reduced by only looking to have seasonal employment or minimal staffing in the summer months, however, there is an expectation that additional management/marketing costs will arise in order to maximise the traffic management opportunities that will be created by the additional capacity of having the Callop car park. Wages cost allowances have therefore been maintained at a reasonable level to allow for an element of co-ordination in addition to car park attendants.

10. Project Development Challenges

The tender brief issued by GCF identified several issues that could have an impact upon the ability to develop a successful project. We consider each of these issues in turn:

Ownership of Roadside Strip

The GCF brief noted that Fassfern Estate owned the strip of land between the former line of the A830 which lies within the proposed purchase site and the realigned road. This is an important strip of land because a redesigned junction is expected to require part of that land to create a slip road and wider bell mouth. The Factor of Fassfern estate confirmed that it is supportive of the community's efforts to find a solution and would be supportive to that end.

In checking the Scotland's Land Information Service website²⁴ the title for the FLS landholding is seen in pink in Figure 6. The A830 can be seen as the green forming a loop in the upper centre of the image. The strip of land between the A830 and the FLS landholding which is assumed to belong to Fassfern is not registered on the Land Register. The issue was raised with the Factor of the estate who has said that they would investigate.

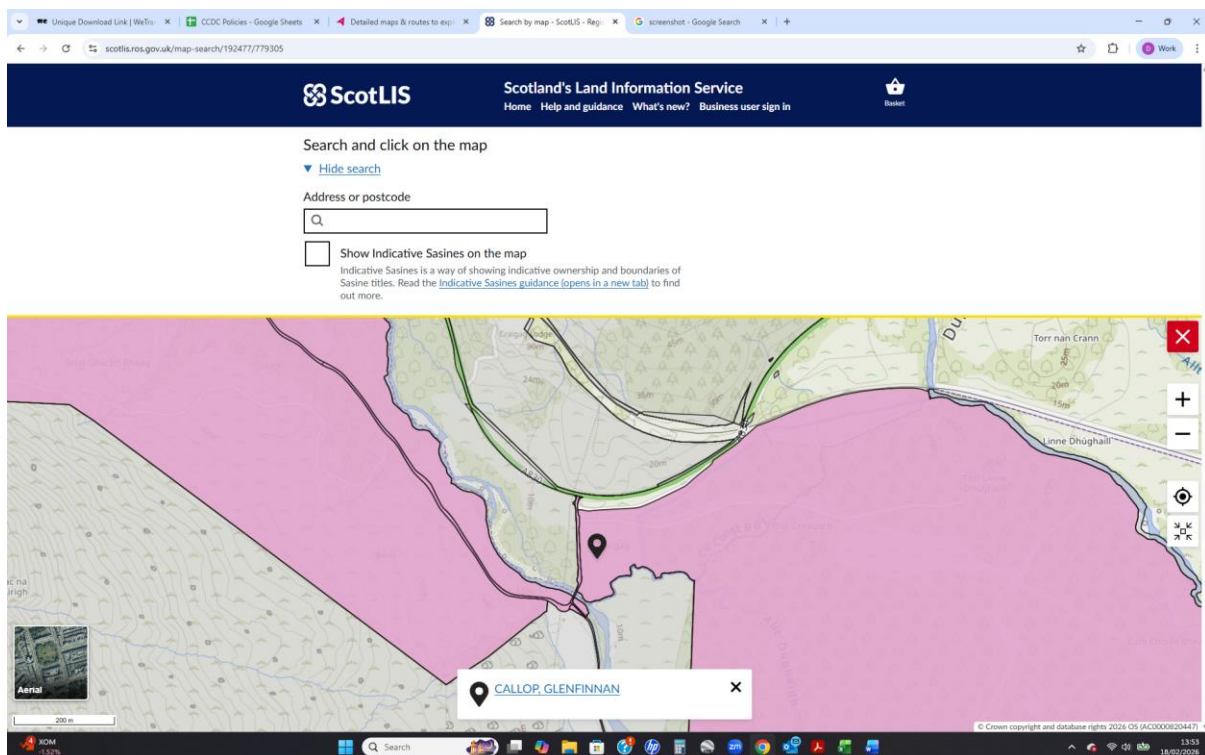


Figure 6: ScotLIS FLS title map (part)

²⁴ <https://scotlis.ros.gov.uk/map-search/192477/779305>

Further investigation on our part found that Fassfern has registered the estate under title INV41559²⁵ which shows that it has registered its land holding to the boundary of the current A830 (Figure 7). One possibility considered was that this may be the result of a mapping error in transposing data from the former title on the Register of Sasines to a map for registration on the Land Register.

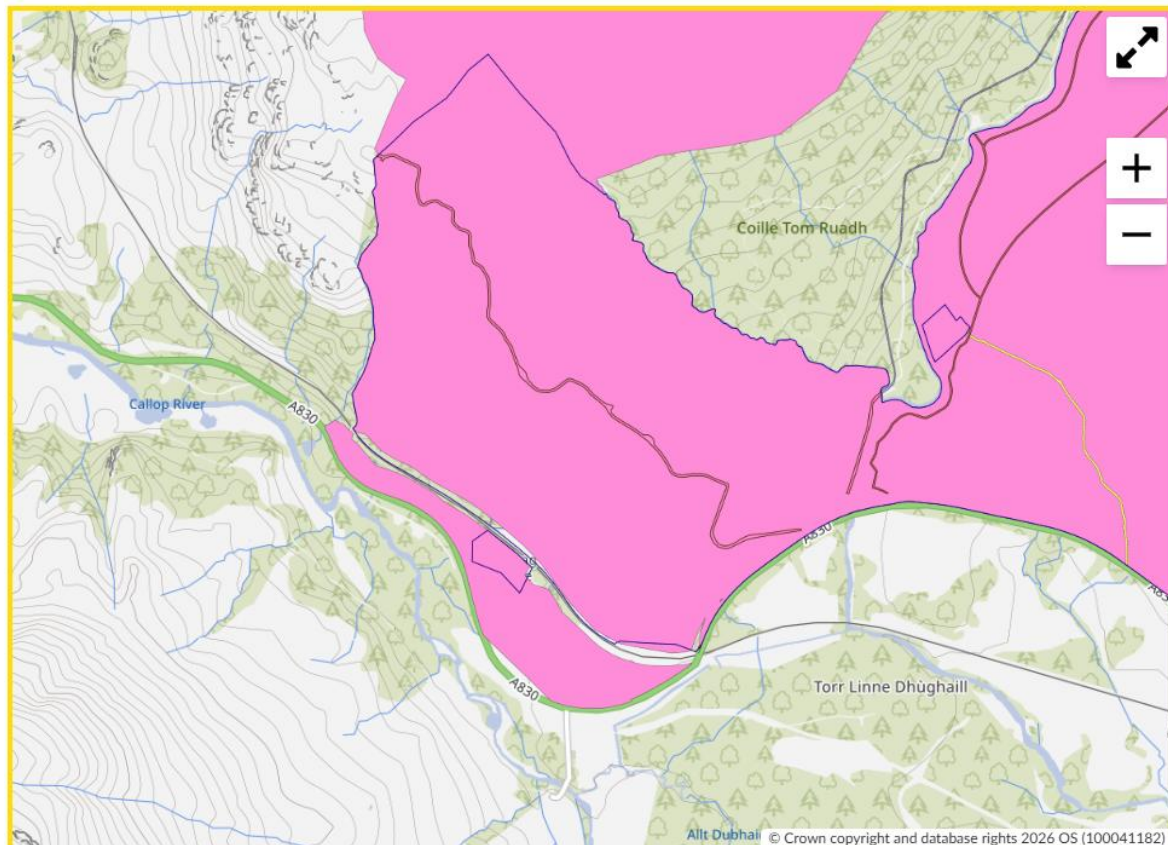


Figure 7: Fassfern Land register map entry (part)

The other possibility is that the Scottish Ministers may have purchased the land at the time of the realignment of the A830. Initially this was thought unlikely as there is land registered to Scottish Ministers nearby on the other side of the A830 under title INV26958²⁶ registered in 2010. However, further investigation by GCF indicates otherwise. The land referred to as "Craigag Estate" which included that strip of land came into the ownership of West Highland Woodlands Ltd on 7 May 1959. A portion of that land was sold to The Secretary of State for Scotland on 9 June 1970, as part of a land purchase to enable the re-alignment of the A830 in 1971.

²⁵ <https://scotlis.ros.gov.uk/property-summary/INV41559>

²⁶ <https://scotlis.ros.gov.uk/property-summary/INV26958>

The only uncertainty stems from the fact that the 1970 disposition only refers to "*That plot or area of ground extending to Twenty-two thousand Three Hundred and Five square yards or thereby [roughly the right amount of land] lying on the north side of the Fort William to Mallaig Trunk Road [that's north of the old road] at Craigag in the Parish of Kilmallie and County of Inverness all as the said plot or area of ground is delineated and coloured pink and marked plot number 14 on the plan Number 1.*" But unfortunately, "plan Number 1" is not attached to the copy deed held by Registers of Scotland, nor is a duplicate plan held by the National Archives of Scotland. GCF will continue to try to track down a copy of "plan Number 1" to resolve the issue.

Transport Scotland

Prior advice from Transport Scotland had indicated that the development of the site, particularly for coaches would require a significantly improved junction and noted that a 215m visibility splay required for a 60mph carriageway would not be achieved. It therefore suggested carrying out a speed survey which was contracted by LUC as part of this study. The study found that the 85th percentile speed was 54.1mph (87kph) which would give a desirable stopping distance of 167m. LUC consider this achievable with the cutting back of vegetation, the removal of the rocky outcrop by the roadside and the widening of junction radii. The full findings are in Chapter 4 of its Transport Note.

Consent to Develop on Peatland and Natural Heritage Issues

Three separate parties were identified as having a potential interest in the issues associated with developing on peatland: FLS, The Highland Council, and NatureScot. The latter body also has a wider natural heritage interest in designated sites.

FLS

In discussion with FLS regarding the potential purchase several issues were raised with respect to deep peat:

- The area to the east of the initially identified land at Callop has been designated as a peat recovery area by FLS after trees that were on deep peat have been removed. This is the area that the present consultants have identified as needed additional land for the delivery of a successful project. FLS would need to take into account the risk of fragmentation of habitat.
- It was noted that The Highland Council will take into account developing on peat in its decision-making process for a planning application.
- It was advised that the advice of NatureScot be sought over its view on development on deep peat.

It is considered that the risk of fragmentation of habitat is minor in this case because the area of deep peat in question is at the western extremity of the peat bog area and the area involved is a tiny fraction of the whole.

The Highland Council

GCF received THC's Pre-Application Advice to its test proposal while this study was underway. The Advice states:

"The principle of the development is acceptable and is considered to accord with National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policies 29 (Rural Development) and 30 (Tourism) which supports development where proposals enhance visitor management, improve safety, contribute to rural resilience and relieve pressure on existing infrastructure."

With respect to deep peat it advises:

"The development lies within a Class 1 carbon-rich peatland area, meaning Policy 5 (Soils) of NPF4 applies. A detailed peat survey is required, and the proposal must demonstrate avoidance and minimisation of peat disturbance, with any unavoidable impacts clearly justified. Although community benefit may support the proposal in principle under Policy 5, development on deep peat requires strong evidence and careful design."

It further states:

"Such proposals will only be supported where they fall within one of the policy's defined categories, including:

- essential infrastructure with a specific locational need and no reasonable alternative site;*
- renewable energy development that optimises the area's contribution to emissions-reduction targets;*
- small-scale proposals directly linked to an existing rural business, farm or croft;*
- development that supports a fragile rural or island community; or*
- restoration of peatland habitats.*

The case under the first bullet point would appear to be solid given that the problem being tackled is huge, involves reducing risks on public roads and prior studies have shown that there is no alternative site. That said, further design stages will require to take Policy 5 into full account and seek to minimise peat disturbance through good design and construction processes.

NatureScot

A NatureScot officer from the Fort William office advised that NatureScot would not take an interest in small scale peat operations outside of designated areas and would leave those issues to be dealt with through the planning process. Species of note in the SSI designation include chequered skipper butterfly, beetles and reptiles. She noted that chequered skippers are unlikely to be in the proposed development area but that the ground is good habitat for reptiles, so adders are likely. When they hibernate they put down material like carpet tiles and hibernate underneath. Knowledgeable people can therefore know how to find them and can also look for skin sheds etc. If hibernating adders are found these can easily be moved prior to construction.

Other Planning Issues

The Pre-Application Advice provided by THC is comprehensive and we would draw GCF's attention to the need to conduct a number of studies prior to submitting a planning application. These are:

- A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment (FRA)
- Drainage Impact Assessment (DIA)
- Transport Statement
- Protected Species Survey
- Tree Survey

Specific species can require surveying at specific times of the year. It would therefore be advisable to speak to an ecologist at the earliest opportunity to consider when surveys will need to be carried out. NatureScot will be happy to review a survey report prior to planning submission to ensure that it is in the correct form.

11. Funding Opportunities

GCF will need to draw together a complete funding package that will cover the capital costs of the provision of a mobility hub incorporating the necessary parking, building provision and associated infrastructure. Further funding will be required to deliver the active travel route to Glenfinnan and to support community and educational activities in the Callop woodland.

The following are a number of key funders to which GCF could apply:

1. **Scottish Land Fund.** The fund has £8m/yr for community purchases of land and other assets. It can give up to 95% grant on capital and revenue costs, although with restricted funds at the current time grant rates in the region of 70% or less are becoming more common. GCF can apply for Stage 2 funding towards the purchase price and associated legal costs. If GCF is able to secure a discount on the sale price of the property to be purchased from FLS this can be credited as a community contribution.
2. **Scottish Government Regeneration Capital Grant Fund²⁷.** This fund has been running for some years now and is administered through local authorities with large capital awards being made for some projects. It favours projects with strong community input and community-led projects have been successful in securing funding in recent years. In 2025-26 six of the fourteen awards were for sums in excess of £1m with the largest award being for £2.14m. Stage 1 applications which submit outline details of a project generally need to be submitted by May/June of each year and if successful a detailed Stage 2 application is submitted in September-November, with construction works to be delivered in the following financial year.
3. **Highland Council Capital Discretionary Fund.** This fund offers grants of between £10,000 and £250,000 to community projects. The funding covers capital costs only and there is an expectation that it will be combined with other funds.
4. **Highland Coastal Communities Fund.** Highland Council administers this funding which comes through the Scottish Government distributing 50% of annual profits generated by the Crown Estate. In 2021/22 the allocation for Lochaber was £562,032²⁸ from a total available of £3,260,091 across Highland region. The average award level was £34,758 and of the 94 projects funded across the Highland Council area 42 were for “Community Facilities/Infrastructure”. Grant awards for individual projects are expected to be in the range of £5-100,000. The Highland allocation for 2025-26 had risen to

²⁷ <https://www.gov.scot/policies/regeneration/capital-investment/>

²⁸ [Highland Coastal Communities Fund | Highland Coastal Communities Fund 2021/22 Review](#)

£3,886,450. Projects must be within 5km of the coast to be eligible. Callop is within 5km of the western shore of Loch Eil.

5. **Highlands & Islands Enterprise.** HIE's resources have been reduced in recent years but the organisation is still able to contribute significantly to community-led projects. HIE would most likely play a smaller role in funding and make any contribution once an overall funding package becomes clearer, following contributions from principal funders.
6. **Private Grant-making Trusts.** There are a number of private trusts that support community and natural heritage projects. Their support levels will be lower than the main funders but could be crucial in completing a package of funding. Key trusts to which GCF could apply include:
 - a. Garfield Weston Foundation
 - b. Hugh Fraser Foundation
 - c. Esmee Fairbairn Foundation

Appendices

Appendix 1 – List of Consultees

Emily Bryce (National Trust for Scotland)

David Robertson (Area Visitor Services Manager, Forestry and Land Scotland)

Rebecca Carr (Community Asset Transfer Manager, Forestry and Land Scotland)

Chris Tracey, (Forest planning Manager, Forestry and Land Scotland)

Lorna Stewart (Factor, Fassfern Estate)

Shaun Entwistle (Craigag Lodge)

David Mosgrove, Conaglen Estate Factor for Broadland Properties Ltd

David Mann (Glenfinnan Resident, Project managing the re-instatement of the boardwalk)

Ally Entwistle (Chair, Glenfinnan Community Council)

Frances Whyte, The Church of St Mary and St Finnan

Hege Hernaes (Glenfinnan Station Trust)

John Barnes (Glenfinnan Station Trust)

Neil MacRae (Senior Partnership Manager, HiTRANS)

Frank Roach (Partnership Manager, HiTRANS)

Ian MacGillivray (SigmaPM)

William Langdon (Highland Council, Planning Case officer)

David MacGillivray (Owner/director, Shiel buses)

David Phillips (Managing director, Shiel buses)

Scott Maclean, MOWI Scotland

Johnny Ormenisan (General Manager, Glenfinnan House Hotel)

Kirsty Mann (Owner/manager, The Stage House B&B)

Duncan Gibson (Chef/manager of The Dining Car at Glenfinnan Station)

Dr Jessica Boucher, Glenfinnan Biochar Project

Appendix 2 - Thematic Summary of Stakeholder Comments

Impacts of Visitor Volume

- Visit Glenfinnan created to attract visitors. 'Be careful what you wish for'.
- Small community and 'such a tsunami of [visitors]'.
- Volume of traffic causing potential blockages for emergency services.
- 'August is the worst for visitor volume. Probably because there are a lot of people on holiday from all over the world. They arrive in Glenfinnan totally stressed and the driving and parking that happens is absolutely off the scale. The actual rudeness and the absolute disregard for people that are living and working in the area, the impact on traffic that has to go through there.'
- Negative environmental impact as cars and buses leave engines running, pretending they are not parking.
- One interviewee would like to see no traffic going up hill as turning and coming back down adds to congestion.
- Two types of visitors: 1) experiential e.g. see Glenfinnan as a destination and want to spend time there.
- 2) 'tickboxers' e.g. want to see the viaduct/train and leave. Need to cater for both types.
- Not an organised visitor attraction. Unusual to have to be somewhere at specific time for experience. Adds to 'crazy pressure', locally.
- Accident at MOWI site & ambulance unable to get to pontoon due to car parking on single track road.
- Verges damaged by parking.

- Traditional coach parties were fine. 15 yrs ago, 12-15 seaters started coming, now all have full size coaches. '..It's like Wacky Races coming out of Edinburgh in the morning'.
- Post-pandemic upsurge in visitor numbers.
- Lots of international visitors in SUVs/people carriers (some Asian-run operators serving Asian customers).
- 'A white knuckle ride for everyone who was coming'.
- Locals adapt their time for leaving to 10am as impossible to overtake with constant oncoming traffic.
- Need to focus on environmental impact of visitor volume. Need a national level strategy [from Visit Scotland].
- Viaduct is spectacular but also very hyped. Also, free which is a big problem.
- Visitors coming throughout the year, but July and August are intolerable months.
- Lots of visitors come for Harry Potter connection. Others because the image of the viaduct 'floats across the world'.
- Viaduct visitors get more desperate as train time approaches. Locals feel 'disrespected and trampled on'. Not a good thing 'for the general psyche of the village'. A commodification of the village although there is no commodity to be sold.
- 'Motorhomes are a real problem. Campervans you can manage'.
- Visitor situation is 'a double-edged sword'. Necessity for local businesses but brings very different type of visitor to Highlands than normally visits.
- On busiest of days cars can be parked solid on verge to end of drive. Apart from that folk just abandon vehicles and run along road. 10 minutes before the train is due and when car parks are full people spend time driving up and down village.

- 75% have travelled from abroad. Don't know about wardens. Reckons half won't pay because it is a rental car.

Callop Carpark

- If more parking choice, hopefully people would be more relaxed.
- Will still have some of same problems with verge parking etc because Callop won't be big enough. But at least providing another option.
- Scope to pre-book space in village at elevated price for guaranteed spot?
- Coaches should be allowed to go into the NTS car park and not into the proposed Callop carpark.
- Callop best site in area for size and location. Hesitation due to reliance on attraction of steam train run by private operator. Worry that community would but in car park that a) isn't big enough or b) is redundant if the steam train stops running.
- No impact on timber operations and no views on suitability of site for carpark.
- [Callop site] - Don't think there would be any issues.
- Danger – suitability of access and egress into site. A bit of work to improve sightlines would lead to lesser problem. Talk of extra lane for entry but might be costly. Will really help the situation.
- Can't just put in an extra car park – must get information out to people as well. Really push the idea of free shuttle bus. Possibly push woodland walk and electric bikes as opportunities. A lovely spot.
- If a new car park there might still not be enough spaces. It might attract even more people to come. In that case, Bear Scotland to physically stop them with obstructions on the verge.
- Curve of the road is not brilliant. Does not help with right turns if coming from Mallaig. Trunk road manager might have a view on access.

Park and Ride

- Park and Ride needed with advanced signage warning to say when village car-park full and need to use park and ride.
- Practicalities of running a park and ride service. Frequency of service; where to wait for it coming back? Will they start walking on the road? Lots of human consequences to account for.
- Shuttle bus needs to go to the station and through the village to a car park above the station where there is a turning space.
- Seasonal - enough capacity for a 30 sec frequency demand for a bus for next 25 years. Regulatory regime for a rail operation is much more complex than for a road. If diff envt such a route would be incredibly popular. Would it diminish demand?

Additional Services / Retail at Callop Carpark

- Room for food service at Callop site, as would serve demand rather than overprovision/displacement.
- Servicing motorhomes/campervans would meet a demand (partly linked to North Coast 500).
- Scope for a craft shop and/or Gaelic cultural centre.
- Scope to provide business space for existing small businesses (e.g. smokehouse; candle company; coffee company)?
- 'Need to crawl before we can run'. Priority is overflow parking with park and ride. And walkway incorporating a loop to walk into the village. In the evenings, have aires for campervans.
- Possibility of small retail area, possibly a cafe. More than enough business to go around.
- Community carpark does not accept coaches.

- Happy about Callop site but 'very worried' about anything above parking and toilets there. Not in favour of retail units or 'out of village' development. Displacement not an issue. Case of not extending the village (e.g. keeping the village contained and its identity, rather than spreading the boundaries).
- Potential wee shop for midgie screen, crafts etc. Potentially a mini "Green Welly" as people doing Cape Wrath Trail. No spare land in the village for a shop.
- Not excited by retail element at Callop but see the attraction of building into the overall planning.
- Facilities for campervans and coaches are desperately needed.
- Glenfinnan viewed as disappointing destination for (non-'checkbox') visitors. Lack of facilities with a central hub/focal point. "It either needs to be a focal point and a destination or nothing happens at all and it suffocates itself".
- No risk of displacement.
- "I think that if there was space on a new camping site to have a sort of cafe\retail\craft, sort of all in one facility where you could get small souvenirs, that would be open seven days a week so you can still get a bowl of soup and a sandwich on a Sunday and you can visit the toilets. I think the village needs that and it would hopefully take away from the pressure Within the village itself and allow the villagers to still go about their day-to-day work."
- [Additional facilities] Shower block, grey/blackwater waste dump. Not sure what else. Was talk of campervan aire. **You couldn't lock site if you had them.** Number of spaces they take up you would get more cars as well. Like the idea of campervan users coming in grabbing a shower and dropping off waste etc.
- Unique solution but not a money maker. Hard work, but possibly a rural training and employment opportunity. Callop might be a site for a drying shed/mobile kiln.
- Annual cohort from West Highland College being trained in rural skills (Countryside skills with ranger training) Co-delivered with Nevis partnership. Maybe community own retort but contractor could use it. Same people could clear and manage kiln/ do car park job/ VC.

Path Development

- Got nothing against the land management plans for the second piece of land.
- "if there is funding available, that they couldn't build a an adjacent path to the forest road. I'd be definitely up for that because it's a lovely walk in".
- Would like to get the boardwalk project going as soon as land is purchased. Intention to do it through the SCIO. Could go ahead if wider Callop project does not proceed or is delayed. It would be great if the Callop project could lead to the best way to replace the boardwalk.
- Should be a fully accessible path like the one at the Glencoe VC. Built in a way that makes it very accessible. Would have been expensive, complies to Sustrans rules etc, so is very good for walking and cycling. Will be low in maintenance.
- Potential for increased usage when car park is done. Bike hire facility for car park would be good to encourage active travel.

Bus Pilot / Other Initiatives

- Bus pilot last year operated by Sheil Buses with financial contributions from Community Council, SCIO & Station Trust. Didn't work well due to lack of information. Tickets sold at premium prices (with concessions). Sheil Buses apparently not interested in operating service.
- Bus pilot was more successful than anticipated with no pre-publicity. Shiel don't see a basis for running it commercially yet. Have agreed to support any marketing. Finding what can be put in place to support a service that is more extensive. Showed that tourists were willing to pay a premium - £12 or £16 rtn about twice the local cost.
- Successful campaign to reduce speed limit from 60-40MPH.
- Unintended consequences of roadside restrictions (e.g. people parking further way to walk in. 'That was the payback for trying to preserve our community'.

- Examples of opening up accommodation and private car parks to help ease demand.
- Doable to put additional trains on. Comes at a cost. Additional train and crews with termination at Glenfinnan.
- Light rail will be very difficult to maintain as track will have difficulties in remaining stable.

Steam Train

- Steam train has been a visitor draw for nearly 30 years.
- Concern about steam train future plans as ticket sales for 2026 season have not been released.
- Likely that another company would run the steam train service if the current one stopped.
- Concern about WCR timetable not yet published.
- Warner Bros. developing Harry Potter Train Ride at Warner Bros. Experience. Thought unlikely to impact on Glenfinnan visitor numbers.

Long-Term Sustainability

- Potential issue about how SCIO stays viable in long-term. Needs more than car-park to keep it financially viable. Scope to also focus on other facilities, assets, services for community benefit?
- May be employment opportunities in Callop but perhaps not for local community.
- "Having dealt with quite a number of community groups in the past, I have to say that this community is by far the best I've ever come across in terms of the experience that they've got. I don't know if it's just some of the people who have moved into the area and their past experience that they have brought in. But they are hugely proactive and obviously experienced in it and are doing it for all the right reasons. There are no personal agendas. So I've got no qualms about the ability of this community to take this on and continue it on".

Lack of Land for Development

- Hemmed in by three big estates so no land opportunities.
- Frustration at not able to control things to give people space to do things.
- Limited opportunities because so much of the ground is privately owned estates.
- Need bigger car park by limited by amount of land available for sale.

Funding

- Emphasise environmental benefits in funding applications.

Appendix 3 - Callop Consultation Responses– 26th February 2026

What do you think of the different mobility hub opportunities?

Environmental Impacts

Avoidance of flood plain preferable -opt D – concern about gravel being washed away otherwise

Consideration of the environment should be key – not lip-service – What is impact and how sympathetic will anything constructed be?

Personally I would like to see as much traffic contained at Callop (for environmental reasons – pollution, diesel particulates etc so mobility hub is ✓

Designs to reflect historic links.

Accessibility

Wheelchair accessibility of boardwalk? ‘Mobility hub’ suggests this is a key consideration.

Employment

Capacity

Car parking 250 required on a Bank Holiday Weekend.

Max. parking required – (possibly never enough). Aim to preserve village priority.

Not enough parking spaces at callop motor homes etc.

Motorhome Provision

? More campervan pitches 10 to 20! ✓ [Editorial note: tick from 2nd person]

Is there a need to provide electric hook-up for mobile homes? They can use battery for an overnight stay – the cost of providing electricity is prohibitive.

Traffic Management

Local resources to manage basics of parking etc? Bus workers?!

Light rail connection the only long term solution + BAN ON PARKING IN VILLAGE

PRO To be successful a strong GLENFINNAN preventive system needs to operate. CON Difficult to police with A830 being a main road. HOW CAN VISITORS BE HELD AT CALLOP PRICE IS ONE BUT OTHER METHODS REQUIRED.

No {campervans, motorhomes, cars} should be allowed to park in village unless pre-booked with a pass.

Essential to have car park at west end of village and bus shuttle going thru village with stop at station

Waiting for shuttle? Alternative walking route less attractive (time constraints of majority visiting)

General

Parking priority with ancillary services. Retail?!? Clarify Timescales

Turn Callop into a reason to spend a day with Harry Potter only being an element not prime.

What do you think of the different site layout options?

Access

Could old road be used for entrance then exit at current road?

Access seems a bit “bottle-necky” – pedestrians need to be kept very separate – access to Sustrans path/boardwalk!

Concerned that callop entrance with toilets could cause bottleneck

Dougie Hunter MOWI – will send movements of lorries. Layby at entrance to enable passing cars/lorries.

Preferred Option

D preferred but would suggest more land is included to allow expansion.

D option with necessary alterations according to regs + Planning advice

Option D. Interesting to note 34 fewer car spaces if coach parking added.

General

Move campervan aires + toilets further east.

Lined bays important. Tourists can't park!

After the valuation, if the price is right!, more land should be bought – future proofing.

What do you think of the different building options?

Capacity

Like idea of ability to expand. Like open plan shop and café to allow for multiple businesses to share the space

Scope for the greatest as numbers are only going ↑

Design General

Buildings – Styles OK. View to Ben✓

Some toilets to be accessed through café/shop to encourage footfall in retail spaces. If visibility splay is problematic then move entrance to near rail bridge using old road. Install traffic lights for bridge and car park combined.

Facilities provision

Facilities: Need for electrics? Washing machine? Unnecessary – will over encourage long stays which is not wanted – not a site/destination (Waste provision ✓)

Thought – too many facilities will encourage mobile homes to stay for longer periods than an overnight stop - no need for washing machines, showers etc.

The permanent café was least favoured in village survey – yet appears on all 4 options D.

Preferred Option

Option 1 preferred. Commercial/retail non essential

Is there a space for the ranger/proposed apprentices/school groups indoors? (space inside a building) (sorry if I missed this!)

Prefer something like Option 3 – some individual units to see how this goes – workshop/retail units for crafters/artisans/food.

Design Detail

Unisex toilets best and showers

Any more ideas?

Will dogs be allowed on the shuttle buses? (so, so many dogs these days!)

Electric Shuttle Bus