

ABERDEENSHIRE STIDP

Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan

Final Report v1.0

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1.0 The STIDP and the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund

The production of the Aberdeenshire STIDP is aligned to the provisions and potential grant support available from the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF). The RTIF was established by the Scottish Government and the fund is managed by VisitScotland on its behalf. The RTIF is designed to support collaborative projects led by local authorities which focus on improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Scotland that are facing pressure on their infrastructure and communities as a result of visitor numbers.

From 1st April 2023, RTIF funding will be exclusively used to support the delivery of the priority projects identified within the STIDPs. It is therefore essential for the Council to formulate its STIDP and frame within that the strategic framework to support future funding applications to VisitScotland under the RTIF.

1.1 Background

Aberdeenshire Council have reported an increase in pressure on tourism infrastructure at several sites and destinations across the area (referred to in this report as hot spots), some of which are contributing to a degree of tension with local communities and negative impacts on the local environment. Much of this pressure can be attributed to the significant increase in outdoor activities and the use of local attractions - parks, beauty spots, heritage sites and countryside and coastal walking routes in the wake of the Covid Pandemic, where travel restrictions led to a notable shift towards 'localism' - communities discovering and making more use of outdoor spaces and attractions close to home. It is forecast that this trend, generated mainly from a local day visitor catchment will continue post-pandemic.

This increased local community engagement with outdoor spaces and attractions has to be aligned with the more strategic patterns that can be drawn from the more traditional regional and national tourism trends – those national and international visitors who pre-plan their visits to Aberdeenshire, either for their primary vacation or as part of a wider touring holiday of the north of Scotland. This group, who largely tour by car and motorhome have a different set of impacts on visitor infrastructure.

As such, a longer-term strategic plan for tourism infrastructure in Aberdeenshire is required to manage this transition in a sustainable way meeting the needs and expectations of visitors whilst simultaneously improving the place making strategy locally at our key tourism destinations.

1.2 Formulating a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (STIDP)

The overall aim of the STIDP is to identify key tourism pressure points and hot spots and set out key infrastructure priorities to alleviate pressures and enhance the visitor experience across Aberdeenshire.

The STIDP will align with the overall vision of Aberdeenshire Council's Visitor Management Plan 2023:

'To deliver a sustainable inclusive high-quality experience to visitors without being detrimental to Aberdeenshire's communities, businesses, land managers, and its natural and cultural heritage.'

The Visitor Management Plan focuses on short term service delivery rather than medium to long term tourism infrastructure. The STIDP shall identify key priorities for tourism infrastructure in Aberdeenshire over the medium term – broadly defined as being the next two to five years. The STIDP would concentrate on publicly available infrastructure primarily aimed at visitors, setting out a joined-up, place-based approach to facilitate provision.

The Draft Destination Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire - A Framework for Growth (2022 – 2030) has been consulted as part of this STIDP. It is important that the STIDP is aligned with the Action Plans that will be developed as part of this strategy. Consultation with Cairngorms National Park Authority has also been undertaken.

1.3 What can be supported under the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF)

The RTIF is focused on improving the visitor experience in rural parts of Scotland that are facing immediate and damaging pressures on their infrastructure or negative impacts on communities due to significant increases in visitor numbers.

Only Local Authorities and National Park Authorities can apply for funding. However, Community Groups and other agencies can apply to their Local Authority or National Park if they have an eligible project. **Individual businesses are not eligible for RTIF.** Some key requirements are that applications should:

- Focus on the strategic development of an area or route.
- Address responsible tourism issues (sustainability) post COVID.
- Avoid a negative impact on the natural or built heritage assets of a destination or location.
- Be based on projects owned by or leased to the Council or its public sector or community group partners.
- Cannot support projects which are led by the private sector- eg, commercial tourist attractions, private golf clubs, private landed estates or private sports & leisure operators.

The type of strategic tourism infrastructure projects that can be supported under the fund are cited as parking, motorhome facilities (including disposal points), viewpoints, paths, toilet provision and EV and e-bike charge points.

All project applications must align with and support the objectives of Scotland Outlook 2030 and the new National Strategy for Economic Development and meet the following:

- **An existing or anticipated visitor pressure point** - As a result of previous or anticipated increases in visitor numbers, there is a visitor and or community pressure point which is likely to continue and needs to be addressed. The applicant should provide evidence of the increase in visitor numbers or anticipated impact of visitor numbers and / or evidence of the impact of visitors on the local area.
- **That a strategic need is met or gap is addressed by the actions proposed** - Priority will be given to early actions identified by the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plans or other strategic plans by Local Authorities, the National Parks, NatureScot or Forestry & Land Scotland. Applicants should provide a strategic content for the project and evidence to support this.
- **Provision of a quality visitor experience** - Provision of high-quality visitor facilities and infrastructure, leading to a positive impact on the local landscape and visitor economy is a key criteria for RTIF support. Applicants should demonstrate the commitment to place principles and a quality design which can accommodate visitors with a wide variety of access needs and complies with and where possible exceeds the requirements of the Equality Act.
- **A responsible tourism approach** - Applicants are expected to take a responsible tourism approach to the planning, design, build and management of the infrastructure provision addressing the issues generated as a result of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak.
- **A carbon conscious approach** - Applications should provide details on how their project will contribute to the reduction / mitigation of climate change and support the transition to a low carbon society i.e. using low carbon materials, energy efficiency, promotion of low carbon transport, renewable energy and waste management in construction and maintenance of the facilities. Applicants should demonstrate their commitment to carbon consciousness where a location reuses, repurposes and considers whole life costs, retrofitting existing structures and considering the embodied carbon in place.
- **Community capacity building** - Creating more resilient communities more able to cope with peak tourism demands and the creation of new local business opportunities.
- **Effective partnerships and collaboration** - Applicants must provide evidence of engagement with local community groups, destination organisations and tourism businesses, demonstrating how partnership working can increase awareness, advocacy and the quality of the final project.
- **Project viability and deliverability** - applicants must provide evidence of:

- Proven experience of project management and financial administration
- A clear timetable for permissions, procurement, site start date and expected time of completion
- A clear delivery plan demonstrating value for money and measurable outputs
- Detailed costs and a budget forecast for the period of the project

Further detailed guidance on fund criteria is provided at www.visitscotland.org and detailed queries can be raised via email on RTIF@visitscotland.com

Figure 1- The types of Strategic infrastructure supported by the RTIF include parking, motorhome facilities (including disposal points), viewpoints, paths, toilet provision and EV and e-bike charge points.



1.4 The Aberdeenshire Hot Spots

Aberdeenshire Council has selected 19 tourism hot spots, exhibiting the impacts of intensified tourism activity from visitor pressure data collected since 2020. These hot spots form the core brief for assessment within the STIDP. The list of hot spots has been notionally categorised by the Council into two tiers for initial assessment.

Figure 2- List of Tourism Hot spots

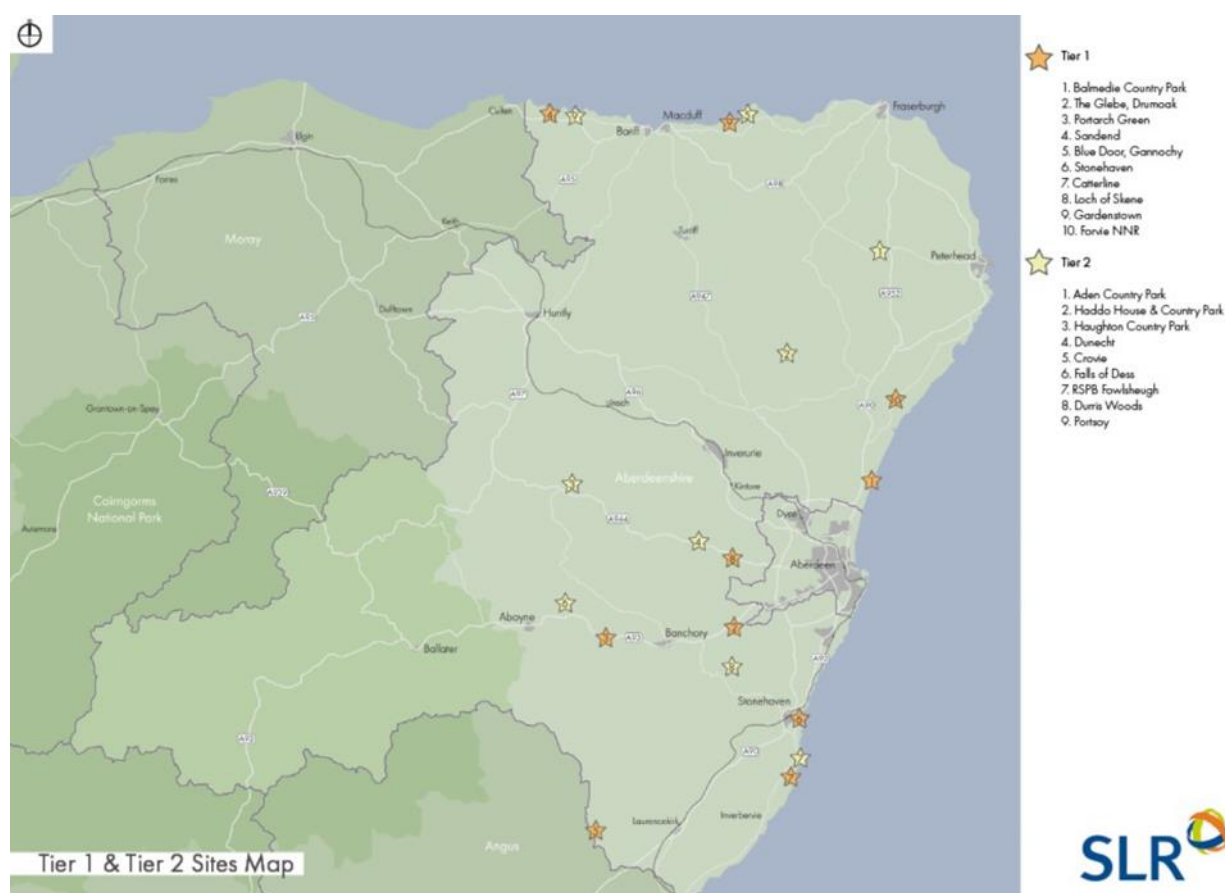
Tier 1

- Balmedie Country Park – improved/increased toilets and parking;
- The Glebe, Drumoak – increased parking;
- Potarch Green – improved/increased toilets and parking;
- Sandend – parking;
- Gannochy (Blue Door) – parking;
- Stonehaven – beachfront including toilets; promenade & harbour;
- Catterline – parking;
- Loch of Skene – parking;
- Gardenstown – parking; and,
- Forvie (Waterside) – parking.

Tier 2

- Aden Country Park;
- Haddo House & Country Park;
- Haughton Country Park;
- Dunecht;
- Crovie;
- Falls of Dess;
- Crawton Nature Reserve (Fowlsheugh);
- Durris Woods; and,
- Portsoy.

The Council has prepared a detailed inventory of the visitor impacts being experienced at each of these locations. The issues range from insufficient parking and access problems (inclusive of disability access) and localised litter and waste disposal to the more strategic issues associated with the provision of rest facilities, toilets and servicing points for electric cars, bikes and motorhomes along key strategic routes. All of these sites have been visited and assessed for a broad range of design and management improvements. Full details with a breakdown of works proposed are provided in section 3 and in a separate appendix provided to the Council.



1.4.1 Aberdeenshire 2023 Levelling Up Fund (LUF) Projects

The STIDP has been prepared against the background of the two successful LUF projects in Aberdeenshire that received funding in round two at Peterhead & Macduff. These projects will have a regenerative impact on the northeast coastal communities and are likely to attract more tourists to the wider north coast corridor.

Aberdeenshire's 'Coastal Economies' Bid

Aberdeenshire succeeded in drawing down LUF funding for a 'package project' of two interlinked investments along the coastline and focused on the towns of Macduff and Peterhead. The projects respond to specific local needs previously identified through community consultation and development strategies. The projects will generate economic impact and deliver significant benefits across the region over the coming decades.

The 'Coastal Economies' package has been identified and developed to respond to unique local priorities: maximising the return on investment for each community whilst recognising the profound influence the North Sea has on our communities and places: whether cultural, environmental or economic.

The Peterhead project is to create a 'Cultural Quarter' revitalising the heart of the town by returning Arbuthnot House into public use and creating a new destination museum and cultural hub, with spaces for recreation, participation and learning. A new public space will be created in Broad Street, and the project will also renew and enhance the current Arbuthnot Museum and Library Building, providing opportunities for new uses.

This ambitious project will provide new cultural, educational and social opportunities. It will celebrate and tell the stories of Peterhead and Aberdeenshire's unique culture and heritage, whilst offering the community new and engaging experiences and opportunities. The project will be a driver for economic growth; help to re-energise Peterhead's town centre; improve its environment with the introduction of greenspace; and improve wellbeing by offering safe, pedestrian friendly spaces for people to enjoy. It will increase the town and the region's attraction as a tourism destination; deliver substantial benefits to local businesses which will all contribute to Peterhead's continued regeneration.

The Macduff project is centred around a refresh of the the Macduff Marine Aquarium. This ambitious project will enhance the visitor experience, provide new educational, recreational, cultural and social experiences and opportunities year-round. The project will be a driver for economic growth; help to re-energise Macduff, offer new opportunities for small businesses, and provide connections, resources and facilities for STEM learners and learning providers across the region.

In order to achieve these ambitions, the proposal in development will build on the current offer at Macduff Marine Aquarium to provide engaging and interactive activities throughout the year and provide scope to develop connections and partnerships across education and business, establishing the site as a hub for science and learning. The project will also improve how the facility sits within and relates to Macduff and the surrounding area in terms of access, connectivity and community.

The centre will be refreshed, and exciting new displays added. A café and restaurant, and enhanced retail facilities will develop economic growth and provide financial security for the Aquarium in increasingly uncertain times. New space will be created for new activities, an increased provision for schools and other educational establishments, and opportunities for community use.

The potential impacts this may bring to the area will continue to be monitored and addressed, where applicable, through RTIF and future versions of the STIDP.



The Coastal Economies Bid- Macduff Marine Aquarium & Arbuthnot House projects.

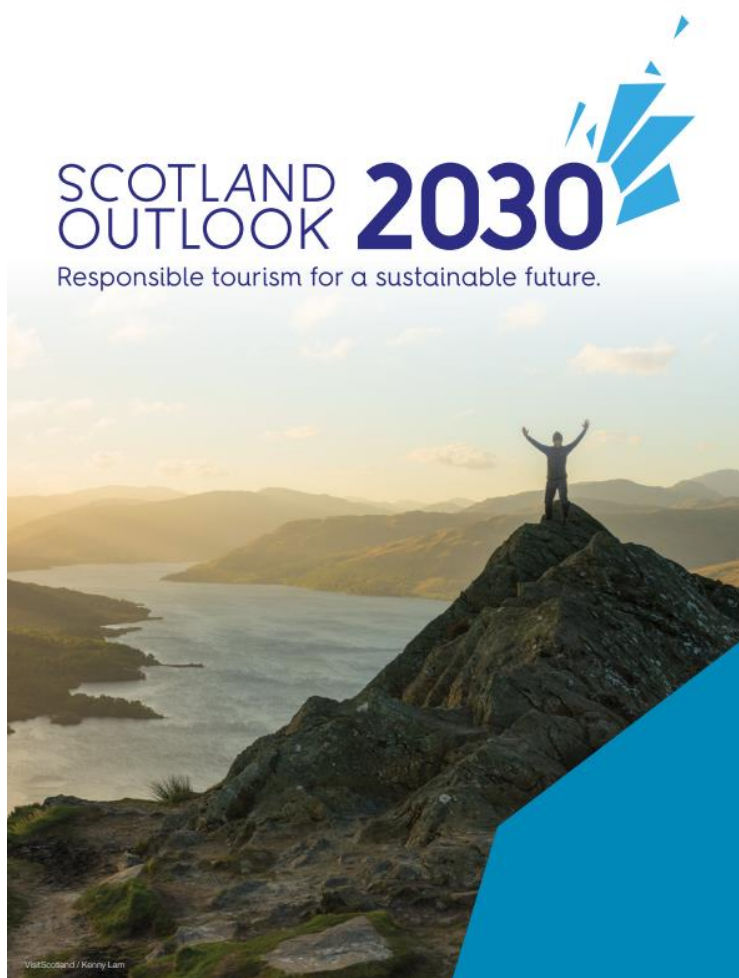


2.0 Tourism Policy & Trends

This section looks at the policy and trends that are shaping tourism activity within Aberdeenshire and framing the context for managing visitor pressures within the STIDP strategy.

2.1 The National Policy Context

The national policy context has changed since 2018. Most significantly the targets for greenhouse gas reductions on the journey to net zero. The National Strategy for Economic Transformation (Spring 2022) sets out objectives and a suite of strategies and programmes to follow. Within this strategy tourism is featured prominently.



The national tourism strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030, was published in early 2020 just before the pandemic hit; but its aim for Scotland to be a world leader in responsible tourism focusing on people, places, businesses and memorable experiences remains just as relevant. It is increasingly recognised that tourism, in the North East and nationally, has a wider contribution to make beyond narrow economic measures – it can play a part in achieving social objectives and environmental sustainability and will continue to form part of the Regional Economic Strategy. Furthermore, regional plans, in particular Aberdeen City Centre Masterplan have potential to support tourism and the visitor economy.

2.2 Tourism in Aberdeenshire

Following the first Covid-19 lockdown in 2020, there was a rapid increase in visitor numbers to attractions within Aberdeenshire, especially to countryside and coastal sites (known as Tier 1, 2 and 3 Sites within this report). In addition to visitors from outside Aberdeenshire, the area also saw an increase in Aberdeenshire residents visiting other parts of the local authority area, including the natural open spaces and countryside immediately on their doorstep. Connecting with nature has been identified as the critical theme driving this trend.

The pandemic resulted in an increase in UK visitors holidaying here – many visiting places for the first time – because they couldn't go abroad. Businesses responded to the opportunity welcoming old and new faces. It remains to be seen whether this will lead to a longer term staycation effect, but it will have given many a first hand, first -time experience of the North East.

In 2019, prior to the impact of the Covid Pandemic, Aberdeenshire received c.381,000 visitors (20% down on 2018), spending some £57m (12% up on 2018) with bed nights reduced by 24% from 2018 with a total of 1,204,000. The wider Grampian region experienced an increase in Scottish visitors alongside a decrease in international travellers, with the increase in spend attributed to growth in domestic day tourism.

These figures were compounded by a trend already observed in 2018 – rising numbers of Scottish visitors and decreasing numbers of international travellers. While overseas visits declined by a quarter, trips by Scottish residents rose by a third in 2019. This is reflected in the region's visitor mix, where residents of Scotland made 64% of all overnight trips.

However, international visitors are still steady. Visitors travel to the North East for many different reasons, but within Aberdeen City business tourism remained a vital segment, whereas in Aberdeenshire holiday travel was dominant. In the few years ahead of the pandemic overall business visits had witnessed a reduction, but the desire to connect in person at conferences remains strong, albeit adapting to elements of hybrid meeting. Taking short walks, enjoying the landscape, visiting historic sites, and shopping for local produce or crafts are among the activities many visitors to the region enjoy, while others indulge in the outdoor pursuits on offer such as cycling, fishing or golf. International visitors from a host of markets explored the region in the years prior to the pandemic, with primary source markets including the USA, Norway and Germany. This pattern is likely to continue in future.

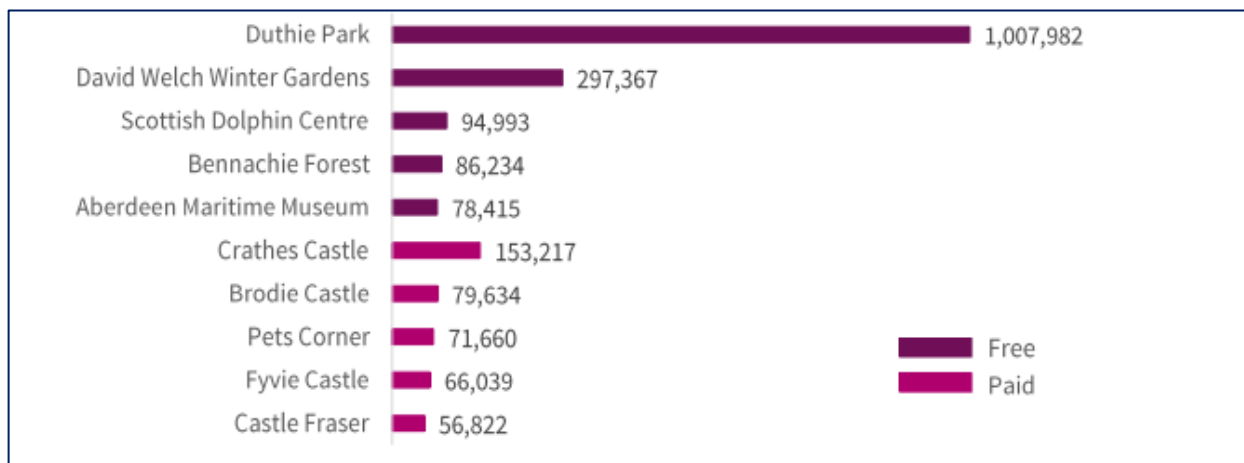
In line with many other destinations the region has faced the challenge of declining length of stay in recent years as short -break trips have grown in popularity; the typical domestic overnight visitor to the City staying 2.4 nights and to the Shire 3.8 nights. There is significant market opportunity in reversing this trend to enrich the visitor's experience, spread the benefit across local visitor economy businesses and lessen the environmental impact associated with a trip.

Table 1 – Regional Tourism Performance (Local Statistics)

Local Authority/ Region	Units		Employment		GVA	
	Number	% Change 2017/18	(000s)	% Change 2017/18	(£m)	% Change 2017/18
Aberdeen City	690	+1%	10.9	+5%	234.4	-10%
Aberdeenshire	729	+3%	7.5	+4%	148.7	-15%
Moray	326	0%	3.1	+3%	66.3	+5%
Grampian	1,745	+2%	21.5	+4%	449.4	-10%

Source: SABS, 2018.

Table 2 – Top Five Free Paid Visitor Attractions in Grampian (with Visitor Numbers), 2019



Source: Moffat Centre Visitor Attraction Monitor, Glasgow Caledonian University, 2019

2.2.1 Pre Covid Visitor Patterns

The tables in this section cover the visitor baseline in Scotland and Aberdeenshire *prior to the Covid outbreak* to provide a competitor and comparator analysis so that we better understand the market in which Aberdeenshire attractions operate.

SCOTLAND VISITOR ATTRACTION CATEGORY RANKINGS						
Category	Visits 2016	Visits 2015	% change	Difference	% of total	Ranking
Activity Attractions	2,610,745	2,378,725	9.8	232,020	4.24	4
Castles/Forts	4,381,560	3,949,916	10.9	431,644	7.12	3
Distilleries/ Breweries/ Wineries	1,463,505	1,307,975	11.9	155,530	2.38	11
Gardens	2,325,172	2,250,131	3.3	75,041	3.78	6
Heritage Centres	1,399,709	1,435,558	-2.5	-35,849	2.27	12
Historic Houses/ Palaces	1,670,433	1,495,276	11.7	175,157	2.71	10
Industrial/ Workplaces	437,919	445,125	-1.6	-7,206	0.71	14
Museums/ Art Galleries	15,992,731	14,878,967	7.5	1,113,764	25.97	2
Other Historic Properties	2,056,772	1,932,981	6.4	123,791	3.34	9
Outdoors/ Nature Attractions	21,174,042	20,987,924	0.9	186,118	34.39	1
Places of Worship/ Spiritual Attractions	2,237,123	2,080,735	7.5	156,388	3.63	7
Scottish Crafts/ Retail Attractions	2,057,210	1,950,040	5.5	107,170	3.34	8
Transport-Related Attractions	1,351,303	1,373,983	-1.7	-22,680	2.19	13
Wildlife/ Animal Attractions	2,413,397	2,321,823	3.9	91,574	3.92	5

Source: Moffat Centre - Scottish Visitor Attraction Monitor 2016

In Scotland, outdoors/ nature attractions are the highest-rated attraction type, followed by museums and art galleries. Outdoor attractions themselves have seen a 0.9% increase, equating to nearly 200,000 additional visitors.

Top 20 Visitor Attractions in Scotland

The following table presents the top 20 attractions in Scotland pre Covid. Attractions highlighted in **bold** are outdoor/ nature attractions:

TOP 20 VISITOR ATTRACTIONS IN SCOTLAND INC. OUTDOORS/ NATURE ATTRACTIONS						
#	Name	2016	2015	% Change	Free/Paid	Charge Band
1	Strathclyde Country Park, Motherwell	5,644,457 E	5,407,774 E	+4.4	F	
2	National Museum of Scotland, Edinburgh	1,810,948	1,567,310	+15.54	F	
3	Edinburgh Castle	1,778,548	1,568,508	+13.4	P	£10+
4	Scottish National Gallery, Edinburgh	1,544,069	1,377,710	+12.08	F	
5	Loch Lomond Shores	1,316,656 E	1,252,107	+5.16	F	
6	Kelvingrove Art Gallery & Museum, Glasgow	1,259,318	1,261,552	-0.18	F	
7	Riverside Museum, Glasgow	1,259,042	1,131,899	+11.23	F	
8	St Giles' Cathedral, Edinburgh	1,171,793 E	1,108,842E	+5.68	F	
9	Dean Castle Country Park, Kilmarnock	1,062,330	1,252,198E	-15.2	F	
10	Calderglen Country Park, East Kilbride	1,050,158 E	878,822 E	+19.5	F	
11	Rouken Glen Park, Giffnock	952,332 E	942,568 E	+1.0	F	
12	Drumpellier Country Pk, Motherwell	933,267 E	919,573 E	+1.5	F	
13	Duthie Park, Aberdeen	843,081	781,389	+7.9	F	
14	Gretna Green Blacksmith's Shop	794,543	775,868	+2.41	F	
15	Royal Botanic Garden Edinburgh	790,050	836,755	-5.58	F	
16	National War Museum Edinburgh	678,982	601,074	+12.96	F	
17	Gallery of Modern Art, Glasgow	646,567	591,943	+9.23	F	
18	Mugdock Country Park, Milngavie	635,520 E	631,336 E	+0.7	F	
19	Edinburgh Bus Tours	604,846	552,006	+9.6	P	£10+
20	The Helix, Falkirk	584,914 E	708,471 E	-17.4	F	
31	Dundee Contemporary Arts	380,000 E	389,598 E	-2.46	F	
32	Aden Country Park, Mintlaw	355,069 E	326,620 E	+8.7	F	
33	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Castle Semple Centre, Lochwinnoch	352,496 E	318,904 E	+10.5	F	

Source: Moffat Centre - Scottish Visitor Attraction Monitor 2016

Top 20 Visitor Attractions in Aberdeen and Grampian Area

The table below shows the most-visited attractions in the Aberdeen and Grampian area prior to Covid. Attractions in **bold** are outdoors/ nature attractions.

TOP 20 VISITOR ATTRACTIONS IN ABERDEENSHIRE						
#	Name	2016	2015	% Change	Free/Paid	Charge Band
1	Duthie Park, Aberdeen	843,081	781,389	+7.9	F	
2	Aden Country Park, Mintlaw	355,069 E	326,620 E	+8.7	F	
3	David Welch Winter Gardens, Aberdeen	292,044	274,713	+6.3	F	
4	Johnston's Cashmere Visitor Centre, Elgin	190,140	184,736	+2.9	F	
5	Dunnottar Castle, Stonehaven	101,008	89,383	+13.0	P	£5-7
6	Crathes Castle, Banchory	98,465	42,311	+132.7	P	£10+
7	Scottish Dolphin Centre, Spey Bay	95,058	91,561	+3.8	F	
8	Bennachie Forest, Inverurie	84,436 E	54,424 E	+55.1	F	
9	Aberdeen Maritime Museum, Aberdeen	81,045	71,919	+12.7	F	
10	Logie Steading Visitor Centre, Forres	65,851 E	59,292 E	+11.1	F	
11	Balmoral Estates, Ballater	62,031	57,806	+7.3	P	£10+
12	Biblical Garden, Elgin	60,100 E	60,000 E	+0.2	F	
13	Culbin Forest and Shore, by Forres	57,755 E	55,642 E	+3.8	F	
14	Macduff Marine Aquarium, Macduff	51,325	49,877	+2.9	P	£4-6
15	Glen Tanar Visitor Centre, by Aboyne	50,000 E	50,000 E	0.0	F	
16	Grampian Transport Museum, Alford	49,806 E	50,838 E	-2.0	P	£10+
17	Glenshee Ski Centre, Glenshee	49,741	43,240	+15.0	P	£10+
18	Muir of Dinnet Nature Reserve, Dinnet	49,336	56,328 E	-12.4	F	
19	Drum Castle, Banchory	48,024	25,118	+91.2	P	£10+
20	Mar Lodge Estate, Braemar	47,153	61,595	-23.4	F	

Source: Moffat Centre - Scottish Visitor Attraction Monitor 2016

8 of the top 20 attractions in Aberdeenshire are outdoors/ nature attractions, highlighting this as Aberdeenshire's main selling point.

Top 20 Outdoors/ Nature Attractions in Scotland

The 20 most-visited country parks are listed below:

TOP 20 OUTDOOR/ NATURE ATTRACTIONS IN SCOTLAND					
#	Name	2016	2015	% Change	Free/Paid
1	Strathclyde Country Park, Motherwell	5,644,457 E	5,407,774 E	+4.4	F
2	Dean Castle Country Park, Kilmarnock	1,062,330	1,252,198E	-15.2	F
3	Calderglen Country Park, East Kilbride	1,050,158 E	878,822 E	+19.5	F
4	Rouken Glen Park, Giffnock	952,332 E	942,568 E	+1.0	F
5	Drumpellier Country Park, Motherwell	933,267 E	919,573 E	+1.5	F
6	Duthie Park, Aberdeen	843,081	781,389	+7.9	F
7	Mugdock Country Park, Milngavie	635,520 E	631,336 E	+0.7	F
8	The Helix, Falkirk	584,914 E	708,471 E	-17.4	F
9	Chatelherault Country Park, Hamilton	572,979 E	598,733 E	-4.3	F
10	Lochore Meadows Country Park, by Lochgelly	571,000 E	670,000 E	-14.8	F
11	Palacerigg Country Park, Cumbernauld	504,773 E	578,931 E	-12.8	F
12	Galloway Forest Park, by Newton Stewart	433,640 E	446,688 E	-2.9	F
13	John Muir Country Park, Dunbar	400,000 E	410,000 E	-2.4	F
14	Aden Country Park, Mintlaw	355,069 E	326,620 E	+8.7	F
15	Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park, Castle Semple Centre, Lochwinnoch	352,496 E	318,904 E	+10.5	F
16	Tweed Valley Forest Park, by Peebles	346,542 E	346,678 E	-0.0	F
17	Gleniffer Braes Country Park, Paisley	319,000 E	319,000 E	0.0	F
18	Glenmore Forest Park, by Aviemore	304,374 E	292,630 E	+4.0	F
19	Queen Elizabeth Forest Park, Aberfoyle	278,844 E	254,320 E	+9.6	F
20	Tay Forest Park, by Dunkeld	268,233 E	263,039 E	+2.0	F
Source: Moffat Centre - Scottish Visitor Attraction Monitor 2016					

The Moffat Centre information listed above, albeit from 2016, provides useful evidence on which of the Aberdeenshire visitor attractions attract the highest visitors, and are therefore under the highest visitor pressures, a key element to attracting RTIF funding support.

Going by the figures, Aden was the top free visitor attraction in the whole of Aberdeenshire in 2016 (355,069 visitors) and this helped to demonstrate the need for funding support from the RTIF in previous rounds. Had car park counters been operational at the site in 2020/21 it may have been listed in the “Top Five Free Paid Visitor Attractions in Grampian (with Visitor Numbers), 2019”.

2.2.2 Destination Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire- A Framework for Growth 2022-2030

The recently published ‘Framework for Growth’ by VisitAberdeenshire, provides a focus for investment and innovation by all the players which make up the visitor economy in Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire.

Figure 3- Destination Aberdeen & Aberdeenshire Objectives



According to the draft framework, those VisitScotland segments with the best fit and growth potential across the Aberdeenshire and the City as a whole are:

- Adventure Seekers – affluent and typically younger they want an active holiday where they can enjoy both outdoor and cultural activities. They will venture off the beaten track and are keen to try new things.
- Curious Travellers – affluent and typically younger/middle aged; free spirits with a great curiosity about the world and look to broaden their minds through travel and trying new things.
- Engaged Sightseers – mid-affluence, older, take numerous breaks, enjoying general sightseeing and touring, meeting locals, taking in historical places as well as scenery and nature.
- Food Loving Culturalists – very affluent, middle-aged, seek relaxing high-quality, holiday experience with great food and drink and engaging cultural activities.
- Natural Advocates – mid-affluence, middle-aged to older, passionate about Scotland- look for peace and quiet, breath-taking scenery, a connection with nature and the chance to get away from it all.

- Business event visitors often share many of these characteristics, although leisure interests are not necessarily the driver to attend a conference. The primary opportunity for Aberdeen comes from UK Association conferences in disciplines aligned to the North East's academic and sector strengths.

The draft framework develops a set of trends for visitor behaviour well aligned to those developing at a national level such as spending more time at home, focusing on 'fresh adventures in fresh air', going digital and changing behaviour in a changing climate. It then develops a number of priority areas and actions that have the greatest potential for sustainable growth including business events, culture & heritage, outdoor activities, adventure tourism and food and drink etc. Specific action plans will follow focusing on each of these areas of growth.

Mindful of the impact of social media on visitor behaviour, a notable new phenomenon has been the emergence of the Instagram or Trip Advisor effect whereby locations can suddenly become overnight "must visit" destinations through the promotion using attractive images by 3rd parties such as influencers. The Prince Albert's Cairn on the Balmoral Estate (known as the Balmoral Pyramids) would be an example of a location that has witnessed dramatically increased visits due to promotion using social media. This "instant popularity" is difficult to predict. The Council will need to remain nimble in responding to emerging infrastructure issues as and where they may emerge.

2.3 Emerging Trends for the STIDP

The strategy has identified three emerging trends that the STIDP needs to be aware of – namely the steady growth in localism, the growing demand for outdoor experiences and adventures and the steady growth of travel by motorhome.

2.3.1 The Growth of Localism

VisitScotland has noted the trend towards Localism and the increasing opportunities local communities are taking to use local destinations and coastal and countryside attractions close to home. "What was at first inflicted upon residents through travel restrictions, both nationally and internationally, has developed into a passion to support both their own communities and businesses, and those of places they visit. Visitors will crave living like a local and creating memories discovering their own authentic Scotland".

Consumers have long been encouraged to "discover what's on your doorstep" and "think global, act local" however during the COVID-19 pandemic this became a much more tangible concept for all.

- 59% of consumers in Britain have used more local stores and services to help support them during lockdown (Deloitte UK).
- Around half of UK adults anticipate taking more or the same number of overnight domestic trips between now and end of the year compared to normal. (VisitScotland.org)
- 65% of Europeans have a newfound appreciation of community since the onset of Covid-19 (mastercard.com)



VisitScotland cite three areas of innovation and opportunity arising from this trend:

Evergreen and evolving experiences: a more local, or domestic, consumer means opportunity for repeat visitation and long-lasting relationships. Seasonal and annual events to encourage visitors to come back and experience something new with the comfort of knowing a destination. This could be collaborations with other businesses to create a “once in a lifetime” event such as seen with the themed light shows at GlasGLOW and Edinburgh Botanics, or a seasonal approach, perhaps focusing on weather experiences or food and drink encouraging visitors back out of season.

Everything Outdoors: what better way to build a connection with a destination than to get out an experience it hands (or feet) on. Accommodation providers might consider links with local sports clubs offering the inside scoop to their guest on the best cycle routes, hiking trails and beauty spots. Agritourism is also a developing trend in travel, driving demand for farm visits, farmers markets and working holidays.

Local storytellers and craftsmanship: be it through music, munchies or “make your own”, experiences should be focused on the history, heritage and human-nature of your destination. Destinations might consider engaging with buskers and street performers to create a unique and curated experience for visitors around a theme core to the destination. Events that allow businesses to collaborate around a core theme, such as Shetland Wool Week, encourage footfall in Scotland’s high streets and village squares, from locals and visitors alike.

2.3.2 Adaptable Adventures

A consequence of the pandemic has been that a lot of people have had to rely on their own initiative and imagination to challenge themselves physically as an antidote to spending a lot of time inside their homes or in the virtual world. “This has resulted in hunger for outdoor activities and physical adventures that allow people to reconnect with nature, help them stay fit, and provide them with a sense of freedom”.

This need for outdoor activities – which has been a growing tourism driver for years – has been further strengthened by the pandemic-related restrictions, with an increasing number of people becoming more active in their own local areas or looking for alternative ways of staying healthy and physically fit:

- The number of English residents participating in adventure sports rose from 2.2 million in 2016 to 3.5 million (+55%) in 2019 (Sport England)
- “The pandemic has seen an increase in interest in outdoor adventures, with cycling, running and open water swimming growing in popularity among Scots both during and post-lockdown.” (VisitScotland)
- In the UK, sales of exercise bikes grew by 2,113%, while weights sales rose by 1,743% between March 2020 and July 2020 (Idealo)

2.3.3 Steady Growth of Motorhomes

Aberdeenshire is feeling the impact of the steady increase in travel by motorhome. The latest figures released by the NCC (National Caravan Council) show that record numbers of motorhomes and campervans were sold in the UK in 2021 thanks to a continued growth in demand for UK holidays.

A total of 16,608 new motorhomes were registered with the DVLA in the 12 months from 1 July 2020 to the end of June 2021, an 8.25 percent increase on the previous record of 15,342 in the same period in 2018/2019 (pre-COVID). The total value of sales of new motorhomes is the highest it has ever been, now nearing £1.15 billion p.a. Campervan sales have been particularly buoyant.

John Lally, Director General of the National Caravan Council (NCC), the UK trade association for the leisure vehicle industry (touring caravans, motorhomes and holiday caravans), commented: “COVID-19 restrictions on travel

have helped, as the industry offers ‘social distance by design’ products. The industry is successfully attracting a new, younger customer while retaining existing ones.”

There are many factors involved in the success of motorhomes – not just the growing trend for staycations when overseas travel is so limited. Motorhomes give access to the countryside, facilitating a variety of outdoor leisure pursuits. The connection with the great outdoors helps with physical and mental health in an ‘always connected’ world. On the other hand, technology such as Wi-Fi has turned working from home into working from anywhere. Breaks without hanging around airports and with the flexibility to ‘get up and go’ and explore the UK are increasingly appealing.

Evidence of the impact of this trend is increasingly noticeable across Aberdeenshire where informal motorhome camping has raised issues of overnight parking, waste disposal, refuse and recycling. This is particularly evident on the popular touring routes along Royal Deeside, the north coast and in and around Stonehaven, south of Aberdeen. The single-track roads, passing places, parking restrictions and capacity in the coastal villages of Catterline, Sandend, Crovie, Pennan, Portsoy and Gardenstown present a significant accessibility challenge for these vehicles. Data collected by the Council has also found evidence of black bag waste from campervans being left at public car parks and beauty spots and reports of chemical toilet waste being dumped in ditches at woodland sites and parkland areas where campervans have been parking overnight.



[Source: campa.org.uk]

Extract from the Campa website showing an absence of motorhome waste disposal points available to ‘non-residents’ across Aberdeenshire.

Indeed, as the map above indicates from the CAMPA website, there appears to be only a few registered CAMPA waste disposal points across Aberdeenshire that provide waste disposal facilities for travelling motorhomes. (There are numerous campsites that do provide waste facilities for motorhomes but these are either not open all year round or will not allow ‘non-resident’ motorhomes to use their facilities).

There is therefore a growing case for the provision of short stay dedicated service facilities for motorhomes (known as 'aires') for year-round occupancy. These provide short overnight stopping facilities for touring motorhomes on planned itineraries- single service points for overnight parking, sometimes including electric charging, waste disposal, laundry and shower facilities ideally located within easy access of retail, restaurant and event facilities in local centres. A strategic network of aires across Aberdeenshire would give the region a strong appeal to this touring motorhome market, help extend the number of overnight stays and drive increasing tourism spend into communities along key routes.

What are Aires?



- Low cost or free 'Camping Car Parks'
- Common throughout France
- Sometimes paved car parks or informal gravel areas
- Some have marked out camping bays others are free for all
- Designed to encourage people to visit the area
- Many have a shop, bar or cafe within walking distance
- Sometimes have Waste Water Disposal
- Sometimes have Toilet Emptying Facilities
- Often have Drinking Water Available (sometimes for a fee)
- Toilets sometimes provided
- Electric Hookup is sometimes provided
- Max. stay usually 24 hours (detailed on signs) but this varies
- Booking not necessary
- Mobile Phone App Services Show Maps of Locations





Details

- Access barriers with €10.80- €13.20 payment varying with the season
- Waste and Recycling Point
- Refuse and Recycling Points
- Water Point
- Electric Hook Up

3.0 Strategy Development

Whilst the development of these visitor and activity trends has generally been welcomed by the regional tourism sector, they raise issues around the proper planning of strategic infrastructure at key locations and sites.

Reported Issues include:

- Inadequate road access and parking – particularly at coastal locations
- The management of informal camping
- Littering & human waste disposal (from motorhomes)
- Wildlife and biodiversity disturbance
- The impact of campfires and BBQ activity
- Absence for strategic servicing for motorhomes
- Inadequate provision to support growth in adventure tourism activity

In addition to the challenge of the area experiencing higher visitor numbers, there is also the challenge of these new countryside users not being familiar with the behaviour expected of them by the Scottish Outdoor Access Code. There is clearly room for improving awareness and information, and for continuing to drive high standards in local site management and interpretation.

As highlighted in the previous section many of the above issues have been compounded by the increasing number of motorhome users parking wild. A lack of infrastructure support for this group, by way of integrated servicing points offering critical services such as waste disposal, has become particularly apparent.

Taken in combination, these issues negatively impact on local communities and serve to undermine the visitor experience.

The assumptions that we carry forward from Section 2 are that:

- Visitor pressure at identified hot spots will continue to intensify across Aberdeenshire.
- This will be driven primarily by a growth in localism- local communities making more use of their local venues and attractions.
- The growth in motorhome use will continue and;
- Increasing demands will emerge to support activity and adventure in key locations.

3.1 Addressing the hot spots

To inform the strategy, 19 hot spot were provided by the Council for review (Drawing 1). For the purpose of the strategy, we have split this list into three tiers.

The Tiers are categorised as follows:

- **Tier 1** Strategic destination development
- **Tier 2** Seatowns and coastal access.
- **Tier 3** Improved visitor management across existing attractions;

The hot spots were visited in October 2022 and the observations (as shown in Appendix A) highlighted a range of issues for each site. These observations showed issues to be both localised and/or strategic and therefore the strategy must cater for both.

In order to inform the strategy, tourist behaviour along the key tourism routes within Aberdeenshire have been assessed. These main routes accessing the sites are the A98, A97, A90, A93 and A96

STIDP Strategy Tiers

Tier 1- Strategic Destination Development

Stonehaven

Sandend

Balmedie

Aire Network

Tier 2- Seatown & Coastal Access

Crovie

Catterline

Crawton NR

Portsoy

Gardenstown

Tier 3- Improved Visitor Management

Blue Door

Durris Woods

Falls of Dess

Loch of Skene

Dunecht

Haughton CP

Forvie NNR

Aden CP

Haddo Ho CP

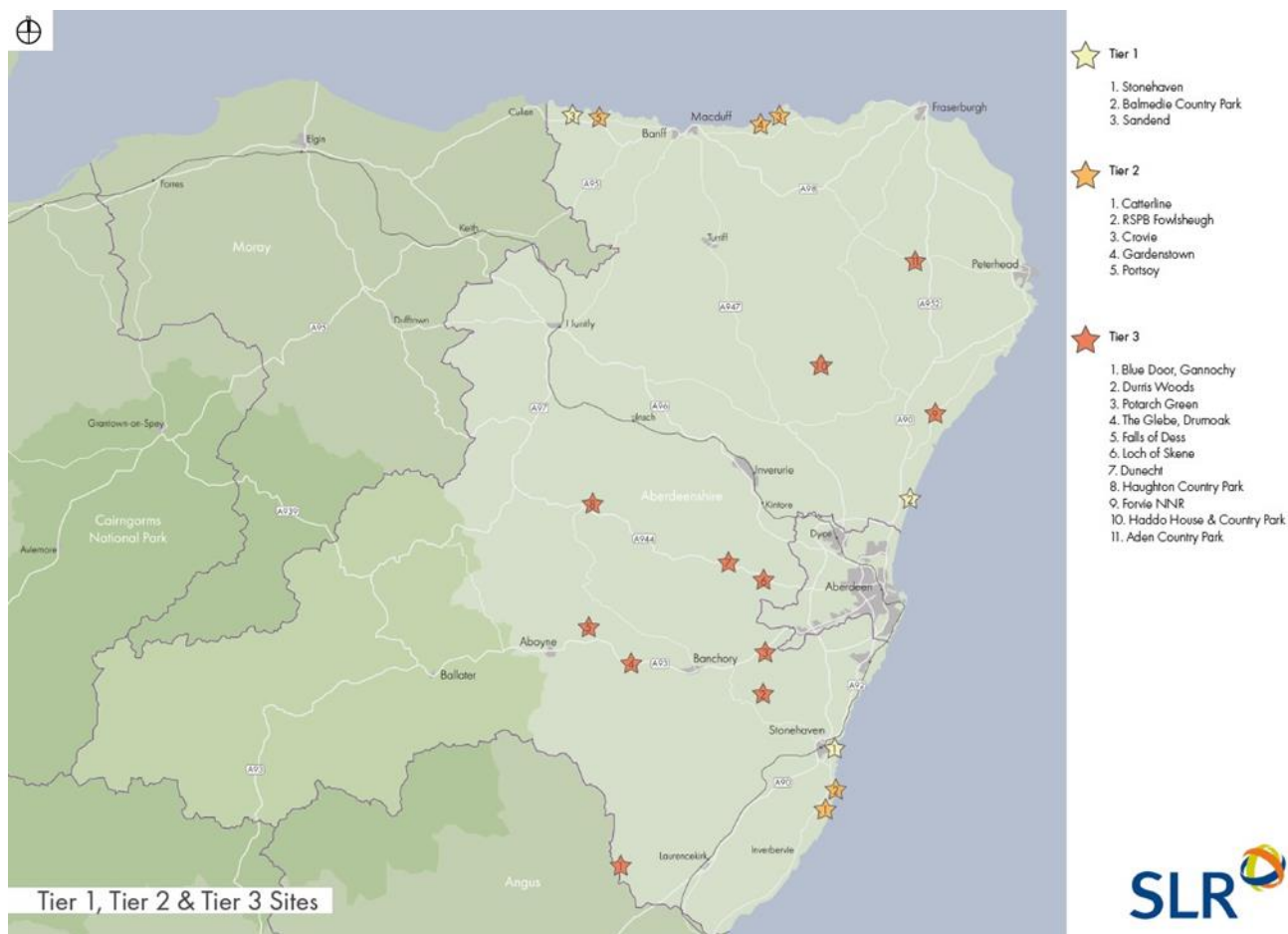
Potarch Green

Drumoak

global environmental and advisory solutions



Drawing 1: Tier 1, 2 and 3 Sites



3.2 Tier 1 Sites- Strategic Destination Development

Three hot spot locations have been identified for development as strategic destination projects within the strategy, namely:

- Stonehaven as Aberdeenshire's premier coastal resort town and southern gateway,
- Sandend as the north coast's main sea adventure tourism base (surfing & sea kayaking- aligned to the strategy of Opportunity North East), and;
- Balmedie Country Park building on the success of the existing coastal park offering and boosting the A90 coastal route linking onward to Fraserburgh and Peterhead.

A further strand of the strategic destination development theme (addressing the whole of Aberdeenshire) relates to the development of a network of aire sites (motorhome servicing sites) to boost the attractiveness of the region by encouraging extended dwell time and longer stays for those touring by campervan and motorhome.

3.2.1 Stonehaven

Stonehaven as a standalone destination is critical to the strategic development of tourism within Aberdeenshire. The town has always maintained a high profile as a key destination within Aberdeenshire with its outstanding heritage harbour, the beachfront and promenade, the outdoor bathing pool, vibrant town centre, its links to dramatic ruined Dunnottar Castle and the remarkable Hogmanay ancient fireball ceremony. Its strategic location on the A90 road corridor and main railway line reinforce its locational advantage as a prime visitor gateway for Aberdeenshire.

Stonehaven is identified within the STIDP as the key placemaking project with the strategy. The town has a number of issues to resolve that require a comprehensive and integrated masterplanning approach. These include:

- The redesign and enhancement of the main beach promenade at Cowie.
- Extension of the promenade to link to the harbour and Cowgate, addressing the impact of sea-level rise and coastal change
- Integration of a new seafront promenade with Market Square, the Town Centre and railway station
- A comprehensive public realm design and movement strategy inclusive of new remote parking provision, active travel and public transport provisions
- The creation of a network of new high quality public spaces reinvigorating the towns status as a premier heritage seafront destination
- The identification of a site for a dedicated motorhome aire for year-round occupancy.

Aberdeenshire Council has begun the process of examining many of these issues through the commissioning of the Stonehaven Traffic Management Review that reported on its community consultation phase in November 2022 and the Stonehaven Coastal Flooding Study. The scope of this work should be extended to embrace public realm design and town masterplanning services to fully integrate the traffic management and flood defence improvements with the equally important place-making agenda that will be critical to the creation of a compelling heritage destination. This is a renewal project for Stonehaven and such is the scale and regional importance of this work, it could be aligned to large scale UK Government and Scottish Government funding programmes. A project in the range of £15-20m could be envisaged.

In terms of smaller scale interim improvements, the area around the leisure centre and promenade at Cowie could benefit from a public realm improvement to improve the visitor experience. A notional conceptual layout is presented below which provides for an upgrade and resurfacing of the promenade to enable the food outlets to have much higher quality outdoor seating areas, to remove car access to the beach frontage and relocate the parking bays to create a much more pedestrian friendly public space. As indicated above project interventions like this require to be placed within a much more comprehensive masterplan for Stonehaven.

Existing Context



Background

Stonehaven as a standalone destination is critical to the strategic development of tourism within Aberdeenshire. The town has always maintained a high profile as a place to visit with its outstanding heritage harbour, the beachfront and promenade, the outdoor bathing pool, vibrant town centre, its links to dramatic ruined Dunnottar Castle and the remarkable national event of the Hogmanay ancient fireball ceremony. Its strategic location on the A90 road corridor and main railway line reinforce its locational advantage as a prime visitor gateway for Aberdeenshire.

Promenade



Harbour



Issues

- Hierarchy of circulation along promenade, where vehicles take priority over pedestrians. Cars overlook the beach, benches overlook the cars
- Beachfront architecture is piecemeal in style and lacking in character
- Uncordinated materials / furniture palette between northern promenade and southern harbour creates visual disconnect.
- Deteriorating surfacing along promenade
- Beachfront balustrade / sea defences deteriorating
- External dining on the roadside

Indicative Interventions

Why Stonehaven?

Stonehaven is identified within the STIDP as the key placemaking project with the strategy. The town has a number of issues to resolve that require a comprehensive and integrated masterplanning approach. These include:

- The redesign and enhancement of the main beach promenade at Cowie.
- Extension of the promenade to link to the harbour and Cowgate, addressing the impact of sea-level rise and coastal change
- Integration of a new seafront promenade with Market Square, the Town Centre and railway station
- A comprehensive public realm design and movement strategy inclusive of new remote parking provision, active travel and public transport provisions
- The creation of a network of new high quality public spaces reinvigorating the towns status as a premier heritage seafront destination.

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Promenade concept idea
& precedent scheme images



The concept sketch is indicative only and designed to convey a project idea rather than a definitive proposal. No consultations have been undertaken with landowners or business operators.

3.2.2 Sandend

Sandend is an established base for a range of activity tourism projects along the Moray Firth- surfing, bodyboarding, paddleboarding and sea kayaking. This is the type of activity that ONE (Opportunity North East) is promoting via its North East Adventure Tourism (NEAT) initiative. NEAT is a project with a vision to transform the region into a world-class destination for adventure tourism by facilitating the development of high quality, sustainable facilities and low carbon infrastructure.


The proposals for Sandend to play a leading role in developing this water-based adventure activity sector along the Banffshire coast requires the following:

- Creation of new parking and set down facilities
- Dedication of the existing small car park as a service and prep area for beach activities (equipment rental, catering kiosks etc)
- Improved visitor services for refuse collection/charging points etc.


It is suggested that as part of the future development of the allocated housing site to the west of Seaview Road, a new area of car parking is delivered to take the pressure off the small existing car park on Seaview Road and the surrounding residential streets. The existing car park could be developed to provide enhanced facilities for visitors using the beach for watersports. This could include a new semi-permanent 'Surf Shack' offering surf, paddle board and kayak rental facilities and a kiosk selling drinks and snacks. The existing toilet block could be refurbished with showers and additional provision for wetsuit wash out.

The indicative new car park layout shown in orange could provide an additional parking provision. New bin stores are also proposed to rationalise refuse collection and improve visual amenity.

Sandend - Tier 1 Site - Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Destination Project



Existing Context




Background

Sandend is a small fishing village with core paths into it and along the coast.

There is a small gravel car park in the village adjacent to Sandend Holiday Park with capacity for around 25 cars. Elsewhere parking in the village is limited to the narrow access road through the village.

Approximately 1 mile to the west of the village there is a cliff top car park for Findlater Castle accessed via a narrow single width farm track.



Facilities

- Small Gravel Car Park
- Toilet Block
- Wheelie Bins
- Beach Access

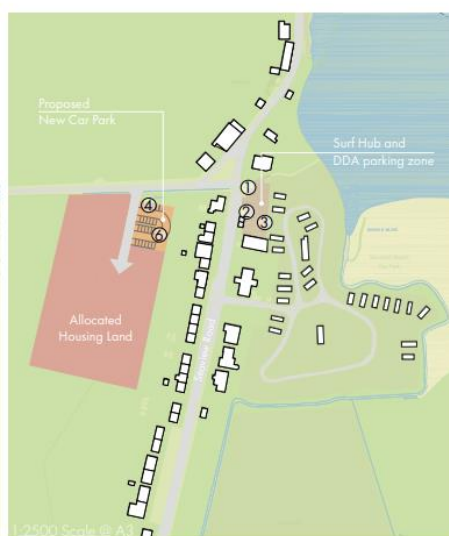
Issues

- Inappropriate Parking
- Irresponsible Camping
- Tents and Caravans
- Toileting
- Litter

Why are we taking this site forward?

This idyllic spot on the north coast of Aberdeenshire could be a haven for watersports enthusiasts but limited parking and a lack of wash out facilities limit its appeal.

Indicative Interventions



Proposed Interventions

There is an allocated Housing Land site to the west of Seaview Road. It is suggested that as part of the future development of this site a new area of car parking is delivered to take the pressure off the small existing car park on Seaview Road and the surrounding residential streets. The existing car park could be developed to provide enhanced facilities for visitors using the beach for watersports. This could include a new semi-permanent 'Surf Shack' offering surf, paddle board and kayak rental facilities and a kiosk selling drinks and snacks. The existing toilet block could be refurbished with showers and additional provision for wetsuit wash out.

The indicative new car park layout shown in orange could provide an additional parking provision. New bin stores are also proposed to rationalise refuse collection and improve visual amenity.

Outline Costings - Sandend				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Surf Shack	Prov. Sum	Item	£200,000
2	Toilet Refurb	Prov. Sum	Item	£100,000
3	Bin Stores	2nr	£5,500	£11,000
4	Geogrid	254m ²	£60	£15,240
5	Asphalt	340m ²	£90	£30,600
6	Electric Vehicle / Cycle Charging	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
				Approx. Total: £406,840

N.B. all rates provided are for indicative purposes only and have been based on recent example projects and SPONs 2022 estimated costs.



Potential semi permanent 'Surf Shack' - kit rental / beach cafe



Existing Toilet to be Refurbished with wash out facilities and showers



Bin Housing



Geogrid Parking Bays

The concept sketch is indicative only and designed to convey a project idea rather than a definitive proposal. No consultations have been undertaken with landowners or business operators.

Sandend - Tier 1 Site - Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Destination Project



Conceptual Visualisation



3.2.3 Balmedie Country Park

Balmedie Country Park has the potential to develop new facilities and to serve as the major coastal activity destination on the north side of the city of Aberdeen. On the A90 route to the north Aberdeenshire coast it is also strategically located to draw touring visitors onto the NorthEast 250 touring route linking to Peterhead and Fraserburgh. It is made up of beach, sand dunes, heath land, and wooded areas, connected by a series of paths and boardwalks. The sand dunes form part of a 15-mile dune system of local and national importance, stretching from the Donmouth Local Nature Reserve at Aberdeen to the Forvie National Nature Reserve at Newburgh.

Existing Context



Background

Balmedie Country Park is situated on the coast, approximately 8 miles north of Aberdeen. It is made up of beach, sand dunes, heath land, and wooded areas, connected by a series of paths and boardwalks. The sand dunes form part of a 15-mile dune system of local and national importance, stretching from the Donmouth Local Nature Reserve at Aberdeen to the Forvie National Nature Reserve at Newburgh.

Balmedie Country Park is a popular place for local people and visitors alike including walkers, dog owners, horse riders and runners who enjoy the flat, sand beach and dunes. Barbecue stands, picnic tables and waste bins are provided, though visitors are asked to take rubbish home.

Facilities

- Free Formal / Informal Car Parking
- Sand Bothy Community Building with Food and Drink Kiosk, Education Space, Room Hire.
- Toilet Block
- Hard Surfaced Path / Boardwalk to beach
- Play Area
- Access Restriction Bollards to main car park for larger vehicles.
- Interpretation Boards
- Picnic Tables

Issues

- Litter
- Parking
- Unauthorised BBQ's
- Deteriorating Car Park Surfacing / Pot Holes
- Deteriorating Boardwalk
- No Facilities for Overnight Parking
- Narrow Access (Width restriction bollards)
- Toilets in poor condition

Why are we taking this site forward?

Balmedie is a popular destination for visitors and locals and has a wealth of potential for further development to improve its functionality and presence as part of Aberdeenshire's touring routes.

The key improvements at Balmedie Country Park are to help build its profile as an outdoor activity destination, equip it better to manage day visitor impact and enable it to host a new motorhome servicing facility (aire). The key measures are:

- At the main car park suggested interventions are minor capital improvement works to the improve functionality of the site. This could include access and surfacing improvements and introduction of bin housing to rationalise refuse collection. A hardstanding BBQ Area with BBQ Bins would also help to reduce fire risk.
- To the south of the main car park a strategic overnight 'camping car park' site and seasonal overflow parking area is suggested. The existing toilet block could be refurbished.
- The access road from Balmedie to the country park is narrow and would also benefit from widening to improve access to the site.

Full consideration requires to be given to nature designations such as SSSI, SAC, SPA, RAMSAR etc. and future proposals at these sites will need to ensure these environmentally sensitive sites are adequately protected. Proposals should also take account of the Coastal Change Adaption Study which has just commenced in 2023.

Indicative Interventions



Proposed Interventions

At the main car park suggested interventions are minor capital improvement works to improve the functionality of the site. This could include access and surfacing improvements and introduction of bin housing to rationalise refuse collection. A hardstanding BBQ Area with BBQ Bins would also help to reduce fire risk.

To the south of the main car park a strategic overnight 'camping car park' site and seasonal overflow parking area is suggested. The existing toilet block could also be refurbished.

All future proposals should take into consideration the Balmedie Active Travel Route Options Feasibility Study and Balmedie Country Park Management Plan.

Outline Costings - Balmedie Country Park				
Main Car Park				
	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Bin Store	2nr	£5,500	£11,000
2	BBQ Area Tarmac	30m2	£85	£2,550
3	BBQ Bins	2nr	£750	£1,500
4	Height Barrier	Prov. Sum	Item	£10,000
5	Geogrid Surfacing	3,150m2	£60	£189,000
6	Asphalt Overlay	1,563m2	£45	£70,335
7	Electric Vehicle / Cycle Charging	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
Camping Car Park				
8	Toilet Refurb	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
9	Refer to '1 Acre Aire'	Prov. Sum	Item	£221,920
Beach Road Access Improvements / Active Travel Route				
10	Road widening with active travel route	Prov. Sum	Item	£350,000
				Total
				£956,305

N.B. all rates provided are for indicative purposes only and have been based on recent example projects and SPONs 2022 estimated costs.

The concept sketch is indicative only and designed to convey a project idea rather than a definitive proposal.

Figure 4- Balmedie Country Park Conceptual Improvements



3.2.4 Aberdeenshire Aire Network -Strategic Servicing for motorhomes

The growing numbers of motorhome visitors and the resulting pressure at certain locations is leading to an increased demand from users for dedicated servicing facilities. This aligns well with demands from affected communities for alternative provision to reduce instances of inappropriate overnight camping in laybys, car parks etc. The current legislative position is that the driver of any vehicle has the right to park and rest in any layby or car park when necessary, as long as the car park concerned is not regulated and specific regulations prevent this.

Any such regulations must be displayed to potential users. Throughout the site visits around Aberdeenshire, it was evident that overnight parking was discouraged from car parks.

Generally, motorhomes can travel for around three days before needing to empty their waste tanks however there are limited locations for motorhome waste disposal points within Aberdeenshire. There are a few small-scale sites (for example Glenbuchty and Rosehearty aires) that can't take more than 5 caravans at a time as they are sites given an exemption under Section 2 of the First Schedule of The Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960. The proposal is to provide a network of six new motorhome stations or 'aires' within Aberdeenshire at strategic locations on the main touring routes. It is recommended that service stations are provided:

- Along the A93 Royal Deeside Route (Between Ballater and Banchory)
- On the A98 northern coastal route (Portsoy/Banff)
- On the A90 at Stonehaven.
- On the A90 at Balmedie Country Park;
- On the A90 at Peterhead
- On the A96 at Huntly

The aires would be used by motoring tourists as a base (with EV charge points/toilets and wash facilities) and would be linked to clusters of local attractions via cycleways/footpaths and public transport.

The Council requires to undertake a site search at the above locations to locate these aires on appropriate sites within local authority control. There may also be the opportunity to negotiate with partner agencies and community groups to help deliver these sites. Sites will require to have good accessibility from the main road network, have mains drainage and power connections and preferably be located close to existing village services for convenience shopping and access to food and drink outlets. The RTIF (Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund), suitably phased would be the initial source of capital funding for the aire network.

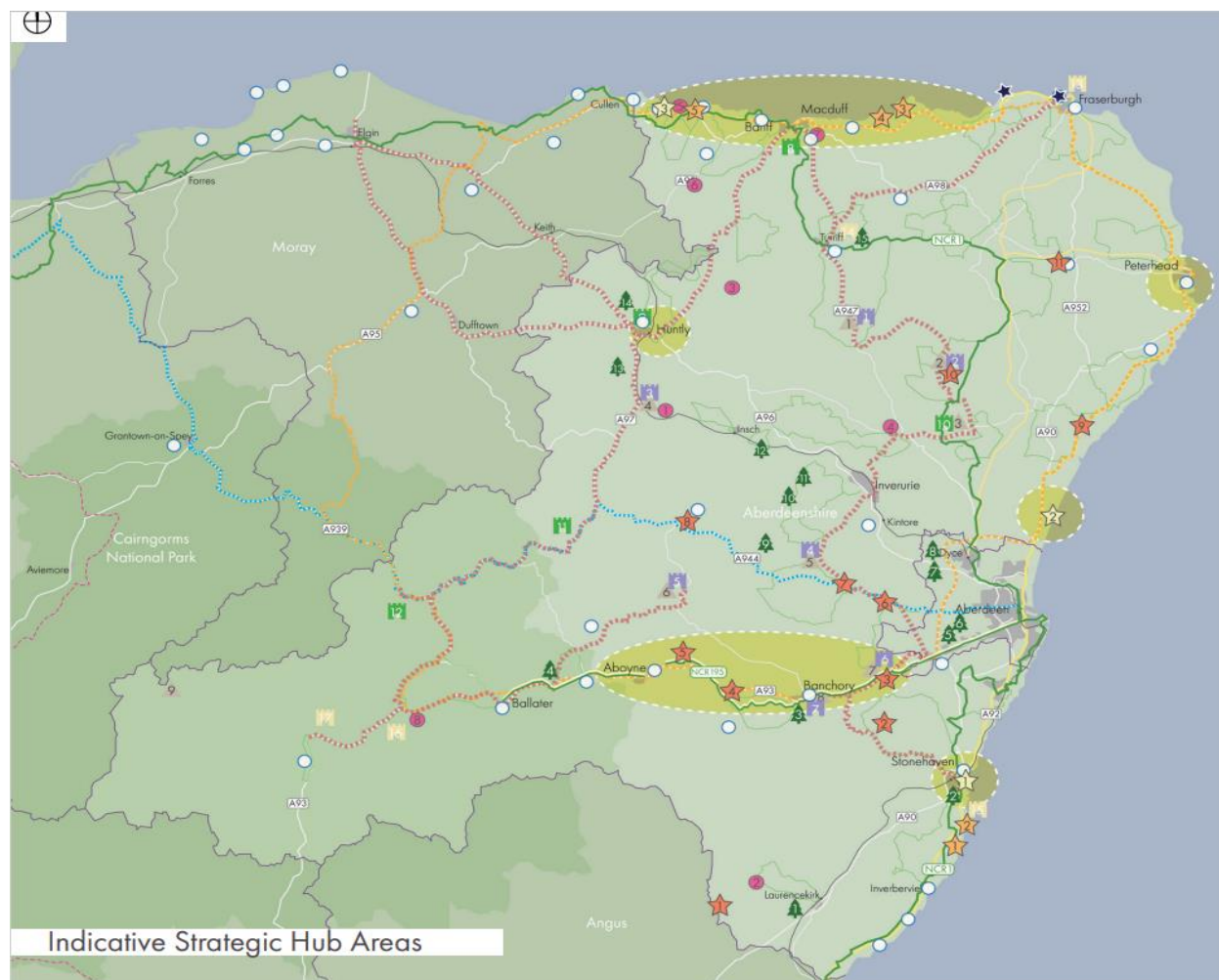
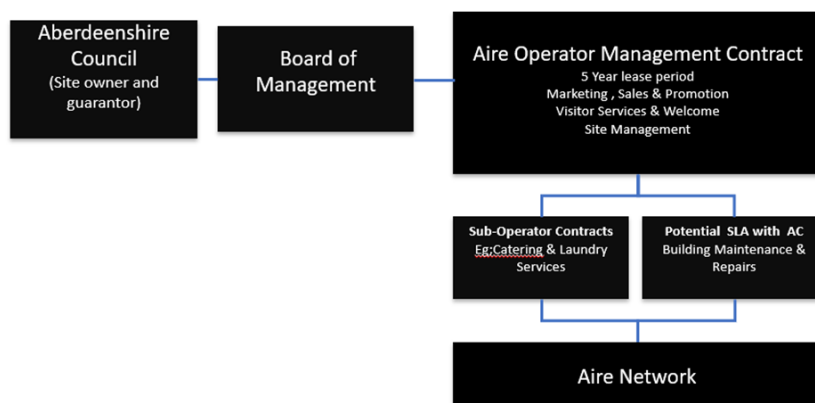


3.2.5 Operating Model for the Aire Network

In terms of operation the Council should consider procuring a single operator contract for the management and delivery of the aire facilities and services for year round occupancy over a suitable lease period. This would be an incentivised operator contract where the commercial operator would run and manage the aires on the Council's behalf with incentives for maximising occupancy throughout the year. The operator would typically market, promote and undertake the day to day management of the network of sites, develop linked ticketing

and sales and coordinate the marketing of local attractions and events. As the Council would own and construct the sites, there may be the potential for a service level agreement for the maintenance of buildings and services and for the sub contracting of local suppliers to provide some visitor services such as laundry and catering. There may be advantages in having an operator on board as the design process for the aires is being developed. The diagram below gives an example of what the operational model could look like.

Aberdeenshire Aire Network- Operational Model



Drawing 3 – Potential locations for motorhome aires

3.2.6 Conceptual Aire Layouts

Three conceptual layouts have been prepared to illustrate the scale and service layout which may be appropriate at the locations set out above. These cover a basic half acre site for 8 pitches, for small villages and rural communities, a one acre site providing for 14 pitches and a larger 1.5 acre site providing 22 pitches for busier locations.

- 0.5 acre Aire, 8 Pitches - Basic Facilities- c. £167,350
- 1 acre Aire, 14 Pitches- Basic Facilities - c.£236,920
- 1.5 acre Aire, 22 Pitches- Equipped Facilities-c.£543,410

(All estimates are order of magnitude estimates and exclude acquisition and services)

Figure 5-Conceptual Aire Layouts



Strategic Sites - 1 Acre Aire - Basic



Key

1. Hardstanding overnight parking pitches x 14nr
2. Water Point x 1nr
3. Compost Toilet
4. Refuse / Recycling Point
5. Drive over Waste Water Discharge Point
6. Waste Disposal Point
7. (Optional) Ticketed Access Barrier with nominal charge

Indicative Costing Schedule

Item	Quantity	Rate	Cost
Compost Toilet	1nr	£15,000	£15,000
Timber Wheelie Bin Store	1nr	£5,500	£5,500
Asphalt Road Surfacing	1,198m ²	£90	£107,820
Reinforced Gravel Hardstanding	560m ²	£60	£33,600
Parking Barrier & Electrical Supply	Item	Prov Sum	£25,000
Connections to Public Water Supply	Item	Prov Sum	£25,000
Connections to Public Sewer	Item	Prov Sum	£25,000
Total			£236,920



Potential Funding

Capital Investment: Rural Tourism Fund
Revenue Fund: Could be gained from parking ticket barrier / honesty box

Strategic Sites - 1.5 Acre Aire - Equipped



Key

1. Hardstanding overnight parking pitches x 22nr
2. Electric Hook Up Points
3. Water Points x 2nr
4. Toilet / Utility Block with washing up facilities
5. Refuse / Recycling Point
6. Drive over Waste Water Discharge Point
7. Waste Disposal Point
8. Ticketed Access Barrier with nominal charge

Indicative Costing Schedule

Item	Quantity	Rate	Cost
Toilet / Utility Building	Item	Prov. Sum	£250,000
Timber Wheelie Bin Store	1nr	£5,500	£5,500
Asphalt Road Surfacing	1779m ²	£90	£160,110
Reinforced Gravel Hardstanding	880m ²	£60	£52,800
Electric Hook Up Points	Item	Prov Sum	£5,000
Parking Barrier & Electrical Supply	Item	Prov Sum	£25,000
Connections to Public Water Supply	Item	Prov Sum	£25,000
Connections to Public Sewer	Item	Prov Sum	£25,000
Total			£543,4100



Potential Funding

Capital Investment: Rural Tourism Fund
Revenue Fund: Could be gained from parking ticket barrier / honesty box

3.3 Tier 2 Seatown and coastal access.

Tier 2 is made up of a series of locations that share a common challenge in terms of managing access and visitor pressure at the height of the season. These are the heritage seatowns of Catterline, Crovie, Portsoy, Gardenstown and Fowlsheugh (RSPB).

All these destinations share issues of constricted access, limitations on parking close to their harbours and shorelines and difficult access for residents and local communities in the holiday season.

The proposed measures include:

- Remote parking and pedestrian/cycle only access
- Special priority access provision for residents and businesses
- Additional signage & interpretation
- Public realm improvements

Whilst these five locations share common issues of constricted access there is a difference in scale between the two larger towns of Portsoy and Gardenstown and the smaller more sensitive settlements of Crovie, Catterline and Fowlsheugh.

Portsoy and Gardenstown could benefit from more comprehensive public realm and access strategies to improve signage, interpretation and general streetscape and public space enhancements- similar to the approach advocated at Stonehaven but smaller in scale. Crovie, Catterline and Fowlsheugh are all very sensitive heritage locations and need tailored measures in full consultation with the resident communities. Full consideration requires to be given to nature designations such as SSSI, SAC, SPA, RAMSAR etc. and future proposals at these sites will need to ensure these environmentally sensitive sites are adequately protected. Proposals should also take account of the Coastal Change Adaption Study which has just commenced in 2023.



Sandend



Crovie

Tier 2 Sites - Seatown and Coastal Access



Many of the Tier 2 Sites have similar issues, suffering from limitations relating to vehicular access or limited car parking provision.

Tier 2 Sites

1. Catterline
2. RSPB Fowlsheugh
3. Crovie
4. Gardenstown
5. Portsoy

Catterline



Issues: Narrow single track access to the beach and limited on-street parking within village. Deteriorating surfacing to beach access track.

Solutions: Minor: Thinning of roadside vegetation to improve sightlines to beach access track. Improved signage across the village, implementing the Community Action Plan in place for this. Resurfacing of access track. Major: Potential new car parking area for beach access elsewhere within the village.

Outline Budget: Minor: £75,000 - Major: £250,000.

RSPB Fowlsheugh



Issues: Narrow single track access road to the trailhead and a very small existing car park with an inefficient layout.

Solutions: Minor Improvement: Existing car park extension and new bin housing for wheelie bins. Major: New car park on derelict land.

Outline Budget: Minor: £40,000 - Major £150,000



Portsoy Harbour

Tier 2 Sites - Seatown and Coastal Access



Crovie



Issues: Steep, narrow access road and limited seafront parking. Cliff top car park has limited views due to unmanaged vegetation. Footpath from Gardenstown and cliff top car park runs along single track road creating potential conflicts with traffic.

Solutions: Trim gorse to open up views from car park. Residents only / DDA parking policy to seafront. Improve pedestrian link between village and car park through road widening / new footway adjacent to road.

Outline Budget: £75,000

Gardenstown



Issues: Motorhome parking lies in unsightly, unwelcoming position surrounded by storage sheds. Surfacing is uneven. No Waste disposal area. No wetsuit wash out facilities in towns public toilets.

Solutions: Minor: Potential to formalise / improve overnight parking and day visitor parking provision with resurfacing, water supply, bin storage and designated toilet facilities. Major: potential for town-wide masterplan recommending conservation, appearance and functionality enhancements.

Outline Budget: Minor: £500,000 - Major £2-3million

Portsoy



Issues: Limited parking in harbour, especially for coaches. The towns signage and wayfinding is poor.

Solutions: Public Realm Strategy project outlining recommendations for future development within the town including hierarchy of circulation routes to reduce congestion and improve wayfinding. Potential for new coach drop. Potential for 'Cycle Hub' project associated to NCR1 route.

Outline Budget: £3-5million



Figure 6- Gardenstown Harbour

3.4 Tier 3 Improved visitor management across existing attractions

The remaining hot spots within Aberdeenshire can be improved to deal with visitor pressures through a range of measures to improve their visitor infrastructure.

The sites all face similar problems such as:

- Inadequate road access and parking – particularly at coastal locations
- The management of casual camping and associated waste
- Littering
- Wildlife and biodiversity disturbance
- The impact of campfires and BBQ activity

Detailed landowner and community consultation is required as individual sites are brought forward for design improvements and the introduction of new management proposals to help try and mitigate and prevent the above problems from occurring. This should include special engagement around disability access and access for specialist groups such as equestrian users.

(Please note that the costed proposals that follow are indicative only and designed to convey a project idea rather than a definitive proposal. No consultations have been undertaken with landowners or business operators).



Figure 7- A message from Drumoak Primary School

Tier 3 Sites - Improved Visitor Management Across Existing Attractions



The Tier 3 sites have been grouped together as the issues they are experiencing can be solved through some minor investment to help improve the functionality of the sites.

Improvements across the Tier 3 Sites include surfacing works, street furniture enhancements, provision for electric vehicle charging and toilets.

Tier 3 Sites:

1. Blue Door, Gannochy
2. Durris Woods
3. Potarch Green
4. The Glebe, Drumoak
5. Falls of Dess
6. Loch of Skene
7. Dunecht
8. Haughton Country Park
9. Forvie NNR
10. Haddo House
11. Aden Country Park

Blue Door, Gannochy



Issues: Limited parking layby located close to bend in road posing potential safety risks. Wheelie bins obstruct footway.

Solutions: Potential for additional roadside layby parking along minor road to east side of the blue door entrance.

Outline Costings - Blue Door, Gannochy				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Bin Store	2nr	£5,500	£11,000
2	Asphalt layby with new kerbs	250m2	£110	£27,500
			Approx. Total:	£38,500

Durris Woods



Issues: Lack of signage / identity. Not obvious how to find it.

Solutions: Provision of improved signage and branding strategy.

Outline Costings - Durris Woods				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Signage Strategy	Prov. Sum	Item	£100,000
			Approx. Total:	£100,000

Falls of Dess



Issues: Very limited parking in roadside layby on bend in the road. Access to the waterfall is challenging - via rocky bank.

Solutions: **Minor:** Potential for formalised set of steps. **Major:** Potential to create a small new parking area to south of waterfall with a new footpath link connected to the Deeside Way Route.

Outline Costings - Falls of Dess				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Stepped Access	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
2	Rolled gravel link path	600m2	£65	£39,000
3	Geogrid	500m2	£60	£30,000
4	Asphalt	500m2	£90	£45,000
5	Street Furniture	Prov. Sum	Item	£15,000
			Approx. Total:	£179,000

N.B. all rates provided are for indicative purposes only and have been based on recent example projects and SPONs 2022 estimated costs.

Tier 3 Sites - Improved Visitor Management Across Existing Attractions



Loch of Skene

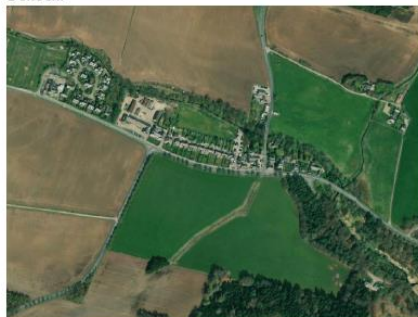


Issues: People driving into private estate thinking it is a car park. Limited parking provision along layby to south of the site.

Solutions: Potential to formalise layby parking area and provide access footpath to the lake. Potential to develop jetty or boardwalks to improve recreational provision from south loch. Potential for new woodland trails.

Outline Costings - Loch of Skene				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Asphalt layby with new kerbs	250m ²	£110	£27,500
2	Bin Storage	1nr	£5,500	£5,500
3	New Woodland Trails	Prov. Sum	£50,000	£50,000
4	Boardwalk / Jetty	Prov. Sum	£150,000	£150,000
			Approx. Total:	£233,000

Dunecht



Issues: Potentially dangerous unsurfaced verge parking along busy A944 route. Poor access for people with mobility issues and families with pushchairs etc due to limited width.

Solutions: Potential to realign stone wall to provide wider surfacing parking layby with pedestrian footway.

Outline Costings - Dunecht				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Asphalt layby with new kerbs	400m ²	£110	£44,000
2	Tarmac footway	500m ²	£95	£47,500
3	Realignment of existing stone wall	Prov. Sum	Item	£75,000
			Approx. Total:	£166,500

Houghton Country Park

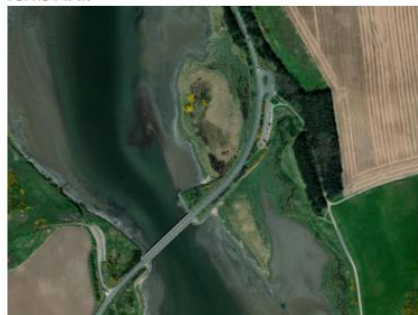


Issues: Poor signage and wayfinding within the park for visitors arriving by car. Lack of sense of arrival and confusing to navigate. Children's play area appears uncoordinated and widely spaced. Lack of fixed litter bins. Deteriorating surfacing along access roads and signs of drainage issues.

Solutions: Potential park masterplan project to enhance the parks functionality and character, including development of gateway features, a site wide signage strategy, interpretation boards, recreational trails and enhancement of children's play provision. All future proposals for the park should consider the proposed bike pump track and all ability trails, along with future developments such as reinstatement of the mini railway and funding secured through the Place Based Investment Programme to improve visitor experience. Proposals for this include installation of all-inclusive, accessible, solar powered, interactive play equipment; an outdoor gym and upgrades / electrification of the park's off-grid toilets.

Outline Costings - Houghton Country Park			
Item	Output	Measure	Total
1	Park Masterplan Project	Prov. Sum	£500k - 3million

Forvie NNR



Issues: Narrow access to small car park - deters visitors. Poorly located wheelie bins makes uninviting entrance. Inconsistent surfacing which is showing signs of deterioration. Evidence of vergeside parking - potentially dangerous.

Solutions: Potential for height restriction barrier instead of bollards. Potential for sensitively designed bin storage. Potential to improve vehicle circulation and increase car park capacity with rationalised layout. Any future proposals should consider the impact of the increased parking provided at Newburgh Beach as part of the Newburgh Seal Watching Experience which has previously been successful gaining RTIF funding.

Outline Costings - Forvie NNR				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Height Barrier	Prov. Sum	Item	£10,000
2	Bin Store	1nr	£5,500	£5,500
3	Geogrid Surface	1100m ²	£60	£66,000
4	Asphalt	1100m ²	£90	£99,000
5	Electric Vehicle / Cycle Charging Points	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
6	Street Furniture	Prov. Sum	Item	£15,000
			Approx. Total:	£245,500

N.B. all rates provided are for indicative purposes only and have been based on recent example projects and SPONs 2022 estimated costs.

Aden Country Park



Issues: Although recent investment has made some significant improvements to park infrastructure there are still areas of the park which would benefit from enhancement, including parking and toilet provision.

Solutions: Potential for additional car park provision to west of main car park. Asphalt resurfacing of deteriorating informal car / coach parking areas. Provision of additional toilet block to uniform campsite. Potential to introduce electric vehicle and cycle charging points with covered cycle storage facilities. Long term ambitions to introduce renewable energy infrastructure e.g. solar panels, heat pumps, turbines etc.

Outline Costings - Aden Country Park				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Additional Car Park	Prov. Sum	Item	£150,000
2	Asphalt Resurfacing	Prov. Sum	Item	£75,000
3	Cycle Storage Area	Prov. Sum	Item	£25,000
4	Electric Vehicle / Cycle Charging Points	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
5	Campsite Toilets	Prov. Sum	Item	£110,000
(excl. renewable energy costs)				Approx. Total: £410,000

Haddo House & Country Park



Issues: Access poorly signed from surrounding roads. Sat-Nav leads visitors down private driveway. Accessible parking area is small and via rough gravel track which may be prove challenging for use by disabled visitors. Large galvanised wheelie bins detract from parkland character. Street furniture palette is inconsistent and could be better coordinated.

Solutions: Better signage strategy from surrounding roads. Resurfacing DDA parking area. Potential EV / cycle charging points. Potential covered cycle storage area. Potential new street furniture strategy incl.

Outline Costings - Haddo House & Country Park				
Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Signage Strategy	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
2	Electric Vehicle / Cycle Charging	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
3	Covered Cycle Stores	Prov. Sum	Item	£25,000
4	Upgrading Park Furniture	Prov. Sum	Item	£150,000
5	Asphalt surfacing to accessible parking	250m2	£110	£27,500
				Approx. Total: £302,500

N.B. all rates provided are for indicative purposes only and have been based on recent example projects and SPONs 2022 estimated costs.



New toilet block at Aden Country Park

Potarch Green - Tier 3 Site - Improved Visitor Management Across Existing Attractions



Existing Context



Background

It is a popular location with tourists and day-trippers, and has a hotel, cafe with a bridge across the River Dee. The Dinnie Stones are a local attraction and are kept at the Potarch Hotel.

The Deeside Way Core Path Potarch runs through the park crossing the Bridge of Potarch to the North East of the site. There are no caravan or camping facilities in the nearby area.

Facilities

- Informal Car Park (Potarch Bridge Car Park)
- BBQ Areas
- Bins
- Out of Use Toilets Building and Portable Toilet
- Picnic Tables

Issues

- Litter
- Inappropriate Parking
- Informal Camping
- Human Waste
- Degradation of Surfacing

Potarch Green - Tier 3 Site - Improved Visitor Management Across Existing Attractions



Recommended Interventions



Proposed Interventions

It is recommended that the existing car park is formalised and resurfaced. This could include gravel filled permeable geogrid to parking bays and asphalt concrete to vehicle circulation areas. As part of the works a new height restricting barrier could be installed to deter overnight parking along with a new knee rail fence along the perimeter of the green to prevent access. A sensitively designed new toilet block and bin store is recommended and the site has potential for the creation of new link path to the Deeside Way along with some electric vehicle and cycle charging facilities.

Outline Costings - Potarch Green

Item	Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Toilet	Prov. Sum	Item	£250,000
2	Bin Store	1 nr	£5,500	£5,500
3	Height Barrier	Prov. Sum	Item	£10,000
4	Knee Rail	286 lin/m	£35	£10,010
5	Geogrid	692m ²	£60	£41,520
6	Asphalt	757m ²	£90	£68,130
7	Rolled Gravel Paths	437m ²	£60	£26,220
8	BBQ Bins	2nr	£750	£1,500
9	Trees	20nr	£75	£1,500
10	Interpretation Board	Prov. Sum	Item	£3,000
11	Electric Vehicle / Cycle Charging	Prov. Sum	Item	£50,000
			Approx. Total:	£467,380

N.B. all rates provided are for indicative purposes only and have been based on recent example projects and SPONs 2022 estimated costs.



Toilet Building



Bin Store



BBQ Disposal



Geogrid Surfacing to Parking Bays

The Glebe, Drumoak - Tier 3 Site - Improved Visitor Management Across Existing Attractions



Existing Context



Background

The Glebe Park is located on the northern bank of the River Dee approximately 1 mile walk from the centre of Drumoak village. The Deeside Way long distance footpath runs through the site following the River between Aberdeen and Ballater.

The park is bounded to the south and west by large blocks of established woodland and vehicle access can be gained to the edge of the park's large grass open space via an informal track through the surrounding woodland. A height restricting barrier limits access to the park for motorhomes.

On approach to the park from the A93 there are a number of informal laybys to the edge of the road.



Facilities

- Litter Bins
- Vehicle Barriers - Height Restrictor & Locked Gate
- Long Distance Footpath
- Open Space
- Picnic Tables

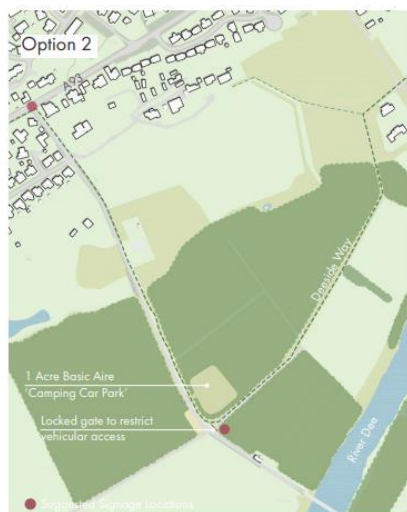
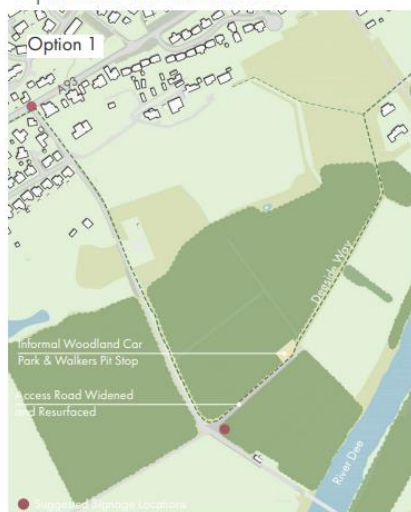
Issues

- Single width access track
- Poor surfacing to access track
- Poorly signed for visitors
- No Toilets
- Informal Camping
- No access / facilities for tourists

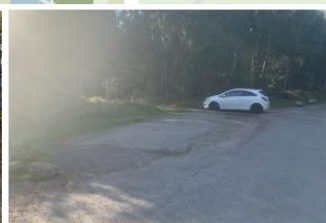
The Glebe, Drumoak - Tier 3 Site



Optional Interventions



Potential small new informal woodland car parking area adjacent to the green



Potential expansion of roadside layby parking



Signage and interpretation for vehicles and pedestrians enhanced

Proposed Interventions

Aside from users of the Deeside Way Core Path which runs through the site it is unlikely many visitors to Aberdeenshire would be aware of the Glebe Park. A major improvement would be the introduction of interpretation and signage to improve wayfinding and create a stronger sense of arrival for visitors travelling along the A93 through Drumoak.

Options for enhancement of the site's facilities could include restricting vehicular access down the woodland track and instead increasing existing layby car parking capacity (Op 1), provision of a new 'camping car park' in the woods (Op 1). Or development of a small new informal car parking area adjacent to the green (Op 2). Either option also has potential to offer compost toilet facilities if required.

Outline Costings - The Glebe				
Item	Option 1 Output	Measure	Rate	Total
1	Widened & resurfaced road	800m2	£110	£88,000
2	New informal woodland car park	Prov. Sum	Item	£100,000
3	Park Signage	Prov. Sum	Item	£15,000
			Approx. Total:	£203,000
Item	Option 2 Output	Measure	Rate	Total
4	1 Acre Basic Acre 'Camping Car Park'	Prov. Sum	Item	£250,000
5	New Gated Access	Prov. Sum	Item	£5,000
	Park Signage	Prov. Sum	Item	£15,000
			Approx. Total:	£270,000

N.B. all rates provided are for indicative purposes only and have been based on recent example projects and SPONs 2022 estimated costs.

4.0 Funding Strategy

The strategy identifies three principal sources of external funding that the Council can access to support the STIDP. These funds are accessible to the local authority directly. Should the Council work in partnership with other community groups then the list of potential sources would expand. (Over the period of implementation, 2022-2030, this list may change and evolve as new funds become available or existing funds close).

The sources are capable of delivering funding support of reasonable scale for a development plan of this nature. Depending on the criteria for future application rounds and subject to the extension of the programme beyond 2025, the UK Government's Levelling Up Fund is a potential funding opportunity for major urban based projects such as those recommended at Stonehaven, Portsoy and Gardenstown. At Scottish Government Level the Place Based Investment Programme incorporating the Regional Capital Grant Fund (RCGF) is the basis for collaborative working with local government but The Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund- administered by Visit Scotland is the primary source of funding for most of the STIDP projects individually falling within the £75k-£500k capital range.

Over the life of the delivery programme there may be additional sources of funding that become available through state agencies and national and devolved government, but these sources are considered the key targets for the STIDP in 2023.

RTIF has the potential to fund up to a maximum of 75% of eligible project costs so there is a minimum requirement to provide at least 25% match funding for projects, although this can include in kind support in the form of labour or land value. This may require input from Aberdeenshire Council's Capital and Revenue budgets in the future, and this will require to be carefully taken into account when considering the proposals detailed within the STIDP.

Aberdeenshire STIDP- Draft Funding Strategy				
Tier	Infrastructure	Fund	Scale	Estimate
Tier 1	Motorhome Aires x 6	Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund- Visit Scotland	2 x 0.5 acres 2 x 1 acres 2 x 1.5 acres	c.£2m
	Stonehaven	Levelling Up Fund (if extended)	Up to £20m per bid	c.£20m plus
		Regeneration Capital Grant Fund	Post 2024	
		Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund- Visit Scotland	£75-500K per project	
	Sandend	Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund- Visit Scotland	£75-500K per project	c.£400k
	Balmedie Country Park	Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund- Visit Scotland	£75-500K per project	c.£1m (2x £500k bids)
Tier 2	Portsoy, Gardenstown,	Levelling Up Fund (If extended)	Up to £20m per bid	c.£7-10m Joint Bid

	Crovie, Catterline & Crawton NR	Regeneration Capital Grant Fund	Post 2024	
		Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund- Visit Scotland	£75-500K per project	
Tier 3	Blue Door Gannochy	Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund- Visit Scotland £75-500K per project		c.£40,000
	Durris Woods			c.£350,000
	Falls of Dess			c.£180,000
	Loch of Skene			c.£250,000
	Dunecht			c.£170,000
	Houghton Country Park			c.£500,000
	Forvie NNR			c.£250,000
	Aden Country Park			c.£410,00
	Haddo House & Country Park			c.£300,000
	Potarch Green			c.£470,000
	The Glebe, Drumoak			c.£275,000

4.1 Monitoring and Reviewing the STIDP

In order to nurture a long-term programme of continuous improvement of the tourism infrastructure within Aberdeenshire, the Council is encouraged to monitor and review the programme of improvements updating the STIDP on a 3 year cycle to ensure it is accurately reflecting current visitor demands, pressures and impact on the key hot spots and communities.

5.0 Recommendations

The following key recommendations are made:

- The Council adopt a three tier strategy for the STIDP as presented in Section 3 of this report.
- The STIDP should be adopted for renewal and revision on a 3-year cycle allowing for new sites to be brought forward as tourism infrastructure is strategically developed within a rolling programme of continuous improvement of the visitor experience across Aberdeenshire.
- In respect of the development of a strategic network of aires (motorhome service points), the Council undertakes a site search for suitable sites within its control or where an aire could be provided in conjunction with an eligible partner within the six identified locations. As sites are selected, these should be taken through detailed design feasibility assessment before being presented for capital funding through the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.
- In parallel with the site selection process the Council should consider the procurement of a single operator contract for the management and operation of the aires over a suitable lease period. There may be advantages in having an operator on board as the design process is being developed.
- Stonehaven is deserving of an integrated masterplanning strategy with a focus on placemaking and public realm renewal. The project should be conceived at scale embracing multi-disciplinary design and community engagement and be considered as a potential project for large scale national funding programmes once plans are fully developed.
- Sandend should be selected for the provision of supporting infrastructure to help develop and expand the water-based activity sector along the Banff coast. Parking, storage, changing and beach access facilities are critical enabling actions. Consultation with the local community and with ONE and existing activity providers will be critical.
- There is the potential to bundle projects together for funding purposes. For example, the Council could consider combining Portsoy and Gardenstown public realm improvements into a single funding submission and promoting a combined and linked Seatown access initiative covering Sandend, Crovie, Pennan & Catterline. Community engagement is again critical when taking these proposals forward.
- Across all three tier level hot spot sites, detailed community consultation is required as individual sites are brought forward for design improvement and the introduction of new management proposals. This should include special engagement around disability access and access for specialist groups such as equestrian users. Tier 3 sites can be bundled together for phased application to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund.

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