

Evolving the Nevis Strategy 2020-40



Com-pairteachas Tire Nibheis
Nevis Landscape
Partnership

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Picture front cover: Children from Stramash Outdoor Nursery looking at Lower Falls on their way to help plant the *Future Forest* in Glen Nevis. ©NLP

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Welcome, to the new Nevis Strategy 2020-40.

This document, **Evolving the Nevis Strategy**, aims to briefly present the background which helped to set out our proposed direction of travel and priorities for the next 20 years as detailed in **The Nevis Strategy 2020-40** document. The team here at Nevis Landscape Partnership are excited about the role we can play, alongside our partners, the community and stakeholders, to care for the stunning and unique Nevis landscape.

The following notes are provided to aid the reader:

1. The Nevis Partnership now trades as the Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP). All references to the partnership in this strategy will be to the trading name.
2. This companion to the Nevis Strategy 2020-40 seeks to review the Nevis Strategy 2001, Nevis Strategy 2008, the Landscape Conservation Action Plan 2014 as well as considering changing government priorities, local plans, local factors, landowner's management plans and trends to provide the current context which underpins the Nevis Strategy 2020-40.
3. Previous documents published by the Partnership are available on our website: www.nevispartnership.co.uk/library.html
4. The Nevis Strategy 2020-40 seeks to build on the work carried out in partnership and cooperation by the Nevis landscape Partnership over the last 17 years.
5. Our main area of operation is the Nevis Area, however NLP are an outward looking organisation and our work and impact regularly reaches beyond this boundary to the wider Fort William and Lochaber community.

The Nevis Partnership is a Scottish company with charitable status formed in 2002 and has been trading as the Nevis Landscape Partnership since 2019

Company registration number SC235028 | Charity registered number SCO33418

1.0 NEVIS LANDSCAPE PARTNERSHIP

1.1 WHO WE ARE

The Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP) is a Scottish charity formed in 2002 with the intent to guide future policies and actions to safeguard, manage, and where appropriate, enhance the environmental and cultural qualities and opportunities for enjoyment and appreciation of the Nevis area.

The NLP understands that managing the complex tensions between recreation and conservation, together with the impacts on residents and businesses within Glen Nevis, are critical considerations. We aim to find community solutions to issues and share the view that all activity taking place in fragile environments must be strategic and holistic so that problems are not simply displaced elsewhere.

We work within the Nevis Management Area (NMA) in partnership with a range of local, national, and international organisations, landowners, businesses, community groups and individuals to maintain and improve the path network and visitor facilities, monitor and conserve habitats and ecosystems for wildlife, and plant trees to support native woodland regeneration and improve connectivity.

1.2 OUR PRINCIPLES

Our work is underpinned by 5 key principles:

- Sustainability
- Commitment to partnership and cooperative working
- Working with the community, landowners, managers and stakeholders to reach agreement and support for management initiatives
- Recognition of the area's international and national conservation, tourism and recreation importance
- Commitment to action and investment

1.3 OUR MEMBERSHIP

Members

Fort William, Inverlochy & Torlundy CC
Forestry & Land Scotland
Friends of Nevis
Glen Nevis Residents Association
Highland Mountain Culture Assoc.
John Muir Trust
Lochaber Chamber of Commerce
Lochaber Geopark
Mountaineering Scotland
sportscotland
The Highland Council
West Highlands College, UHI

Advisors

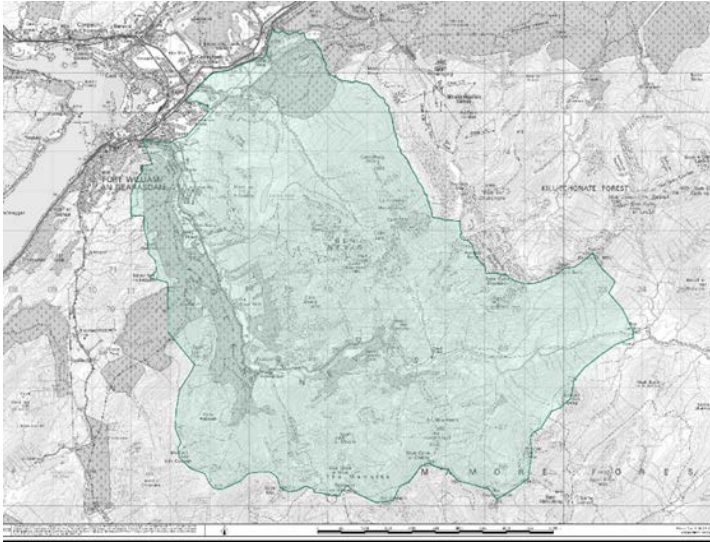
NatureScot

Representatives

Jahama Highland Estates
VisitScotland

2.0 THE NEVIS MANAGEMENT AREA

Ben Nevis (1345m) is an international Scottish icon; a landmark recognised beyond our shores. As the highest mountain in the British Isles it has economic and reputational value on a national scale, sitting at the heart of the Outdoor Capital of the United Kingdom. More profoundly, it has deep cultural and environmental significance. The encompassing mountain landscape of Glen Nevis constitutes one of Scotland's most accessible and cherished National Scenic Areas. The high profile and national importance of the area attract more than 350,000 visitors annually and managing the complex tensions between recreation and conservation is critical in securing the future of the Nevis landscape and its wild land areas.



The Nevis Management Area includes Glen Nevis, Ben Nevis and the surrounding mountains and slopes of the River Nevis and Allt a' Mhuilinn catchments. It includes the Ben Nevis Massif, Carn Mor Dearg, the northern summits of the Northern Mamores and the south-west slopes of Aonach Beag, but excludes the wider Mamores, Grey Corries and Aonach Mor. The approximate size of the area is 89km², which contains the main visitor facilities and activity areas in Glen Nevis - from the Glen Entrance to the Upper Falls car park.

This area includes significant parts of the Ben Nevis SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and SAC (Special Area of Conservation) which encompass species, habitats and landscapes as well as being one of the core parts of the Ben Nevis and Glen Coe NSA (National Scenic Area). Protected features include different types of native woodland, open ground habitats such as heath, bog and scree as well as rare arctic-alpine plants and bryophytes (mosses and liverworts), species such as the small mountain ringlet butterfly and assemblages of breeding birds and flies. It also includes the complex geology and glacial history of the area, which in turn led to it being officially recognised in 2007 when Lochaber was awarded European and Global Geopark status.

The built heritage includes the scheduled ancient monument of Dun Deardail, a vitrified fort, and other archaeologically and culturally significant sites, including, Ach nan Con graveyard, charcoal burning platforms and now-abandoned settlements. More recent evidence of human interaction with the landscape includes the Observatory ruins on the summit of Ben Nevis and the pony track that was built to service it.

For a full and detailed description of the Nevis Management Area and it's natural and cultural qualities please refer to the LCAP 2014, Sections 2 – 5, available on our website.

<https://www.nevispartnership.co.uk/library.html>

3.0 BACKGROUND TO THE NEVIS STRATEGY

In late-1998, the Nevis Working Party appointed Peter Scott Consultants to organise a participative programme to develop a Vision for the Nevis Area and a researcher to collate initial information. The future Vision was confirmed in mid-1999, following public and interest group workshops. To foster debate and seek consensus amongst the interests represented on the Working Party and to enable contributions by external experts, the first stage in developing the Strategy involved several Topic Groups developing Topic Papers on key issues, which were then discussed, modified and agreed by the Working Party.

The first Nevis Strategy was produced in 2001 by The Nevis Working Party with funding from The Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Lochaber Enterprise and the European Regional Development Fund. It was updated in 2008 to produce a 5-year plan which then formed the basis of the Landscape Conservation Action Plan and the subsequent successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.

The original strategy document was based on 5 'needs':

1. Environment
To safeguard, manage and, where appropriate, enhance the environmental qualities of the Nevis Management Area
2. Cultural Heritage
To safeguard and increase awareness of, and care for, cultural heritage sites and features
3. Visitor Management
To provide opportunities for sustainable and thoughtful visitor appreciation of the Nevis Area
4. Development within Glen Nevis
1984 Management Plan is out-of-date and more explicit policies are required to ensure a robust planning framework and prevent isolated development
5. Organisational factors
Shortfalls in funding, staffing and the coordination of management programmes.

4.0 ACHIEVEMENTS

The Nevis Partnership was formed with a commitment to action and investment. In the eighteen years since the original strategy was written the partnership has delivered both large and small scale, heritage and community projects in the Nevis area in partnership with the local community as well as local and national organisations.

Our most ambitious programme to date, the Nevis Landscape Partnership (NLP) programme has been an enormous success and has given us the confidence to think bigger in terms of our aspirations. Not only has it delivered on all the key outcomes, it has brought with it a sense of optimism and, importantly, trust in The Nevis Partnership as an organisation which gets things done in an open and inclusive way.

In all, the Nevis Partnership have levered over £6M of investment into the Nevis Management Area; delivering projects, providing training, and creating employment in the environmental sector. Some of the highlights of the past eighteen years are listed below.

4.1 PEOPLE

- We have created employment in the environmental sector from our early support of the for the development of the John Muir Trust's Ben Nevis Conservation officer role to our own Conservation, Footpath and Volunteer Co-ordinator roles of the past 5 years.
- Supported an upland path skills development programme in conjunction with the National Trust for Scotland and Lochaber Enterprise.
- Delivered a hugely successful Trainee Volunteer Ranger programme for 37 participants over 4 years, which has changed lives, leading to employment and enrolment into further education courses.
- In partnership with Friends of Nevis, John Muir Trust and Forestry and Land Scotland we have run or supported over 400 volunteer, community engagement and school education events over the last 5 years.
- In partnership with London Fieldworks we have supported over 40 artists in residence at Outlandia.

4.2 PLACE - NATURAL HERITAGE

- Ground-breaking North Face Survey of rare arctic-alpine flora to convert an Unfavourable condition assessment for vascular plants to Favourable for Ben Nevis SSSI;
- Woodland regeneration and planting in Glen Nevis, contributing to Unfavourable – Recovering feature condition for the Native Pinewood feature of the Ben Nevis SSSI/SAC;
- Forest restructuring in commercial woodlands within the National Forest Estate to enhance native elements and support qualifying habitats on adjacent ground;
- Blueprint generated to show future potential for native woodland within the Partnership area;
- Provision of support infrastructure for a number of BAP species, including red squirrels, bats and owls;
- Worked with the Ben Nevis Race Associational and Lochaber Athletics to re-route the Ben Nevis Race and Half Ben Race to reduce erosion of qualifying habitat on the Grassy Bank (Red burn area);

- Improvements to the path network, within the Partnership area which reduce erosion and damage on qualifying habitats on adjacent ground;
- Feasibility study for reintroduction of freshwater pearl mussels in the Waters of Nevis.
- Improved woodland management around Polldubh crags;
- Continue to monitor and respond to planning applications relating to the Nevis Management Area.

4.3 PLACE - CULTURAL HERITAGE

- Ben Nevis film series capturing both the natural and cultural heritage aspects of the area
- In partnership with the Forestry and Land Scotland we conducted the first ever excavation of Dun Deardail, a vitrified hill fort in Glen Nevis, with associated school and community engagement events.
- Sense of Place project to improve curling ponds with interpretive art installation
- Sponsor of the Fort William Mountain Festival to promote environmental themes
- Published books: Nevis, The Ben and the Glen; Exploring the Landscape of Ben Nevis and Glen Nevis; The Archaeology of Dun Deardail (Best Archaeological Book category for the 2018 British Archaeological Awards.; The North Face Survey: Discovering the hidden side of Ben Nevis,
- Ran several Gaelic in the Landscape events to educate about Gaelic place names in the Nevis area.
- Production of awareness raising documents and leaflets covering the subjects of flora and fauna, mountain safety in the summer months and general attractions in the Nevis area.
- Online platforms: website, facebook, Instagram, twitter, vimeo and youtube to provide wider intellectual access to the area.
- Publication of free quarterly magazine with articles on a range of topics relating to the area (also available as an online version)
- Bi-monthly article in Lochaber Life a free magazine sent to every household in Lochaber.

4.4 ACCESS

- Extensive repair of the Ben Nevis Mountain Path, the primary route to the summit of Ben Nevis
- In partnership with The Highland Council we built a new all-ability bridge over the river Nevis
- Installed the new all-ability riverside walk
- Improved access routes to the historic climbing area of Polldubh
- Built a new path along the Allt a Mhuilinn
- Improved low level walking routes in Glen Nevis

4.5 COMMUNITY

- Supported the establishment in 2008 of Friends of Nevis
- Glen Nevis Festival
- Delivery of the Scottish Mountain safety seminar
- In partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland we have run 2 Archaeology festivals, celebrating the Dun Deardail Excavation project in 2016 & 2017.
- All Ability Bridge Grand Opening 2017
- Delivered the 'Celebrating the wild Festival' in 2018

- Partnered with the National Trust for Scotland to bring 10 Thistle Camp working holidays to Nevis from 2016-19
- In 2018 we set up and now facilitate the Glen Nevis Integrated Infrastructure Steering Group to engage residents and the business community to develop and continuously improve the Integrated Infrastructure Plan.
- Facilitating visiting volunteer groups, Fix the Fells & Edinburgh University 'Dirty Weekenders'
- Participation in and facilitation of extensive discussion with regard the management of Three Peak charity events

Whilst our projects have resulted in better inclusion, participation and cooperation in caring for our landscape, it is also true to say that we, as an organisation, have also developed and matured. The Nevis Landscape Partnership is now a team of seven, each bringing with them specific yet complementary skills. The team have experience of listening to our partners and stakeholders to develop and deliver meaningful projects and activities.

Our experience has led to the development of sound project management, financial administration and governance arrangements giving us the ability to deliver complex multi funded projects, whilst complying with the different regulations and priorities set out by our various funders, including the complex European funding schemes. We ensure this happens both at project and operational level through the oversight of regular Executive Committee and Board meetings.

Our financial and project reporting systems are robust and have been tested by three successful external financial audits. Consequently, the organisation, has a wide range of expertise and knowledge, all relevant as we transition into this next phase of the organisation's development.

It is at the core of the Nevis Landscape Partnership's key principles that we should work in partnership and cooperation to bring meaningful benefits to the area and to the individuals and communities who access it, and it remains our key mode of operation, demonstrated most recently in the development and delivery of the NLP programme.

It would be true to say that without the Nevis Landscape Partnership, the NLP programme and associated investment into the area would not have happened. We were the lynch pin which brought everyone together and we are continuing to do just that. The NLP programme has demonstrated that we can do far more as a well-funded, secure and resilient collective than we can ever manage individually.

5.0 EVOLVING THE STRATEGY

The European Landscape Convention (ELC), which was signed by the UK government in 2006 and introduced in March 2007, provides a people-centred and forward-looking way to reconcile management of the environment with the social and economic challenges of the future, and aims to help people reconnect with place.

The ELC states that a landscape's natural and cultural components form a whole and highlights the importance of helping the public and institutions recognise the value of the landscape, and of working together to take part in decision making.

The Scottish Government also has a strong ambition to be a leader in environmental protection and sustainability. It is currently developing an Environment Strategy to steer the country's future course in delivering several ambitious outcomes around the vision of "one planet prosperity" – "protecting nature and living within the Earth's sustainable limits, while building a more prosperous, innovative and successful nation" (Scottish Government, 2018).

The Scottish Government recognises that there is significant future action required, in particular halting biodiversity loss, restoring healthy ecosystems, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, tackling air and water pollution, and increasing the number of people accessing, enjoying and connecting with nature.

The updated Nevis Strategy seeks to build on the achievements of the past, in particular, the experience of delivering the NLP programme to provide opportunities for the local and wider community to work together to find community led solutions to caring for their local landscapes. It seeks to welcome visitors and the local community into Glen Nevis but understands that managing the complex tensions between recreation and conservation, together with the impacts on residents and businesses within Glen Nevis are critical considerations. We share the view that all activity taking place in fragile environments must be strategic and holistic so that problems are not simply displaced elsewhere.

Key to achieving this balance is an understanding of:

- People – why and how are people compelled to visit our landscape
- Place - what makes our landscape special and what are the forces that act upon it
- Community – facilitating community led solutions which allow the landscape to flourish for future generations.

Despite our many successes there is still much that needs to be done. Further, changes in Scottish Government priorities, new pressures from a hugely successful national destination marketing strategy, new landowners and an ambitious Fort William development plan, amongst other factors, presents both new opportunities and challenges for the Nevis area. This document seeks to outline the main factors considered in developing the Nevis Strategy 2019-39.

6.0 THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

6.1 PEOPLE

6.1.1 LOCAL FACTORS

Local Population

Since 1996, the population of Highland has increased by 12.5%. This is the 7th highest percentage change out of the 32 council areas in Scotland. Over the same period, Scotland's population rose by 6.1%.

The population of Fort William, by contrast, has decreased slightly from 10292 to 10175 (-117 or -1.2%) from 2011-2016. Although the Fort William 2040 plan proposes around 650 new homes to be built this is largely to meet both existing need and changing living patterns. The population of Lochaber is 19806 (2016).

The Scottish Index of multiple Deprivation 2016 (SIMD16) is the Scottish Government's official measure of the level of deprivation in 6976 (up 471 zones on 2012) data-zones where rank 1 is the most deprived. The 14 data-zones in Greater Fort William rank from 954 (down 40 places on 2012) to 6086 (up 557 places on 2012) on the multiple Index. With Fort William central and plantation continuing to be at the lowest end of the rankings and the only zones within the 20% most deprived zones in Scotland (ranks 1 to 1395). Issues pertaining to poor health are particularly evident in Fort William Central whilst education skills & training is a particular issue in the Plantation.

The employment opportunities in the area are heavily dependent on the tourism sector which tend to be seasonal in nature and may also attract zero hours contracts. Employment opportunities of a more permanent nature would be beneficial to the area and could be considered as part of the Nevis Field Centre development.

The NLP programme has contributed to the challenges and opportunities taken from the Highland Council's Single Outcome Agreement, in particular, by improving health through activity, fitness and well-being and by increasing volunteering, participation and ownership. However, there is clearly more to do in engaging the local population, especially in the more deprived areas, where they may also benefit from learning new skills which has the potential to build confidence and help people into employment and further education. Opportunities exist to develop more partnership working with organisations like Lochaber Hope and Y People.

Educational Establishments

Within Fort William environs there are 5 primary schools with associated nursery provision, Stramash outdoor nursery, Lochaber High School and UHI West Highland College. With wider Lochaber having a further 20 primary and 2 high schools.

The NLP programme provided the resources to engage with many of the local schools in particular through the Dun Deardail, Future Forests, Celebrating the Wild and Community Engagement projects and by working with our partners and High Life Highland's Active Schools programme we were able to visit schools in the more remote areas in Lochaber. We have worked

with young people from ages 3 to 17. There has been real interest from schools to continue working with us and seeking follow up activities and our future plans for the development of the Nevis Field Centre and tree nursery would provide excellent opportunities for further engagement. The Mountain Camp concept, a residential immersion week aimed at exploring all things Nevis could form part of transition activities aimed at preparing P7 students for High School, is just one initiative currently being explored.

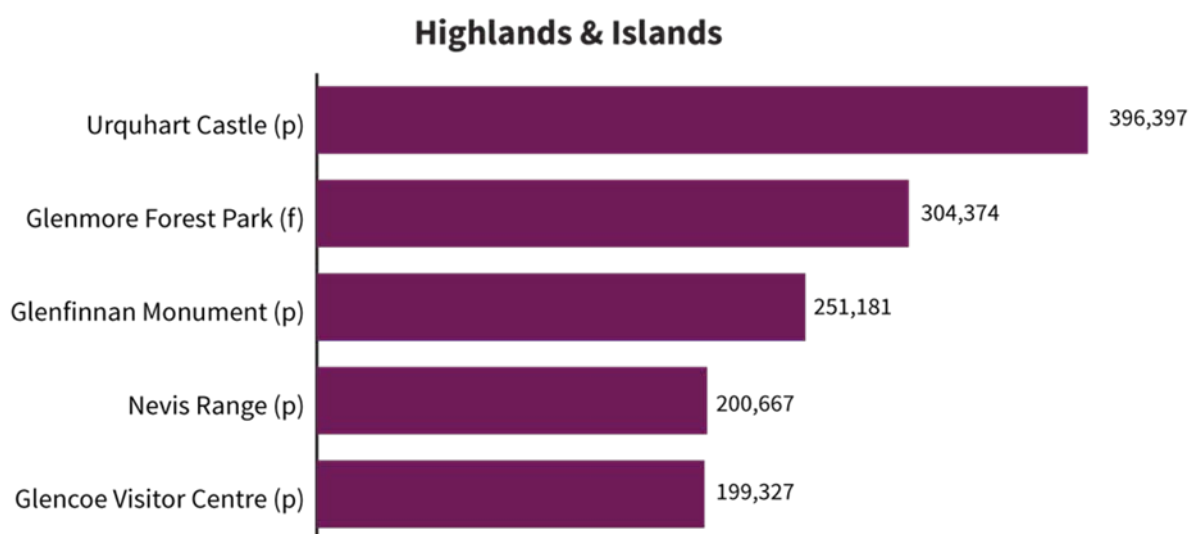
We are also working with UHI to develop joint initiatives. We have already hosted some of their Adventure Tourism students on our Trainee Volunteer Ranger course and are investigating a possible joint Rural Skills programme. Improved NLP facilities could pave the way for far more joint working both with schools and the UHI.

6.1.2 VISITORS

Highly successful destination marketing has increased visitor numbers across the Highland region with 10.5 million trips taken in Q1-3 2018. With Ben Nevis and Glen Nevis continuing to be a key attraction for visitors.

The 2001 Nevis Strategy put the numbers climbing Ben Nevis at 75,000, this number had risen to 117,000 in 2011 and by 2018 we had 160,000 people on the Ben Nevis Mountain Path alone which is a rise of 113% on 2001. Similarly, in 2018 the Ben Nevis Visitor Centre had in excess of 114,000 people through its door. This represents a dramatic increase on the 2016 figure of 56,500 and may be due in part to locating the new all-ability bridge adjacent to the visitor centre building and the recent refurbishment of the facility carried out as part of the NLP programme.

Whilst some of the people counted at both these locations will be the same people, if you consider access to other attractions in the Nevis Management Area; e.g. Ring of Steall, Steall Falls, Polldubh Crags, completing the West Highland Way, using the all-ability riverside path, users of the Forestry and Land Scotland path network including to visit Dun Deardail, and those accessing the North Face from the Allt a' Mhuilinn visitor numbers to the area are conservatively estimated to be in excess of 300,000 per year . To put this in context the table below lists the top 5 attractions in the Highland region.



Insights Department: Tourism in Scotland's Regions 2016 (update May 18).

Further, the Fort William Strategic Transport Study 2018 notes that “The International Passenger Survey (IPS) suggests Fort William had 112,000 holiday-related visits in 2016, significantly more than comparable Aviemore, – and visitor numbers have increased in Fort William in recent years.” It goes on to mention Nevis Range and Glenfinnan as being key major attractions but does not mention Ben and Glen Nevis.

“Scottish Tourism has been one of the economic and social success stories of the last 50 years. From 1969 to 2019 there has been an exponential growth in trips, expenditure and in the nationalities of visitors who experience our tourism offering.”

Insight Department: Tourism Futures 2069

It is difficult to predict future trends, however, with the Scottish Highlands listed 5th in Lonely Planet’s Top Ten Regions to visit and the investment across Scotland in marine tourism means we are likely to see a further increase in visitor numbers to the Fort William area over the next few years. As part of the Fort William 2040, plans are well progressed for new waterfront developments which will bring new business to the area and an increase in cruise liners visiting the town, with 17 visits already planned for 2019. Significantly, the Fort William 2040 Masterplan does not include consideration of the impacts on the Nevis Management Area at the time of publication. However, as a result of feeding into the FW2040 consultation process, the Field Centre, listed as a potential project, will be considered for inclusion in the next iteration of the FW2040 Masterplan.

6.1.3 ACCESSING THE NEVIS AREA

Walking and Cycling

The proximity to Fort William and surrounding villages allows easy access to Glen Nevis by foot or bike with access either from North Road, Claggan or via the paths traversing around Cow Hill. There are also two cycle hire businesses catering for visitors; one in Fort William High Street and the other in Inverlochy. Further, Lochaber Environment Group run a bike repair scheme to encourage more locals to cycle. Access to the area can also be made from the North Face car park and Nevis Range.

However, despite this easy access many choose to access to the Nevis by car which presents challenges in terms of sustainability, congestion and pollution. Our intention is to reduce the reliance on cars to enjoy this spectacular place, and we are working closely with the local community on this. The following sets out some of the challenges and opportunities which we will continue to develop and explore to continually improve access.

Public Transport

The following service buses run along Glen Nevis

No 41: Glen Nevis Youth Hostel Twice daily, No Sunday service

No 42: Service operates from May to October from 9.30 to 17.00

Glen Nevis Youth Hostel from 9.30 to 17.00 (6 runs, 3 of which go to Lower Falls)

The fare from town to Lower falls is £3.50 single or £5 return.

There are some barriers to encouraging better use of public transport:

- Lack of promotion to use the bus rather than take the car
- Lack of frequency of service (this may be linked to poor uptake of the service)
- No hop on/off facility, which could tie in with 'point to point' walks or different attractions
- £5 return per person vs £4 donation for all day parking at Lower Falls and no charging regime at the road end.
- No proper bus stop/shelter or timetable information at Lower Falls car park meaning the bus normally waits at the entrance to Achriabhach, which can lead to confusion for users.
- The timetable does not cater for walkers who often start earlier than 9.30 and finish later than 17.00 in the summer, especially when doing the longer walks such as the ring of Steall.

Private Vehicular Access

There has been an increase in traffic in Glen Nevis, in line with increasing visitor numbers generally. Spot surveys carried out by NLP and JMT in 2018 found the car park at Steall to be vastly oversubscribed from Easter until October. This high volume of traffic is particularly problematic along the single-track road in upper Glen Nevis, at the Youth Hostel Bridge and at Achintee.

The Scotland Visitor Survey 2015 & 2016 found that 9% of visitors to the Highlands came by touring caravans or motorhomes and this appears to be a growing market. In common with other popular areas in the Highlands, Glen Nevis has had a number of issues specifically relating to this user group, from leaving rubbish, stopping overnight in laybys and inappropriate disposal of toilet waste. Although it is the minority of users it is a significant problem and presents health hazards where this behaviour takes place. The Campervan and Motorhome Professional Association has been set up to provide best practice advice to secure a sustainable industry, which includes information for clients on sustainable behaviour and etiquette. There may be opportunities to add information to their site about Glen Nevis.

There are also minibuses, sometimes with trailers, large tour coaches and a high volume of cars accessing the Glen Nevis, which is creating negative impacts, such as damage to road edges and roadside erosion.

In addition, social media and online review sites tend to focus people on honeypot sites, with visitors visiting the same spots in the same way at the same time, which can overwhelm facilities a peak-times.

Glen Nevis Integrated Infrastructure Steering Group

Fort William Strategic Transport Study 2018 does not consider the acute congestion experienced in Glen Nevis from Easter to September, the impact on visitor experience or the significant road and infrastructure maintenance required to manage this as it is out with the study area of this report.

In 2018, NLP invited Glen Nevis residents, landowners and stakeholders to form a Glen Nevis Integrated Infrastructure Steering Group (GNIIS) to develop a plan to address the issues whilst maintaining access to the area.

The steering group aims to develop community led solutions which:

- Welcome the local community and visitors into Glen Nevis and the surrounding landscape in a sustainable and low impactful way.
- Takes a holistic and multifaceted approach to managing congestion, pollution and erosion in Glen Nevis which includes promoting public transport, cycling, e-bikes and walking to access the area and understands that ever increasing or additional carparks is not the sole solution to the issues.
- Provides quality facilities where they are required, such as toilets.
- Provide quality information which allows people to make informed choices on how to access and enjoy Glen Nevis and the surrounding landscape in a thoughtful and sustainable way
- Mitigates negative impacts on the environment, residents and businesses in Glen Nevis.

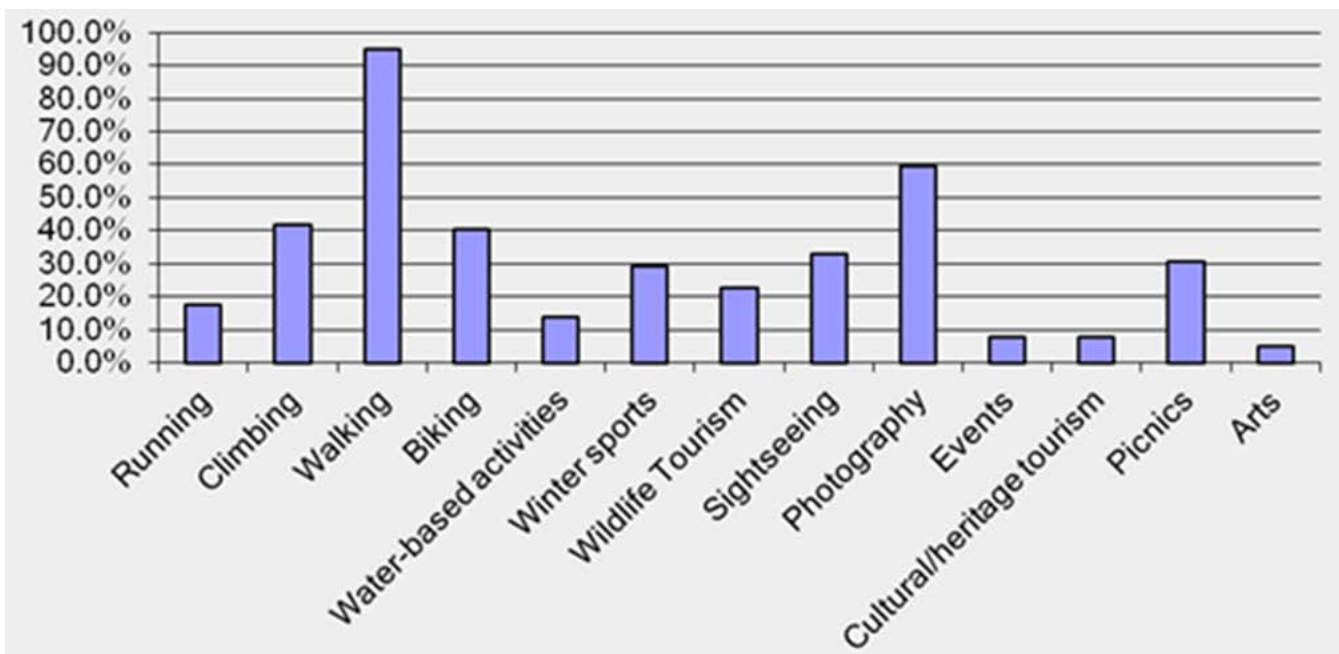
Some progress has been made as a result of this group:

- NLP has engaged with The Highland Council Community Services Roads Department and some potholes have been repaired and inspections and works have been carried out on some of the road bridges along upper Glen Nevis.
- THC Roads team are costing replacing the corroded and broken passing place signs along upper Glen Nevis Road which should help with inappropriate parking.
- THC roads team will be installing a campervan restriction sign to upper Steall to help with the dangerous congestion experienced here by restricting access by large vehicles.
- NLP have taken over the Lower Falls car park and have been successful in their application to the Rural Tourism and Infrastructure Fund to improve the carpark, install toilets and a bus stop.

Although NLP and John Muir Trust have carried out spot traffic surveys a full traffic impact study would provide the data and evidence to help GNISS developing further impact reduction strategies for Glen Nevis in partnership and cooperation with wider Fort William initiatives as suggested in the Fort William Strategic Transport Study 2018, e.g. visitor shuttle (or hop on/off bus service) tied into park and ride locations (with could include facilities for motorhomes and campervans to empty waste and do laundry etc.).

6.1.4 ACTIVITIES

The Landscape Conservation Action Plan 2014 looked in detail at the variety and history of differing activities in the NMA. The graph below provides results from the NLP Community Consultation and Visitor Survey (2013). Participants were asked in what activities do you participate in Glen/Ben Nevis.



LCAP 2014

This section seeks to provide a brief update to the information provided in the LCAP 2014, however the Participation in Outdoor Recreation 2018 report notes that:

The proportion of adults visiting the outdoors in 2017/18 (82%) is the same as the proportion reported in the 2013/14 survey; the proportion of adults visiting the outdoors on a regular weekly basis has, however, increased significantly since 2013/14 (up from 50% to 57% in 2017/18) as has the total number of visits taken (up from 396 million to 546 million in 2017/18).

Scotland's People and Nature Survey - Participation in outdoor recreation, SNH, December 2018

Walking

Walking continues to be a key activity in the area with approximately 160,000 walkers using the Ben Nevis Mountain Path in 2018. However, Glen Nevis is also a significant attraction in its own right with c.50,000 walkers passing through it whilst completing the West Highland Way and many more visiting Steall Falls and tackling the Ring of Steall.

While many walkers have the walk as their primary focus, there are innumerable other reasons why people would access the area on foot, including birdwatching, photography and botany. All of these users will benefit from enhanced access and a wider network of suitable paths.

Path Network

There was significant work carried out as part of the NLP programme on the Ben Nevis Mountain Path, North Face Path, All Ability Riverside Path and around the Polldubh climbing area. Nevertheless, much of the surrounding area remains true wilderness. Whilst it may seem counter intuitive to further develop the existing path network in these areas there would be real benefits to doing just that:

- improve the resilience of the area to cope with increasing recreational pressure and control erosion due to trampling. Most people will stay on the path if one is provided;

- provide increased opportunities to connect with the natural and cultural heritage;
- provide greater choice of activity or route for a wide range of abilities, reducing the honeypot effect by dispersing visitors around the area, creating the impression of a quieter, more peaceful area;
- facilitate a longer, slower and more immersive experiences rather than the quick-look selfie culture which is now so pervasive.

Five main opportunities exist:

1. The Glen Nevis Heritage Trail – This trail, some 13 miles long, will take in many of the natural and cultural heritage sites in Glen Nevis, highlighting cultural, environmental and historical interests on the route. Starting at the Curling Ponds, along the north of the River Nevis to Polldubh and Steal Meadows beyond before crossing the river and returning back along the south of the river to lower falls where it will then join up with the Forestry tracks heading back to the entrance to the Glen.
2. The Meall an t'Suidhe Circular - allowing people to choose, once they reach the Halfway Lochan, whether to continue on to the top of Ben Nevis or, in poor weather or when they are feeling disinclined to go higher, to take a lower level circular route back to the Visitor Centre.
3. Mamores Access project – Repair the first 2-300 metres of each of the access points to allow the erosion at these points to recover.
4. Central Highlands Way – investigate the possibilities of working with neighbouring estates to link up paths along the Waters of Nevis, linking Fort William with Corrour, Rannoch, Dalwhinnie and Strathspey
5. Monitoring slope stability and assessing what, if anything, can be done to mitigate or prevent erosion around existing paths.

Family days out

A lot of work has already gone into enhancing family days out, for example, along the all-abilities Riverside Path and around Braveheart car park. The proposed redevelopment of the Lower Falls car park provides a real opportunity to enhance family days, providing scope for better public transport, picnic areas, toilets and links to the wider path network. However, there will also be scope for the increased involvement of families in the enjoyment of nature through the activities and facilities the proposed Nevis Field Centre will be able to offer. Engaging with the local and visiting population, including young people, has been a key focus for the Partnership and will continue to be so in the future.

Dog walking

There are several well-used starting points regularly used by dog users and whilst most owners are responsible there are issues relating to irresponsible dog ownership. Livestock are a constant presence in the area and more education is needed to develop dog owners' understanding of what is meant by close control and their responsibilities around the safe disposal of dog waste.

Cycling

There is enormous potential for cycling in and around Glen Nevis and the wider NMA, and increasing interest E-bikes or Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (epac). The Scottish Outdoor Access Network provides the following information:

An 'electrically assisted pedal cycle' is not a 'motor vehicle' as long as it meets various criteria, and consequently it can be ridden within the exercise of the Scottish access rights, (e.g. on shared paths) – as well as on roads and bike lanes if the rider is over the age of 14.

Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycles (epac) fall under the “Electrically Assisted Pedal Cycle Regulations 1983 S.1.1168” – Regulation 4 contains the requirements / criteria for an EAPC. The key requirements to fall into this category are:

- the bike must have pedals that can be used to propel it
- the electric motor should not be able to propel the bike at more than 15mph
- the bike (including its battery but not the rider) must not be heavier than 40 kilograms (kg) if it's a bicycle, or 60kg if it's a tandem or tricycle
- the motor shouldn't have a maximum power output of more than 200 watts if it's a bicycle and 250 watts if it's a tandem or tricycle
- the bike must have a plate showing the manufacturer, the nominal voltage of the battery, and the motor's power output.

Mountain biking opportunities exist throughout Glen Nevis, from easy family-friendly forest tracks around the Lower Falls car park and the lower Glen, increasing use of the Allt a'Mhuillin, as well as parts of the proposed Heritage Trail route.

Encouraging bike use in Glen Nevis rather than cars is a core aspiration to reduce congestion and pollution and to enhance visitor experience. The proposed Nevis Field Centre and improvements to Lower Falls will help to support the use of bikes and e-Bikes by providing hire locations within the Glen and bike racks and route information.

Running

Not everyone climbs or walks up Ben Nevis. Each year men and women from all parts of the UK and beyond gather at Claggan Park football ground on the outskirts of Fort William to take part in the gruelling Ben Nevis Race – a 14km run with a 1,345 metre ascent to the top of Ben Nevis and back again. They're following in the footsteps of a man called William Swan, a barber from Fort William, the first person to make the first recorded hill run of this massive mountain. He did it in 2 hours 41 minutes.

The present day record, from Claggan Park, is almost half Swan's time. This run is not for the fainthearted. Entry is restricted to people who have already completed three hill races and, even then, numbers are kept to a maximum of 500 people due to the fragile and demanding nature of the mountain environment. Anyone who doesn't make it to the peak in two hours is turned back.

Besides the iconic Ben Race, the area is popular with the local community as well as visitors as a place to train for mountain races, to run with local groups or simply as a stunning location to take exercise.

Volunteering

Working with Friends of Nevis at the outset of the NLP programme and now including other national organisations, the volunteering outcomes from the NLP programme have been extraordinary. It was also used as a method of professional development, as shown by the Trainee Volunteer Ranger project.

Conservation volunteering is an ‘activity’ in its own right and it can stand alone as such or form part of a multi-day or activity experience. NLP aspires to build on this activity strand as it delivers real benefits for infrastructure as well as generating a wonderful sense of immersion and purpose for those taking part. NLP aspires to continue to build on their existing work with volunteers with the residential element of the Nevis field Centre supporting this.

“The move by consumers from material assets to generating memories is one of the biggest shifts in leisure spending. Hobbies, skills development and unique opportunities are all growth areas and writing workshops, artists retreats, outdoor survival schools and cookery courses all add to the attractiveness of a destination.”

Insight Department: Trends 2019 – Visit Scotland

Education and Engagement Events

From formal, led learning experiences right through to self-guided exploration and Citizen Science, there is a huge opportunity to build on the excellent projects delivering this kind of activity through the NLP scheme. It is applicable to all age-groups, all socio-economic groups and can be delivered on an individual or collective basis. It provides purpose and rewards to those taking part, enhancing understanding and a sense of achievement. The Nevis Field Centre is going to be a critical hub from which this form of activity can set out and return to.

Climbing

Climbing remains a popular activity in the area with both the North face and Polldubh Crags being well used by both locals and visitors. The North Face featured prominently as the location for a ground-breaking botanical and geological survey, which demonstrated the area to be a thriving montane habitat as well as a mecca for climbers, whilst also giving rise to a new geological theory about the formation of the Ben itself.

Meanwhile the work at Polldubh, to make the cragging venue in Glen Nevis more accessible and user-friendly, has been very successful, ensuring the on-going value of this location to outdoor climbers and the new local climbing wall, which uses the venue to bringing indoor climbers into the outdoors. Other providers, like Outward Bound Locheil, also use this venue for teaching climbing.

The creation of a Meall an t’Suidhe circular would provide a quick and environmentally stable decent route back to the car park for climbers on the North Face.

Access to Polldubh is easy from the road but there is no formal car parking and the casual use of passing places becomes a problem in the busy months and, along with parking by kayakers, is causing erosion along the roadside. The Lower Falls car park is not particularly convenient for either of these user groups and a long-term solution needs to be found to maintain access for different activities without damaging the roadside and creating an adverse experience for other user groups.

Kayaking

There is an aspiration in the Fort William 2040 plan to create a world class training facility for white water kayakers in Fort William using the tail race from the Lochaber Aluminium Smelter Hyrdo Scheme. This may well increase local and visitor interest in this activity in the area in the future.

The River Nevis are already an invaluable resource for kayakers and local adventure centres. Access and egress from the river is important and there is a need to provide better, more formal, get in and out points. Facilitating safe and responsible access, and looking at how kayakers use the available parking, is something which NLP aspires to address.

Camping

The Land Reform Act (2003) supports wild camping, which is defined as small-scale, short duration and leave-no-trace. Camping from a vehicle, near a road, is not wild camping and would more appropriately be termed free camping. Free camping is, however, a significant and growing issue in Glen Nevis, alongside the use of motorhomes. Wildfire from poorly-managed campfires compounds the roadside erosion and toileting issues brought about by free camping and the byelaws now imposed on Loch Lomond are pushing free campers further north, to Glen Etive and Glen Nevis. Structures like the Curling Ponds are regularly used by wild campers, coach party groups and free campers alike, but often these are recreation spaces on the periphery of Fort William where such activity is completely inappropriate.

NLP is uniquely placed to develop a co-ordinated strategy, in conjunction with local landowners and campsite providers, to educate, direct and manage campers of all types such that their impacts are minimised.

Activity Providers

There are a relatively large number of mountaineering instructors, mountain Guides and ecotourism guides, as well as other guided groups – runners, cyclists etc. Guides are in a unique position to mould the attitudes of their clients to how they interact with nature and can make a big difference providing education and role models around appropriate behaviours. Continuing to provide appropriate facilities to enhance access as well as providing information to enable professional guides to create a better learning experience for their clients is an important aspiration.

6.1.5 SLOW ADVENTURE

Slow adventure is defined as a form of tourism which avoids the quick-fix adrenalin-pumping hits of convenient adventure experiences, in favour of slow, immersive journeys, living in and travelling through wild places and natural spaces – experiencing nature in its timeframe, its seasons, its weathers and its variations. These journeys will typically include elements of the following:

- Wild food
- Wildlife
- Comfort in the outdoors
- Creating and enhancing people's understanding
- Human- or nature-powered travel

- An enhanced engagement with place

Slow adventure activities draw upon ideas framed around the partners' cultures and histories, such as hunting, fishing and wild foods, love of and respect for nature and wildlife, and the relationship between food and the land/sea. These activities will also be infused with individualistic elements, from Norwegian 'friluftsliv', to Icelandic coastal and marine culture and Scottish traditions of adventure.

6.1.6 MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH BENEFITS

It is well-documented that stress is a primary cause of mental illness. Engagement in the outdoors has significant benefits for all types of mental illness, as well as for those not currently suffering (1 in 4 people suffer from depression every year), primarily by reducing stress. Regular participation in walking, gardening and volunteering would have a significant impact on local people struggling with any form of disadvantage, including mental illness. NLP would hope to target these groups by facilitating access to activities in Glen Nevis that would provide real and lasting benefits.

The physical benefits of the activities promoted by NLP will also be delivered, across the whole suite of proposed activities. Physical and mental health and wellbeing are, of course, inextricably intertwined so wherever there is a physical benefit, there will be a mental health benefit associated with it.

"The emotional benefits of 'ecotherapy' are well documented, but recent studies have highlighted there can also be long-term, physical health improvements associated with time spent in green spaces. The Japanese concept of 'Shinrin Yoku' – or forest bathing- has been linked to reduced rates of cardiovascular illness and Type 2 diabetes."

Insight Department: Trends 2019 – Visit Scotland

6.1.7 IMPACTS FROM RECREATION

The impacts from recreation in one of the reasons why this landscape needs to be actively managed. Footfall, activities, litter, plastics use, camping, wildfires and toileting all have an adverse impact on the natural environment which attracts people to this place in the first instance. In order to preserve this precious resource and to keep its fundamental services operating well, the impacts of people on the Ben and in the Glen need to be mitigated and, if possible, pre-empted through proactive management and education.

NLP is in a unique position to facilitate the development and delivery community led solutions as part of an effective strategy to manage visitor impacts in this iconic landscape.

6.1.8 PEOPLE - OPPORTUNITIES

- Create a field Centre in Glen Nevis to promote greater understanding of and involvement in the care of our landscapes.
- Provide better information for visitors on attractions and access options, both before and during their visit.
- Develop path network to provide for a range of routes, user groups and abilities, and connect to the natural and cultural heritage
- Promote access by foot, bike, public transport
- Promote an area wide move towards water refill points and re-useable water bottles.
<https://refill.org.uk/>
- Collective access to a wide range of visitors - co-ordinate positive messages to reinforce responsible and thoughtful access
- Engage with schools and public regarding litter
- Develop Rural Skills programme for high school students with UHI
- Work with UHI to promote Slow Adventure in and around the Nevis area
- Improve visitor facilities and install toilets at Lower falls and Achintee
- Promote the outdoor access code, manage the littering problem and incidence of wildfire caused by visitors in Glen Nevis;
- Link with Fort William Strategies e.g. park and ride / shuttle bus to Glen Nevis
- Join with organisations in other areas to review the Outdoor Access Code
- Develop people counting strategy for the area to provide accurate figures and inform future visitor and impact management of the area.

6.2 PLACE

6.2.1 NATURAL HERITAGE

The 2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity provides a good framework within which to look at how the Natural Heritage is performing; how healthy it is and where more work needs to be done to enhance it. It stems from a belief, which is well-founded, that a healthy ecosystem is inextricably linked to sustainable social and economic systems. The link between the natural environment, the local economy, health and well-being in the Nevis Partnership area is very clear and it provides a useful focus for how to develop all the strands of the 2020 Challenge for the benefit of all.

Strategic objectives	Aims	Key outcomes	NLP actions
Wealthier and Fairer	Maximise the benefits of a diverse natural environment	Natural resources contributing to strong, sustainable economic growth	Much of the local tourism is underpinned by the natural environment; looking after that asset ensures that the local economy is strong
		Diverse natural environment is a national asset we must protect	Conservation of the designated site features widely supported by previous activity which will be built on and further developed both on the designations and on adjacent land.
Healthier		Health and well-being improved through physical activity and contact with nature	Activities and volunteering become part of the local community landscape and improves health and well-being
		Nature providing goods and services which support our lives, welfare and economy	The health of the ecosystems within the NLP area help to mitigate the local industrial activity which forms such an important part of the local economy
Safer and Stronger		Healthy natural environment is much more resilient to climate change	On-going support of woodland development, peatland restoration and management of invasive non-native species enhances the environment's resilience to climate change
		Engage people with	Communities involved in decision-making take pride in their local environment

Strategic objectives	Aims	Key outcomes	NLP actions
Smarter	the natural world	An integrated approach taken to land and water use	Catchment-scale management
		Healthier local environments more widely understood and supported by communities	On-going involvement in local projects by those living in the vicinity of the Glen
Greener	Support biodiversity and ecosystems	Scotland's internationally renowned nature is highly valued and secure	Securing the condition of the path network and enhancing the visitor experience through high quality infrastructure
		We have clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse seas and coast	High quality run-off from the catchment helps improve the quality of the inshore waters of Loch Linnhe and improved vegetation cover within the catchment assists in mitigating floodwater from high-intensity rainfall and snowmelt

Native Woodland

Native woodland restoration and expansion should continue to be developed in Glen Nevis where possible. Flood mitigation, fish habitat improvements, biodiversity increase and water quality improvements are all benefits from woodland retention and expansion. However, in order to meet the challenges of delivering an increase in woodland within a designated site for which there are also open ground qualifying habitats, it is envisaged that native woodland expansion would be patchy, generating a mosaic of habitats with both open and closed canopy and a significant length of woodland edge. Woodland edge habitats support a very wide range of species. This type of focused woodland expansion allows all other habitats, and their associated fauna, to thrive and optimises biodiversity while also allowing for a more intimate and attractive landscape.

Flood Mitigation

Flood mitigation is an important part of climate change as, in this area, rainfall is predicted to increase in total amount and intensity. That this is happening has been demonstrated through the NLP project for freshwater pearl mussel re-introduction. Once prevalent in the Waters of Nevis, FWPM have died out and were considered for re-introduction. However, a survey of suitable habitat showed that almost all the available gravel beds had been ripped out in a 10-year period and virtually no suitable habitat remained. This is due to an increase in peak flow, something which higher rainfall intensity produces in rivers like this without mid-river lochs to act as a buffer. It is therefore not surprising that downstream flooding is being increasingly reported towards the mouth of the glen.

The most effective mitigation for flooding is revegetation of the catchment. The greater the volume of vegetation, the slower the percolation of rainfall into the watercourse. In order to reduce the impact of higher intensity rainfall events, a highly effective strategy would be to

increase biomass through general woodland expansion and targeted riparian woodland development.

Peatland restoration has an important role to play in reducing rainfall run-off and, where it is feasible, should be attempted in the upper stretches of the catchment. The bulk of peatland restoration opportunities probably lie out with the area covered by NLP but, nonetheless, where opportunities are identified, they should be pursued.

Another strategy would be to reduce the area of hard surfaces, or at least aim to minimise their increase. Traffic management and a presumption against the creation of large areas of hard standing therefore has a significant contribution to make towards flood mitigation.

Montane Habitats

Montane Habitats are not currently under threat except where recreation impacts are high. Continuing to manage and improve the path infrastructure will deliver improvements in those places where montane habitats have been damaged.

Deer Management

Deer Management is an essential part of habitat management within the NLP area. Currently carried out by Jahama Estates and JMT, largely away from the core area of Ben and Glen Nevis, there are opportunities to develop a model here with a degree of community involvement. A mechanism for educating people about the natural heritage, it also offers a chance for locals and other interested people to develop new skills and a better understanding of how countryside management is carried out.

Invasive Non-Native Species

Rhododendron – National Forest Estate should be cleared under their national strategy but NLP could do carryout training events on their land and do lots to encourage the replacement of rhododendron in gardens with other, suitable cover plants and the eradication of rhododendron in the glen.

Skunk cabbage is present in one location that still requires management. NLP would aim to address this during the next phase of INNS management.

Invasive Native Species

Other, native, invasive species include bracken and ragwort. These are a normal part of our native flora but in places can develop to a density and level which is not natural.

Throughout Glen Nevis, on woodland soils, dense bracken cover now shades out the herb-rich grasslands that have, through grazing, replaced woodland. The loss of grazing that results makes the land very unproductive, either as a woodland or as pasture. Managing bracken through swiping or cutting can bring significant benefits to graziers who may see a reduction in available grassland through woodland expansion.

Ragwort is native to Scotland and is commonly found at low densities but, where introduced into pasture or woodland edges, can achieve high densities. It is toxic to grazing animals and therefore is considered a noxious weed. Ragwort is colonising parts of Glen Nevis where forestry has been cleared and thence is moving onto pasture grassland. Like bracken, removing the

plants is an important way of improving grazing for livestock. 'The Scottish Government Guidance on How to Prevent the Spread of Ragwort' Provides information on when and how removal should take place.

Feral pigs are present throughout Leanachan Forest, adjacent to the NLP area. It is quite likely that they will move into woodland in Glen Nevis, if they are not already present, as they can travel large distances through woodland and over open ground. Pigs can do extensive damage to new woodlands, though the ground excavation they create can also be beneficial for regeneration. Fences are usually inadequate to stop pigs.

Managing feral pigs is challenging and requires significant expertise. Should pigs emerge within the NLP area, then a strategy will be required to manage them effectively. In the interim, monitoring for pig presence is something which volunteers and trainee rangers can undertake and will raise awareness of this re-introduced species.

Wildlife Surveys

Survey work on butterflies and red squirrels was an important element of Citizen Science in the NLP Scheme. Involving people in survey work has great benefits and should be continued. A number of species would benefit from greater knowledge, including water voles, mink, badgers, bats and black grouse.

Mitigating industrial activity

Increased industrial activity in Fort William, with the development of the new aluminium wheel factory and increased production at the smelter may produce an increase in industrial pollution. However, this can be effectively mitigated by building more biomass to filter and absorb aerial pollution. Projects to increase biomass through woodland expansion, riparian woodland and scrub, deer management and grassland improvements will all help to act as a natural filter for local industrial activity.

6.2.2 CULTURAL HERITAGE

The excavation of Dun Deardail, carried out in partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland was successful in engaging local schools in this period of history. The knowledge gained as a result of this provides ongoing opportunities for engagement events for locals and visitors to the area.

An Archaeology Survey was commissioned by the former landowner of the Jahama Highland Estate in 2003 as part of a Woodland Grant Scheme. A total of 43 archaeological sites was recorded in Glen Nevis, comprising 154 individual monuments. They mostly fall into one of the following four categories:

1. Settlements
2. Boundary walls or fences.
- 3 Charcoal burners' platforms
4. Tracks and paths.

The recommendations of the report focussed on additional surveys to document the heritage and protection activity to prevent further damage from tree growth as some of the sites were reported to be liable to damage from this increasing vegetation, as well as paths and tracks damaged by

the pressure from visitors. In particular, there is a risk that the burial ground 'Ach nan Con' could be damaged by trees in danger of collapse. To date no apparent action has been taken to secure these cultural assets.

This presents opportunities to work with the current landowner and perhaps the West Highland Museum to develop a project to incorporate research and protection and restoration activity into training, volunteering events, and interpretation, all of which would take place from the Nevis Field Centre. This could be further developed in conjunction with the local community to document and develop oral and community history to share through a range of media with our community and visitors.

6.2.3 CHANGES IN LAND OWNERSHIP

Late in 2016 Rio Tinto Alcan announced the sale of the Lochaber Smelter as all associated land holdings and hydroelectric schemes to GFG Alliance. The Land holdings, which include the Nevis Management Area were brought together under a subsidiary company Jahama Highland Estates.

The Nevis Landscape Partnership has developed good working relationship with Jahama over the past 2 years and is currently developing several projects for community and environmental benefit in partnership with them.

6.2.4 EAST LOCHABER AND LAGGAN COMMUNITY TRUST

Following the review announcement by Rio Tinto Aluminium in early 2016, it became clear that an option that included a community company could form part of the solution to retain the Fort William smelter in operation, particularly if the company could act along with others that had the expertise to successfully own and operate the smelter and hydropower assets, allowing the community to derive the benefit and income from owning the land. If this strategy proved successful, this would be the largest community-led land buyout in Scotland to date.

The East Lochaber and Laggan Community Trust (the Trust), which is a company limited by guarantee, has been formed to benefit the community of East Lochaber and Laggan, being the community council areas of Laggan; Spean Bridge, Roy Bridge and Achnacarry; Inverlochy and Torlundy; Caol; Kilmallie; Fort William; Nether Lochaber, Glencoe and Glen Etive and Kinlochleven (the Community).

The Trust's aim is to ensure that the long-term benefits – economic, social and environmental – are maximised for the benefit of local people and the nation, specifically:

- To manage community land and associated assets for the benefit of the Community and the public in general;
- To advance community development, including urban or rural regeneration within the Community;
- To advance environmental protection or improvement including preservation, sustainable development and conservation of the natural environment, the maintenance, improvement or provision of environmental amenities for the Community and/or the preservation of buildings or sites of architectural, historic or other importance to the Community.

6.2.5 FORT WILLIAM 2040

As part of the future delivery of WestPlan the first iteration of the ambitious Fort William 2040 (FW2040) Project has been published which will be a key part of the WestPlan's Action Programme.

Fort William 2040 will help deliver a shared vision for the future of Fort William and Lochaber. Consultation events were held throughout the end of 2018 which helped to draw up a Masterplan and Delivery Programme to help make it a reality.

The Highland Council are committed to ongoing collaboration to review and progress to the implementation of the individual projects that will make Fort William and Lochaber a better place.

The Nevis Landscape Partnership fed into the consultation process with a view to ensure that the range of developments and socio and economic benefits proposed for the area also have a positive impact on the special qualities of the Nevis area. **As a result, one of our development opportunities, the Nevis Field Centre, is now listed as a potential project, and will be considered for inclusion in the next iteration of the FW2040 Masterplan.**

6.2.6 DEVELOPMENT IN GLEN NEVIS

Current Planning Policies

Planning policies and other programmes (e.g. tourism marketing), including initiatives by local businesses, will be supporting the sustainable development of tourism throughout Lochaber, including facilities and services for visitors to Glen Nevis, but with most new commercial visitor services sited out with the Glen.

Enhanced planning policies and guidance for the Nevis Area will have the support of residents and the wider community and will safeguard the area's landscapes and related attributes. Provision will be available for -

- a. essential up-grading, redevelopment or moderate extension of existing residential, tourism or other properties, but with a presumption against new residential, commercial or other development out with existing development clusters in Lower Glen Nevis
- b. development, refurbishment or enhancement of non-commercial facilities (e.g. car parks, paths)
- c. essential development, refurbishment or other operations associated with land and catchment management, public services and infrastructure,

Insofar as a.-c. are consistent with agreed planning criteria and guidance and environmental and visitor management objectives.

There are several policies that may be applicable to different forms of development within this area of "countryside" within Glen Nevis (this excludes that entrance part of the Glen that forms part of the Fort William urban area – see map below). Policies 28, 29, 31, 32, 35, 43, 44, 47, 51, 52, 56, 57, 58, 59, 60, 61, 64, 65, 66, 67, 74, 75 and 77 are most relevant, which can be found in the Highland-wide Local Development Plan 2012

The Highland-wide Local Development Plan 2012 (HwLDP) is The Highland Council's vision for the whole area and sets out how land can be used for the next 20 years. The HwLDP should be read alongside the Area Local Development Plans and any Local Plans which are still in place.

The Planning (Scotland) Bill

The Planning (Scotland) Bill was introduced to parliament in 4 December 2017 and is expected to be enacted in 2019. The Bill is central to the Scottish Government's package of measures intended to strengthen the planning system's contribution to inclusive growth and empowering communities. Within this there will be the opportunity for communities to develop and influence 'Local Place Plans' which should be brought into force 2020/2021. This would provide an opportunity to produce a local place plan for Glen Nevis which would have a statutory basis in the determination of planning applications. To do this the Partnership would need to demonstrate that its stance / planning document has been consulted on, as far as reasonable reflects a consensus of expressed opinion, and doesn't conflict with other statutory requirements, policy and guidance.

The Nevis Landscape Partnership should form a Planning Steering Group to work with the local community, landowners and stakeholders to develop a Local Place Plan for the Nevis area.

Development in The Nevis Strategy 2020-40

Aims

The Nevis landscape Partnership will take the opportunity to develop a Local Place Plan for the Nevis Area, however in the meantime we will continue with the aims as set out in the 2001 strategy, where it aimed to encourage and contribute to the further development of effective planning policies and appropriate and consistent planning decisions in the Nevis Area to -

- ensure that development is environmentally and economically sustainable (acknowledging that some development and other activities will not be economically self-supporting (e.g. informal visitor facilities and improvements / additions to the path network)
- are consistent with the other aims and objectives of the Nevis Strategy
- meet the aspirations of the local and wider communities.

Objectives and Key Criteria for Planning and Development as set out in the 2001 strategy

- a. To encourage and support planning policies and decisions which –
 - provide scope for the renewal, up-grading, diversification or moderate expansion of properties, or limited- scale residential or other development, in appropriate locations in Lower Glen Nevis
 - maintain the undeveloped characteristics of Mid and Upper Glen Nevis and mountain and wild country areas, while providing scope for improving informal visitor facilities and for essential development or operations associated with land or visitor management, health and safety.
- b. To contribute to effective and appropriate planning decisions for the Nevis Area, through providing guidance on, for example, the location, design and landscaping of proposed development, which is complementary to statutory planning policies.

- c. In considering any development proposals, which fall within the scope of a. (above), the planning authority will require to be satisfied that these –
- meet a bona fide development need, which cannot be better satisfied out with the Nevis Area
 - contribute to the well-being and amenity of local residents, landowners and/or businesses
 - do not conflict with, and where practical enhance, environmental qualities
 - are consistent with the management objectives and planning guidance in the Nevis Strategy.

Recommended Planning Policies

The Strategy recommends the following policies (in italics) for adoption by The Highland Council:

- a. **Zoning Framework** - *The planning authority, in reviewing the Lochaber Local Plan, should adopt a revised 3 zones framework for development decisions affecting the Nevis Area; comprising –*

zone 1. Lower Glen Nevis (Nevis Bridge to Cattle Grid) - *there will be a presumption against all development, except for residential and visitor accommodation, and facilities and services for visitors to the Nevis Area, which are consistent with the objectives and guidance in the Nevis Strategy.*

zone 2. Mid Glen Nevis (Cattle Grid to Lower Falls)* - *there will be a presumption against all development other than for non-commercial day visitor facilities. Exceptionally, the sensitive conversion of the existing buildings at Achriabhach for land or visitor management purposes may be permitted. (* similar restrictions should apply between Claggan and Torlundy).*

zone 3. Upper Glen Nevis, Mountains and Other Remote Areas - *there will be a presumption against all development, except where required to conserve or maintain basic day visitor facilities and existing buildings and structures (e.g. car parks, paths), or where there are specific environmental reasons for enhancing such facilities.*

This zoning policy will be applied in conjunction with the other policies and guidance set out below.

b. Control of Other Development and Operations

- I. *The planning authority should seek formal agreements with statutory undertakers and others (e.g. land managers), to ensure that it and other interested parties are fully consulted on all development proposals and other substantive operations, including permitted development.*
- II. *Where voluntary agreements are assessed to be ineffective in controlling the impacts of permitted development or other operations, the planning authority will consider applying for Article 4 Directions to bring such development within the scope of planning controls. Care will be required to ensure that any permitted development does not adversely affect the area's outstanding scenic qualities.*

c. Signing in Glen Nevis -

The planning authority should prepare and promote a simple strategy and design guidelines for commercial and other signs in the Nevis Area, in consultation with representatives of local residents, businesses and landowners.

d. Supplementary Policy Guidance -

The planning authority should adopt the planning guidance in the Nevis Strategy as supplementary policy guidance in support of the Lochaber Local Plan. Adoption of the planning guidance as supplementary guidance to the Local Plan will promote the standards of development and associated works expected in the Nevis Area.

Importantly, all planning policies and guidance applying to the Nevis Area will require to be consistent with the policies and proposals in The Highland Structure Plan.

Planning Guidance

The recommended planning guidance sets out criteria and expectations, which future development will be expected to fulfil, and seeks to ensure that the siting, design and landscaping of future development –

- is sensitive to the high quality landscapes of the Nevis Area and wider Ben Nevis and Glen Coe NSA
- does not adversely affect, but seeks to enhance, the amenity and environmental qualities of adjacent buildings, can be integrated within the current pattern of development and its landscape setting, and is not intrusive from popular roads, paths or other vantage points.

The guidance advocates that -

- a. New development should be restricted to existing development clusters. Criteria are set for any exceptions.
- b. Any new houses should conform with The Highland Council's rural housing design guide (being prepared).
- c. In-fill housing or the sub-division of plots in the Lower Glen will be resisted, to prevent 'sub-urbanisation'.
- d. Ancillary buildings (e.g. sheds, feed-stores) should be sensitively sited and designed.
- e. Ancillary business use of homes, crofts or outbuildings should meet the stated criteria.
- f. While providing scope for up-grading or extensions, the character of farmsteads and traditional buildings should generally be maintained.
- g. Farm, forestry and public utility buildings and works should be sensitively sited and designed.
- h. Any renewal or replacement of existing visitor accommodation should be within current site boundaries. New buildings should be sited within the framework of tree belts and other landscaping.
- i. New development should be restricted to sites with substantial landscape cover, or where significant screening is part of the proposal. Planting should be undertaken in advance of development on sites with no/little vegetation and should predominantly comprise locally native species.
- j. Provision should be made for the protection of important landscape features and proposed landscaping, especially where a condition of consent (e.g. management agreement).
- k. Traditional boundary features (e.g. stone walls) are favoured.
- l. There should be a presumption against mobile trading (e.g. burger vans).

- m. Development proposals should respect, maintain or enhance opportunities for recreational access.
- n. Structure Plan policies on advertising and signs should be adhered to, and these should be kept to a minimum and sensitively designed. Any unacceptable increase in signing may result in further controls.
- o. Statutory undertakers should take a more active approach to under-grounding power and 'phone lines. There should be no additional telecommunications masts.
- p. There will be a general presumption against new or extended hill tracks.
- q. Those proposing development are encouraged to seek professional advice and consult planning staff.

6.2.7 PLACE – OPPORTUNITIES

- Woodland expansion, retention and edge habitat creation
- Riparian woodland and scrub development
- Peatland restoration feasibility and delivery
- Non-native Invasive species eradication in Glen the Nevis area e.g. Ponticum, skunk cabbage, mink
- Native Invasive species management e.g. Bracken and ragwort
- Path network improvements
- Traffic management scheme, limitation on parking and hard surfaces
- Citizen science survey work
- Key species habitat improvement e.g. Black grouse water vole
- Community deer management – pilot programme
- West highland landscape cooperation scheme - a concerted collaborative effort to deliver natural heritage improvements over a much wider area with cumulative benefits
- New Cultural Officer post to develop a project to further research and devise a care plan for physical cultural assets
- Oral history project – audio and/or visual record of stories from the area
- Work with Bun-Sgoil Ghàidhlig Loch Abar to increase Gaelic learning opportunities in Glen Nevis
- Repair and upgrading of Polldubh Cottages into group accommodation and remote classroom
- Establish Tree Nursery to facilitate woodland expansion and training opportunities
- Installation of a cattle grid to stop sheep getting into sensitive areas

6.3 COMMUNITY

6.3.1 COMMUNITY EMPOWERMENT (SCOTLAND) ACT 2015

In 2015 Parliament passed the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 to give new rights to community bodies and new duties to public sector authorities. The Act aims to help communities do more for themselves and have more say in decisions that affect them.

Research has shown that when communities feel empowered, there is:

- greater participation in local democracy
- increased confidence and skills among local people
- more people volunteering in their communities
- greater satisfaction with quality of life in the neighbourhood

Better community engagement and participation leads to the delivery of better, more responsive services and better outcomes for communities.

6.3.2 WHO IS OUR COMMUNITY

The Nevis Landscape Partnership facilitates community responses and supports their involvement in the care of Nevis and wider Lochaber. Our community is diverse, and all are welcome to get involved in decision making, action and learning. The list below is not intended to be exhaustive, however provides an indication of the many organisations / groups we work with.

Glen Nevis Residents Association

The Glen Nevis Residents Association represent those who live in Glen Nevis. They are members of the Nevis Landscape Partnership and nominate two directors (one associate) to the Nevis Landscape Partnership Board.

Community Councils

Fort William Community Council and Inverlochy and Torlundy Community Council are members of the partnership and nominate directors to our Board.

Landowners

There are four main landowners in the Nevis Management Area:

Forestry and land Scotland (Member of NLP)

Glen Nevis Estate (Former member, continues to work cooperatively with NLP)

Jahama Highland Estate (Advisor to NLP)

John Muir Trust (Member of NLP)

The remaining land holdings being owned by other residents and businesses, who have representation through the Glen Nevis Residents Association.

Business operating in the Nevis Area

Nevis has 3 main business models in or using the Nevis Management Area

- Tourism – e.g. visitor services, accommodation and hospitality

- Farming: both Landowners and Tenant farmers, predominantly sheep grazing
- Activity providers – both private businesses and organisations like The Outward Bound Trust and High Life Highland.

Communities of interest

Runners, mountaineers, climbers (Polldubh Climbing Club), kayakers, walkers

Lochaber Natural History group

Lochaber Biodiversity Action Group

Interest clubs and organisations e.g. photography, art, ornithology, walking, Scouts etc

Friends of Nevis

Lochaber Environment Group

National Volunteer groups

Fort William and Wider Lochaber

We are connected to the wider area both through the community councils and our association and participation in a number of organisations and groups such as;

- Lochaber Chamber of Commerce (member of our Board)
- The Outdoor Capital
- Lochaber Biodiversity Action group
- Upland Path Advisory Group
- SAC Steering Group

The wider business community and employers, though they may not be dependent on the natural or cultural heritage for their business, ensuring the area is well looked after is a large part of making it an attractive place to live or relocate when employment opportunities arise.

6.3.3 COMMUNITY – OPPORTUNITIES

- Create a community hub to support engagement which would allow us to reach out to new and different groups of people than our existing supporter base
- Operate a Community tool shed and remove barriers to action.
- Facilitate focus / steering group to promote community involvement in the care of the landscape
- Provide engagement opportunities for disadvantaged groups to realise the benefits of social interaction and interaction with nature
- Work with communities of interest to develop their involvement in the care of the landscape
- Provide a meeting point to facilitate exchange of ideas between different groups.

7.0 FURTHER READING

Nevis Landscape Partnership - Key Documents

The Nevis Strategy 2020-40 – Consultation Draft
 The Landscape Conservation Action Plan (LCAP) 2014
 The Nevis Strategy 2008
 The Nevis Strategy 2001
www.nevispartnership.co.uk/library.html

Local and National Priorities and wider guidance

Fort William 2040	www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/582/west_highland_and_islands_local_development_plan/5
Highland-wide Local Development Plan	www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan
Planning (Scotland) Bill	www.gov.scot/policies/planning-architecture/reforming-planning-system/
Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015	https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/
Fort William Strategic Transport Study; Aug 2018	www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/19581/main_report.pdf
National Performance Framework	https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/
2020 Challenge for Scotland's Biodiversity	www.gov.scot/publications/2020-challenge-scotlands-biodiversity-strategy-conservation-enhancement-biodiversity-scotland/pages/4/
Scottish Biodiversity Strategy	www.nature.scot/scotlands-biodiversity/scottish-biodiversity-strategy
The European Landscape Convention (ELC)	www.landscapeinstitute.org/policy/13732-2/
Highland profile - key facts and figures	www.highland.gov.uk/info/695/council_information_performance_and_statistics/165/highland_profile_-_key_facts_and_figures/2
The Scottish Index of multiple Deprivation 2016 (SIMD16)	http://simd.scot/2016/#/simd2016/BTTTTFTT/9/-4.0000/55.9000/
Visit Scotland Insights	www.visitscotland.org/research-insights
Scottish Outdoor Access Network	https://soan.org.uk/2013/04/electric-bikes-and-access-rights/
East Lochaber and Laggan Community Trust	http://eastlochaberlaggan.scot/
Slow Adventure	https://saintproject.eu/
Refill	https://refill.org.uk/
Campervan and Motorhome Professional Association	http://www.campa.org.uk/
Scotland's People and Nature Survey - Participation in outdoor recreation 2018	www.nature.scot/sites/default/files/2018-12/SPANS%20-%202017-18%20Participation%20in%20outdoor%20recreation.pdf

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