

STRATHARD LIFE PLANS 2019

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND BRIEFING NOTE

1.0 SUPPORTING STATEMENT:

The Community Chartering Network (CCN) is a UK-wide network with a shared commitment to community empowerment and responsible environmental stewardship. Members and connected parties include professional facilitators, lawyers, planners, community advocates and leaders. CCN was set up to explore and establish new models for community engagement and rejuvenation around shared lived experiences of place, and essential rights and responsibilities. Our mission is to support communities who wish to ensure genuinely sustainable local development. In achieving this, our aim is to enable truly resident-led outcomes through collective decision-making approaches which are open, transparent and inclusive, and tailored to specific local objectives, issues, needs and context.

2.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The two Strathard Life Plans -Kinlochard (KLP); and Stronachlachar and Inversnaid (SILP)- are the documented outcomes of a resident-led consultation, which took place in Strathard between October 2018 and March 2019. They were initiated by the Strathard Community Council, funded by contributions from The Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park and CCN, and in Kinlochard, supported by a workgroup of 10 local residents. Significant efforts were made to engage and include all residents in the exercise. The KLP involved a parallel young people’s consultation with resident primary and secondary schoolchildren, designed and facilitated by two young members of the workgroup. Well over half of each of the three communities participated directly, and the final outcomes and documents were reviewed by all for fairness and accuracy prior to their submission to the Strathard Community Council for representation.

The process was professionally-facilitated by CCN, comprising both collaborative workshops and online questionnaires. Growing from agreement on what was shared and essential to experience and life in the communities (See Life Plans (LPs) 1.1: ‘Our Important Things’), the process sought to build consensus on Core Principles (LPs 1.2) and Themes for Action (LPs 2.0) related to development over the next 5-10 years, and everything in the Life Plan has been generally consented to, unless otherwise specified. In this way, the Life Plans provide an integrated framework and basis for development, joined-up planning and action, and constructive engagement with all relevant stakeholders, such as Planning authorities and developers.

The Life Plans take inspiration from, and align with, the vision and progress made by The Scottish Government in relation to planning, including the National Planning Framework 3 2014, and innovations in community empowerment through the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015, the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003 and the framework for “Local Place Plans” set out in the new Planning Bill. The Principles and rich context they provide can help to facilitate the delivery of the statutory duties under the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, thereby helping to ensure those policy objectives regarding sustainable development and revitalising rural communities are achieved successfully. Consensual agreement in the articulation of these communities’ shared vision, experience and aspirations of Place, brings a concrete actionable model to the sometimes-abstract concepts of Place-based planning. It is hoped therefore, that the Life Plans offer a mechanism for less adversarial, and more efficient, planning and decision-making. These matters are discussed further in the Briefing Note (Section 3 below). This vision and collaboration take on particular significance in light of the recent Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report (2018), which stresses the significance of the next 12 years in working to effectively address and prepare communities for the adverse impacts of climatic changes – essentially the period covered by these Life Plans and the next round of Local Development Plans.

The **Main Outcomes** of the consultations are (see Tables 1 and 2 below for links to the Life Plans and the Policy context):

- 1. Four Core Principles** defined by each Community to act as a measure of whether a development or action is appropriate or potentially harmful for them, thereby providing guidance through which Statutory Duties, Overarching Policies and Development Planning can be enacted.
- 2. Four Themes for Action**, again particular to each Community and which form an integrative basis for sustainable improvement and collaboration over the next 5-10 years, and which give rise to and are supported and clarified by specific Guidelines which define appropriate housing and economic development.

3. Priority Areas specified by each Community within each Theme for Action. While *the emphasis and meaning of each, as well as important contextual details, are unique and specific to each community*, there are broad thematic similarities which are summarised as follow:

- **Building community cohesion, sustainability and resilience:** Need for greater community autonomy and clearer guidelines due to genuine existential concerns about the harm of inappropriate development; Agreement that any housing development should be driven by specific local needs, affordable, utilise existing stock, and service permanent residents (not ‘social dumping’); Emphasis on the future need to attract young families to keep community vibrant; Enabling opportunities or spaces for community-building; Aspiration to explore independent economic development by the community, for the community, which can sustain year-round functioning.
- **Protecting and enhancing the community, its environment and special qualities:** Desire to formalise conditions which can ensure dark skies and essential tranquility of the area (e.g. no motor sports); Collaborating with landowners and authorities to ensure a joined-up Place-based approach to planning and action which supports efficient ‘win-win’ activity; Defining Exclusion Zones for areas fundamental to the character and value of the area, and Development Zones which may be more suitable for housing or economic activity; Aspiration to participate more meaningfully in ecosystem services and/or environmental restoration; Addressing tourist rubbish.
- **Upgrading infrastructure:** Decent broadband and mobile services a high priority and a basic economic enabler!; Better road maintenance including addressing potholes, flooding and passing spaces to ensure access (resident, visitor, emergency); Rethinking local medical services due to declining local provision; Other infrastructural upgrades improvement, including utilities and connecting Kinlochard sewage system to local plant; Genuine concerns that without investment in general infrastructure new development can only disable the existing community and its ability to flourish.
- **Improving the efficiency of the existing tourist economy (without increasing traffic):** Better cycling routes, footpaths, hiking trails and land access promoting longer stays; Improved information and signage highlighting local natural and historical heritage; Planning controls on holiday lets, second homes and large-scale tourist developments; Enriching the natural and historical heritage as an approach to attracting and keeping visitors.

To conclude, KLP/SILP set out the residents of these Wards’ vision and aspirations for protecting and enhancing their Communities as Places to live and work over the next 5-10 years, while defining priority areas and details of what this means in specific context. They also serve as a framework and basis for positive engagement and conversation with developers, statutory bodies and other stakeholders.

Their aim is to ensure local activities and outside interests properly consider the importance of, and align with, the residents’ Place-making perspective, and appreciate the potential consequences of their proposals on community sustainability, integrity and wellbeing. Supporting an open, transparent and inclusive approach to decision-making, these Life Plans form integrated, dynamic and living models of what these communities are, and what they need to thrive. Development and action which aligns with their Principles and Themes are likely to receive greater support from residents because they will improve the sustainability and resilience of their communities. As such, they can be material considerations for future activities and development and which necessitate close attention from any parties with interests in the Wards and who wishes to participate in improvement without causing harm.

3.0 BRIEFING NOTE:

3.1 Relationship to the Statutory Planning Framework: In developing the two Strathard Community Life Plans - Kinlochard (KLP) and Stronachlachar and Inversnaid (SILP) - CCN facilitated the development of residents’ visions without referring them to the policies of the Local Development Plan or the National Park Partnership Plan. This Note explains the modelling and reasoning behind this approach. In addition, it sets out how, through this unique modelling, these Life Plans can be effectively engaged across different organisations and partners working together to manage the National Park in a way that puts community empowerment at the centre of their activities. Finally, it provides some high-level guidance on how the Life Plan might be considered to relate to the policy context.

3.2 Life Plans - a resident-led understanding of “place”. The Strathard Life Plans can be viewed as design tools for enhancing those core qualities of a place as expressed through its residents. They seek to help strengthen the quality of the shared lived experience of residents situated in their place. For that reason and in order to build consensus, the Life Plans needed to be documents which the community as a whole felt ownership over. Therefore, CCN modelled its workshops to help surface the

experience of residents of their place as directly as possible, without any framing using the policies under the Local Development Plan or the vision and outcomes set out in the National Park Partnership Plan.

It is recognised that there are public bodies (such as the National Park Authority and Stirling Council Local Authority) which have statutory duties to look after the national park as planning authorities. They have issued policy to fulfill that mandate, such as Local Development Plans, Rural Development Frameworks and the National Park Partnership Plan, each which use specific language and terms set out in the legislation which grants them their statutory powers (such as the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2006). Planning authorities also fund the development of Community Action Plans to *“identify and deliver on [community] aspirations where they are consistent with the statutory aims of the National Park.”*¹

By sourcing the Strathard Life Plans in residents’ experience of their place, which is then communicated outward to third parties with statutory duties over that same place, CCN believes it has been possible to achieve higher levels of engagement and “consensus-planning” whereby the majority residents of a community feel aligned with the contents of their Life Plan. Between the consultations and online questionnaires, around 55% of residents on the electoral roll have directly inputted into the Kinlochard Life Plan (or around 70%, if these attendees are regarded as also representing the other members of their household on the electoral register). Over 60% of residents inputted into the Stronachlachar and Inversnaid Life Plan, representing over 90% of the households in that area.

This is a key difference with Community Action Plans which, though their content is produced through consultation with a community, are sourced and held in the language/framing that comes from outside the community (planning authorities and their statutory duties) and so cannot by their nature achieve the kind of consensus-planning that these Life Plans have. The majority of residents do not conceptualise the Place they live in abstract legal and policy terms, but in terms of their day-to-day lived experiences. As such, they find it difficult to understand, engage with, or feel ownership over, any language/framing imposed upon them of which conflicts with their shared understanding and experience of place. Bridging the gap between communities and policymaker’s articulation of Place in a way which promotes positive engagement and joined-up, efficient collaboration is a chronic challenge faced by planners and the planning system. It is also which it is increasingly important to resolve, given the growing pressures on public services, need for adaptive transition, and the potential impacts of adversarial planning situations on the public purse and trust.

The primary aim of the Strathard Life Plans is to protect and support the vitality of the shared vision and lived experience of residents in a way which promotes cohesion and motivates grass-roots improvement. Documents such as this Briefing Note can then provide a mechanism which enables the Principles and Themes for Action to be discussed, understood and used by the community to work with third party public bodies and developers without disturbing the essential integrity of their Life Plans. In addition, and importantly, because of this “decoupling” from the policy context, and integrated community vision extant in the Life Plans, they can be used across diverse purposes, organisations and partners as a lens to help grasp the meaning of a place and facilitate wiser, more nuanced, decision-making. This approach could support future policy approaches to be developed in an integrated way which puts joined-up living models of communities at its centre. One example, is that concept of Life Plans could inform the framework for “Local Place Plans” set out in the new Planning Bill

3.3 Linking between the two approaches (Life Plans and Statutory Plans): The Strathard Life Plans offer an integrated approach to the shared experience of living in an area, and to those measures by which improvement/development in an area can impact on that. This is schematically represented in the Life Plans through diagrams that link the Core Principles and These for Action to one another (see LPs 2.0).

Based on the lived experience of residents expressed through their **“Important Things”**², the Strathard Life Plans provide a framework for an understanding of “place” on which all future action/development can be understood and based on. Each community defines four **Core Principles** having first identified the “Important Things” fundamental to the quality of their shared experience. Each Life Plan sets out four **Themes for Action** towards protecting and improving these “Important Things”, and which are underpinned and guided by these Core Principles. Together these Themes for Action form a dynamic integrative basis for sustainable improvement and related “place-making” collaboration for the next 5-10 years, towards building better places to

¹ <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/park-authority/how-we-can-help/communities/community-planning/>

² “Important Things” are similar to what are defined as “amenities” in the Local Development Plan (“a positive element or elements that contribute to the overall character or enjoyment of an area. For example, open land, trees, historic buildings and the inter-relationship between them, or less tangible factors such as tranquility”).

live and work. These are supported and clarified by specific **Guidelines** for housing and economic development. These Core Principles then act as a measure of whether development or action is appropriate or potentially harmful.

In order to help mediate and communicate between these two different ways in which to encounter a place, we have set out below two tables to help in the “translation” between that which is expressed by the Community Life Plan on the one hand and the Local Development Plan/National Parks Partnership Plan on the other.

TABLE 1: Relationship between Core Principles and Statutory Plans (statutory duties): the 4 Core Principles for each community, underpin their Themes for Action and are shared, fundamental measures by which each understands and assesses whether proposals for local development and activities will improve or adversely impact their Wards as a place to live and work. The 4 Principles of each Life Plan map well with the duties of the National Park Authority under s1 of the National Parks (Scotland) Act 2000, with all 4 of the Principles of each Life Plan compatible with the delivery of each statutory duty.

TABLE 1: Relationship between Core Principles and Statutory Plans (statutory duties)

STATUTORY DUTIES OF THE NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY	LIFE PLAN: 4 CORE PRINCIPLES	
	KLP	SILP
1. Conserve the natural and cultural heritage of the area; 2. Promote sustainable use of the natural resources of the area; 3. Promote understanding and enjoyment (inc recreation) of the special qualities of the area; 4.. Promote sustainable economic and social development of the area’s communities.	1. Community: Does the development or activity complement and/or strengthen the special and quality of our unique Community such as we have described in our Important Things? 2. Connectedness: Is the development or activity (or are we) increasing and strengthening our bonds with our neighbours, or our communications with external stakeholders relevant to our Life Plan, in order to a) improve the integrity which underpins our Community’s healthy functioning, and b) increase our capacity to respond to and unite around opportunities and threats? 3. Guardianship: Is this development or activity (or are we) amply mindful of the fragility and detail of our local natural and historical heritage, and of our responsibility to safeguard this, and the life-giving qualities it provides for posterity? 4. Autonomy: Do we (or how can we) have a level of influence over this development necessary to ensure to the extent possible that our Community flourishes, and becomes, according to its own essential nature, as articulated in this Life Plan?	1. Balance: Is the scale and content of the development properly considered and monitored such that we are certain they do not cause the imbalance and negative consequences that past decisions have had on our Community and environment? 2. Sustainability: Does the development clearly strengthen our Community’s ability to sustain itself economically and socially year-round, now and in the future? 3. Stewardship: Does the development contribute with our necessary level of care to the beauty, health and value of our natural environment, and to the benefit of its residents and visitors, human and non-human? 4. Self-Governance: Do we (or can we) have the level of influence over the development sufficient to ensure that it aligns with our Principles and Life Plan?

TABLE 2: Relationship between Life Plan Priority Areas and Statutory Plans (policy): each of the communities’ Themes for Action see aspirations broken down into Priority Areas specified by each Community within each Theme for Action. Each individual Priority Area has a specific context and emphasis for each community, and can encompass or be relevant to multiple policy areas. The table is to serve as a high-level guide which links the thematic summary in the Executive Summary to relevant sections of the two Life Plans and the policy context.

TABLE 2: Relationship between Life Plan Priority Areas and Statutory Plans (policy)

LIFE PLAN: PRIORITY AREAS	LIFE PLAN 'POLICIES'	RELEVANT LDP POLICIES	NATIONAL PARKS PARTNERSHIP PLAN
BUILDING COMMUNITY COHESION, SUSTAINABILITY AND RESILIENCE			
The recognition of existential concerns due to inappropriate development	KLP 2.1 SILP 2.1 KLP/SILP 3.1 & 3.2	OP1, OP2, OP3, HP1, VE2	Outcome 1,3, 11
Attracting young families to keep communities vibrant	KLP 2.1 & 2.2 SILP 2.1 & 2.2 KLP/SILP 3.1 & 3.2	OP1, OP2, OP3, HP1, HP2, EDP2, CFP1, TP1	Outcomes 10-13
Affordable housing	KLP 2.1, 2.4 & 3.2 SILP 2.1 & 3.2	OP1, OP3, HP1, HP2, EDP2	Priority 12.2 Outcomes 10-12
Space / opportunities for community-building	KLP 2.1 & 2.4 SILP 2.1	OP1, OP3, VE2, CFP1	Outcome 13
Community right-to-buy	KLP 2.4 SILP 2.1	OP1, CFP1, RP2, REP1,	Outcomes 1,2,10
Independent economic development by the community, for the community, sustaining year-round activity	KLP 2.1 & 2.4 SILP 2.1	OP1, OP2, EDP2, CFP1, RP2	Outcomes 11-13
PROTECTING AND ENHANCING THE COMMUNITY, ITS SPECIAL QUALITIES, AND NATURAL ENVIRONMENT			
Dark sky status and 'quiet loch' status	KLP 2.3 SILP 2.4	OP1, OP2, VE1, VE2, NEP1	Outcome 2
Exclusion Development Zones protecting areas fundamental to character and value	KLP/SILP 3.1 & 3.2	OP1, OP2, NEP5, OSP2	Outcomes 1-3, 5, 10
Potentially appropriate Development Zones for housing or economic activity	KLP/SILP 3.1 & 3.2	OP1, OP2, HP1, HP2, VE1, VE2, EDP2, NEP1, HEP1, HEP3, HEP5, CFP1, RP2	Outcomes 11,12
Collaborating with landowners and authorities to ensure an efficient joined-up Place-based approach	KLP 2.3 SILP: all 4 Themes	OP1, OP2, VE1, VE2, OSP2, CFP1	Outcome 12 Priority 11.2
Ecosystem services and/or environmental restoration	KLP 2.1 SILP 2.4	OP1, OP2, VE2, NEP1, NEP5, NEP6, NEP8	Outcomes 1-4
Addressing tourist litter	KLP 2.1 SILP 2.2 & 2.4	OP1, OP2, VE2	Outcomes 7-8

UPGRADING INFRASTRUCTURE			
Broadband and mobile services (high priority)	KLP 2.2 SILP 2.3	OP1, VE1, VE2, HEP2, TP1	Priority 11.4
General infrastructural investment (electricity, water, sewage)	KLP 2.2 SILP 2.3	OP1, OP2, OP3, VE1, VE2, NEP11, NEP12, HEP2, REP1	Outcome 10 Priority 10.1
Roads, including emergency access (resident, visitor, emergency)	KLP 2.2 SILP 2.3	OP1, OP2, OP3, VE2, TP2, TP3, NEP13	Outcomes 10-12
Medical service provision	KLP 2.2 SILP 2.3	OP1, OP2, OP3	Priority 12.3
IMPROVING THE EFFICIENCY OF THE EXISTING TOURIST ECONOMY (WITHOUT INCREASING TRAFFIC)			
Better cycling routes, footpaths, hiking trails	KLP 2.2 SLP 2.2	OP2, OP3 VE1, VE2, TP2, EDP2	Outcomes 5,7,8, 10
Land Access	KLP 3.2 SILP 2.2	OP1, OP2, VE1	Outcomes 1-8
Improved information and signage highlighting local natural and historical heritage	SILP 2.2	OP1, OP2, OP3, VE1, VE2, EDP2	Outcomes 5-8
Planning controls on holiday lets, second homes and large-scale tourist developments	KLP 3.1 & 3.2 SLP 2.2, 3.1 & 3.2	OP1, OP2, OP3, HP1, HP2, EDP2	Outcomes 7,8 & 10-12
Enriching the natural and historical heritage as an approach to attracting and keeping visitors	SILP 2.2 & 2.4	OP1, OP2, OP3, VE1, VE2, VE3, EDP2, NEP1, NEP5, NEP6, HEP3, RP2	Outcomes 1,2,4 & 6-8

4.0 Conclusion: These Life Plans are consistent with the National Outcome that citizens “live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe”. They can also support the National Park Authority deliver on Outcome 13 (Community Empowerment) under the National Parks Partnership Plan. They can be brought into action through the statutory framework by enabling the production of e.g. a Rural Development Framework that is both aligned with the residents’ Life Plan and is also aligned with the Local Development Plan and the aspirations of the National Parks Partnership Plan (the tables below providing an overview of how these 3 documents relate to each other). In addition, the Life Plan process could potentially become an exemplary methodology to pilot “Local Place Plans” under the current Planning (Scotland) Bill.