BALLOCH CASTLE COUNTRY PARK
STRATEGIC DELIVERY PARTNERSHIP MEETING
THURSDAY 30/4/26, 2PM
WDC, DENNY ROOM, CHURCH ST OFFICES, DUMBARTON

MINUTES

In Attendance:
Peter Hessett, Chief Executive Officer, West Dunbartonshire Council
Elaine Boyle, PA to Chief Executive
George Findlater, Head of Community and Economic Development, Historic Environment Scotland
Bea Nichol, Place Development Manager, Historic Environment Scotland
Stuart Mearns, Director of Place, Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park.
Lynne Cooper, Regional Director, Glasgow City Region, Visit Scotland
Ian Bain, Greenspace Manager, WDC
Michelle Lynn, Asset Manager, WDC
Sally Page, Chair, BCCPRG
Audrey Baird, Vice Chair, BCCPRG
Gillian Clark, Secretary, BCCPRG

Apologies:
Laura Wilson, Loch Lomond Group
David McEwan, Glasgow City Council

NOTE: Actions are in bold

Peter welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Peter outlined the current status of Balloch Castle Country Park and set this in the context of the financial challenges facing WDC. The Park is owned by Glasgow City Council and leased by WDC. WDC is solely responsible for the maintenance of the Park, which currently has a budget of £250k per annum. Additional funds have come from ScotGov's Nature Restoration Fund in recent years which has allowed works to be completed to reduce the impact of INNS within the Park and deliver an updated Woodland Management Plan. Peter indicated there is little prospect of WDC being able to commit additional capital or resource spending, however additional resources are available for tackling anti-social behaviour within BCCP.
WDC has devised a Community Planning Strategy for prevention of drowning in the River Leven, which has been adopted by other Councils in Scotland.
Since 2013 there have been two major capital investments in the Castle, with over £3.2.million spent on repairs.
Michelle advised that the windows in the Castle will be replaced and works to the lintels and stonework are being considered.

Michelle explained the lease has 9 years to run but negotiations with GCC are currently underway with a new agreement expected within the next 6 weeks. The transfer of ownership of BCCP from GCC to WDC would incur significant legal/ compensation costs due to the Common Good Clause attached to the ownership of the Park.

Michelle stated there are significant constraints in the current lease that apply to any income generated from the assets within the Park and that the long term rental of the North and South Lodges could be problematic should the existing lease come to an end and the tenants had to move out.

Members agreed that income generation and reducing the cost to WDC of maintaining the Park were essential for sustainability of the Park.

Role of BCCPRG

Sally thanked Peter for hosting and chairing the meeting.
Sally stated that there has been positive collaboration between BCCPRG & WDC since the RG started five years ago, particularly with regards to improvements to the Park's natural environment. However, restoration of the built assets so they can be brought back into use, and income generation within the Park are fundamental issues that must be resolved.
BCCPRG has delivered several small projects including working with CHAS to deliver a series of street banners in Balloch Main Street, information panels in the Castle foyer for the public toilets, INNS conifer removal, litter picks, visitor counts and other Park user and community engagement events.
BCCPRG is collaborating with various Universities, as well as local schools and youth groups to deliver art workshops focused on the Park's outstanding biodiversity.
Also, a Memorandum of Understanding between WDC and BCCPRG was signed in 2025.

Audrey presented our Lottery Heritage Fund - Stage 1 outline funding application proposal, which must be submitted by either the owner or leaseholder of the Park. The Lottery will not consider an application from the leaseholder if there is less than five years to run on the lease. LHF expects the owner/leaseholder to contribute 20% towards the costs of the project being applied for.
Peter indicated that £8k could potentially be available from WDC to support the delivery of a masterplan and feasibility study.
Ian Bain indicated £18k may be available from the next allocation of the Nature Restoration Fund to support the employment of a BCCP Project Manager for two years.
George stated he was supportive of the LHF proposal put forward and HES can assist in developing a funding strategy.
Bea added that HES also provides grants and these could be part of the funding mix given BCCP's status as an 'anchor' visitor destination and gateway to Loch Lomond and the Highlands.

Lynn spoke about the strategic importance of the BCCP and indicated that she had recent met with staff at Chatelherault Country Park in Lanarkshire, where the local authority has been able

to provide funds for a master planning exercise. **Lynn will share the Masterplan for Chatelherault Park with BCCP SDP.** Lynn also suggested Glasgow City Region could be a possible source of financial support in the future.

Stuart thanked us for the information we had issued with our invitation to the meeting. He asked if we had contributed to the Local Place Plan, and we informed him that we had made a significant contribution. **Stuart will check out LLTNP's allocation of the Scottish Government Nature Restoration Fund.**

Peter indicated that the Visitor Levy could also contribute towards the regeneration of BCCP and that a decision could potentially be made in advance of its implementation. Peter will update on this.
Lynne will investigate Forth Valley and Lomond CLLD as a source of funding.
George will discuss other funding and philanthropy opportunities with colleagues and report back.

BCCP Strategic Delivery Partnership – Is this an appropriate model?
Members agreed a Strategic Delivery Partnership was an appropriate model to deliver the regeneration of BCCP over the long term but that it should be informal and flexible, with additional members invited to participate as and when required.

SDP Membership & Terms of Reference
Other potential members of the BCCP SDP were raised including GCC, CHAS, Loch Lomond South Community Development Trust, Woodland Trust Scotland (which owns the neighbouring Whinny Hill Reserve)
Aggreko - **Michelle will forward her contacts to Sally.**
Historic Buildings Trust
Glasgow City Council has requested West Dunbartonshire Council to lead on representing the owner of the Park at the SDP.
Bea stated NatureScot are looking for projects and could be a valuable addition to the SDG. Audrey and others welcomed this proposal.
The draft Terms of Reference were not discussed at the meeting and will be carried forward to the next meeting.

Lessons from Other Country Parks?
Bea will contact NatureScot to discuss further and raise the suggestion of creating an opportunity for community based country park charities to share good practice and learning, potentially via the formation of an Association of Scottish Country Parks.
Lynne will speak to colleagues about potential members of BCCP SDP. Lynn will advise on options and examples of successful nature tourism initiatives and partnerships which could be explored for the Park.

Creating a Vision & Action Plan for BCCP
BCCPRG to present a draft version of a vision for agreement at the next SDP meeting.

BCCP to start work on developing an Action Plan for BCCP SDP based on the themes and actions discussed at the meeting.
George will arrange for a colleague in the HES architectural team to meet with WDC to make an assessment of the built assets in the Park.

Date, Location, Chair of Next Meeting: Stable Block, BCCP, on a date tbc in October 2026. To be chaired by Peter Hessett.