

To: Economy and Regeneration Policy Board

On: 29 August 2023

Report by: Chief Executive

Heading: Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park – Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan and Castle Semple Vision Document

1. Summary

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to inform the Economy and Regeneration Board of the development of a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (STIDP) which sets out a number of projects to enhance infrastructure and relieve visitor pressure points at Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks.
- 1.2 A copy of the STIDP can be found in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 1.3 This report also provides an update on the consultation exercise, which was undertaken to support the STIDP, as well as progress on the development of a future Castle Semple Vision document.
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2. Recommendations

- 2.1 It is recommended that Board:
- (i) Approves the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (STIDP) as a basis for further development and delivery of proposals, including the preparation of bids for major capital funding streams.
 - (ii) Authorises the Head of Economy and Development to conduct a series of feasibility studies to support the next stages of development for the STIDP.
 - (iii) Notes the intention to produce a long-term Castle Semple Vision.
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3. Background

- 3.1 In 2022, the Council were successful in securing funding from VisitScotland to produce a Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (STIDP) for Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks.

The plan sets out short to medium term tourism infrastructure solutions and a programme of phased investment over the next five years. In particular, the plan:-

- identifies high level requirements for strategic tourism infrastructure;
- considers the future role of Castle Semple/Muirshiel Country Parks in the wider context of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and the emerging Renfrewshire Tourism Action Plan;
- provides a catalyst for attracting inward investment to implement both short to medium term projects and those in the longer-term.

3.2 This report summarises outcomes from the STIDP process to date and next steps.

4 Consultation and Engagement

4.1 The STIDP was developed through detailed consultation with Park staff, Council officers and key local stakeholders such as the RSPB, along with desk-based analysis and site visits to Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks. This included: -

- Engagement with Elected Members and Senior Officers with operational responsibility for Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.
- Engagement with The Villages Local Partnership (a group of seven local Community Councils (Lochwinnoch, Howwood, Kilbarchan, Brookfield, Bridge of Weir, Elderslie, Houston).
- Wider Stakeholder & Public Consultation – An in-person event hosted at the Castle Semple Visitor Centre on 23 February 2023 was attended by approximately 80 stakeholders, residents, and park users, with a survey also available online. In total 136 consultee responses were received.

4.2 Outcomes from the consultation (Appendix 2) identified key priorities for both short and medium/long term projects at Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks. Respondents' highest priorities were:

- *Short Term (all at Castle Semple)*
 - 1. New Toilet facilities
 - 2. Pedestrian Safety & Accessibility
 - 3. Upgraded Trails & nature lookouts/hides
- *Medium / Longer Term*
 - 1. New Additional Visitor Centre & Café Facility
 - 2. Upgraded Castle Semple Visitor Centre
 - 3. Muirshiel Country Park Centre Upgrade

- 4.3 Additional priorities from the consultation included the enhancement of paths and wayfinding, improvements to watersports facilities (changing/showers) and improvements to connectivity, particularly in relation to active travel and public transport.

5 STIDP Priorities

- 5.1 The consultation outcomes have informed the priorities identified within the STIDP, particularly in relation to access, connections to sustainable travel choices and the provision of adequate toilet facilities on the site. The three 'high' priority projects identified are:

- *Priority 1: New Toilet Facilities* Demolish the outdated toilet block, providing a new facility on the existing site. This will be designed to improve accessibility and provide a small changing area for independent watersports users and/or bike hire hub plus additional cycle parking.
- *Priority 2: Railway Bridge Safe Movement & Connections.* This action would address pedestrian, cycle, and vehicular conflicts at the railway bridge (Church St/Lochlip Road) with new junction markings (white lining/hazard marking/cycle markings to road and cycleway plus sightline improvements.
- *Priority 3: Public Transport Connections (CS-Lochwinnoch Stn)-* Improve legibility ease of connections and provide appropriate signage for Lochwinnoch Rail Station, RSPB, and Castle Semple with information on including, for example, active travel trails, Castle Semple Loch, Barr Loch and CMRP. Amend/Improve existing crossing, white road markings and provision of safe crossing for pedestrians and cyclists.

- 5.2 A further 5 short term projects were also recommended (see STID plan page 60 at Appendix 1). These projects include improvements to wayfinding, active travel, boardwalks/trails, improvements to public realm and a play park at Muirshiel Visitor Centre.

6 Castle Semple Vision

- 6.1 To develop future aspirations for Castle Semple work is also progressing on the preparation of a vision document which considers the long-term promotion of Castle Semple Gateway as a 'regional destination' for environmental education, leisure, recreation and tourism.
- 6.2 The vision document will outline key aspirations and conceptual plans for Castle Semple and surrounding assets, which will form the basis of a conversation to develop a future masterplan for the site.

7 Next Steps

- 7.1 To support progress and delivery of actions from the STIDP, officers will utilise existing regeneration budgets, such as the Place Investment Fund and Shared Prosperity Fund to conduct feasibility and detailed design studies to further develop several of the short-term priorities highlighted in the plan.

If feasible, officers will then consider capital funding to deliver these priorities. Any delivery will be progressed in partnership with the local community and key stakeholders.

- 7.2 Officers will look to finalise a draft of the vision document before the next meeting of the Clyde Muirshiel Liaison Group.

Implications of the Report

1. **Financial** – No immediate additional finance is sought. All funding in the short-term is accounted for within existing Council budget and secured external funding.
2. **HR & Organisational Development** – None.
3. **Community Planning** –
 - *Reshaping our place, our economy, and our future: Renfrewshire Council is working with stakeholders to maximise the opportunities for culturally led regeneration, providing support to make best use of heritage assets.*
 - *Building strong, safe, and resilient communities: working in partnership with local groups and organisations to achieve positive outcomes.*
4. **Legal** – None.
5. **Property/Assets** – None.
6. **Information Technology** - None.
7. **Equality and Human Rights**
 - (a) The Recommendations contained within this report have been assessed in relation to their impact on equalities and human rights. No negative impacts on equality groups or potential for infringement of individuals' human rights have been identified arising from the recommendations contained in the report. If required following implementation, the actual impact of the recommendations and the mitigating actions will be reviewed and monitored, and the results of the assessment will be published on the Council's website. An Equality Impact Assessment is being prepared as part of the project requirements.
8. **Health and Safety** – None.
9. **Procurement** – None.
10. **Risks** – None.
11. **Privacy Impact** – None.
12. **Cosla Policy Position** - Recognising Tourism Outlook 2030.

13. Climate Risk - No identified impacts at present.

List of Background Papers – None.

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CMRP CASTLE SEMPLE / MUIRSHIEL COUNTRY PARKS

STRATEGIC TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

Place Making Framework
Investment Plan for Visitor & Tourism Infrastructure



Contents

01

Introduction

- 1.1 Purpose
- 1.2 Aims and Objectives
- 1.3 Report Structure

02

Contextual Assessment

- 2.1 Policy Context (National / Regional / Local)
- 2.2 Overview of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park
- 2.3 Castle Semple & Muirshiel Country Parks

03

Developing the Country Park 'Gateway' Facilities

- 3.1 Developing a Plan for Future Investment
- 3.2 Castle Semple Country Park
- 3.3 Loch Aird Boardwalk
- 3.4 Conclusion to Developing the Country Park 'Gateway' Facilities

04

Strategic Plan

- 4.1 Developing the Strategic Vision
- 4.2 Key Aims
- 4.3 Developing a Project-Based Strategy

05

Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan

- 5.1 Programme of Investment & Development
- 5.2 Developing a Phased Investment Plan
- 5.3 Consultation & Engagement
- 5.4 Delivering a Sustainable Short-Term Future - Castle Semple
- 5.5 Priority Action Plan
- 5.6 Delivering a Sustainable Short-Term Future - CMRP
- 5.7 RTIF Application - Early Action Projects
- 5.8 Medium Term Future

06

Project Development & Next Steps

- 6.1 Project Development & Next Steps
- 6.2 Identification Programme of Short-Term Investment
- 6.3 Project Development Priority Projects
- 6.4 Castle Semple - Start of a Journey

Appendices

- Appendix 1: Summary Project Sheets Illustrating Draft RTIF Short List.
- Appendix 2: Table summarising potential Projects: Long List
- Appendix 3: Table summarising potential Projects: Short List Projects
- Appendix 4: Summary of Consultation & Engagement Feedback
- Appendix 5: Tabulated Policy Summary



01

Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Renfrewshire Council (the Council) has commissioned the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (STIDP) to better understand the future role of Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks in the wider context of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (CMRP) and the emerging Renfrewshire Tourism Action Plan.

The study (including the STIDP at section 5) seeks to identify high level requirements for strategic tourism infrastructure development at Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks that form key gateway facilities to CMRP.

Since being built in the 1990s, Muirshiel and Castle Semple Country Parks have witnessed significant growth in visitor numbers with resultant pressures on facilities, services, and local infrastructure. The Council are keen to translate increasing visitor demand into a long-term opportunity to promote the Country Parks as 'gateways' within CMRP and develop a major regional level tourism strategy based around outdoor activity, contact with nature, active leisure and health and well-being. It should be noted that current facilities are at capacity and unable to capitalise on the opportunity that an increased value on outdoor green/blue space offers.

The study seeks to address:

- Context and setting of CMRP (incorporating Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks and setting out the Strategic Vision and Opportunity).
- Define future gateway and destination role of Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks.
- Set out a programme for progressive phased investment.

Consultation has included Renfrewshire Council Members, local stakeholders, and tourism/regeneration/place officers across Council Services along with the RSPB, VisitScotland and the Ranger Team at CMRP. In addition:

- The Client Steering Group has helped to coordinate consultation through a Clyde Muirshiel Liaison Group.
- A Consultation Event was hosted within the Castle Semple Visitor Centre in late February and supported with an online Consultation Room. 60-80 stakeholders attended the event with 15 completed survey forms.
- The online 'Consultation Room' (available on computers, digital devices and phones) allowed wider stakeholders to provide feedback and complete a questionnaire on facilities and investment priorities. The online Consultation had a participation level in excess of 540 visits with 136 completed questionnaires.

The study has sought to develop set of prioritised project proposals with input from operators, stakeholders and local community interest groups which will meet the core opportunities and investment needs at Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks. Renfrewshire Council is keen that future investment is strongly aligned to the emerging Renfrewshire Tourism Action Plan.

1.2 Aims & Objectives

The Plan will help to identify areas of opportunity and identify actions to strengthen regional tourism infrastructure, support placemaking and address the needs of both residents and visitors. Furthermore, it will create a framework to define future planning to assist in securing additional funding for projects within the Country Parks.

The aim of the project is to develop a place-based framework for tourism development, that seeks to create a destination gateway for Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks set within the wider context of CMRP.

The Plan objectives are to:

- review the opportunities, requirements, challenges and current and future capacity of the site to meet the needs of visitors, whilst continuing to support and service the varied specialist groups/users into the future.
- define the requirements for investment within the site and to set out a programme for investment over the short, medium, longer term along with any priorities and projects eligible under RTIF funding.
- outline how the existing visitor infrastructure can be enhanced through the delivery of improved services with stronger alignment to deliver low carbon and sustainable travel choices for leisure and outdoor recreation users.
- demonstrate how stronger local and regional links can be developed to ensure investment in improved infrastructure and facilities can be a catalyst for positive economic recovery and area wide regeneration (post-Covid).
- Identify the key visitor and site infrastructure requirements to address visitor pressures within Renfrewshire's Country Parks that could be advanced through an application for RTIF support.

In summary, the Plan seeks to both align and build on the emerging ideas of the Renfrewshire Tourism Action Plan, creating a comprehensive place-based framework for Castle Semple as the primary visitor gateway to CMRP in Renfrewshire.



1.3 Report Structure

The report is presented in six sections as follows:

1. **Introduction**
Describing purpose, aims and objectives of this study set within the context of national and local policies.
2. **Contextual Assessment**
Overview of CMRP and the role of Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks including key issues, place and visitor profile.
3. **CMRP – Developing the Country Park ‘Gateway’ Facilities**
Developing Castle Semple as Renfrewshire's Gateway to CMRP.
4. **Strategic Vision**
Setting out the broad vision and aspirations in the context of emerging tourism planning.
5. **Castle Semple Country Strategic Tourism Infrastructure**
Promoting Castle Semple as a place-based destination.
6. **Project Development & Next Steps**
Identifying strategic programme of investment and key project components of delivery strategy and phasing.



02

Contextual Assessment

2.1 Policy Context

The policy context contains national, regional and local policies. National policy has in recent years provided a stronger policy framework around the protection and enhancement of environmental assets, climate change, health and well-being (including active communities, place qualities and place-making). The national policy framework sets out an ambitious programme for tourism growth.

NATIONAL

Scotland's Climate Change Plan

Scotland's ambitious climate change legislation sets a target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. Climate change is the single greatest threat to Scotland's environment and may affect the delicate balance of Scotland's ecosystems and transform Scotland's habitats and biodiversity, adding to existing pressures. Regional Parks and Country Parks have a role in education and supporting the transition to net zero.

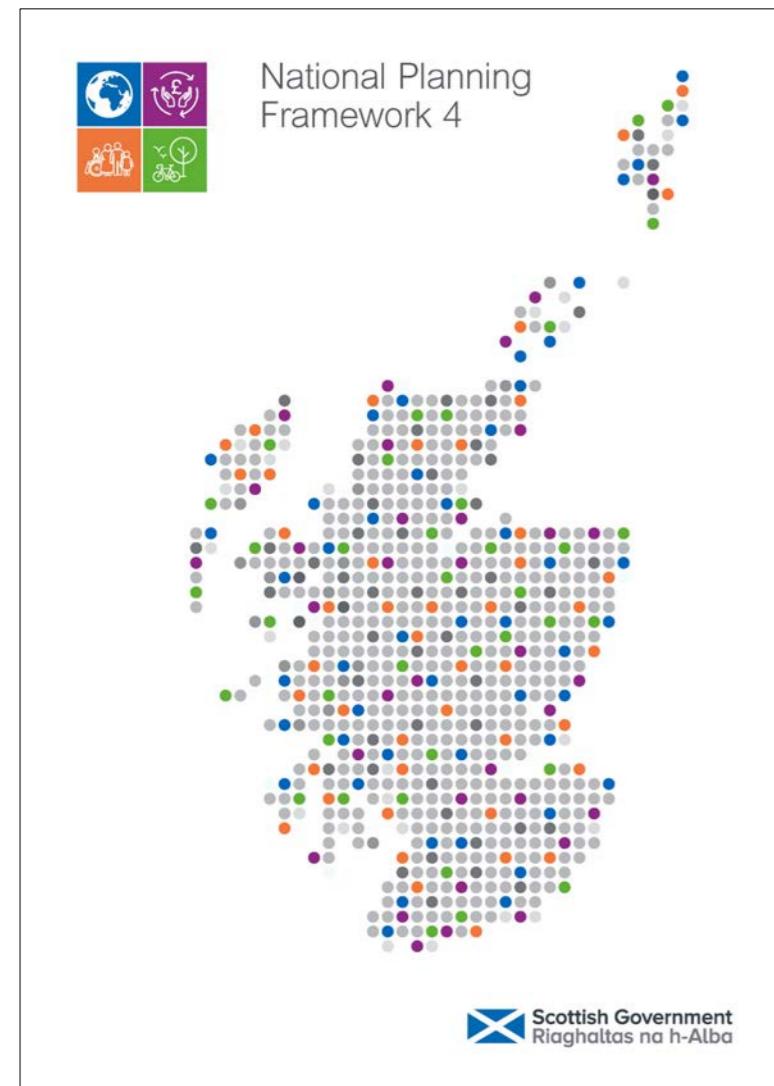
National Tourism Strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030 ¹

Sets out the national Tourism Strategy for Scotland to be world leaders in 21st century tourism built around the key priorities of our passionate people, our thriving places, our diverse businesses, our memorable experiences.

Tourism is an important industry in Scotland and plays a significant role in the country's economy. Tourism is acknowledged as having a significant role in delivering Scotland's wider economic strategy as it cuts across every sector and touches every part of Scotland's economy. Tourism can help to stimulate investment and development across all and help to create jobs and support local businesses in areas that may otherwise struggle to attract investment. However, this ambition goes beyond that; it will look to enrich the lives of those who live here and visit us; it will protect and preserve place quality and has an important role in acting as a global pioneers for responsible tourism.

The National Tourism Strategy places an emphasis on Responsible Tourism as a strategic priority. This looks to ensure that tourism leads to improved community wellbeing and nurtures thriving places across Scotland.

¹ National Tourism Strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030, VisitScotland



National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)¹

NPF4 sets out a national spatial strategy for Scotland and defines national planning policy. The NPF4 sets out a number of spatial principles relevant to the planning for rural assets. The following 4 spatial principles are relevant:

- **Conserving and recycling assets:** We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy.
- **Local living:** We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally.
- **Rebalanced development:** We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand.
- **Rural revitalisation:** We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together.

¹ NPF4, Scottish Government

The NPF4 forms a core part of the Development Plan and sets out the Scottish Government's vision for the country's spatial development over the next 10-20 years. The spatial principles and national spatial strategy support the planning and delivery of:

- **Sustainable places**
Will help to deliver on core national outcomes for the environment, communities, economy addressing a range of policies to tackle climate change, reduce emissions, restore and better connect biodiversity, protect and enhance natural places, greenbelts, sustainable transport and promote a more circular economy.
- **Liveable places**
Will help to deliver on core national outcomes for communities, culture, human rights, children and young people, and health addressing a range of policies to tackle health inequalities, promote healthier lives, enhance blue-green infrastructure and support design quality and place.
- **Productive places**
Will help to deliver on core national outcomes associated with fair work and the business, economy, poverty, communities helping to support a greener, fairer, and more inclusive wellbeing economy and addressing a range of policies associated with Community Wealth Building, culture and creativity, rural development and tourism.,

REGIONAL

GRI Rural Community Tourism Strategy

The GRI Rural Tourism Strategy was commissioned for the Greater Renfrewshire and Inverclyde area under Scottish Government's Rural Communities Testing Change Fund, to identify ways of supporting rural communities. The strategy aims to enhance the economic and social benefits of sustainable tourism for local communities while minimising any negative impacts on the environment.

The strategy sets out a range of measures to support rural tourism, including the development of new tourism products and experiences, the promotion of sustainable tourism practices, and the improvement of tourism infrastructure and services. It also seeks to encourage greater collaboration between different stakeholders in the tourism sector, including businesses, local communities, and government agencies. The GRI Rural Tourism Strategy recognises that rural tourism is an important source of employment and economic growth for many rural areas of Scotland. It also acknowledges that tourism can have negative impacts on the environment and local communities if not managed carefully. Therefore, the strategy emphasises the need for sustainable tourism practices that balance economic growth with environmental protection and social well-being. The strategy emphasises the need for sustainable tourism practices that balance economic growth with environmental protection and social well-being.

LOCAL

Renfrewshire's Economic Strategy 2020-2030

A key challenge defined within Renfrewshire's Economic Strategy is to raise the profile of Renfrewshire nationally and internationally as a natural location for inward and established business investment, for attracting talent and as a place to visit. A core intervention under this challenge is to sustain visitor growth in the long term (a new visitor attraction) and build our capacity for tourism growth.

Renfrewshire Local Development Plan

The Renfrewshire Local Development Plan sets out an ambitious Spatial Strategy that provides a framework for the protection and enhancement of Renfrewshire's diverse natural environment, built and cultural heritage assets and delivery of economic and infrastructure investment. Furthermore, it guides the future use of land to assist in creating strong communities and attractive places.

The LDP includes a revitalised recognition of the built, natural, cultural and heritage tourism offering of Renfrewshire and the important contribution that the tourism sector makes to the Renfrewshire economy. Key policy areas include:

- **Sustainable Economic Growth**
Deliver successful places, based upon balancing the relationship between the environmental, social and economic characteristics of the area.
- **Sustainable Travel**
Demonstrate that there is good accessibility to a range of sustainable travel modes, based on links to the hierarchy of walking, cycling, public transport networks.
- **Tourism**
Proposals for sustainable tourism development including new or expanded tourism-related facilities – (Policy E4).
- **Built Environment**
Protect and enhance the quality of the built and natural environment and be of a design that is appropriate to reflect the siting, density, character, landscape setting and identity of the surrounding area.
- **Village Centres**
Local Service Centres (Lochwinnoch) perform a vital role in supporting many local communities within Renfrewshire. These centres have more localised catchment areas providing a range of local services. Small local village centres (Howwood/Kilbarchan) which perform a vital role in supporting local communities within Renfrewshire's villages.

Renfrewshire Tourism Action Plan (Emerging)

Renfrewshire Council is developing a Tourism Action Plan which is at early consultation stage. This will provide an opportunity to reflect on the positive experience of hosting successful events and delivering an energetic cultural programme and how to build on and complement this in the future.

Tourism is a key sector within the Renfrewshire economy. Covid had a dramatic impact on tourism with changes to patterns of normal visitation which resulted in emphasis on day visits, increased use of countryside and "staycation" holidays. This has led to pressures on visitor destination (excess demand) and extended visits and bookings associated with self-catering, countryside visits, and activity. These circumstances resulted in more of Renfrewshire's outdoor spaces being used than normal.

Whilst there is a gradual return to pre-Covid conditions, these trends persist. Overseas travel to Scotland is not expected to return to pre-Covid levels until 2023 or 2024, while UK self-catering remains buoyant. Other impacts of Covid include the prioritisation of "green" and sustainable activity, recognition of the role the sector has in contributing to zero carbon targets, the requirement for a far stronger community foundation for determining tourism priorities, and the importance of digital on all aspects of tourism.

The emerging Tourism Action Plan recognises the importance of prioritising tourism and the need to develop a strong tourism offer based around the following six thematic areas:

1. **Collaboration** - public, private and third sectors working together to support tourism across the region and a tourism network that facilitates and urges operators and organisations to enter into partnerships and joint activity (in e.g., marketing)
2. **Infrastructure** – especially around active travel provision linking key tourism destinations
3. **Rural Renfrewshire** – capitalising on the outdoor activities and landscape attributes of the district to build a stronger appeal to markets – this would include continuing development at Castle Semple
4. **Paisley** - continuing to build on the strengths of Paisley as a destination in its own right, capitalising on its strong regional appeal, signposting to our other regional destinations, assets and experiences
5. **Events** - building on the success of the strong programme of events to drive additional visitor numbers and highlight further opportunities for the regeneration of communities
6. **Business tourism** – addressing this "hidden" sector of conferences, events, academic and corporate market opportunities in venues across the area

Strong Strategic Policy Alignment

National, Regional and Local policies (and importantly the new National Planning Framework (NPF4) establish a strong policy framework aligning the key national outcomes with spatial principles, with economic, environmental and community policies defined at the regional and local level.

CMRP delivers an important contribution to sustainable, liveable and productive places. It directly supports the following key target policy areas of NPF4:

Sustainable Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackling the climate and nature crises Climate mitigation and adaptation Biodiversity Natural places Soils Forestry, woodland and trees Historic assets and places 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Green belts Brownfield land, vacant and derelict land and empty buildings Coastal development Energy Zero waste Sustainable transport
Liveable Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design, quality and place Local living /20 minute neighbourhoods Rural homes Infrastructure first 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Heat and cooling Blue and green infrastructure Play, recreation and sport Flood risk and water management
Productive Places	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community wealth building Local centres Rural development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tourism Culture and creativity Minerals

Clyde Muirshiel is at the forefront of addressing climate change and the nature crises alongside promoting quality of place, healthier communities, rural diversification and tourism. Critically it needs to ensure it can continue to invest in its natural capital, infrastructure and educational programmes to deliver strong national, regional and local outcomes.



2.2 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

2.2.1 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park

CMRP covers an area of 265sq km across three local authorities, namely Renfrewshire Council, Inverclyde Council and North Ayrshire Council. The regional park was established through the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967 and modified by the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1981. In 1996 the three authorities established a Joint Committee 'The Park Authority' which initially managed all functions related to tourism, recreation, and environmental management across the park area. However, the Park Authority was disbanded in 2020 along with the Joint Committee. Each of the three Councils have now assumed full responsibility for the park management and the delivery of services within their geographical boundary.

Renfrewshire Council continues to work with the other local authorities to ensure that the park is managed effectively, and that its natural and cultural heritage is protected and enhance promoting sustainable tourism and rural economic growth within the region.

2.2.2 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Aspirations, Aims and Priorities

As one of Scotland's designated regional parks CMRP retains the three principal aspirations that were set out in the Park Strategy (2016 – 2021). These were:

- “To conserve and enhance the natural beauty, biodiversity and cultural heritage of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.
- To encourage and enable learning, understanding and enjoyment of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.
- To promote and foster environmentally sustainable development for the social and economic well-being of the people and communities within the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park area.”

Priority: Leisure Activity & Health.
Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park provides visitors of all ages and abilities the opportunity for quality recreation. Using its unique assets, the Park will facilitate a high quality programme of leisure activities which contribute to the health agenda.

Priority: Education & Outdoor Learning
Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park is an increasingly popular and productive venue for formal and informal education and outdoor learning. More people will participate in learning opportunities and will develop a better appreciation of the area's natural and cultural heritage.

Priority: Environmental Management
Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park is an attractive and ecologically important visitor destination with increased biodiversity value. The Park embraces opportunities for positive environmental change.

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park: Park Strategy 2016-2021

2.2.3 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's Role

The role of the regional parks is to provide fresh air, open spaces and responsible recreational opportunities close to where people live. In rural and relatively remote wild hill country, this requires above all, enhanced transport links from the main centres of population – particularly for those without a car which is often young people and those with limited financial resources.

2.2.4 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park's Tourism, Recreation Environment Designations

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park encompasses publicly and privately owned land. Most visits to the park are for recreation or access purposes and are supported by a network of paths, trails, and cycle routes. The Park provides a unique habitat for many different species of plant and animal life and includes 5 sites designated a SSSI's (Sites of Special Scientific Interest), one SPA (Special Protection Area) and WLA's (Wild Land Areas) - identified as nationally important. Almost 85 % of land within the park is in private ownership and is put to a wide range of uses including farming, commercial forestry, shooting, the supply of public water and renewable energy.

A significant amount of the grassland and moorland is productive with managed farms and livestock. There are important semi-natural woodlands and pockets of commercial plantations offering a diverse range of habitats supporting a regional ecosystem of identified biodiversity value.

The Park's landscape is an important draw for a diverse range of recreational users including hill walkers, wildlife enthusiasts and cyclists. Visitors are also drawn to the area's heritage, with the Regional Park including a number of scheduled monuments, listed buildings, landscape features and places of interest. Overall, CMRP is a high value and important natural resource with excellent accessibility from the Central Belt and Southwest Scotland and offers a diverse range of recreational opportunities alongside important environmental ecosystem services recognised as of regional importance.

The Country Parks (Castle Semple and Muirshiel) provide important gateway sites and the following features forming core visitor destinations:

- Greenock Cut Visitor Centre
- Thom / Gryfe /Daff /Outerwards Reservoirs
- Lunderston Bay & Clyde Coast
- Misty Law / Burnt Hill /Hill of Stake
- Muirhead & Camphill Reservoirs
- Castle Semple Country Park
- Castle Semple Visitor Centre
- Castle Semple Watersports Centre
- RSPB Lochwinnoch and Aird Meadow
- Barr Loch Reserve
- Muirshiel Visitor Centre
- Kilbirnie Loch

2.2.5 Regional Park Tourism Data 2018-2022

The Regional Park has three visitor centres which are located at Castle Semple, Muirshiel and Greenock Cut. It is estimated that the park receives an estimated 1.5-1.8 million visitors annually¹. Renfrewshire Council collects visitor data based on car count for Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Park visitor centres. The data suggests visitor numbers to these facilities are of the order of 485,000 visitors.

Key regional tourism data² indicates:

- The city region offers a significant day trip market with circa 3.5million people living within 90 minutes' drive time. However, Glasgow is also a driver for overnight and international tourism and its proximity to the park therefore creates an additional opportunity.

A number of visitors arrive through connections to Prestwick international airport/Northern Ireland ferry services or from the South-West of Scotland including North, South & East Ayrshire.

¹ Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Data, 2012

² VisitScotland Regional Tourism Data 2019

- The Greater Glasgow & Clyde Valley major attractions (paid/free) would include CMRP and Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks. The RSPB Lochwinnoch Nature Reserve receives approximately 25,000 visitors¹ annually, with Visitscotland recording 26,217 in 2019²

A summary of some of the key regional tourism data from Visitscotland Glasgow and Clyde Valley Factsheet is shown in graphic summary form together with some projections for the Regional Park's facilities within Renfrewshire.

¹ Visitor Experience Manager, RSPB

² Visitscotland Tourism Statistics 2019

Tourism Built on Core Strengths



*Data Extracted from VisitScotland Gt. Glasgow & Clyde Valley Factsheet 2019 & Renfrewshire Council Economic Strategy 2020-2030)

2.2.6 Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park Visitor Numbers

Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park have collated visitor numbers over a number of years. The visitor counts are tabulated by year based on car counter data between 2015-2018. For years 2019-2022 full car counter data has not been available, and figures are locally derived estimates.

CMRP (see table below) has witnessed steady and sustained growth in visitor numbers over the period 2015-2022. Notable increases in visitor numbers are indicated in 2012/13 (primarily at Lunderston Bay) and 2018/20 resulting from Covid. Outwith these periods growth has followed a broad 2-3% year on year growth. Castle Semple numbers have increased from 338,000 in 2010 to 430,000 in 2021.

Castle Semple Country Park and Visitor Centre is by far the most visited element of CMRP in Renfrewshire with significantly smaller numbers visiting Muirshiel Country Park and Visitor Centre. Greenock Cut and Lunderston Bay are locations operated by other authorities and are outwith Renfrewshire as shown in the above table. Visitor numbers for Muirshiel Country Park and the Visitor Centre are based on car counts and are less reliable at this location.

Centre / Facility	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22
Castle Semple	338000	339000	345800	344000	320000	312911	346209	332950	370442	459514*	412192*	430192*
Muirshiel	35800	35850	35900	35950	36000	36047	39463	36964	39358	46845	55045*	55045
Greenock Cut	69000	68000	68500	69000	71000	79440	69875	67540	68279*	71625*	94672*	94672
Lunderston Bay	110000	70000	188000	199400	210000	221862	182108	222372	228920	270614	314596	314596
TOTAL	552800	512850	638200	648350	637000	650260	637655	659826	706999	848598	876505	894505
Percentage Increase	0	-7%	24%	2%	-2%	2%	-2%	3%	7%	20%	3%	2%

* Renfrewshire Council locally derived estimate, full car counter data not available

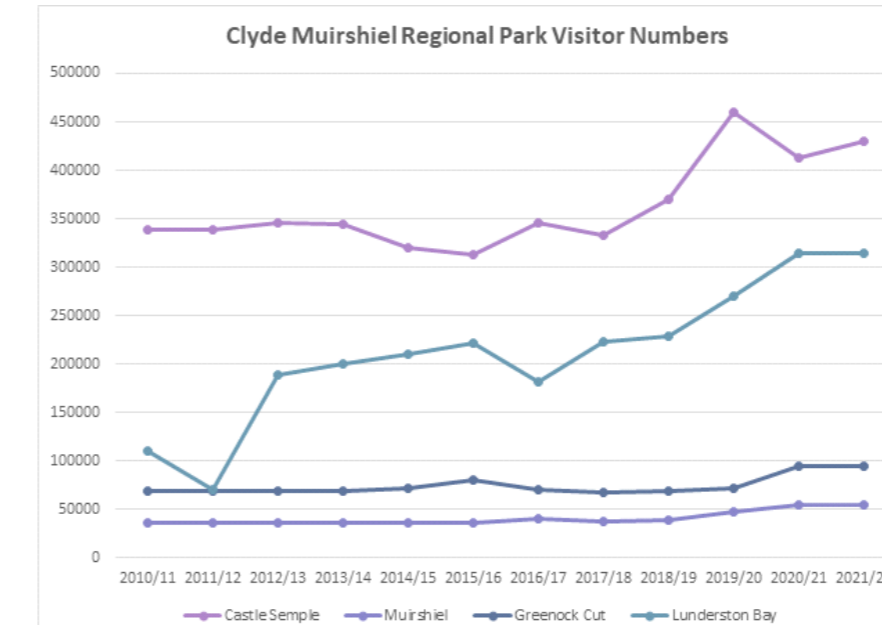


Figure 1: CMRP Visitor numbers broken down to each of the four core destinations.

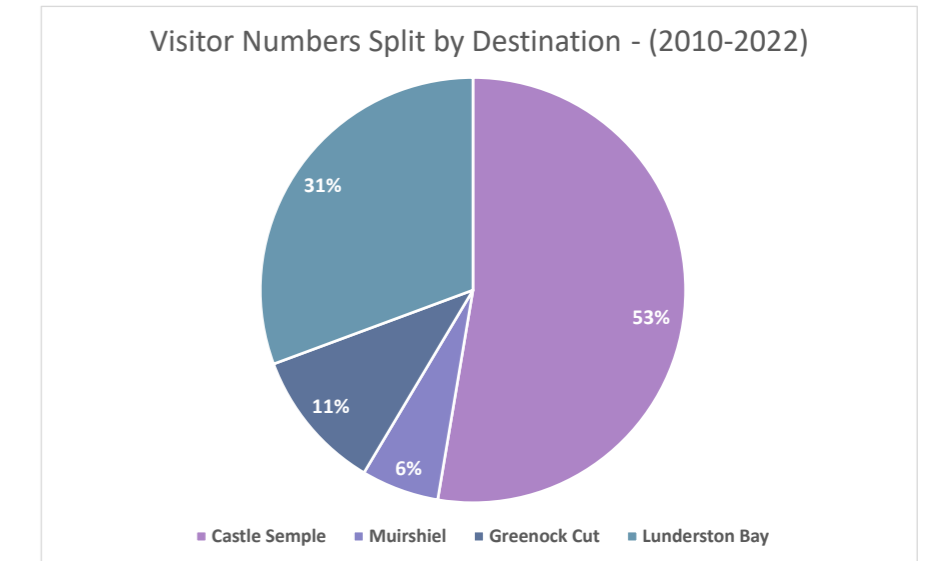
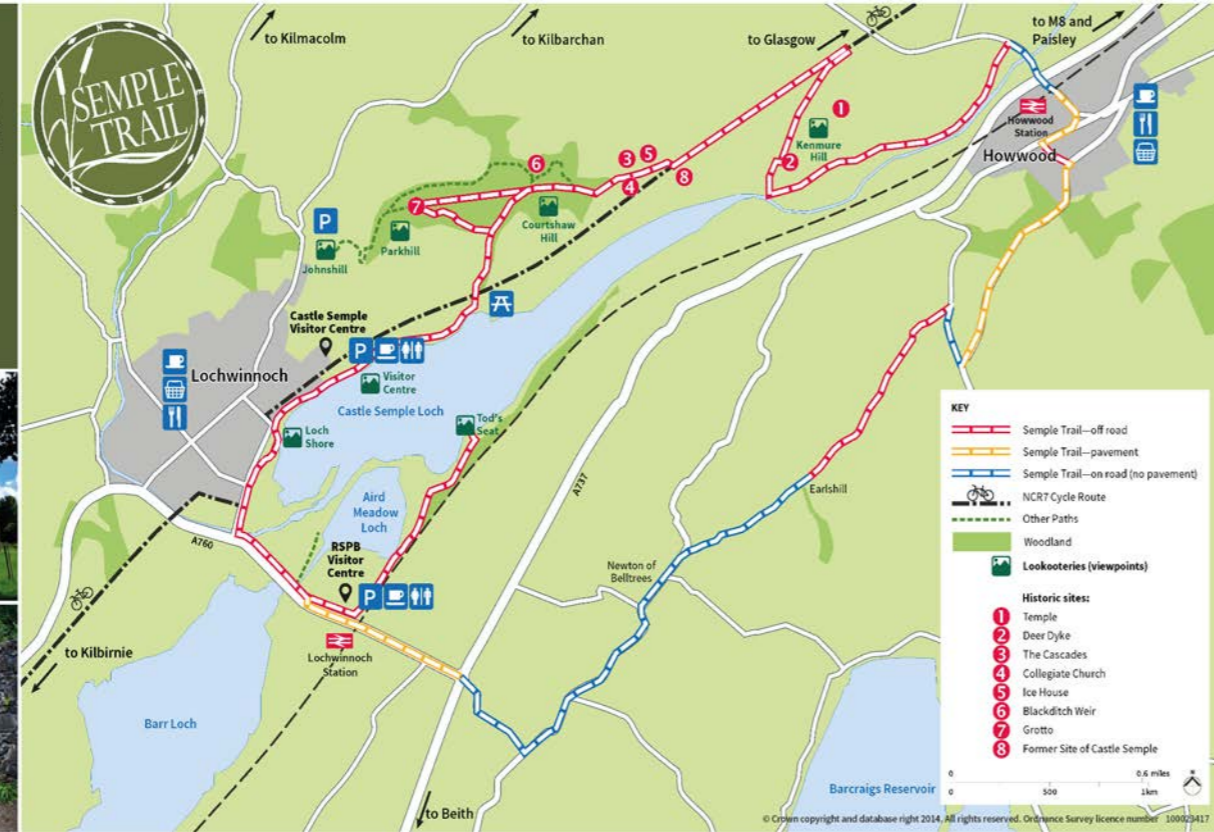
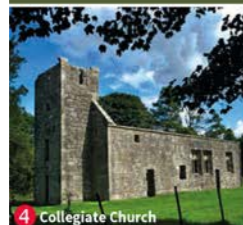


Figure 2: This chart represents the same data as tabled above. It should be noted that the Castle Semple Visitor Centre secures over half (53%) of all visitors to the core destinations of the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park with the Muirshiel Visitor Centre attracting the least (6%). Greenock Cut and Lunderston Bay are not within Renfrewshire.



Semple Trail

Semple Trail is approximately 15km (9 miles) long. Along the trail you will encounter a variety of settings from lochside and woodland paths to farmland and quiet country roads. Please note that there may be grazing cattle or sheep on the farm land at any time of year. Care should always be taken around farm animals as they can be unpredictable. Please keep your dog under control and take all litter home.



2.3 Castle Semple & Muirshiel Country Parks

2.3.1 Castle Semple Country Park

Castle Semple Country Park (CSCP) was formed from part of the original estate centred around the Loch. Castle Semple mansion house itself burnt down at the beginning of the 20th century. The site was acquired by Renfrewshire County Council and designated as a Country Park in 1971. The CSCP with its connections to public transport (Lochwinnoch rail and bus services) forms an important gateway to the more remote, open countryside of CMRP.

Castle Semple Country Park Visitor Centre

Castle Semple Visitor Centre is operated by Renfrewshire Council. The centre is located on the north shore of Castle Semple Loch alongside the National Cycle Route 7 (NCR7) and only 1.5km from Lochwinnoch Railway Station. The Visitor Centre is open throughout the year and includes recreational, hospitality and educational facilities with a strong focus on education supported by the Ranger Service. Countryside Rangers provide an environmental education programme and support visitor services with advice about local walking routes, trails, and wildlife viewpoints. Additional attractions and activities include walking, cycling, wildlife watching, indoor and outdoor facilities, basic café- refreshments and a retail offering.

Castle Semple Activity Centre - Sailability Centre of Excellence

The Castle Semple Centre is recognised as a Royal Yachting Association Sailability 'Centre of Excellence' – the first in Scotland (awarded in 2013). The centre has both specialist facilities, staff and equipment to accommodate people of all abilities in the delivery of watersports training such including sailing, kayaking and canoeing and power boating. The centre provides accessible stage courses for youths aged 8-15 years and level courses and taster sessions for adults (16+). The centre also offers accessible sports days throughout the year as well as disability open days and competitive/non-competitive events throughout the country.

The Castle Semple Activity Centre additionally has been recognised as a Scottish Cycling Disability Hub. In 2017, the Park's Castle Semple Centre was designated as one of only two HSBCUK Disability Hubs by Scottish Cycling in recognition of the Park's varied cycle equipment, specially trained staff and commitment to paracycling development as part of a fully inclusive outdoor activity programme.

Semple Trail

The Semple Trail starts at the Castle Semple Visitor Centre and links a series of visitor attractions between the villages of Lochwinnoch and Howwood. The Semple Trail comprise a series of walks and cycle routes around Castle Semple Loch, Parkhill Wood, Collegiate Church and Kenmure Hill Temple with connections to Lochwinnoch, Howwood and the RSPB Visitor Centre. Other parts of the trail can be explored from links from the NCR7 cycle route.

Sailing / Rowing / Stand-up Paddleboard (SUP) & Windsurfing and Fishing Clubs

A core element of the Country Park is access to Castle Semple Loch and the use of the waterbody for water-based recreation (see above). In addition to the Centre facilities operated by the Council, a diverse range of water sports facilities and activities are offered by independent clubs on land leased from Renfrewshire Council. The clubs include:

- Castle Semple Rowing Club**
 The Club provides an open membership-based facility providing for recreational rowing including training and education operating from a purpose-built clubhouse.
- Castle Semple Sailing Club**
 The Club based facility (open membership) provides for sailing and education on Castle Semple Loch and manages facilities to enable enjoyment of the waterbody for recreational sailing
- Ride 63 Community Cycle Club**
 The Ride 63 is a Community Cycling Club based primarily at Castle Semple Visitor Centre. Club objectives: a) Development of infrastructure for the sport of cycling in Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and in the wider area.
- Clyde Windsurfing & Stand-up Paddleboard (SUP) Club**
 The Club provides a range of services including adult and junior coaching in windsurfing and Stand-Up-Paddleboard (SUP) including beginners, experienced, touring and race training.
- Fishing Clubs**
 Fishing is permitted on Castle Semple Loch. The Countryside Ranger Service manage permit fishing on the West bank of the Loch. Castle Angling Club and St Winnoch Angling Club cover other beats.

Castle Semple Visitor Infrastructure

Public Transport (rail/bus) and National Cycle routes (NCR7) all have important roles in supporting travel choice. Key aspects of the recreational and transport network are the rail/bus connections that offer non-car-based accessibility and reduce car dependency. Extending travel choice by supporting sustainable modes through public transport are part of the Council's priorities to support delivery of national transport outcomes.

The Country Park has a range of supporting facilities with most of the built facilities developed during the 1980's as timber log buildings designed specifically for visitor use and with limited capacity for adaptability and energy efficiency. The main visitor infrastructure includes:

- Public parking for 112 cars +DDA parking with electric charging stations (6 public/4 staff).
- Cycle shelter and cycle racks for c40+ bikes.
- Hardstandings for minibus / coach use.
- Public Toilet Building separate from Visitor Centre – structural condition requires replacement.
- Path connections to NCR7 and off-road route to the Lochwinnoch Rail Station.
- Basic Café facility.
- An Education and training space plus offices for Activity Centre & Countryside Ranger Service.
- Pontoons and landing facilities for non-motorised watersport users also used through agreement of the Activity Centre by local Rowing / Sailing /Windsurf & SUP Clubs.

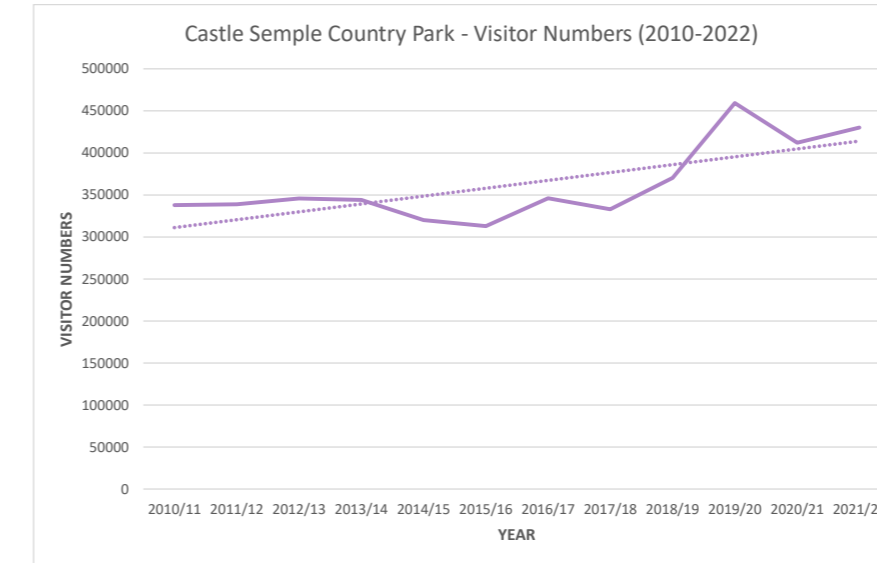


Figure 3: Castle Semple Country Park: Growth in visitor numbers 2010-2022 with trend line indicated in dotted line. See section 3.2.1.

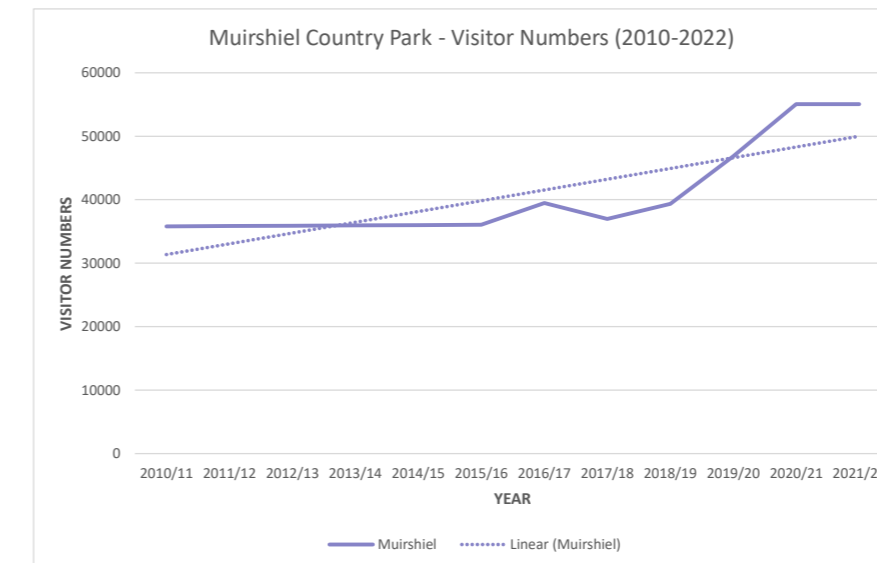


Figure 4: Muirshiel Country Park: Growth in visitor numbers 2010-2022 with trend line indicated in dotted line. See section 3.3.1.

2.3.2 Muirshiel Country Park

Muirshiel Country Park was formed on estate grounds of Muirshiel House - a shooting lodge located on the river Calder adjacent to Duchal and Queenside Moor. The site was acquired by Renfrewshire County Council in 1952 and designated as a Country Park in 1970.

Muirshiel Country Park Visitor Centre

Muirshiel Visitor Centre provides a small visitor facility 4 miles from Lochwinnoch located within the hills of Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park. The centre is home to the Ranger Service and provides basic facilities (toilets/shelter/parking) and the start point of a series of walks and cycle routes. Full time and seasonal countryside rangers operate from the visitor centre.

Walking Trails

Popular walking trails include walks (several circular) to Misty Law, Hill of Stake, Windy Hill and the former barytes mine. Windy Hill is the most popular and family friendly walk whilst others (such as the Hill of Stake - the highest hill in CMRP) are slightly longer (3-4 hrs minimum) and require navigation skills. The heather moors of CMRP are home to one of Britain's rarest Birds of Prey - the Hen Harrier.



03

Developing the Country Park 'Gateway' Facilities

3.1 Developing a Plan for Future Investment

The Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks are operated by Renfrewshire Council. The facilities were built in the 1980's to meet the objectives defined within CMRP Plan at that time and to deliver visitor centres which would support both public visitor needs and the Park Countryside Ranger Service.

The Visitor Centres require investment if they are to sustain current activities with respective buildings nearing the end of their design life. Maintaining activity and the current role of the Visitor Centres will require:

- Aligning regional tourism activity and the promotion of outdoor recreation and countryside activity with the Country Parks and developing site specific development plans for facility and visitor management.
- Developing a phased Investment Plan to provide reinvestment in the core Building Assets with the primary focus of promoting Castle Semple as Renfrewshire's 'Gateway' to CMRP and a regional centre of excellence in watersports and responsible countryside recreation.
- Developing wider partnerships with existing adjacent and co-located facilities i.e., RSPB, Watersports Clubs, Sustrans and local communities, to ensure the Country Parks are closely integrated and support regeneration of rural villages and wider local attractions.

The priority for investment needs to be Castle Semple Country Park. Muirshiel Country Park and its Visitor Centre provide access to hill walks and open countryside and its role is complimentary to Castle Semple Country Park.

3.2 Castle Semple Country Park

Castle Semple is the 'gateway' to CMRP in Renfrewshire. The Castle Semple Country Park provides a focus for mixed-use, family-oriented outdoor activity and a high-quality inclusive hub for watersports. The site has a number of important attributes that support sustainable place-making and offer the opportunity to promote development. These include:

The site has a number of important attributes that support sustainable place-making and offer the opportunity to promote development. These include:

- Strategic location offering direct access to strategic transport links including National Cycle Route (NCR7), a mainline railway station and bus based public transport connecting to main population centres. No other regional park offers equivalent and immediate access to a station. Prestwick and Glasgow airports are also within easy reach.
- Strong place appeal and customer base that currently attracts over 50% of all visitors to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park
- Capacity to deliver diverse range of activity incorporating passive and active leisure on land and on water with strong regional demand and capacity for further growth.
- Environment and place quality with the opportunity to explore a range of environments, heritage assets, habitats and viewpoints offering positive experiences and strong contact with nature.
- Established visitor infrastructure with a Countryside Ranger Service and educational and training support, capable of accommodating people of all abilities within a recognised Centre of Excellence.

3.2.1 Growth in Visitor Numbers (See also Section 2.2.6)

Castle Semple has seen significant growth in visitor numbers over the period 2010-2022. Levels of activity have been consistently high with specific site pressures due to levels of activity throughout the summer peak periods.

Comprehensive visitor data is incomplete due to challenges in collecting data during Covid and during periods where the main Visitor Centres (Castle Semple Country Park/Muirshiel Country Park) were closed or operating under a very restricted operational plan.

The main pressures on visitor use within Renfrewshire portion of CMRP has been at Castle Semple Country Park. These have included:

- Increased cycle activity on the Renfrewshire sections of the National Cycle routes notably NCR 7 (Sunderland-Glasgow-Inverness) and NCR 75 (Edinburgh-Glasgow-Kintyre).
- Increased day visitors to the visitor centre and Country Park locations during Covid and Covid recovery periods including walking, cycling, outdoor recreational activity including during periods when the Visitor Centre was closed.
- Increased walking and day visit activity within Country Parks with strong activity from across local and regional catchments, primarily accessed by walking, cycling or car.

Visitor counts undertaken by the Council have focussed on car counter data which are anecdotally supported by the ranger service and open-mobile data (Strava). Statistics collated by the Council for Castle Semple Country Park indicate See Table and Graphs page XX):

- Increase in Visitor Numbers to Castle Semple Visitor Centre between 2018 and 2019 jumping from 370,442 to 459,514 a 24% increase within the year (see figure X).
- Visitor numbers (car counter data) indicate a fall to 412,192 and 430,129 in 2020 and 2021 albeit that this was not the experience on site which advised visitor numbers/ pressure remained high with no change over 2019 figures and potentially implying a greater access by active travel.
- A sustained level activity of circa 420,000 visitors to Castle Semple Visitor Centre (Car Counter Data collected by Renfrewshire Council 2022) that represents a 13% increase over 2019 figures at a site that was already at capacity.

The graphed data also includes a projection (see Graphs page XX) of the current trend in visitor numbers at Castle Semple. On the current trend numbers are likely to rise to 500,000 in 2024/25 and assuming further investment in the site, 530,000 by 2025/26. These are projections based on current trends.

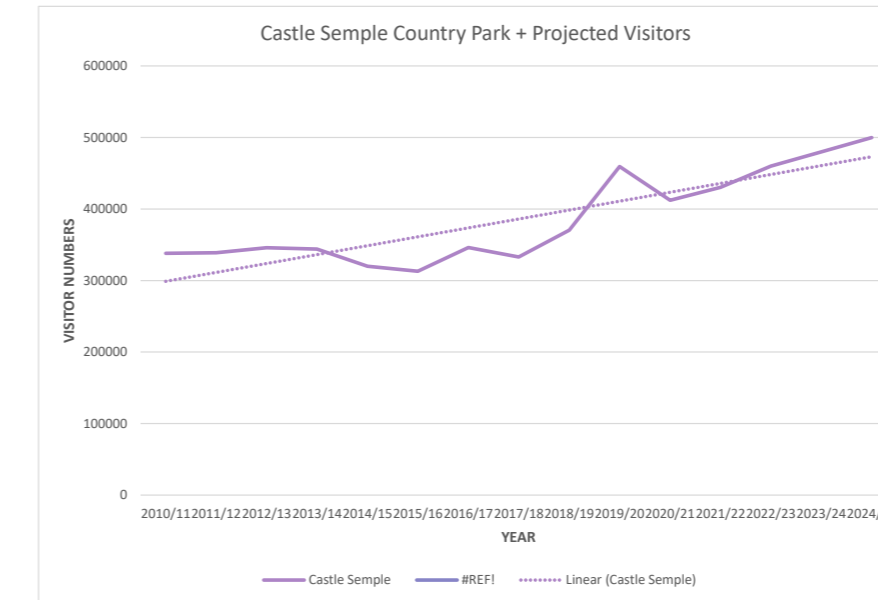


Figure 5: Castle Semple Country Park: Growth in visitor numbers 2010 - 2022 and projected numbers to 2025/26. The projected growth in visitor numbers is based on current post-covid levels of activity on site and the re-establishment of pre-covid annual growth in visitor numbers. The ranger service and levels of activity across the Country Park suggest these figures are probably conservative.

3.2.2 Challenges around Visitor Numbers

The main challenges associated with visitor use and the increase in visitor numbers have been identified during consultation with staff including the centre manager, ranger services other stakeholders and site visits. A consultation event held at the Castle Semple Visitor Centre was well attended and supported by an online survey and questionnaire. The engagement (event and online) recorded issues and concerns across a breadth of stakeholders.

Quality of the Visitor Experience

Peak period reduction in the visitor experience due to numbers of visitors and particularly traffic congestion and traffic movements within the car park, litter management and the inability to effect dispersal of visitors to the wider Country Park and trails due to legibility, poor signage, and information for visitors. The constraints of a long narrow site and the need to balance visitor access with environmental protection and management is a further issue.

Lack of Toilet & Changing Facilities

The enforced intermittent closure of the toilet facilities means that only people on courses, staff and 'users with additional or specific access and mobility needs can reliably access public toilets within the visitor building which has limited capacity and opening hours. This impacts on visitor amenity and site use (i.e., toilets and changing) with concerns around anecdotal public use of woodlands and wider park areas as well as 'dirty toileting' behind buildings when the café and visitor centre is shut.



Safety & Traffic Management

Issues with peak period traffic management and conflicts with active travel users (i.e., walkers, cyclists, recreational users). These are most acute at the entrance area and associated with the use/misuse within the parking bays including non-appropriate use of disability parking/e-charging and public transport e.g., congested site with multi-users with the potential for conflicts between vehicles and pedestrians and cyclists.

Water Catchment & Site Operational Management

Broad range of site management issues exacerbated by fluctuating water levels and levels of use including over-use of sensitive water-edge areas (with resulting surface erosion) and break-up of paths. These flooding, siltation and water edge issues are also linked with climate change and the need to address integrated water catchment management to create sustainable loch water levels and alleviate community flooding issues.

Limited Capacity of the Visitor Centre

The visitor centre provides primarily for educational, watersports and training groups with additional access or support needs and only has limited capacity for day-visitors and capacity for tourism support. There is a need to adopt a more integrated tourism and community planning approach that seeks to build capacity across the region. Locally this could include better signage, maps and waymarking to help encourage dispersal to CSCP trails, the RSPB facility and other CMRP attractions.

The visitor centre space is often at a premium with school and educational groups putting pressure on toilets, break-out space, and the capacity to support a quality food and drink offer. Potentially a remodelling and re-organisation of the building or additional space and the re-establishment of external toilets could create opportunity.

The consultation sought stakeholder views on the support and ancillary visitor services considered appropriate for the Castle Semple Visitor Centre.

Castle Semple Country Park – Visitor Pressures 2020-2022



Gateway location with intensification of use due to Covid/ Staycation and increase in outdoor recreation creating pressures on facilities with most acute pressures at 'gateway sites' with potential for conflict between visitors and residents.

1. Car Park capacity/congestion/irresponsible parking
2. Lack of toilet capacity / irresponsible toileting
3. Lack of changing capacity
4. Vehicular / Pedestrian conflicts
5. Watersport User conflicts
6. Cycle access issues
7. Erosion of grass areas / path edges
8. Littering

3.2.3 Castle Semple Country Park: Problems /Opportunities/ Issues /Challenges

The Problems, Opportunities, Issues and Challenges (POIC) that impact on the future of Castle Semple Country Park have been identified through public and stakeholder consultation along with ongoing discussions with park staff and local organisations:

Castle Semple County Park			
Problems	Opportunities	Issues	Challenges
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centre is an ageing facility needing major refurbishment to respond to 21st century needs. • Peak day visitor parking capacity creates congestion and restricts access. • Limited site capacity needs to address travel choice, develop capacity, and promote stronger dispersal. • Lack of basic facilities such as toilets, shelter and changing space. • Poor connections to facility and capacity to disperse and integrate town/village services within the visitor destination. • Avoiding a car-based 'predict & provide' planning approach that reinforces existing car based travel patterns and is ultimately unsustainable. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing Castle Semple as a sustainable gateway to CMRP creating a high-quality cluster of visitor facilities serviced by public transport and active travel. • Protect and enhance the special environmental qualities of the site and create more inclusive access to nature and experiences. • Invest in facilities offering scale and a mix of uses aligned with local capacity. • Develop the trail and walking/active travel routes creating a series of path-cycle routes barrier-free and meeting all skills, competencies and interests. • Extend and build on the resources to facilitate additional capacity for a range of visitor activity including nature activities, watersports and water-based leisure. • Develop public transport (rail and bus) connections that allow for public transport choice across Glasgow conurbation. • Develop a 'geography' curated around diverse visitor experiences integrating people, place, natural capital, and environment. • Look to align Castle Semple more strongly with local community needs and interests. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognise the need to improve facilities and address post-Covid demand for locally accessible recreation. • Sustainable management and protection of biodiversity in a designated environment of high value and sensitivity. • Need to address Climate Change and Net Zero commitments by reducing car dependency and extending choice, - facilitating modal shift. • Hospitality (café facilities) offer is very limited and requires upgrading or change in management. • Further assessments are required to establish site capacities and specific visitor user-requirements. • Proposals need to be sensitive to place and strongly anchored in place-making and aligned to local communities. • Need to build a concept/ vision and masterplan for the future through engagement with strong support across diverse user and interest groups. • Resources limited within ranger services • Multi-user activity can create conflicts associated with specific site user needs (water and land) and are not necessarily aligned to sustainable site management. • Operational management focus on visitor experience and quality. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing partner and funding support to deliver investment to upgrade the existing facility. • Securing partner and funding support to deliver investment to provide new facilities / attractions in rural location. • Identifying natural capital of the site and identifying sites with environmental capacity to accept sensitive built development. • Creating a quality masterplan to deliver a shared vision enabling phased delivery. • Building the partnerships with public/3rd sector/private funds to deliver the vision. • Securing early action and additional infrastructure investment for core visitor facilities represents an urgent need. • Developing the destination whilst promoting wider travel choice and targeting reduced car accessibility and reduced trip generation. • Delivering a high quality sustainable destination based on rural family-oriented attractions with meaningful modal shift targets. • Developing a strong Country Park USP based on a multi-activity centre.

3.3 Muirshiel Country Park

Muirshiel Country Park includes a small visitor centre that doubles as a centre for the ranger service. The purpose of the facility is to enjoy the estate setting of the former Muirshiel House and it is a gateway to the wilder areas of CMRP. The site provides access to cycling including road and gravel routes and forms an access point to longer distance walks and routes.

Muirshiel Country Park fulfils a complimentary need to Castle Semple Country Park for less intensive, more individual, and small group exploration of the open countryside and wild areas of CMRP. It provides with its visitor centre a supported location for family and mixed capability groups to undertake hill walks and educational trails and explore the Muirshiel Estate.

The site has a number of important attributes that establish its 'gateway' qualities and create the opportunity for further development. These include:

- Central CMRP Location offering direct access to the centre of the Regional Park.
- Capacity to create a secondary hub and access point dispersing visitors and facilitating access to wild country/exploratory hill walks.
- Environment and place quality allowing visitors to access remote areas, get away from crowds and enjoy close contact with 'raw nature' and explore a heritage landscape.
- Established visitor infrastructure with a well-established Countryside Ranger Service

3.3.1 Growth in Visitor Numbers

Muirshiel Country Park has seen significant growth in visitor numbers over recent years, most notably since 2019 resulting from the impact of Covid. Levels of activity have remained consistently high with specific site pressures exacerbated throughout the summer peak periods.

Visitor counts undertaken by the Council have focussed on car counter data but this is anecdotally supported by the ranger service and open-mobile data (Strava). The statistics collated by the Council indicate:

- An increase in visitor numbers to Muirshiel Country Park between 2016 and 2021 jumping from 36,964 to 55,045 - a 48% increase over this period.
- A sustained level activity of between of 55,000 visitors between 2021 and 2023.

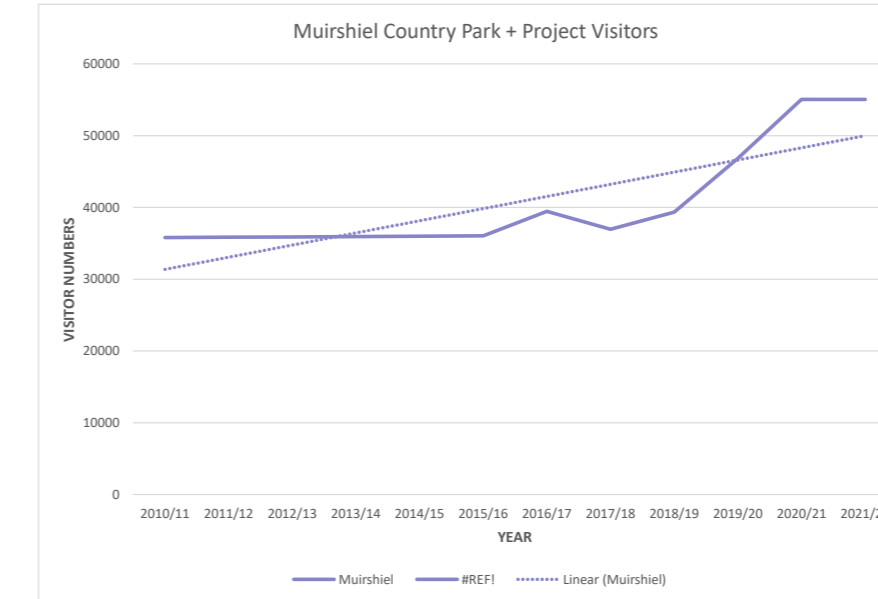


Figure 6: Muirshiel Country Park: Growth in visitor numbers 2010-2022 and projected numbers to 2025/26. The projected growth in visitor numbers is based on current post-covid levels of activity on site and the re-establishment of pre-covid annual growth in visitor numbers. The ranger service and levels of activity across the Country Park suggest these figures are probably conservative.

3.2.2 Challenges around Visitor Numbers

The main challenges associated with visitor use and the increase in visitor numbers include:

Sustaining Facilities & Growing Visitor Numbers

The Ranger Service operates from the visitor centre at Muirshiel Country Park and the dual use of visitor centre and ranger offices provides the operational base, sustains a presence, and maintains activity. Visitor numbers need to grow to sustain educational and public facilities at this site.

Building Condition

The existing building was built in the 1980's of timber construction and requires significant investment to ensure it remains fit for purpose. The building has suffered from severe water ingress through the roof and a major roof upgrade is required.

Road Access & Condition

Access to the visitor centre is by a C class rural road extending 5.0 km from the B876. The road has steep gradients, no footways and is a single-track road with passing places. For most of its length, the road is in good condition but limited by width and capacity.

The site access road has poor facilities for walkers and cyclists using the route. Road safety and the encouragement of active travel present significant challenges.

Muirshiel Country Park – Visitor Pressures 2020-2022

Gateway location with intensification of use due to Covid/ Staycation and increase in outdoor recreation creating pressures on facilities with most acute pressures at 'gateway sites' with potential for conflict between visitors and residents.

1. Single track road capacity
2. Vehicular / Pedestrian conflicts on approach road
3. Cycle access issues
4. Lack of waymarking /
5. Path erosion / Land management
6. Littering



3.2.3 Muirshiel Country Park: Problems /Opportunities / Issues /Challenges

Problems / Opportunities / Issues and Challenges (POIC Appraisal) that impact on the future of Muirshiel Country Park have been identified through public and stakeholder consultation along with ongoing discussions with park staff and local organisations:

Muirshiel County Park			
<p>Problems</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitor Centre is an ageing facility requiring investment (refurbishment/ renewal) to maintain functionality. • Location is remote from accessible public transport and viable active travel routes and is therefore car dependent. • Access road is 5km single track road with limited capacity. • Single track road with locally steep gradients with no footway or cycleway provision. • Visitor Centre offers limited appeal as a destination providing a primary service centre for ranger services. E.g., a functional facility. • MCP purpose and future role within CMRP not clearly defined limiting clarity around future investment. • MCP is a staging point for local/wider walks/cycling but offers very limited facilities and tracks/routes require investment. • Facilities are 7.5km from Lochwinnoch and 9.0km from the railway station accessed by a single-track road. 	<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remote and rural estate environment with extensive opportunities to develop walks and trails and make path connections to local points of interest. • Develop scenic trails and high moor walking/active travel routes linked to circular local routes within MCP. • Develop cycle routes. • Develop trail hub. • Develop as a low intensity, nature/wild outdoors exploratory environment based on place/open moorland/heritage visitor experiences. • Protect and enhance the special environmental qualities of the site and create more inclusive access to nature and experiences. • Identify how to capitalise on this experience so close to Glasgow beside central Scotland's only 'wildland' • Demonstration/education site for green energy using peatland, hydro, solar etc. 	<p>Issues</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of MCP Visitor Centre role if stronger facilities developed at Castle Semple. • Café facilities opening seasonally requiring greater footfall to be sustainable. • Forest felling programme may involve disruption . due to working operations. • MCP offers local facilities/access but not significantly better/ differentiated from other country/rural locations and facilities • Need to address Climate Change and Net Zero commitments in promoting a site where access is primarily by car. 	<p>Challenges</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Securing partner and funding support to deliver investment to upgrade the existing facility. • Defining a purpose and need for a location that promotes and supports outdoor activity. • Access challenges for active travel (walking and cycling) given routes from other centres are road based with significant opportunity for road user conflict. • Lack of public transport options.



RSPB Boardwalk completed initial phases.

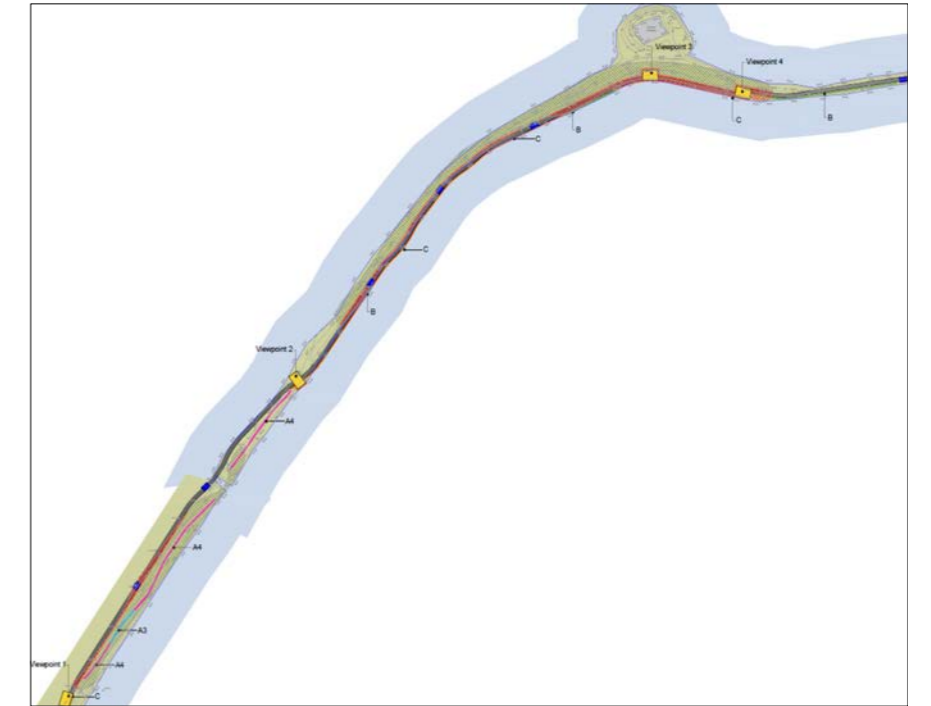
3.3 Loch Aird Boardwalk

RSPB / Renfrewshire Council / VisitScotland / National Lottery Heritage Fund.

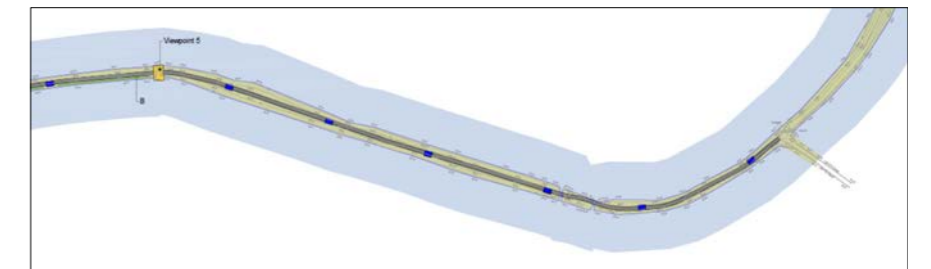
RSPB Lochwinnoch have recently completed the construction of a new 400m boardwalk with funding support from VisitScotland's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund and the National Lottery Heritage Fund, as part of the Garnock Connections landscape partnership scheme.

The new boardwalk closes 400m of the 870m gap in a circular route around the Aird Meadow Loch before ending at a viewpoint beside the Peel Tower. It provides level and safe access to a previously inaccessible part of the nature reserve, ensuring more people can enjoy immersing themselves in the local wildlife and the beautiful surroundings, without impacting on the natural biodiversity.

The new route will also help staff and volunteers manage the site for the benefit of visitors and wildlife, giving easy access to areas that were previously hard to reach and could be susceptible to anti-social behaviour. The final phase of the wider boardwalk development is in early development stages.



Boardwalk West Section - General Arrangement



Boardwalk North Section - General Arrangement



3.4 Conclusion to Developing the Country Park 'Gateway' Facilities

- Castle Sempole and Muirshiel Country Parks will continue to secure high visitor numbers and the level of demand for high quality, visitor serviced, and publicly accessible outdoor recreation destinations will continue to grow.
- Castle Sempole and Muirshiel Country Parks require investment and a clear strategy for developing their facilities, recreational, leisure capacity and educational and ranger services.
- Castle Sempole Country Park has the potential to offer the strongest 'gateway' to the Regional Park.
- The investment focus should be Castle Sempole Country Park which has the capacity to significant expand and develop as a major Sub-National/Regional recreational facility in a well-connected location with strong sustainable travel choices, active local club level organisations and the connections to the nearby RSPB Lochwinnoch.
- Renfrewshire's Country Parks could make a significant additional contribution to rural economic growth, building stronger links to rural and activity tourism and place-based regeneration of the connected villages of Lochwinnoch, Howwood and Kilbarchan.

Castle Sempole Country Park

- Gateway to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park
- All-family Facility

Castle Sempole Country Park
What are the best elements of the Country Park?

Country Park
What investment would you like to see in the facilities?

Country Park
How can the Country Park be improved?

Country Park
How important are Visitor Facilities and toilets?

Country Park
How best can we become more sustainable?

Priorities for Investment:
• Your thoughts and ideas for developing the country park.

Country Park
The Country Park is a great asset. How can it be improved and developed?

Creating a regional tourism destination

New Visitor Hub

- Education & Ecological
- All-family Facility

New Visitor Hub
Castle Sempole will need investment to maintain facilities for the future?

New Visitor Hub
Country Parks are for all. What additional facilities are required?

New Visitor Hub
In the Short-Term new toilet facilities are a priority?

New Visitor Hub
Creating a new Café / Education and Ecological Centre could add to the Parks appeal?

Visitor Hub
Parking space is limited so encouraging walking, cycling and public transport is important?

Priorities for Investment:
• How do we create a stronger destination whilst supporting regeneration of local centres & villages?

New Visitor Hub
A New Visitor Hub could add new facilities and allow more flexible use of the existing Centre?

Creating a regional tourism destination



04

Strategic Plan

4.1 Developing the Strategic Vision

The vision and aspiration for Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks is to build a regional tourism and visitor destination meeting a broad range of visitor needs that provides a key gateway into the wider Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park.

Castle Semple will create a multi-centred, multi-activity destination; combining activities operated and managed by Renfrewshire Council, supported by RSPB and where appropriate commercial and private operators (café-restaurant, bike hub, visitor services etc.) as well as providing the base for Countryside Ranger Services with a focus on visitor support, land and environmental management and access & well-being.

As a primary Regional Park gateway, the Castle Semple Country Park and Visitor Centre will focus on sustainable visitor use, meeting the diverse needs of its visitors in a manner that celebrates the special qualities of place and where all users can enjoy active leisure, contact with nature, participate in, or watch water-based activities and to share experiences in a quality outdoor environment.

Key Aims

Developing Castle Semple as a Visitor Gateway

- Develop Castle Semple Country Park as the primary 'gateway' to CMRP in Renfrewshire.
- Invest and develop a strong and diverse range of attractions and facilities based on a combination of active recreation and leisure including watersports, walks & trails, environmental exploration and education, health and well-being.
- Promote the Country Park a key destination hub and place of orientation for facilities both within CMRP and in the wider community i.e., local villages and other local attractions.

Creating a Multi-Centred Destination

- Country Park Regional Centre
 - New "Crannog style"¹ visitor service Hub supporting additional visitor facilities including Café/Restaurant Facility and local orientation and information.
 - Education and wildlife hides/facilities.
 - Semple Trail extension, boardwalks, and connections with RSPB.
 - Cycle hub and cycle trails linked to NCR7.
 - Ancillary visitor retail e.g. crafts, arts, natural growing.
 - Walks for well being
- Regional Watersports and Activity Centre
 - Watersports for All – Specialist Training and 'Can U Experience'
 - Community Clubs e.g., Sailing, Rowing, Windsurfing, SUP Clubs.
 - Independent water sports and leisure e.g., for Kayaks, Canoes and SUPs.
- Major Regional Innovative Play Facility
 - Innovative & Natural Play & Exploration
- RSPB Nature Reserve
 - Connecting walkways to RSPB Centre
 - Boardwalk / Hides / Interpretation

¹ A 'Crannog' is a traditional water-edge building.

Enabling additional facilities within the Country Park and/or Regional Park:

- Public transport and active travel connections.
- Strong village links and public realm connections.
- Regional trails, long-distance and circular cycleways.
- Other attractions and facilities (CMRP) e.g., Greenock Cut, Lunderston Bay, Lochshore Kilbirnie.
- Destination accommodation.
 - Visitor accommodation.
 - Camping centre.
 - Motorhome Facility.
- Local business growth.
 - Hospitality and accommodation.
 - Local retail / tourism related business.
 - Regional BMX / biking centre (e. g. within local area benefiting from cycle path network).
 - Bike & Cycle Hub.
 - Bike Pump/BMX.
 - Gravel Trax.
- Lochside fishing stations
- Events e.g.
 - Cycle Arts Festival
 - Watersports events (building on current programme).
 - Model boating / other
 - 'Your Castle Semple' - Environmental open day



4.2 Developing a Project Based Strategy

A medium to long term strategy or plan will be required to advance the development of the core facilities at Castle Semple Visitor Centre within the wider Castle Semple Country Park. An initial presentation to CMRP Liaison Group (Feb 2023) highlighted:

- Strong local member support for the concept of re-investment and development at Castle Semple Country Park.
- The need to positively plan for the future, develop a clear vision and set an ambition aligned with the Tourism Action Plan and development of the rural economy.
- A recognition that projects of this scale and nature will require external funding and in all likelihood be developed in phases based on successful funding awards.

Development of the concept should seek to establish a broad consensus of support across all stakeholders, identify the local priorities and needs and build through engagement a plan that will allow short, medium and longer-term priorities to be identified and advanced.

Funding streams and opportunities to bid for external funding often emerge with very tight timescales. Recent examples include Levelling up Funds, Growth Deals, Lottery Funding Programmes and funds available through the Tourism Infrastructure Funds via VisitScotland and the Scottish Government. A strategy is required to secure short-, medium- and long-term funding.

Discussion with officers during the development of the strategy focussed on the need for a review of existing funding arrangements at Castle Semple and the urgent need for investment in the built facilities that have been identified as approaching the end of their design life.

4.2.1 Addressing Investment Options

Investment & Development Strategy for Castle Semple Country Park (CP)		
Level of Intervention		
Option 1 Existing Capital Programme – ‘Make Do & Mend’	Option 2 New investment and upgrading of Existing Facilities	Option 3 Major Investment Programme Support by Initial Engagement Preferred Strategy
Existing Capital Programme	Programme for full facility upgrade	Programme for re-development
Bid for external support funding on a project by project basis	Bid for external support funding on a project by project basis	Major bid programme and/or co-funding with partners
CAPEX Investment requirement £0.5m/annum	CAPEX Investment requirement £21-£4 m/annum over 3-5years	CAPEX Investment requirement £15-£25m
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do minimum. • Seek to manage issues. • Address core deficiencies • Adopt measures to mitigate impacts. • Retain existing operations. • Promote other sites / locations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Focus on short term needs • Respond to issues as issues arise. • Consult with wider stakeholder groups. • Develop/trial short-term measures. • Improve on-site reactive management. • Build more car parking. • Retain existing operations. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create forward looking vision & strategy. • Address short/medium/longer term needs. • Identify ‘Early Actions’ to address pressures. • Prioritise investment and seek external funding / funding bid opportunities. • Seek partner/stakeholder support. • Develop Destination Development Plan / • Develop Visitor Management Plan. • Identify opportunities for sustainable outdoor recreation and tourism development. • Develop a place-based masterplan linked to area regeneration and place-making. • Engage with stakeholders/ communities. • Review operational Management.

Investment & Development Strategy Park Facilities		
Option 1 Existing CP Gateways	Option 2 Hierarchy of CP Gateways Support by Initial Engagement	Option 3 Single Destination Gateway Preferred Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote all CP Gateway sites. Invest at each of the visitor centres. Develop MCP & CSCP visitor centres. Invest in public transport connectivity. 	Develop a strategic hierarchy of CP 'Gateways'. Aligned with environmental capacity. Define hierarchy linked to investment plan. Inclusive, barrier free, family focussed. Primary CP Gateway destinations to offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capacity for high level visitor use. Multiple attraction/facility cluster. Public transport connectivity. Connections to NCR and active travel network. Toilets / changing Commercial hospitality / support services Parking + EV charging Strong town / village links Ranger / educational / training services Play areas / facilities. Secondary CP Gateway destinations to offer: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ranger services Toilets / changing 	Review and define new Country Park Strategy. Focus facilities within single 'Destination'. Destination supports regional tourism. Develop as a multi-partnered investment. Public / Private /Third Sector operators Destination development to include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Commercial /public service facilities Commercial leisure/hospitality Clubs and commercial leisure Third Sector Multiple attractions / facilities Accommodation (chalet) Hospitality (café/restaurant) Public transport connectivity Public sector facilities focussed on ranger services / path networks / environmental management.

4.2.1 Developing a Masterplan

The Castle Semple Country Park Strategic Plan is being advanced as a 'Visioning Project' to assess levels of strategic support within Renfrewshire Council to commit to a fully transformational project for Castle Semple Country Park as the 'gateway- centrepiece' to the Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park in Renfrewshire.

The preferred strategy for Castle Semple Country Park is to develop a major investment programme (Option 3 - see above) to substantially upgrade and expand the facilities as a core element of Renfrewshire's Tourism Action Plan. The investment would involve:

- Development of a detailed Masterplan
- Preparation of a costed Investment Plan and Business Case
- Commitment to a phased Investment Programme
- Investment of £15-£25 million over a 5-15 year period (dependent on funding attained)

A decision to re-invest in Castle Semple would reflect similar commitments by public authorities in countryside assets and country parks. Benchmark examples of masterplanned proposals for countryside recreation project investment in Scotland include:

- Falkirk Helix (Falkirk Council/Living Landmark Programme) £40m
- Strathclyde Park (North Lanarkshire Council) £20m
- Irvine Great Harbour (North Ayrshire Council / AGD) £14m
- Dams to Darnley (East Renfrewshire Council) £20m
- Seven Lochs (Glasgow City & North Lanarkshire Councils) £16m
- Pollok Country Park Stables & Courtyard (Glasgow city/LUF) £13m

Developing the project will require wider engagement and the development of a masterplan with clear project strategy based around the delivery of national, regional and local outcomes supported by a clear Business Case and a promotion and marketing strategy. Importantly the masterplan will need to align with the core policy and planning strategies, including:

- Renfrewshire's Tourism Action Plan
- Renfrewshire's Economic Development Strategy
- Local Development Plan
- Place Shaping Strategy & Local Place Plans
- Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (i.e., Section 5 of this Plan)

The masterplan will need to complete a detailed user need, space, facilities and condition review of the core assets of the Country Park including detail of ownerships, leases, designations etc. Proposals have been advanced for extensions and redevelopment of buildings associated with both the Castle Semple Visitor Centre (Simpson Brown, 2020) and Rowing Club.

The masterplan should seek to develop a detailed understanding of current and future needs based on the capacity of the Castle Semple Visitor Centre, Castle Semple Loch and existing infrastructure.

The Castle Semple Visitor Centre site is constrained, and options should be explored around developing a 'multi-centred visitor park campus' model that provides facilities within a series of specialist hubs connected by active travel walkways and boardwalks that build on the special; qualities of place and collectively create a strong integrated visitor destination.

An initial exploration of ideas has focussed on the existing facilities and visitor centre site. The site is constrained in scale (long narrow site defined by former railway (NCR7) and Castle Semple Loch) and with relatively poor road access. The opportunity within a multi-centred visitor destination should seek to develop:

- The existing watersports visitor centre to better accommodate its activity role alongside the existing local clubs and provide for independent day visitors looking to participate in watersports. This may mean reorganisation of space to meet educational, changing and group activities (including additional provision of toilets).
- A new visitor centre – potentially on the model of a ‘Crannog’ providing visitor hospitality (café, retail, restaurant, orientation and viewpoints) at the south-west corner of Castle Semple Loch (closer to the Lochwinnoch Public Park). This would be connected by paths and/or boardwalk to Lochwinnoch Public Park, the Watersports Visitor Centre, the RSPB Centre and include for new public car parking on Lochlip Road. Boardwalk connections to Loch Aird circular walkway (RSPB) will extend the opportunity for contact with nature and connect facilities across the Castle Semple Country Park. The review should also consider the future role and contribution of the Lochwinnoch Community Annexe Building and the further development of community space.
- A high-quality new Play Facility that builds on the existing facility within Lochwinnoch Public Park offering innovative exploratory play potentially themed around wildlife, birds and/or local ecology supporting the wider Country Park offer as a full-day visitor destination.

- A network of paths / boardwalk and walkways that build on the Semple Trail initiative creating opportunities to offer closer contact with nature, water-margins and wetland ecology and build on the RSPB Boardwalk with a series of circular exploratory routes connecting all visitor destinations.
- Provision of a new arrival, access, and parking close to the A760 / Lochlip Road with new visitor parking linked to path/cycle network. The additional parking will take pressure off the existing parking and create the main arrival point with associated visitor facility linked to the New Visitor Centre / Crannog closer to the Lochwinnoch Station supporting sustainable travel choices.
- Countryside Ranger Services investment and Voluntary Group support that provides ranger voluntary sector support services (digital / interactive interpretation, info-point / QR Codes or App, educational walks, summer season guided walks and access to hides) alongside site environmental management and measures to support environmental designations and protection and enhancement of biodiversity and nature restoration.

The masterplan should also ensure it is closely aligned to Renfrewshire’s Regeneration and Place-Shaping Strategy and support ‘Just Transition’ to Net Zero and Climate Change:

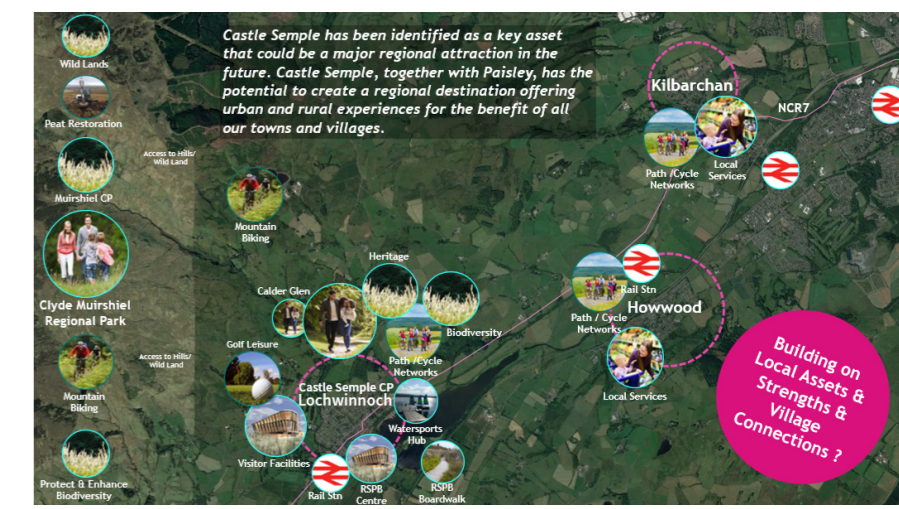
- The Renfrewshire Local Development Plan supports investment which creates strong communities and attractive places within Renfrewshire and is closely aligned to a place-making and place-shaping programme linked to key sector growth. The focus is on regeneration and enhancing existing places.
- Rural and village regeneration (predominantly Lochwinnoch, Howwood and Kilbarchan – see plan) will seek to promote multi-use activities and functionality within local village centres that can help to sustain local business activity and services. These settlements are serviced by the Paisley-Ayr rail line with stations at Lochwinnoch and Howwood and provide a range of hospitality and service support for recreation and outdoor leisure, and tourism.
- Destination development can support Renfrewshire’s rural settlements and strengthen local village services, 20-minute neighbourhoods, and small business. Enterprise activity can be developed around planning for sustainable tourism which supports and promotes:
 - Stronger public transport services and connections and the promotion of public transport to reduce car dependency.
 - Increase of local spending (goods and services) within centres and associated visitor facilities creating local employment and economic activity.
 - Developing strong connections and active travel routes between settlements and points of visitor arrival, gateways, facilities, national cycle routes, public transport interchanges and destinations.
 - Protecting environmental assets and managing destinations to enhance environmental capacity and biodiversity.



05 Strategic Infrastructure Plan

5.1 Programme of Investment & Development
 Renfrewshire Council are keen for the Strategic Tourism Infrastructure Development Plan (STIDP) for Castle Semple and Muirshiel Country Parks to create a clear framework for visitor infrastructure development. The STIDP will help to support future application(s) to the Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) operated by Visitscotland.

This Plan (STIDP) seeks to address short term needs and the priorities associated with visitor pressures on the current facilities and resources. The plan also aligns with the ambitions to develop outdoor recreation, environment education and sports and leisure facilities within the Country Parks to deliver on the Council's commitments to community health and well-being, tourism, and further development of the rural economy in line with the adopted Development Plan policies.



5.2 Developing a Phased Investment Plan

- **Short Term Needs – seeking funding support from RTIF**
Addressing the challenges of current visitor pressures
Renfrewshire Council recognise the need for short -term investment to address unsustainable visitor pressures at Castle Semple. Immediate short-term actions are relating to:
 - visitor management.
 - addressing negative impacts on the visitor experience.
 - addressing capacity of the basic tourism infrastructure (toilets/ paths/safe movement).
 - promoting easier access by sustainable travel modes and support for active travel.
- **Medium Term Future**
Building the infrastructure for Castle Semple gateway
Renfrewshire Council have been working to develop early 'visioning and concept work' advanced by the Regeneration and Place Team. Ideas and concepts formed part of the Next Stage Community & Stakeholder Engagement which took place late February 2023. Medium term actions to develop:
 - A detailed masterplan for the future development of Castle Semple Country Park.
 - Business case and submissions to support external funding.
 - Implementation of initial phases of investment.

- **Longer Term Future**
Develop the destination and extend place-making
Destination development will allow wider partnership delivery; working closely with a range of tourism operators / providers with the view of extending the half-day / day visitor activity at Castle Semple Country Park to longer-term breaks with more extensive co-located offers (additional attractions, facilities and activities); local accommodation (hotels, chalets, Airbnb, Rural B&B); extending the visitor catchment; developing links to Renfrewshire's food and drink sectors; regional and local events and experiences.

5.3 Consultation & Engagement

The STIDP has involved a joint working group engaging external stakeholders along with Council services (including the Place and Regeneration, Park and Ranger services and Environment and Infrastructure teams). Discussion and collaboration have centred on the needs of Castle Semple in terms of visitors, operational management, measures to support net zero and the promotion of active and sustainable travel choices.

Renfrewshire Council are very aware that the concept needs to engage and build support across a diverse range of stakeholders. Early indications have confirmed support for short term project initiatives (RTIF applications) and outlined medium term ideas for further development of Castle Semple as a primary gateway facility for the Regional Park.

Consultation Events & Stakeholder Group Presentations

The broad concepts and draft proposals have been subject to consultation with stakeholder groups through presentations and events. These have included:

- Clyde Muirshiel Liaison Group. Member and cross departmental officer group with responsibility for coordination of Renfrewshire Council's management of CMRP within Renfrewshire.
- The Villages Local Partnership is a formally constituted group of seven local Community Councils (Lochwinnoch, Howwood, Kilbarchan, Brookfield, Bridge of Weir, Elderslie, Houston). The group meets periodically to coordinate activity, share knowledge around new initiatives and programmes and coordinate spending supported through grant funding from Renfrewshire Council. Castle Semple proposals were presented to this group.
- Stakeholder & Public Consultation Event hosted at the Castle Semple Visitor Centre 23rd February 2023 attended by 60-80 stakeholders, residents and park users. Consultees completed questionnaires and indicated priorities / preferences at the event and on-line.



Consultation On-line with Supporting Questionnaire Survey

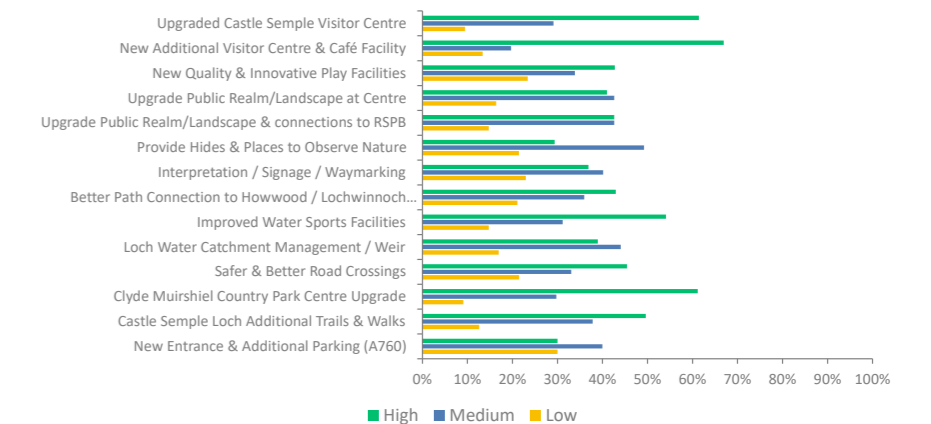
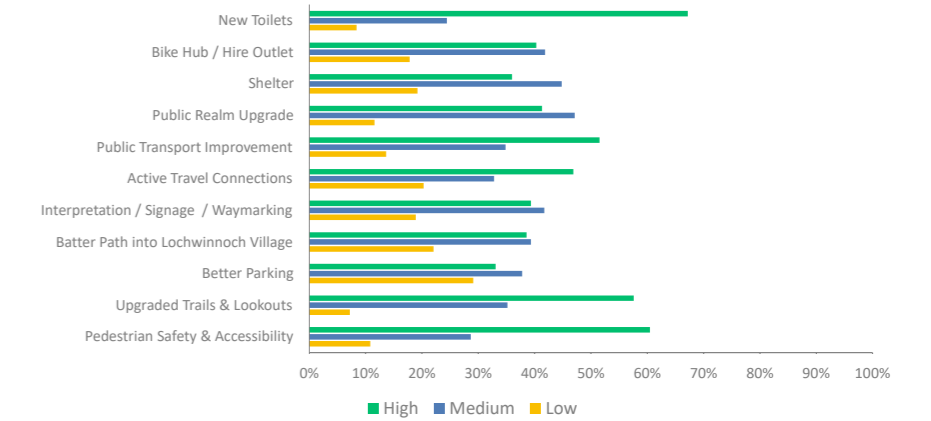
- Virtual Engagement (On-line Consultation - available on-line on computers, digital devices and phones) provides a virtual 'Consultation Room' duplicating presentation materials used for other events but undertaken to make the consultation more inclusive and seek responses and feedback from individuals and groups unable to attend events.
- The on-line consultation has been viewed 614 times with over 136 questionnaires completed on-line. On-line consultation has proved to be very successful in extending engagement and inviting comment from within community organisations, clubs and wider user groups and the general public.
- The On-line Questionnaire provided both qualitative and quantitative feedback through a standard suite of questions around project priorities, user needs and views on the adequacy or otherwise of the existing facilities. The main priority projects supported were:

High Priority Short-Term Projects

1.	New Toilets	67.18%
2.	Pedestrian Safety & Accessibility	60.47%
3.	Upgraded Trails & lookouts	57.6%

High Priority Medium / Longer Term Projects

1.	New Additional Visitor Centre & Café Facility	66.93%
2.	Upgraded Castle Semple Visitor Centre	61.42%
3.	Muirshiel Country Park Centre Upgrade	61.16%





5.4 Delivering a Sustainable Short-Term Future Upgrading facilities to meet current demands at Castle Semple Visitor Centre

Castle Semple is an aging facility developed in the 1980's to meet needs that have changed over the past 40 years and it now requires to be re-positioned to meet the needs of the 21st century. Promoting independent visitor uses, outdoor leisure and recreational activity, exploration and contact with the natural environment (with ready access based on sustainable travel choices) are all areas to be advanced.

The short-term focus of the work at Castle Semple has been to address challenges of managing visitor numbers and expectations at a 'gateway site' that has witnessed a 24% (2018-2019) increase in visitor numbers on a site with ageing infrastructure and limited capacity. Pressures arising through increased visitor numbers have been further exacerbated by the covid-19 pandemic.

Castle Semple Country Park is a large site with a good capacity for visitor dispersal and exploration. Adjacent facilities include the neighbouring RSPB Lochwinnoch reserve. Short term needs are focussed on creating additional capacity to better meet the needs of the current visitor numbers and user groups.

"hunger for outdoor activities and physical adventures that allow people to reconnect with nature, help them stay fit, and provide them with a sense of freedom"

VisitScotland Insights

Issues arising during covid / post-covid at Castle Semple Country Park (impacting on the visitor experience, access and capacity) include:

- Level of on-site parking with capacity unable to address demand during peak periods weekends for most of the summer season compounded by visitor's reluctance to make use of public transport.
- Visitor management and pedestrian / cyclist safety - created through uncontrolled, irresponsible and illegal parking, exacerbated by a lack of definition of parking areas and a lack of enforcement.
- Inadequate signage and waymarking to encourage/support stronger visitor dispersal at primary arrival points (i.e., lack of dispersal and not capitalising on existing infrastructure e.g., paths, lookoوترies and viewpoints).
- Inadequate visitor destination elements which would support greater intensity of use e.g., seating, shelter for watersports, changing facilities, improved food and beverage offer, litter- recycling bins, local paths connections and appropriate information.
- Lack of toilet provision (other than in the main visitor centre building which has limited opening hours).
- Lack of signage and legible connections to encourage sustainable travel choices e.g., public transport, rail, bus, and active travel (to reduce pressure on car parks).
- Poor access and mobility issues at the Lochwinnoch train station for visitors with access needs e.g., family groups with prams, cyclists' people with disabilities etc.
- Inadequate cycle route information and cycle parking (and potentially charging points) to offer a range of circular and connected leisure and exploratory routes to the NCR7 and NCR75.

A Steering Group Workshop and a Stakeholder Consultation Event has identified a long list of improvements that would strengthen sustainable visitor activity and support the long-term ambitions for Castle Semple Country Park.

The review of short-term needs identified the scope of action, order of cost and priority. The initial assessment indicated that immediate short-term needs would require an investment of between £0.9 and £1.2m to meet site/visitor requirements for 2024 – 2026. Concurrently, Renfrewshire Council will look to advance through a masterplan process the medium-term investment plans.

Renfrewshire Council

Vision: Renfrewshire Outdoor Leisure Destination

Developing the Key Ideas & Concepts
Making Castle Semple a 'Special Place'

Ideas are at an 'early stage of thinking' and are looking to identify the areas of opportunity that can inform a future vision. Key initial ideas:

Castle Semple Country Park

- Create a Hub supporting the Regional Park with diverse attractions and trails
- Develop a new Visitor Centre creating a series of 'hubs' and activity centres
- Extend and improve the trails and walkway/seating areas

Regional Watersports Facility

- Build on and extend Castle Semple as a Regional Centre for Watersports for All
- Improve water access and shoreside facilities

Loch & Nature Reserve

- Link up with RSPB and create a Circular Semple Loch Walk / Boardwalk
- Develop a network of trails, viewpoints and bird / wildlife hides

New Visitor Hub

- Create a Hub for visitors with facilities (café / toilets/ educational space)
- Improve pedestrian & cycle access, connections to station and parking
- Provide a regional high quality adventure / innovative play facility



Early engagement is looking to start a conversation about future investment.

Ideas to improve place quality

Creating a regional tourism destination

Investment planning for Castle Semple
Plan includes Short / Medium / Longer Term Elements

Castle Semple needs investment. Delivering a vision for larger scale projects will take time and will require external funding. In the Short-Term, investment is required to maintain the facilities and enhance their capacity. The investment plan for Castle Semple therefore includes the following elements:

Short Term Programme (1-2 Years)

- Secure funding for investment in 2023 / 2024 from RTIF/Council
- Funding Bid to Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) operated by VisitScotland
- Invest in new toilets/ better path connections / waymarking- eligible items under RTIF

Medium-Longer Term Programme (3-10 Years)

- Secure funding for investment in 2025/ 2028 from National Grant Award (s)
- Bid to Scottish & UK National Programmes
- Regeneration / place-making / tourism funding to support Regional Tourism Strategy

Castle Semple Country Park is a major asset. Many of the facilities are 20-30 years old and require re-investment. The park has opportunity to develop as a 'gateway' to Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and create a active sport & recreational hub taking advantage of its sustainable travel connections.



Investing in facilities to create a quality experience for all.

Creating a regional tourism destination

5.5 Priority Action Plan

The priorities within the Short -Term needs focussed strongly on access, safe mobility and connections to sustainable travel choices as well as the provision of adequate toilets on the site. Three 'high' priority projects were identified:

Priority 1: New Toilet Facilities

Demolish the no longer fit for purpose toilet block. Provide a new facility on the existing site. Design to improve accessibility and provide a small changing area for independent watersports users and/or bike hire hub plus additional cycle parking. The Council would likely seek a design grant (RTIF) for development of the toilet facility.

Priority 2 Railway Bridge Safe Movement & Connections

Address pedestrian, cycle, and vehicular conflicts at the railway bridge (Church St/Lochlip Road) with new junction markings (white lining/hazard marking/cycle markings to road and cycleway plus sightline improvements.

Priority 3 Public Transport Connections - (CS-Lochwinnoch Stn.)

Improve legibility ease of connections and provide appropriate signage for Lochwinnoch Rail Station, RSPB, and Castle Semple with information on including, for example, active travel trails, Castle Semple Loch, Barr Loch and CMRP. Amend/Improve existing crossing, white road markings and provision of safe crossing for pedestrians and cyclists.

5.6 Delivering a Sustainable Short-Term Future Upgrading facilities to meet current demands at Muirshiel Visitor Centre

Muirshiel Visitor Centre is an aging facility developed in the 1980's and essentially providing a hybrid facility as a ranger services building and visitor centre. The centre helps to promote independent visitor uses, outdoor leisure, recreational activity, exploration and contact with the natural environment as well as access to the wilder areas of CMRP.

The short-term focus of the work at Muirshiel Visitor Centre needs to support existing facilities and ensure these are fit for purpose as well as encouraging dispersal of visitors across the Regional Park from the Castle Semple Primary Gateway.

The site assessment, discussion and observations along with recorded comments on site facilities produced a series of issues and concerns that need to be addressed. The main issues are:

- Building works to improve energy efficiency of the building and complete roof/fabric repairs to ensure building is fully wind/watertight and fit for use. Currently the building suffers from significant water ingress.
- Inadequate signage and waymarking of accessible hill walks, and routes.
- Amenity enhancement to the immediate Visitor Site.
- Path surfaces and path connections /gates

Ref	Draft Project	Priority	Order of Cost	RC and Others	RTIF	Scope/Description
01	Demolish Toilet Block Provide New Toilets	High	£0.2-£0.30m	£55k	£220k	Demolish condemned Toilet Block. Provide new facility for all users. Design to improve accessibility and small changing and/or shower area for independent watersports users plus additional Bike Hire Hub / Flexible Outlet Space to support bike hire / cycle activity and NCR7.
02	Improvements External Public Realm	High	£0.15-£0.2m	£30k	£120k	Place and visitor infrastructure public realm improvements to external environment to CS Centre to improve capacity, accessibility and circulation and improve amenity and DDA inclusive access/mobility. Potentially to include boardwalk/pontoon to waterfrontage.
06	Develop Trails & Boardwalk Initiatives	High	£0.25-£0.35m	£60k	£240k	Strengthen the 'trails initiative' with an innovative educational trail/walkway and viewing hubs connecting Castle Semple more legibly to other attractions & sister facilities (Parkhill Wood /RSPB). Compliments and links RSPB Boardwalk.
07	Public Transport Access (CS-Lochwinnoch Stn.)	High	£0.1m	£20k	£80k	Improve legibility ease of connections and provide signage Lochwinnoch Rail Station/ RSPB/Castle Semple with signage and information on Active Travel trails / Castle Semple Loch and CMRP. White lining and improve safe crossing for ped/cyclists.
09	Active Travel Connections	High	£0.1-0.2m	£20	£80k	Improve grading and connections to NCR7 and Active Travel Routes / Trails to make dispersal of visitors and connections easier. Connections to RSPB Boardwalk and connections to Lochwinnoch /Howwood rail stations.
10	Way-Marking from Visitor Arrival Points	High	£0.1-0.2m	£20k	£80k	Upgrade the family of way-marking signs to develop clearer messaging connecting Castle Semple with Lochwinnoch/ Howwood/Kilbarchan and inviting dispersal of visitors supporting peak capacity/facilitating further exploration of local place assets.
12	Railway Bridge (Ped/Cycle) Safe Movement/Capacity	High	£0.05m	£10k	£40k	Address pedestrian/ cycle and vehicular conflicts at the Railway Bridge (Church St/Lochlip Road) with new junction markings (white lining/hazard marking/cycle markings to road & cycleway plus sightline improvements
15	Muirshiel Visitor Centre	High	£0.1-£0.2m	£30k	£120k	Provision of play within site. Small play facility to meet needs of children/ younger audiences providing barrier free/inclusive play and a short family oriented short circular walk from Visitor Centre.
Totals				£245k	£980k	
Summary Total				£245k	£980k	Short Term Priority Investment £1,075,000 over 2 years
% Contributions				20%	80%	
TOTAL Phase 1 Investment						£1,225,000

Short Term Project Priorities addressing acute visitor pressures within Castle Semple Country Park / Muirshiel Country Park

5.7 RTIF Application – Short-term Early Action Priorities

The priority items are all considered eligible items under the VisitScotland Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund (RTIF) that aims to support collaborative projects with a focus on improving rural visitor experience that are facing pressure on their infrastructure and communities because of visitor numbers and pressure points.

5.8 Medium Term Future Building the infrastructure for Castle Semple Gateway

Renfrewshire Council has medium and longer-term ambitions for Castle Semple Country Park.

Through this STIDP, the Council has sought to identify funding (RTIF) for the short term programme (see short term priorities in table above). The stakeholder engagement activity undertaken to prepare the STIDP was also used as a platform to develop a medium/longer term a Project Prospectus to define a development and investment programme for the period 2025-2035.

As previously noted, Castle Semple Country Park is identified within the emerging Regional Tourism Strategy and as a regionally important community and recreational asset. It is considered likely that Castle Semple will emerge as a major programme initiative to support regional tourism growth, rural diversification and village place-making with strong tourism, economic and community outcomes.

The engagement has identified strong support for further development of the Country Park, with stakeholders looking to build on the key strengths of the existing visitor centre and recreational, educational and environmental assets. Stakeholder feedback has supported concept ideas for re-investment in facilities and the development concept of Castle Semple as a Regional Park Gateway.



Developing a Project Prospectus

In developing a Project Prospectus for Castle Semple Country Park, the Council will be seeking to develop initial concept ideas that, subject to further review and approvals, could set a brief for a full masterplanning and business case exercise for the Country Park 2025-2035.

Development proposals would be subject to external support funding with an anticipation Castle Semple could be a project for future national funding submissions.

Initial ideas informally reviewed through the consultation process are still at concept stage, however, the early ideas suggested with evidence of support are:

- Promoting a multi-centred Country Park.
- Developing active recreation and watersports within the visitor centre.
- Creating a new visitor facility.
- Developing an innovative natural play facility.
- Extending the network of paths and trails.
- Strengthening the links to local village(s).
- Promoting active travel and improved connections with sustainable travel choices.
- Creation of a new arrival point & parking.
- Developing the sites environmental capacity and biodiversity.
- Investment in Countryside Ranger Services and Educational Services

Castle Semple Country Park is a location with huge potential and capacity to contribute to national outcomes of sustainable, liveable and productive places. It can act as a driver for regional tourism and support wider programmes for health and well-being, placemaking and community wealth building. Building a broad consensus of support and developing the Castle Semple Country Park Masterplan will ensure the concept of the Regional Park and Country Parks as outlined in the 1970's remains a valid and meaningful part of our 21st Century ambitions for future generations.



06

Project Development & Next Steps

6.1 Project Development & Next Steps

Renfrewshire Council and the Park Ranger Service are developing the short-term project proposals into Concept Design (RIBA Stage 1-2). Each of the projects will be advanced through the standard RIBA Design stages (Stages 2-6) proposals (where relevant) to ensure appropriate design and extent of consents and approvals.

Renfrewshire Council are proposing to make a formal submission requesting RTIF support funding based on the short-term priority projects set out in Section 5.6.

A number of projects are being advanced with initial feasibility level assessments by Renfrewshire Council. These include (traffic and transport, roads safety, on-site surveys etc.) works (e.g., road markings, safety surfaces and controlled crossings).

A number of the RTIF projects would be classed as 'Permitted Development' (subject to confirmation from Planning Services) and require only internal approvals following design stage approvals. Consultation and engagement including the on-line engagement has confirmed the project priorities with stakeholders with all project priorities supported through engagement.



6.2 Identification Programme of Short Term Investment

Project	Capital Spend	Design Stages 2-3	Design Stages 4-5	Completion
Toilet Facility	£275k	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q2 2024
Public Realm	£150k	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q2 2024
Trails & Boardwalk Initiatives	£300k	Q3 2023	Q1 2024	Q4 2024
Public Transport Connections	£100k	Q3 2022	Q4 2023	Q3 2024
Active Travel Connections	£100k	Q3 2023	Q3 2023	Q2 2024
Waymarking	£100k	Q3 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024
Railway Bridge Safety	£50k	TBC	TBC	Q3 2023
Clyde Muirshiel Visitor Centre	£150k	Q3 2023	Q1 2024	Q4 2024
Total	£1225k			

Investment and project delivery milestones subject to approvals and RTIF funding.

Project	Q2 2023	Q3 2023	Q4 2023	Q1 2024	Q2 2024	Q3 2024	Q4 2024
Toilet Facility							
Public Realm							
Trails Initiative							
Public Transport Connections							
Active Travel Connections							
Waymarking							
Railway Bridge Safety							
Clyde Muirshiel Visitor Centre							
Total							

Indicative project programme subject to design development, approvals and RTIF funding.

6.3 Project Development Priority Projects

Renfrewshire Council have commissioned the development of the Castle Semple Prospectus that will seek to develop a vision and concept for Castle Semple Country Park and set a brief for masterplanning. The study is being advanced by consultants involved in a number of major park and greenspace projects (National Park Plans, HELIX, Country Parks, Heritage Parks) funded through Lottery and partnership-based funding.

6.4 Castle Semple – Start of a Journey

The development of this STIDP has been the catalyst for re-thinking the role and value of both the Regional Park and Country Parks and perhaps from a Renfrewshire Council perspective; encouraging more ambitious thinking about the needs for the future. This represents the start of a journey to explore and develop concept ideas for what would recreate and rebuild a strong, vibrant and sustainable Country Park for the future.

National policy and national outcomes now give full recognition of the need to protect, develop and enhance environmental assets and build a productive, healthier well-being economy for all.

Castle Semple Country Park has the potential to play a core role in delivering on national, regional and local outcomes. Engagement and concept development should seek to advance through a staged process. The intention should be to ensure a strong alignment of the Masterplan with the Regional Tourism Strategy with both fully supported and advanced alongside stakeholder engagement and a clear and robust Business Case to support external funding.

Appendices

Appendix 1	Summary Project Sheets Illustrating Draft RTIF Short List Projects.
Appendix 2	Table summarising potential Projects: Long List
Appendix 3	Table summarising potential Projects: Short List Projects
Appendix 4	Summary of Consultation & Engagement Feedback
Appendix 5	Tabulated Policy Summary

Appendix 1 - Summary Project Sheets Illustrating Draft RTIF Short List Projects.

Demolish & Renew Toilet & Hub Building

Project:

The existing toilet block building was condemned in 2019. The project provides a replacement facility incorporating a flexible space, shelter and seating. The flexi-space will provide either changing for independent watersports users or allow the re-establishment of a seasonal cycle hire facility on site.

Programme / Priority:

Early Action. High priority project meeting key user needs on site and with extended access and provision for DDA needs.

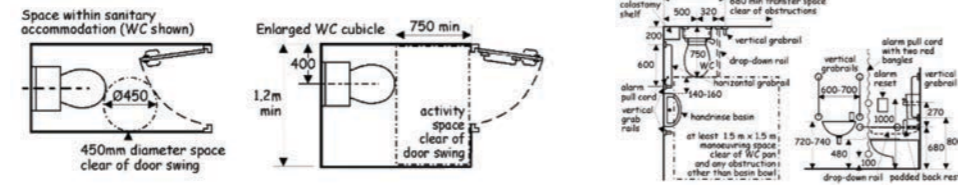
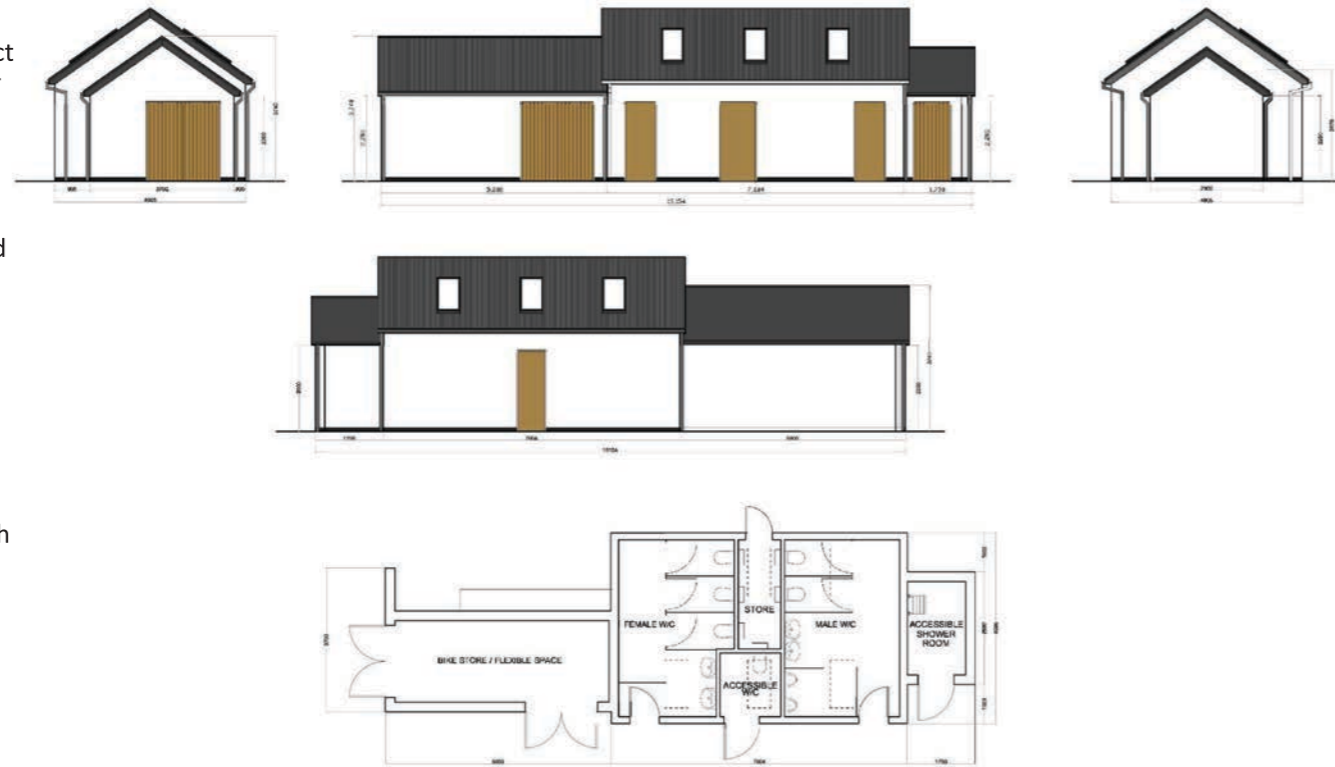
Design:

Design based on established models within National/Country Parks based on a simple timber frame building with solid timber secure sliding doors with rendered blockwork and slate tiled roof incorporating shelters in roof overhangs. Ref: General Requirements and Standards (Scotland) Regulations / BS 6465-1:

45-50 m2 GFA compliant with Document-M of Building Regulation with standard toilet fittings on tiles floor/wall. Upgraded services / & ground slab.

Approvals & Consents:

Replacement of existing facility. Planning Consent required. Detail reviewed Planning Officers detail application. No new utility connections. Re-uses all existing drainage connections.



Improvements to Public Realm/ Access

Project:

Small public realm and access improvements particularly to circulation will address higher intensity use and minimise pedestrian/cycle/vehicular conflicts in the area of the Visitor Centre.

Early Action. High priority project to address higher levels of use and to prioritise Disabled / Active Travel / Public Transport users over car users.

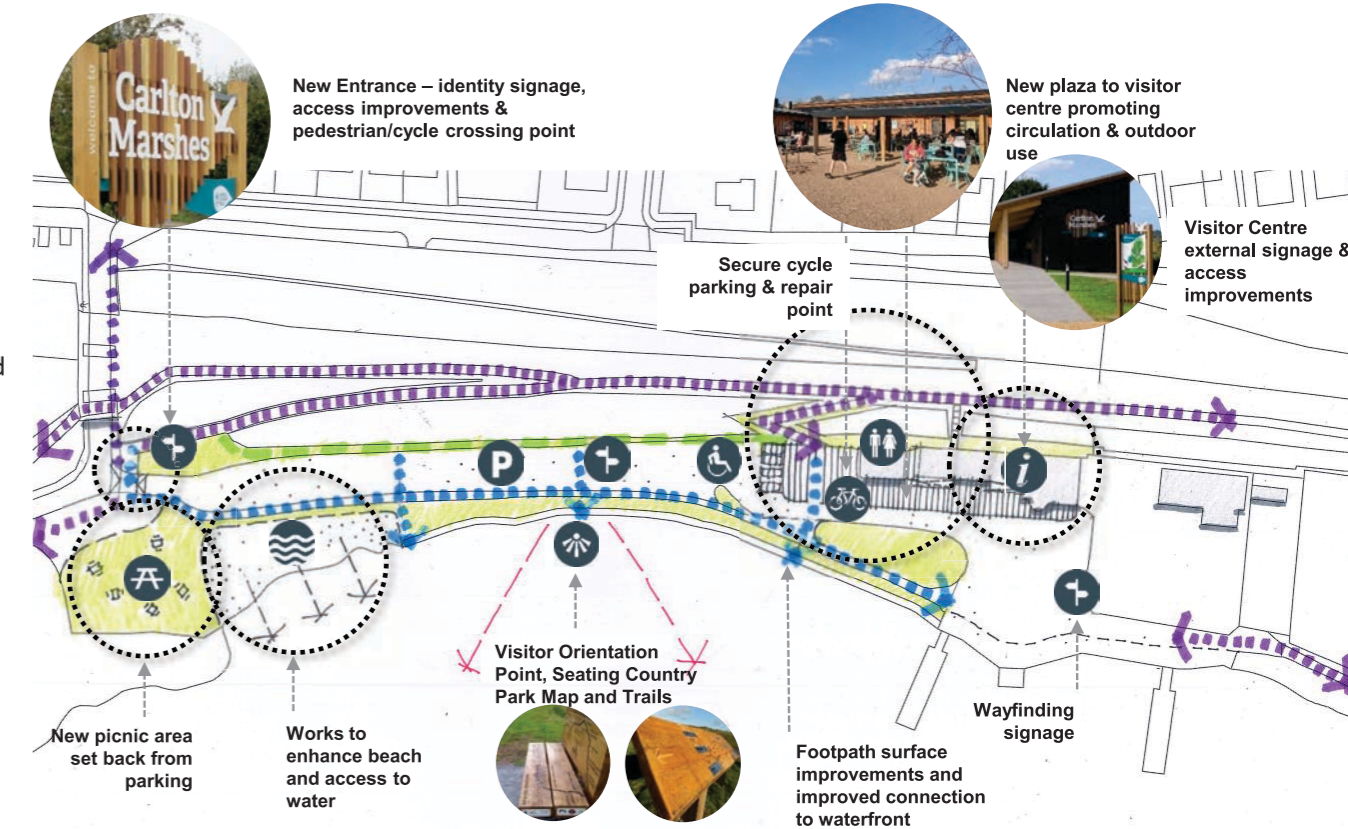
Design:

Simple external design improvements focussed on functionality and creating car-free space for groups and visitors in the area of the centre / toilet facility / NCR arrival point. Re-organisation of cycle parking and soft landscape elements.

Upgrading to create a more appealing, functionally more usable and more welcoming sense of space that encourages outdoor use and activity.

Approvals & Consents:

Majority of the works involve upgrading work undertaken under Permitted Development (PD) with detail to be agreed with RC Planning/Estates and Ranger Services. Re-uses all existing drainage connections.



			RTIF	
Priority	Engagement	Consents		
High Priority	Supported	PD	Eligible	12 Month Deliverable

Develop Trails Initiative (CS Trail)

Castle Semple RTIF

Project:

Strengthen the 'trails initiative' with an innovative educational trail/walkway and viewing hubs connecting Castle Semple more strongly/legibly to the connecting other attractions & sister facilities (Parkhill Wood /RSPB). Introduce shorter circular trails that compliment and link the RSPB Boardwalk and connections towards Rail Station improving safe access to Lochwinnoch Village Centre.

Programme / Priority:

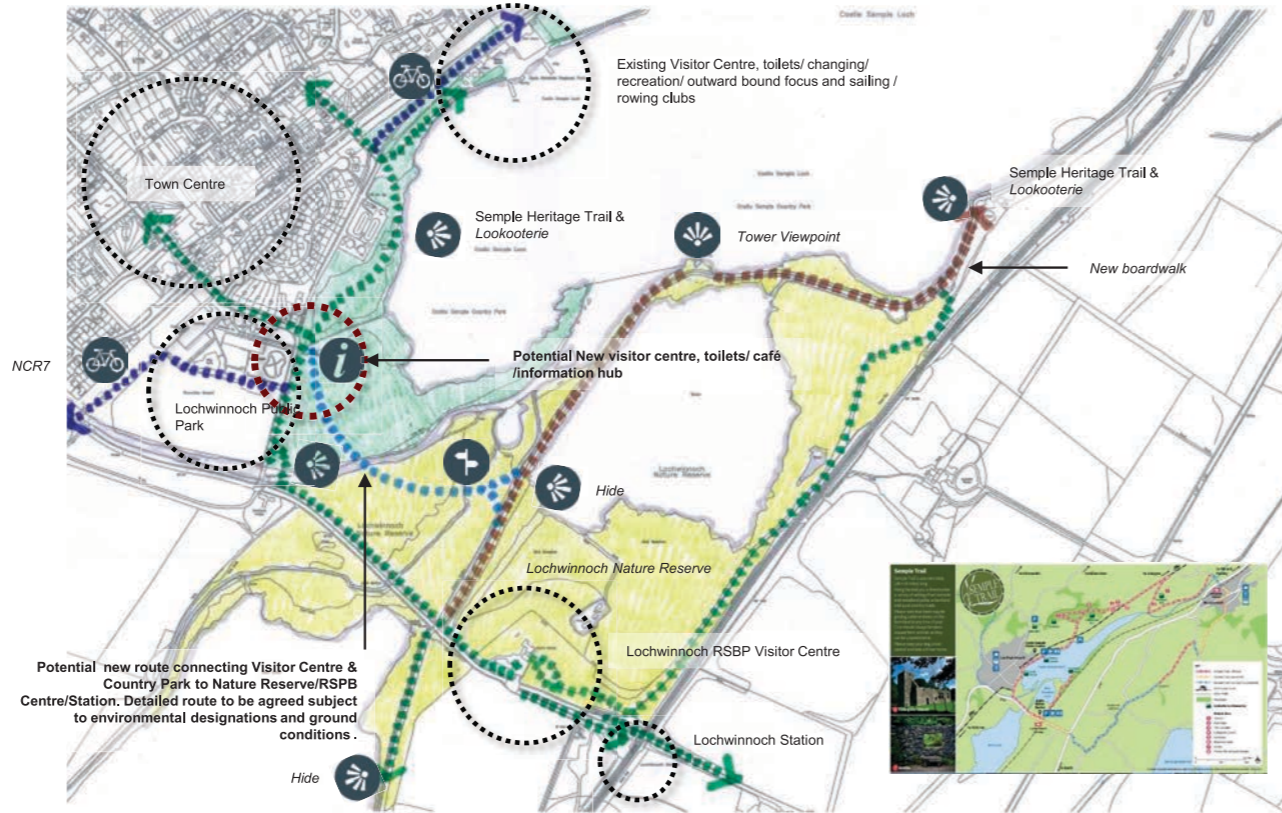
Early Action. High priority project meeting key user needs on site And supporting visitor dispersal. Creates extended access and improved provision for DDA / Public Transport users.

Design:

Provision of Orientation Signage within the Visitor Centre public realm and better connections to the CS Trails including route connecting to RSPB and final phase of their boardwalk. Standard sealed path construction providing access for all user groups.

Approvals & Consents:

Permitted Development (PD) with detail to be agreed with RC Planning/Ranger Service/NatureScot. Local deck/ bridge structures to protect minor watercourses.



			RTIF	
High Priority	Supported	Agree Routing NatureScot	Eligible	12 Month Deliverable

Public Transport Access (Rail Station)

Castle Semple RTIF

Project:

The project seeks to improve access and connections at Lochwinnoch Rail Station for pedestrians and cyclists with the provision of a Toucan Crossing on the A760 at the Railway Station steps (connecting to southbound platform) and improvements to signage and path connection to Castle Semple/RSPB on the A760.

Programme / Priority:

Early Action. High priority project to improve public transport connectivity and support use of sustainable travel and make Castle Semple Country Park friendly for active travel/ PT users.

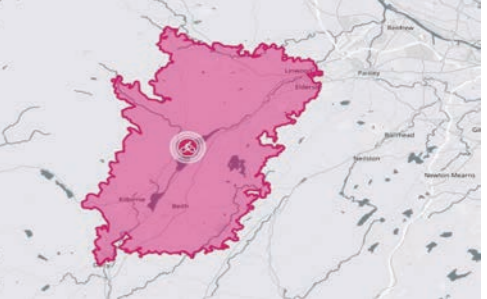
Design:

New Toucan Crossing. Upgrading of path to Station (vegetation trimming). Continuous pavement at RSPB site and improved signage. Alternative of access road upgrading and new pedestrian bridge could offer alternative.

Approvals & Consents:

Scope of work to be undertaken by RC Roads as part of network services improvement and promotion of active travel / public transport connections.

			RTIF	
High Priority	Supported	Agree Detail RC Roads	Eligible	12 Month Deliverable



Active Travel Connections

Project:

Improve the connections by promoting active travel priorities with continuous footway / cycleways. Improve grading and connections to NCR7 and Active Travel Routes / Trails to make dispersal of visitors and connections easier.

Programme / Priority:

Early Action. High priority project meeting key user needs on site and with extended access and provision for DDA / PT users.

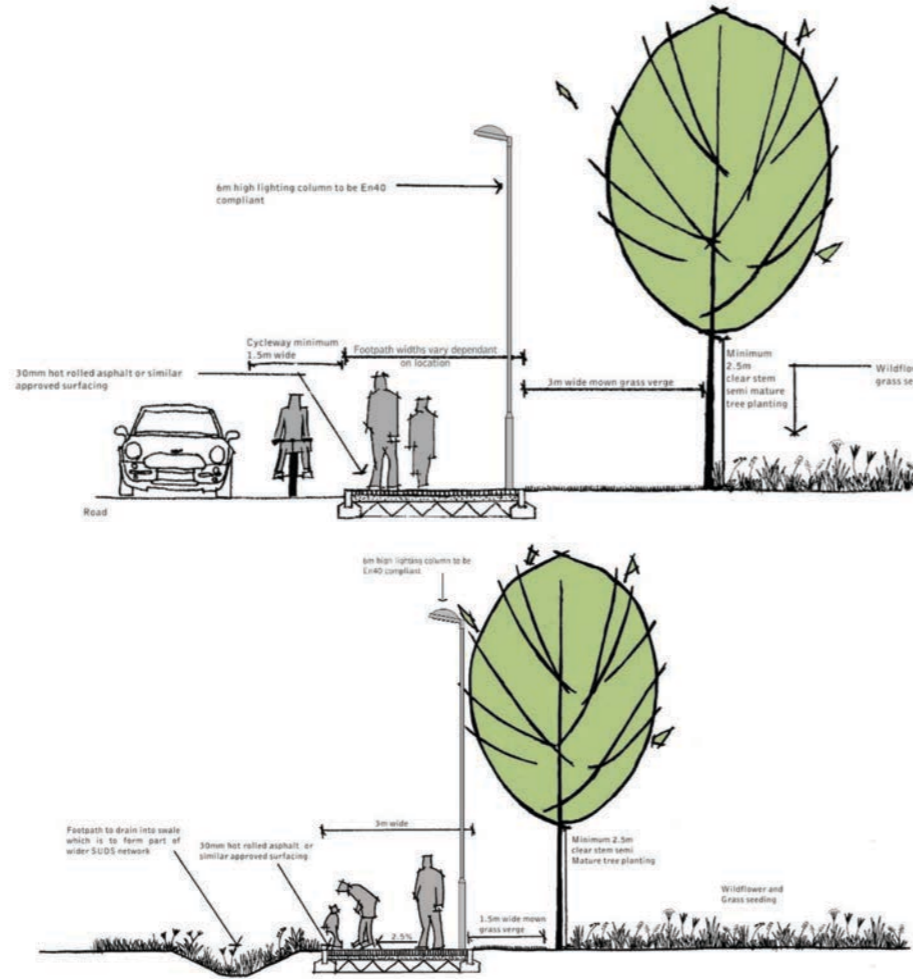
Design:

Local improvements in areas of high intensity use to support active travel (pedestrian / cyclists) and make Castle Sempole Country Park family and cycle friendly. Local path widening and crossovers. Introduction of ramp / path grading at congestion points.

Approvals & Consents:

Upgrading undertaken under Permitted Development (PD) with detail to be agreed with RC Planning/Estates and Ranger Services.. Re-uses all existing drainage connections.

			RTIF	
Priority	Engagement	Consents	RTIF	
High Priority	Supported	PD	Eligible	12 Month Deliverable



Signs, Orientation & Wayfinding

Project:

Upgrade the family of way-marking signs to develop clearer messaging connecting Castle Sempole with Lochwinnoch/ Howwood/Kilbarchan and inviting dispersal of visitors supporting peak capacity/facilitating further exploration of local place assets.

Programme / Priority:

Early Action. High priority project meeting key user needs on site and with extended access and provision for DDA / CPT users. Complete and ensure all Cycle-Link signs are operational

Design:

Develop a suite of proposals that build on the existing character and signage detailing / lookouteries. Existing signage is 10-15 years old with all existing signs replaced or re-purposed. Ensure all signs / information supports place quality, avoids clutter and minimises future maintenance.

Approvals & Consents:

Upgrading undertaken under Permitted Development (PD) with detail to be agreed with RC Planning/Estates and Ranger Services.. Re-uses all existing drainage connections.

			RTIF	
Priority	Engagement	Consents	RTIF	
High Priority	Supported	PD	Eligible	12 Month Deliverable



Railway Bridge/Entrance Safety Improvements

Project:

The existing entrance junction is on a Non-classified local road immediately south of a former rail bridge. The area combines walking/ cycling and vehicular movements. Increased use creates the potential for conflict with measures proposed to improve safety and prioritise active travel users.

Programme / Priority:

Early Action. High priority project. Addresses user concerns with vehicular movement in area of high pedestrian /cycle movement.

Design:

Road geometry limits amendment to road geometry. Measures include new road surfacing. Rubble strip and continuous footway across junction with revised road markings. Safety barrier and signage.

Approvals & Consents:

Detail agreed with Renfrewshire Council Roads & Transport to offer priority to pedestrian / cycle users and better define priorities at junction. Improvements to sightlines on apex of road curve by trimming over grown vegetation.

			RTIF	
Priority	Engagement	Consents		
High Priority	Supported	Advanced RC Roads	Eligible	12 Month Deliverable



Muirshiel Visitor Centre

Project:

Provision for innovative play within site. Small play facility to meet needs of children/ younger audiences providing barrier free/inclusive play and a short family oriented short circular walk from Visitor Centre. Supporting Muirshiel for shorter trails and walks and family based outdoor countryside activity.

Programme / Priority:

Early Action. High priority project meeting key user needs and supporting visitor dispersal within CMRP - Country Parks

Design:

Innovative small play facility based on countryside location and character developed using natural materials (timber / rocks / gravel / sand) allowing adventure play for all ages.

Approvals & Consents:

Upgrading undertaken under Permitted Development (PD) with detail to be agreed with RC Planning/Estates and Ranger Services.. Re-uses all existing drainage connections.

			RTIF	
Priority	Engagement	Consents		
High Priority	Supported	PD	Eligible	12 Month Deliverable



Appendix 2 - Long List Projects

**CASTLE SEMPLE
RENFREWSHIRE COUNCIL RSTRATEGIC TOURISM INFRASTRUTURE PLAN
IDEAS/ PROJECT LONG-LIST - V004 February 2023**

Initial Ideas Ref	Draft Project	Priority	Draft Order of Cost	Potential Eligibility RTIF	Draft Scope/Description
LL1	Demolish Toilet Block (linked to 11)	High	Low £0.05million		Demolish condemned Toilet Block to reorganise frontage improve accessibility and provide new toilet and changing facility providing better capacity/user needs & disability provision within single new build facility.
LL2	Place Based Improvements External Public Realm	High	Medium £0.3- £0.6million		Place and visitor infrastructure public realm improvements to external environment to CS Centre to improve capacity, accessibility and circulation and improve amenity and DDA inclusive access/mobility
LL3	Public Realm Improvements Water-Edge Treatment	Medium	Medium £0.5- £0.7million		Provide a boardwalk within the public realm to offer a safer, higher amenity and usable water-edge (launching kayaks/SUP's and segregate public realm from car park. Provide seating/access to waters-edge
LL4	Comprehensive Public Realm Enhancement of Castle Semple	Medium	Medium £0.8- £1.0million		Comprehensive upgrading of external works across the public areas of Castle Semple. Creating a quality experience along the northern and SW sides of the loch with soft treatments to sensitive habitat zone.
LL5	Circulation Improvements	Medium	Low £0.2- £0.5million		Reorganise parking to better meet the needs of all users and provide enhanced facilities for pedestrian /cyclists/mobility impaired and ensure better facilities for cycle parking/charging.
LL6	Develop the Trails Initiative	High	TBC		Improve capacity to disperse visitors and encourage exploration, contact with nature, activity and active travel within the Country Park, links to Lochwinnoch Village Centre and RSPB facilities.
LL7	Destination Services Improvement to facilities	Medium	Medium £0.4- 0.6million		Improve amenity and operational management focussed on built facilities of the site for all users with improved signage, lighting, seating, recycling facilities and site/wider CMCP /trail information.
LL8	Centre Building Upgrade (Option A: Reorganisation)	High Study in Progress	Medium £0.4-0.6 million		Restructure the Centre Building to make the building better for Outdoor Leisure service user needs/ capacity including internal re-organisation and stronger sense of welcome. Option envisages further RC/Private investment in commercial leisure (café/hospitality) on adjacent site
LL9	Centre Building Upgrade (Option B: New Extension Simpson Brown Proposal)	Option	High £3.0- £3.5million		Refurbish and reorganisation of Centre Building to provide new extension creating (Simpson Brown) additional flexible Community / Educational space within the building with extension to provide additional capacity including replacement toilet and new changing /orientation space
LL10	New Toilet/Changing Facility (Option C: New Facility)	Option	Medium/High £1.5- £2.0million		Create new toilet and changing facility with improvements to capacity for on-site storage facilities for watersport activity that meets needs of the centre's expanding programme of support to Young People and special needs/interest groups.

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Appendix 3 - Short List Projects

Ref	Draft Project	Priority	Order of Cost	RC and Others	RTIF	Scope/Description
01	Demolish Toilet Block Provide New Toilets	High	£0.2-£0.30m	£55k	£220k	Demolish condemned Toilet Block. Provide new facility for all users. Design to improve accessibility and small changing and/or shower area for independent watersports users plus additional Bike Hire Hub / Flexible Outlet Space to support bike hire / cycle activity and NCR7.
02	Improvements External Public Realm	High	£0.15-£0.2m	£30k	£120k	Place and visitor infrastructure public realm improvements to external environment to CS Centre to improve capacity, accessibility and circulation and improve amenity and DDA inclusive access/mobility. Potentially to include boardwalk/pontoon to waterfrontage.
06	Develop Trails & Boardwalk Initiatives	High	£0.25-£0.35m	£60k	£240k	Strengthen the 'trails initiative' with an innovative educational trail/walkway and viewing hubs connecting Castle Semple more legibly to other attractions & sister facilities (Parkhill Wood /RSPB). Compliments and links RSPB Boardwalk.
07	Public Transport Access (CS-Lochwinnoch Stn.)	High	£0.1m	£20k	£80k	Improve legibility ease of connections and provide signage Lochwinnoch Rail Station/ RSPB/Castle Semple with signage and information on Active Travel trails / Castle Semple Loch and CMRP. White lining and improve safe crossing for ped/cyclists.
09	Active Travel Connections	High	£0.1-0.2m	£20	£80k	Improve grading and connections to NCR7 and Active Travel Routes / Trails to make dispersal of visitors and connections easier. Connections to RSPB Boardwalk and connections to Lochwinnoch /Howwood rail stations.
10	Way-Marking from Visitor Arrival Points	High	£0.1-0.2m	£20k	£80k	Upgrade the family of way-marking signs to develop clearer messaging connecting Castle Semple with Lochwinnoch/ Howwood/Kilbarchan and inviting dispersal of visitors supporting peak capacity/facilitating further exploration of local place assets.
12	Railway Bridge (Ped/Cycle) Safe Movement/Capacity	High	£0.05m	£10k	£40k	Address pedestrian/ cycle and vehicular conflicts at the Railway Bridge (Church St/Lochlip Road) with new junction markings (white lining/hazard marking/cycle markings to road & cycleway plus sightline improvements
15	Muirshiel Visitor Centre	High	£0.1-£0.2m	£30k	£120k	Provision of play within site. Small play facility to meet needs of children/ younger audiences providing barrier free/inclusive play and a short family oriented short circular walk from Visitor Centre.
Totals				£245k	£980k	
Summary Total				£245k	£980k	Short Term Priority Investment £1,075,000 over 2 years
% Contributions				20%	80%	
TOTAL Phase 1 Investment						£1,225,000

Appendix 4 - Summary of Consultation & Engagement Feedback

CASTLE SEMPLE COUNTRY PARK - Initial Ideas Forum

Monday, April 03, 2023

136

Total Responses

Date Created: Thursday, January 26, 2023

Complete Responses: 136

Q6: What are your priority projects in the medium & longer term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 133 Skipped: 3

	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
Upgraded Castle Semple Visitor Centre	61.42% 78	29.13% 37	9.45% 12	127	1.48
New Additional Visitor Centre & Café Facility	66.93% 85	19.69% 25	13.39% 17	127	1.46
New Quality & Innovative Play Facilities	42.74% 53	33.87% 42	23.39% 29	124	1.81
Upgrade Public Realm/Landscape at Centre	40.98% 50	42.62% 52	16.39% 20	122	1.75
Upgrade Public Realm/Landscape & connections to RSPB	42.62% 52	42.62% 52	14.75% 18	122	1.72
Provide Hides & Places to Observe Nature	29.37% 37	49.21% 62	21.43% 27	126	1.92
Interpretation / Signage / Waymarking	36.89% 45	40.16% 49	22.95% 28	122	1.86
Better Path Connection to Howwood / Lochwinnoch / Kilbarchan	42.97% 55	35.94% 46	21.09% 27	128	1.78
Improved Water Sports Facilities	54.10% 66	31.15% 38	14.75% 18	122	1.61
Loch Water Catchment Management / Weir	38.98% 46	44.07% 52	16.95% 20	118	1.78
Safer & Better Road Crossings	45.45% 55	33.06% 40	21.49% 26	121	1.76
Clyde Muirshiel Country Park Centre Upgrade	61.16% 74	29.75% 36	9.09% 11	121	1.48
Castle Semple Loch Additional Trails & Walks	49.61% 63	37.80% 48	12.60% 16	127	1.63
New Entrance & Additional Parking (A760)	30.0% 36	40.0% 48	30.0% 36	120	2

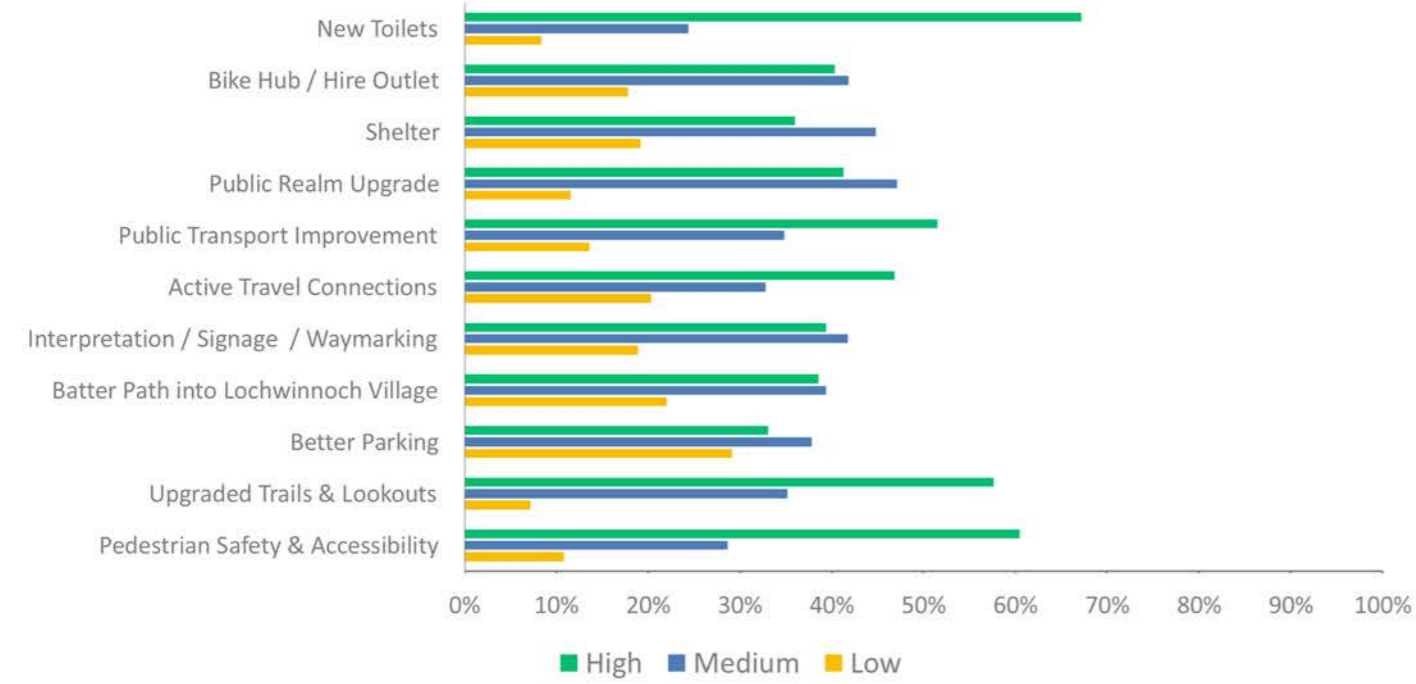
Q5: What are your priority projects in the short term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0

	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE
New Toilets	67.18% 88	24.43% 32	8.40% 11	131	1.41
Bike Hub / Hire Outlet	40.31% 52	41.86% 54	17.83% 23	129	1.78
Shelter	36.00% 45	44.80% 56	19.20% 24	125	1.83
Public Realm Upgrade	41.32% 50	47.11% 57	11.57% 14	121	1.70
Public Transport Improvement	51.52% 68	34.85% 46	13.64% 18	132	1.62
Active Travel Connections	46.88% 60	32.81% 42	20.31% 26	128	1.73
Interpretation / Signage / Waymarking	39.37% 50	41.73% 53	18.90% 24	127	1.80
Better Path into Lochwinnoch Village	38.58% 49	39.37% 50	22.05% 28	127	1.83
Better Parking	33.07% 42	37.80% 48	29.13% 37	127	1.96
Upgraded Trails & Lookouts	57.60% 72	35.20% 44	7.20% 9	125	1.50
Pedestrian Safety & Accessibility	60.47% 78	28.68% 37	10.85% 14	129	1.50

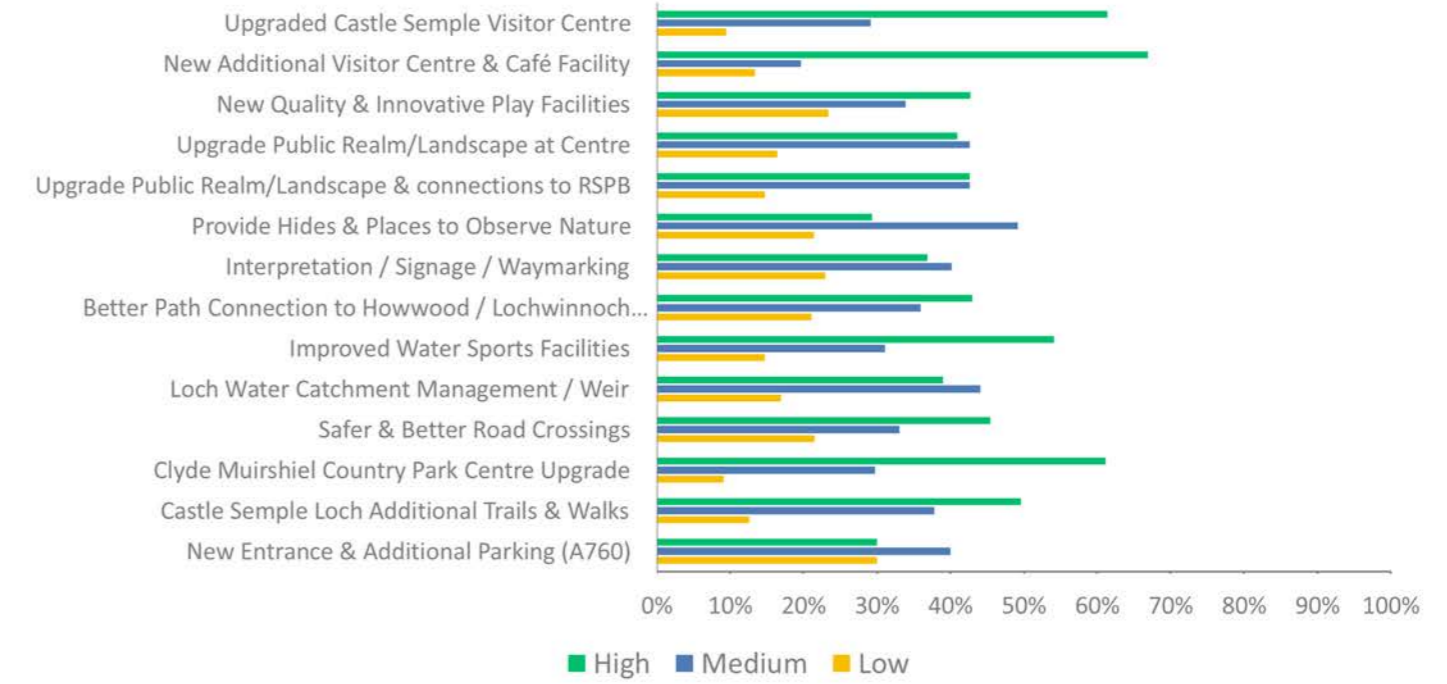
Q5: What are your priority projects in the short term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0



Q6: What are your priority projects in the medium & longer term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 133 Skipped: 3



Appendix 5 - Tabulated Policy Summary

POLICY FRAMEWORK

The project will deliver against the policy objectives of key strategies set out by both Scottish and UK Government. The Project is also in line with Scottish Government's inclusive growth and health & wellbeing agenda, targeting regional imbalances in socio-economic activity and deprivation, and recognising the importance of developing the tourism sector, place-making and development of the rural economy. The key messages from these strategies, and the alignment with the project, are outlined below:

Scottish Policy Context	Regional/Local Policy Context
Scotland's Climate Change Plan	Glasgow City Region Economic Strategy 2017-2035
Scotland's National Strategy for Economic Transformation (2022)	Renfrewshire Council Plan 2022-2027
Programme for Government (PfG), Scottish Govt., 2021-22	Renfrewshire Councils Economic Strategy
National Planning Framework 4 (2023) - (NPF4)	Greater Renfrewshire and Inverclyde (GRI) Rural Community Tourism Strategy
Place Principle - 20 Minute Neighbourhoods	Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (2021)
National Tourism Strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030	Renfrewshire Tourism Action Plan

Strategy	Health Objectives	Alignment with CMRP/Castle Semple Planning
Scotland's Climate Change Plan	Scotland's ambitious climate change legislation sets a target date for net zero emissions of all greenhouse gases by 2045. Climate change is the single greatest threat to Scotland's environment. Climate change may affect the delicate balance of Scotland's ecosystems and transform Scotland's habitats and biodiversity, adding to existing pressures.	Regional Parks and Country Parks have a potentially key role in supporting sustainable activity in the countryside supporting Just Transition and providing an important resource for education and awareness of Climate Change issues
National Tourism Strategy, Scotland Outlook 2030	Sets out the national Tourism Strategy for Scotland to be world leaders in 21st century tourism built around the key priorities of our passionate people, our thriving places, our diverse businesses, our memorable experiences.	Renfrewshire Council is seeking to build a Regional Tourism Action Plan built on and supporting the national tourism strategy. Countryside activity, sports, leisure and recreation are emerging as a key theme.
National / Regional Transport Strategy (SPT)	<p>National Transport Strategy (reflecting the Climate Change Plan) sets out a commitment to reducing car kilometres by 20 per cent by 2030, to enable us to meet our net zero emissions target by 2045. Transport is Scotland's largest sectoral emitter, accounting for 29% of total greenhouse gas emissions</p> <p>The Strathclyde Partnership for Transport's Regional Strategy identifies four key transport outcomes across the area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliable travel • Improved connectivity • Access for all • Reduced emissions. 	Renfrewshire Council are looking to positively contribute to each of the SPT priority outcomes, improving facilities and networks for active travel that will improve connectivity and reduce car dependency and offer sustainable travel choices to all. Castle Semple with its access to rail/bus services provides a Country Park with good public transport access.

Strategy	Health Objectives	Alignment with CMRP/Castle Semple Planning
National Planning Framework 4 (2023)-(NPF4)	<p>NPF4 sets out the national spatial planning framework and forms part of the Development Plan.</p> <p>NPF4 sets out a national spatial strategy for Scotland and defines national planning policy. The NPF4 sets out six spatial principles relevant to the planning for rural assets.</p>	<p>The following 3 over-arching spatial principles are relevant:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conserving and recycling assets. We will make productive use of existing buildings, places, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy. • Local living. We will support local liveability and improve community health and wellbeing by ensuring people can easily access services, greenspace, learning, work and leisure locally. • Rebalanced development. We will target development to create opportunities for communities and investment in areas of past decline and manage development sustainably in areas of high demand. • Rural revitalisation. We will encourage sustainable development in rural areas, recognising the need to grow and support urban and rural communities together.
Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (2021)	The Renfrewshire Local Development Plan sets out an ambitious Spatial Strategy that provides a framework for the protection and enhancement of Renfrewshire's diverse natural environment and built and cultural heritage assets, the delivery of economic and infrastructure investment and it guides the future use of land to assist in creating strong communities and attractive places.	<p>Specific support and references to the rural economy, tourism and place development support CMRP and Castle Semple Country Park.</p> <p>The LDP includes a revitalised recognition of the built, natural, cultural and heritage tourism offering of Renfrewshire and the important contribution that the tourism sector makes to the Renfrewshire economy.</p>
Renfrewshire Economic Strategy 2020-2030	Renfrewshire's Economic Strategy 2020-2030 sets out the ambitions and actions to achieve sustained, inclusive growth of the Renfrewshire economy over the next 10 years. Its development has been led by the Renfrewshire Economic Leadership Panel, bringing together leaders from across the private and public sector, enterprise agencies and education and skills experts	<p>New sectors in creative industries, tourism and care are identified as having the potential of diversifying the economy further and offering more opportunities for long-term, sustained and inclusive economic growth.</p> <p>The tourism sector is recognised as one of Scotland's key growth sectors. For Renfrewshire a thriving tourism industry built around the area's own offer can generate significant economic benefits and improve how the area is perceived to a wide audience of not just visitors but of potential investors</p>
Renfrewshire Tourism Action Plan 2023	Renfrewshire Council is developing a Tourism Action Plan. The new Action Plan is at consultation stage and will provide an opportunity to reflect on the very positive experience of hosting successful events and delivering an energetic cultural programme and how to build on and complement this in the future.	The new Regional Tourism Action Plan is at the early consultation stage. Initial consultations have identified key issues and areas of opportunity but significant further dialogue with industry and alignment across Council and stakeholder groups is required.
Renfrewshire Cycling Strategy 2016-2025	The aim of this cycling strategy is simple: to get more people in Renfrewshire cycling more often. The strategy supports many of the aims of the council's business plan and Renfrewshire's community plan. Achieving these aims will bring many benefits for Renfrewshire's residents, its communities, its environment and its economy. By encouraging people to be more active, cycling can help to improve the health and wellbeing of people of all ages.	The strategy notes: Stronger links with leisure and tourism, building on resources such as Gleniffer Braes and Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park (eg. developing mountain biking), and accommodation and attraction resources across the network (e.g. development of a network of Cyclist Havens).



CASTLE SEMPLE COUNTRY PARK
Initial Ideas Forum

Consultation Summary Report

Consultation and Engagement

The STIDP has involved a joint working group engaging external stakeholders along with Council services (including the Place and Regeneration, Park and Ranger services and Environment and Infrastructure teams).

Renfrewshire Council are very aware that the concept needs to engage and build support across a diverse range of stakeholders. Early indications have confirmed support for short term project initiatives (RTIF applications) and outlined medium term ideas for further development of Castle Semple as a primary gateway facility for the Regional Park.

Consultation Events & Stakeholder Group Presentations

The broad concepts and draft proposals have been subject to consultation with stakeholder groups through presentations and events. These have included:

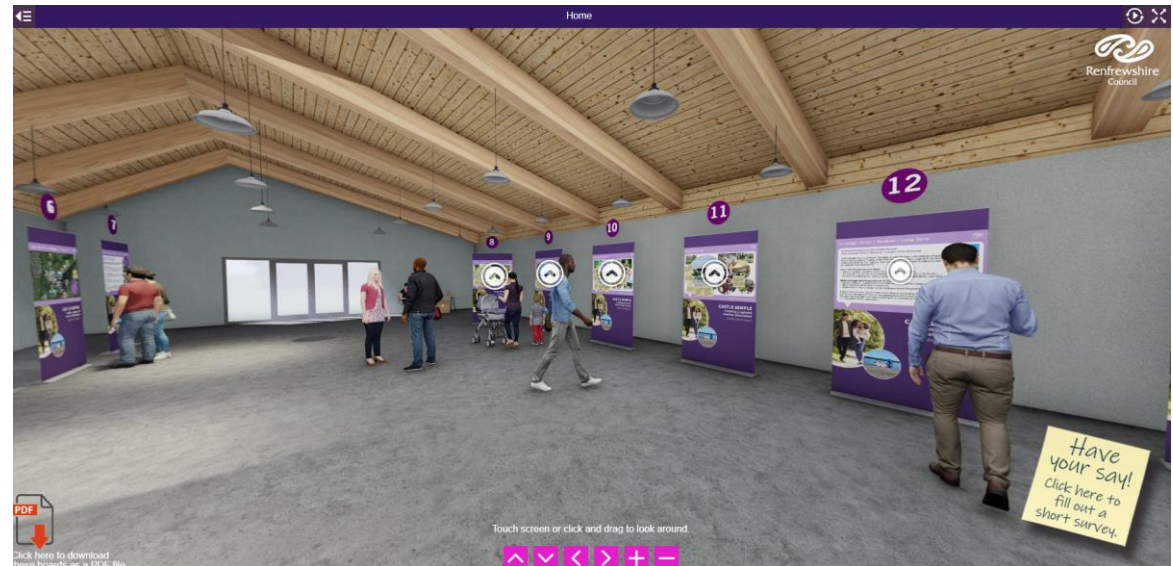
- Clyde Muirshiel Liaison Group. Member and cross departmental officer group with responsibility for coordination of Renfrewshire Council's management of CMRP within Renfrewshire.
- The Villages Local Partnership is a formally constituted group of seven local Community Councils (Lochwinnoch, Howwood, Kilbarchan, Brookfield, Bridge of Weir, Elderslie, Houston). Castle Semple proposals were presented to this group.
- Stakeholder & Public Consultation Event hosted at the Castle Semple Visitor Centre 23rd February 2023 attended by 60-80 stakeholders, residents and park users. Consultees completed questionnaires and indicated priorities / preferences at the event and on-line.



Consultation Event at Castle Semple Visitor Centre

Consultation On-line with Supporting Survey

- Virtual Engagement (On-line Consultation - available on-line on computers, digital devices and phones) provides a virtual 'Consultation Room' duplicating presentation materials used for other events but undertaken to make the consultation more inclusive and seek responses and feedback from individuals and groups unable to attend events.
- The on-line consultation has been viewed 614 times with over 136 questionnaires completed on-line. On-line consultation has proved to be very successful in extending engagement and inviting comment from within community organisations, clubs and wider user groups and the general public.
- The On-line Questionnaire provided a both qualitative and quantitative feedback through a standard suite of questions around project priorities, user needs and views on the adequacy or otherwise of the existing facilities.



Online Consultation using i:engage web-based tool

Consultation Survey

The consultation event and online consultation (i-engage) used SurveyMonkey to collect the views across a diverse range of user, stakeholder and local community groups. The survey included:

- 60-80 people attended the event.
- 614 online viewers to the website.
- 136 surveys completed.
- 64 comment forms and post-it notes.
- Plus, study consultees with key stakeholder interests.
- Total consultees in excess of 700 people.

Consultation Results – Priority Projects

The consultations advised of the key priorities for both short-term and long-term projects and these are reported below:-

High Priority Short Term Projects

- | | |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| 1. New Toilets | 67.18% |
| 2. Pedestrian Safety & Accessibility | 60.47% |
| 3. Upgraded Trails & lookouts | 57.6% |

High Priority Medium / Longer Term Projects

- | | |
|--|--------|
| 1. New Additional Visitor Centre & Café Facility | 66.93% |
| 2. Upgraded Castle Semple Visitor Centre | 61.42% |
| 3. Muirshiel Country Park Centre Upgrade | 61.16% |

Priorities: Short Term

5. What are your priority projects in the short term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

	High	Medium	Low
New Toilets	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Bike Hub / Hire Outlet	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Shelter	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Realm Upgrade	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Public Transport Improvement	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Active Travel Connections	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interpretation / Signage / Waymarking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Batter Path into Lochwinnoch Village	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better Parking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upgraded Trails & Lookouts	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Pedestrian Safety & Accessibility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>		

Priorities: Medium & Longer Term

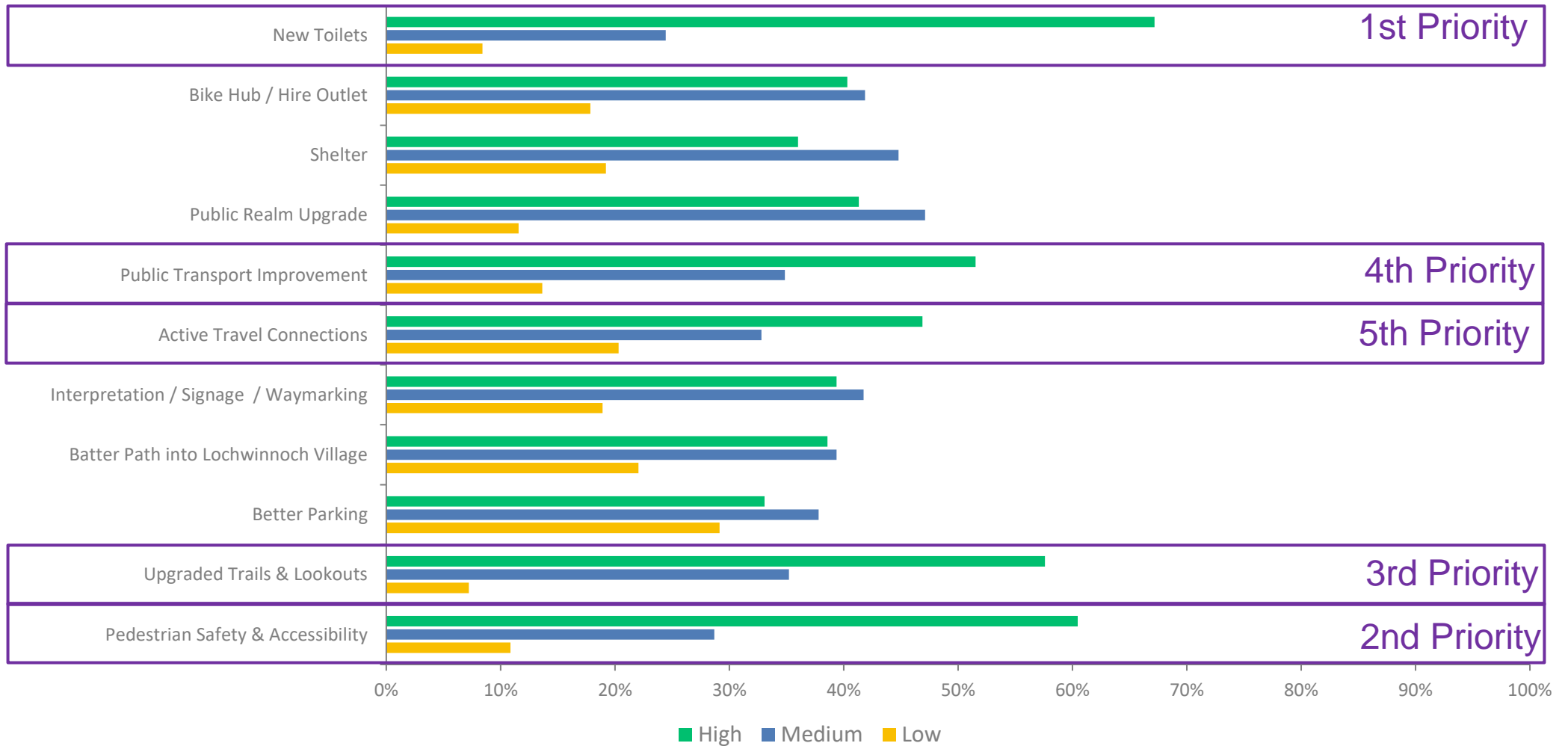
6. What are your priority projects in the medium & longer term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

	High	Medium	Low
Upgraded Castle Semple Visitor Centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Additional Visitor Centre & Café Facility	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Quality & Innovative Play Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upgrade Public Realm/Landscape at Centre	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Upgrade Public Realm/Landscape & connections to RSPB	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Provide Hides & Places to Observe Nature	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Interpretation / Signage / Waymarking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Better Path Connection to Howwood / Lochwinnoch / Kilbarchan	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Improved Water Sports Facilities	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Loch Water Catchment Management / Weir	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Safer & Better Road Crossings	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Clyde Muirshiel Country Park Centre Upgrade	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Castle Semple Loch Additional Trails & Walks	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
New Entrance & Additional Parking (A760)	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
Other (please specify)	<input type="text"/>		

Stakeholder views were sought using consultation forms and online SurveyMonkey

Q5: What are your priority projects in the short term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0



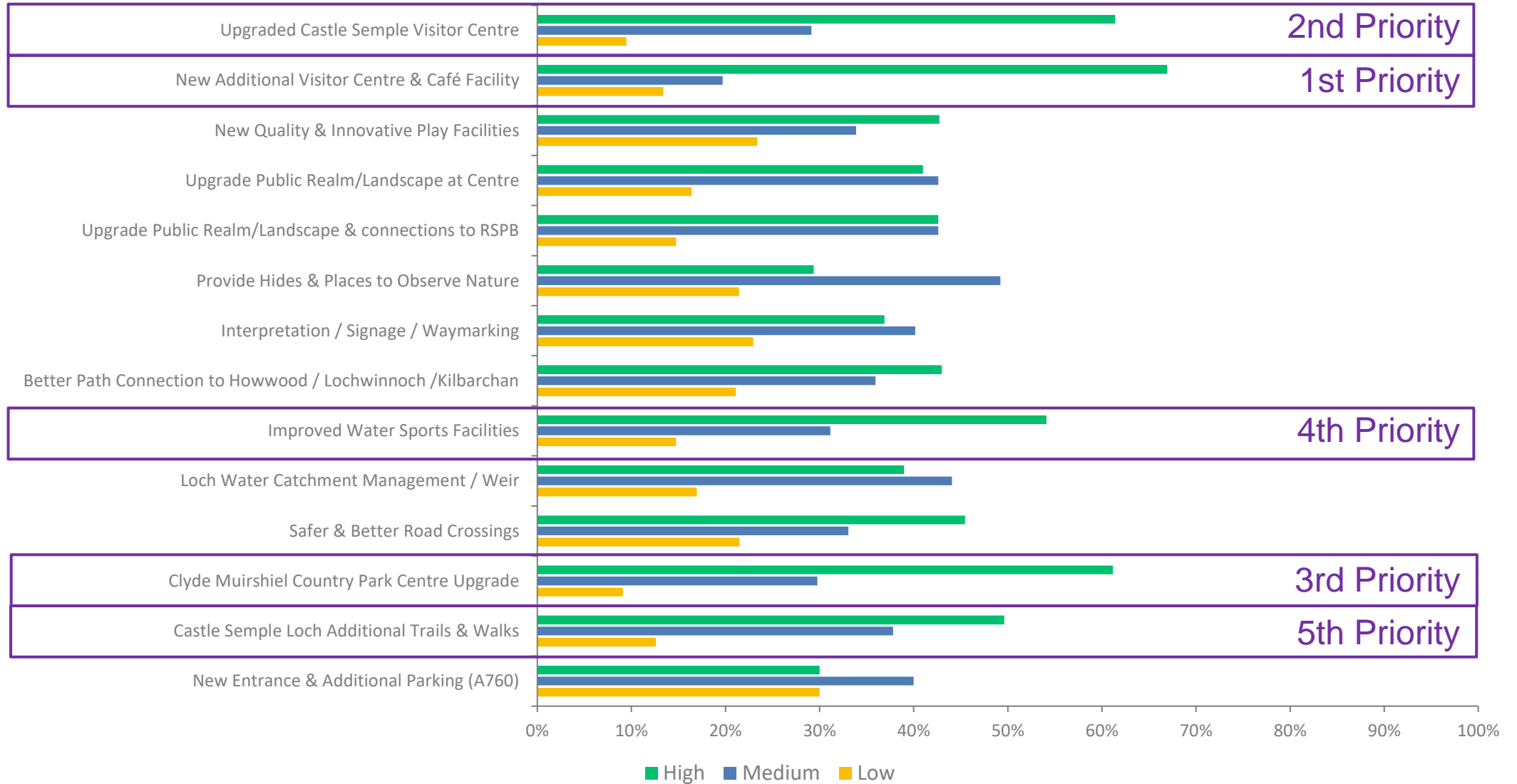
Q5: What are your priority projects in the short term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 136 Skipped: 0

	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	
New Toilets	67.18% 88	24.43% 32	8.40% 11	131	1.41	1st Priority
Bike Hub / Hire Outlet	40.31% 52	41.86% 54	17.83% 23	129	1.78	
Shelter	36.00% 45	44.80% 56	19.20% 24	125	1.83	
Public Realm Upgrade	41.32% 50	47.11% 57	11.57% 14	121	1.70	
Public Transport Improvement	51.52% 68	34.85% 46	13.64% 18	132	1.62	4th Priority
Active Travel Connections	46.88% 60	32.81% 42	20.31% 26	128	1.73	5th Priority
Interpretation / Signage / Waymarking	39.37% 50	41.73% 53	18.90% 24	127	1.80	
Batter Path into Lochwinnoch Village	38.58% 49	39.37% 50	22.05% 28	127	1.83	
Better Parking	33.07% 42	37.80% 48	29.13% 37	127	1.96	
Upgraded Trails & Lookouts	57.60% 72	35.20% 44	7.20% 9	125	1.50	3rd Priority
Pedestrian Safety & Accessibility	60.47% 78	28.68% 37	10.85% 14	129	1.50	2nd Priority

Q6: What are your priority projects in the medium & longer term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 133 Skipped: 3



Q6: What are your priority projects in the medium & longer term? Please select your Top 6 Priority Projects in the High column & Indicate your views on the priority level of the other projects.

Answered: 133 Skipped: 3

	HIGH	MEDIUM	LOW	TOTAL	WEIGHTED AVERAGE	
Upgraded Castle Semple Visitor Centre	61.42% 78	29.13% 37	9.45% 12	127	1.48	2nd Priority
New Additional Visitor Centre & Café Facility	66.93% 85	19.69% 25	13.39% 17	127	1.46	1st Priority
New Quality & Innovative Play Facilities	42.74% 53	33.87% 42	23.39% 29	124	1.81	
Upgrade Public Realm/Landscape at Centre	40.98% 50	42.62% 52	16.39% 20	122	1.75	
Upgrade Public Realm/Landscape & connections to RSPB	42.62% 52	42.62% 52	14.75% 18	122	1.72	
Provide Hides & Places to Observe Nature	29.37% 37	49.21% 62	21.43% 27	126	1.92	
Interpretation / Signage / Waymarking	36.89% 45	40.16% 49	22.95% 28	122	1.86	
Better Path Connection to Howwood / Lochwinnoch /Kilbarchan	42.97% 55	35.94% 46	21.09% 27	128	1.78	
Improved Water Sports Facilities	54.10% 66	31.15% 38	14.75% 18	122	1.61	4th Priority
Loch Water Catchment Management / Weir	38.98% 46	44.07% 52	16.95% 20	118	1.78	
Safer & Better Road Crossings	45.45% 55	33.06% 40	21.49% 26	121	1.76	
Clyde Muirshiel Country Park Centre Upgrade	61.16% 74	29.75% 36	9.09% 11	121	1.48	3rd Priority
Castle Semple Loch Additional Trails & Walks	49.61% 63	37.80% 48	12.60% 16	127	1.63	5th Priority
New Entrance & Additional Parking (A760)	30.0% 36	40.0% 48	30.0% 36	120	2	