

Glenmore Visitor Improvement Plan

I. Purpose

I.1 Set within the context of the overall strategy, this plan sets out more specific proposals for improvements at Glenmore, on which we are also seeking your feedback. The plan has evolved considerably over the last 18 months since the first proposals were presented for discussion, through a series of productive discussions with local businesses, community representatives, neighbours and visitors. Common themes and aspirations have emerged which we have tried to capture in the plan below.

I.2 The purpose of the plan is to contribute to the overall strategy for Cairngorm and Glenmore by:

- Setting out the role and direction for Glenmore in the context of the visitor experience in the wider area;
- Setting out proposals to enhance the visitor experience;
- Shaping collaboration in managing the area with neighbours;
- Informing future investment and decision making by partners.

I.3 The plan will adopt clear visitor experience objectives where visitors will:-

- Feel welcome, valued and safe.
- Easily find the facilities they need: toilets, information, visitor centres, activity points, trailheads.
- Understand the whole, integrated Glenmore offer and make the best choices for them.
- All be able to undertake some activity and have a quality experience. Accessible approach, arrival, orientation, activity, departure.
- Look after Glenmore, minimising damage to habitats and species.
- Return for different activities as part of a longer stay or throughout the year.
- Recommend Glenmore to others.

I.4 The plan will adopt clear design principles to support the visitor management objectives:

- Design solutions that prioritise visitor safety and address key safety concerns.
- Design and select options based on least restrictive access – meeting obligations under the 2010 Equality Act. (Equality Assessment required throughout project.)
- Promote activity - encouraging as many visitors as possible to be active.
- Intuitive design.
- Responsible custodians – keeping Glenmore special by design: facilitating access to less sensitive routes and designing for positive behaviour.

1.5 The Visitor Improvement Plan will work alongside the Forest Design/Land Management Plan for Glenmore, which sets out the direction for the continued active management of the estate.

1.6 Following consultation, we will finalise the improvement plan and take forward relevant proposals into a Development Brief that will form non-statutory planning guidance, to guide future development of Glenmore.

1.7 Further more detailed feasibility planning will be required following consultation. Implementation of any of the proposals will depend on securing funding.

2. Context

2.1 Glenmore is where the mountains, loch and forest meet. Minutes from Aviemore you can be exploring the forest, sitting on the beach at Loch Morlich, heading into the hills, sailing on the loch or enjoying the visitor facilities. Here you find one of the defining views of the Cairngorms: the northern corries rising above Loch Morlich.

2.2 The number of visitors to Glenmore Forest Park is estimated at 150,000 pa, with 80,000 to the current Visitor Centre. Many more pass through Glenmore on the way to Cairngorm Mountain, where car counts indicate total visitor numbers in the region of 400,000.

3. Current Issues

Poor Visitor Welcome



Dated Facilities



Traffic and Car Parking



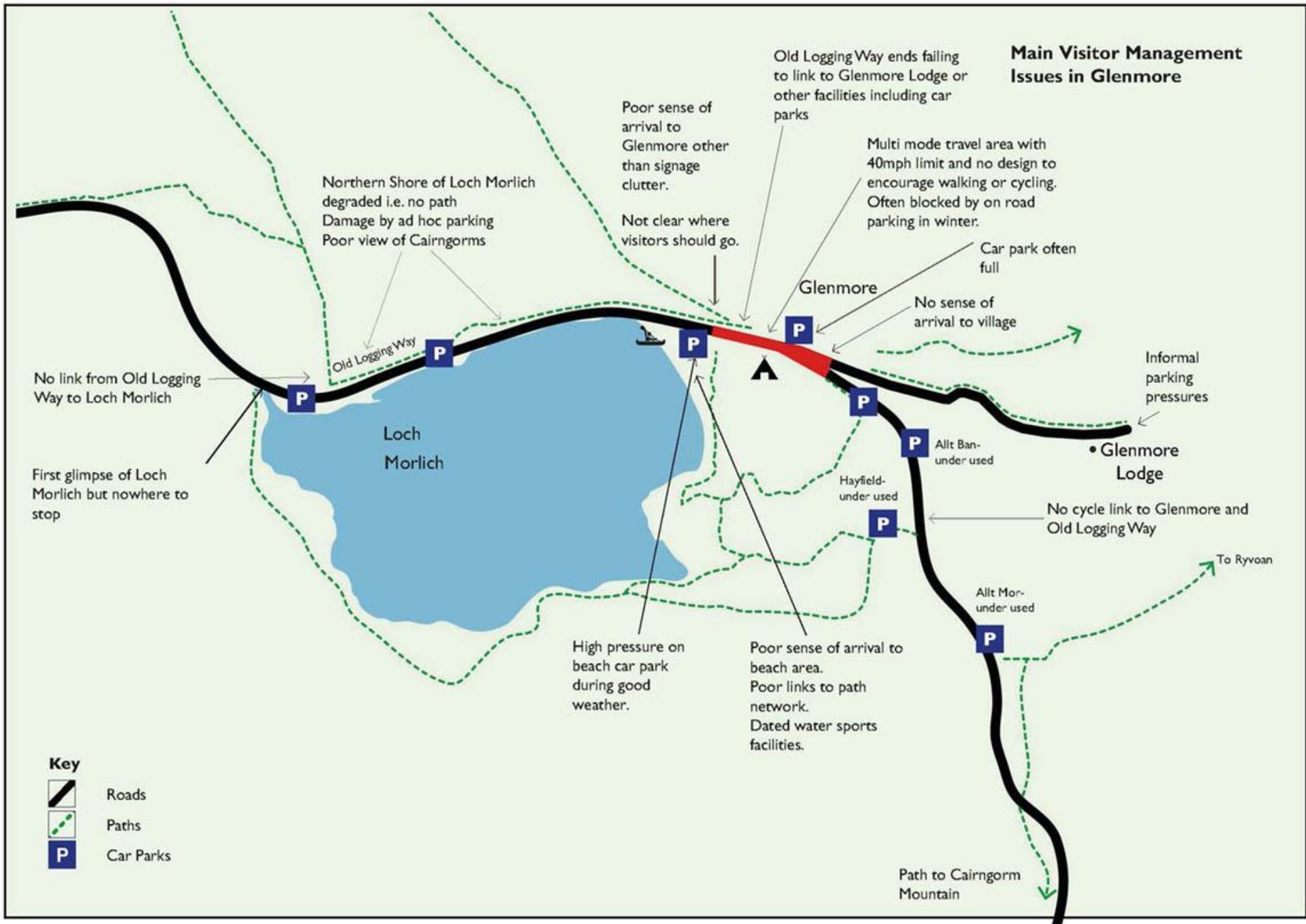
Irresponsible Behaviour



3.1 To deliver the vision for Cairngorm and Glenmore, we know we need to improve the current visitor experience at Glenmore to the exceptional quality we aspire to. The results of previous ad-hoc decisions are apparent in the fragmented visitor experience and facilities.

Current Issues	
Pre-arrival information	There is a lack of co-ordination in pre-arrival information (including web information) and messages about the area between Glenmore and neighbouring businesses and land holdings, missing opportunities for cross promotion and consistent messages about planning journeys, travel and activities.
Visitor welcome	There is currently a plethora of signs and it is unclear to the visitor where to go on arrival and how best to move around between facilities/attractions. The location of the visitor centre is not immediately obvious on arrival.
Co-ordination of facilities and activities	Visitor facilities within Glenmore and between Glenmore and neighbours are not well connected physically or cross promoted. It is not easy for the visitor to know how to connect experiences together and visitor information does not make the most of promoting routes, activities and itineraries across businesses and land holdings.
Dated facilities	The visitor centre is not a natural point of arrival and the inward looking nature of the building and display areas do not allow the visitor to connect with and orientate themselves in the landscape. The SYHA do not consider that the current hostel building (which they own) is fit for purpose in meeting their current or future business needs.
Access routes	The network of access routes in and around the settlement at Glenmore does not join up effectively, leaving some gaps in footpaths, for example between the visitor centre and the beach, and making it difficult for visitors to find their way round on foot. The popular Old Logging Way is not well connected to other facilities and access points, particularly at Glenmore.
Traffic and Car Parking	Overall there is sufficient parking provision though its use is not well co-ordinated. Some car parks are charged whereas others are free, it is not immediately clear which car parks best serve which destinations, there are gaps in parking provision including the Reindeer Centre and some trail heads. At busy times parking spreads along the roadside, both in the settlement and along the loch shore. The lack of clear road crossing points combined with traffic speed presents a barrier to people moving easily around the area on foot.
Irresponsible behaviour	There are signs of an increase of irresponsible behaviours associated with informal camping on and around the beach at Loch Morlich, including litter, disturbance, fires and human waste. While not yet a significant issue, this area requires active management and ranger presence.
Public toilets	There is limited provision of public toilets in Glenmore given the number of visitors. In particular, the provision by the beach is limited and not well signed or easy to find.
Outdoor learning facilities	Despite the area being well used by schools and education groups, there is limited outdoor and sheltered facilities for groups. There is also a more strategic level opportunity to better connect and develop the outdoor learning experiences offered in the area, including through the National Outdoor centre at Glenmore Lodge.
Views and setting	While the forest setting is integral to the character of Glenmore, growth of trees immediately around visitor facilities has resulted in a loss of former views to the mountains and the loch, making it harder for visitors to get an overall sense of orientation.
Conservation management	Unintended disturbance of nature conservation interest due to lack of knowledge of impact by some visitors and users of the forest, particularly on Capercaillie.

Question 5: Are there other specific issues relating to Glenmore that you think this plan should address?

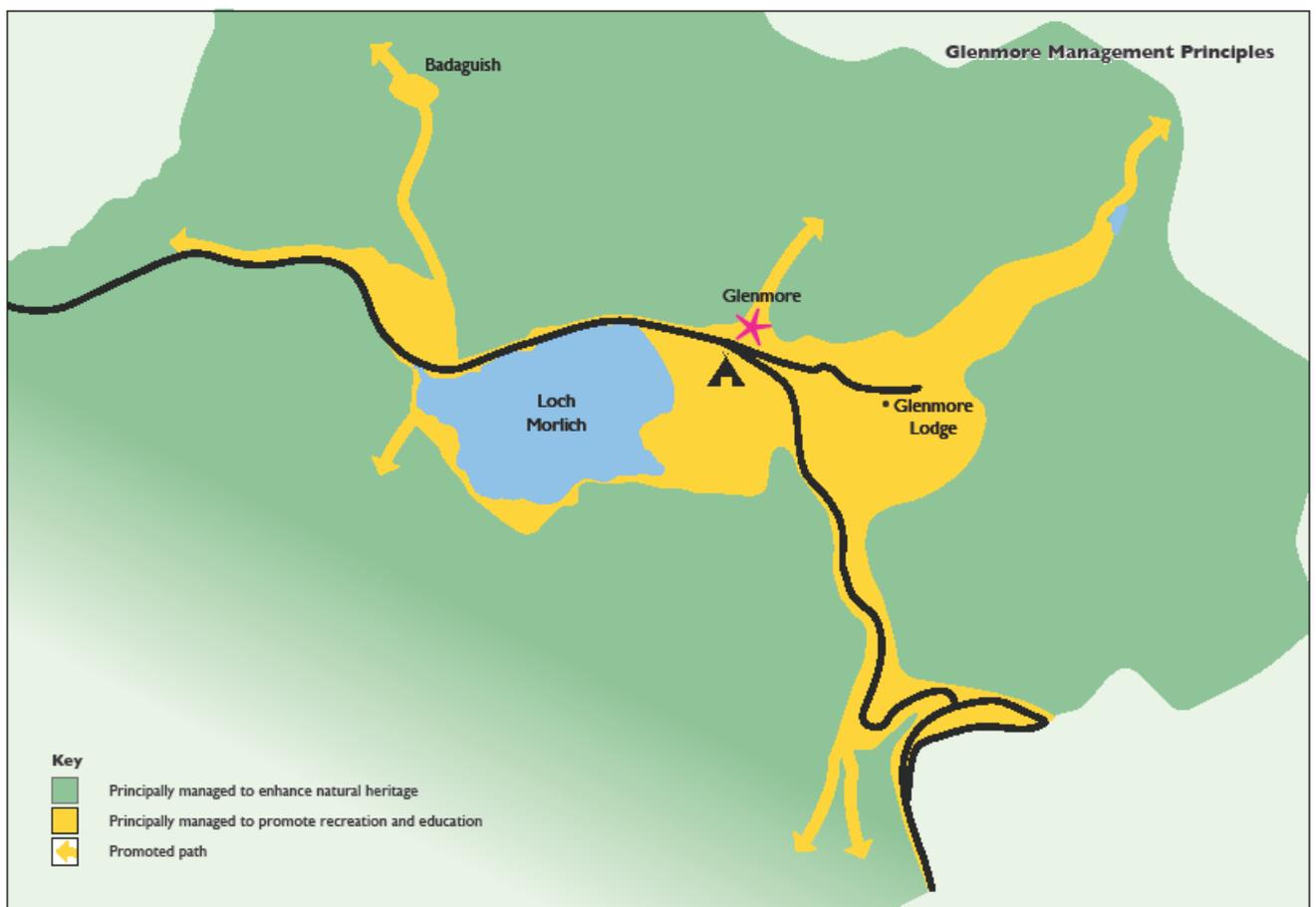


4. Outline Proposals

Our proposals to deliver improvements at Glenmore over the next ten years are set out in five sections:

- Visitor welcome
- Outdoor Learning, Residential Centre and Visitor Services
- Access infrastructure
- Parking
- Landscape enhancement

Implementation of the proposals is identified as short (1 – 3 years), medium (3 – 7 years) and long term (7 – 20 years). The spatial overview below sets out the basic principles underpinning the proposals.



4.1 Visitor Welcome

Objectives	<p>a) Enhance the sense of arrival both at Loch Morlich and at the settlement of Glenmore so that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visitors arriving by car, bus and bicycle know that they have arrived in a special place and can quickly find a place to stop and orientate themselves; • The settlement has a strongly pedestrian-friendly character; • The visitor hub in the settlement is easy to locate; • Car and bike parking options are obvious; • Drivers passing through Glenmore respect that they are passing through a settlement and behave accordingly.
	<p>1.1 Improve pre-arrival information and web presence in collaboration with neighbouring businesses, and improve digital connectivity</p>
Outline Proposals	<p>1.2 Improve the welcome signage at arrival points and provide clear orientation information. Rationalise and improve co-ordination of signage within the settlement to help visitors find their way (short term)</p> <p>1.3 Reduce the speed of through traffic in the settlement and redesign the road and path treatments to encourage slower speeds and easier crossing by pedestrians (medium term)</p> <p>1.4 Extend the Logging Way to connect with the visitor hub and onward routes for visitors arriving and leaving by bike (medium-term) and install bike storage at key arrival points (short term)</p> <p>1.5 Fully integrate bus stops within the settlement of Glenmore (short term)</p>

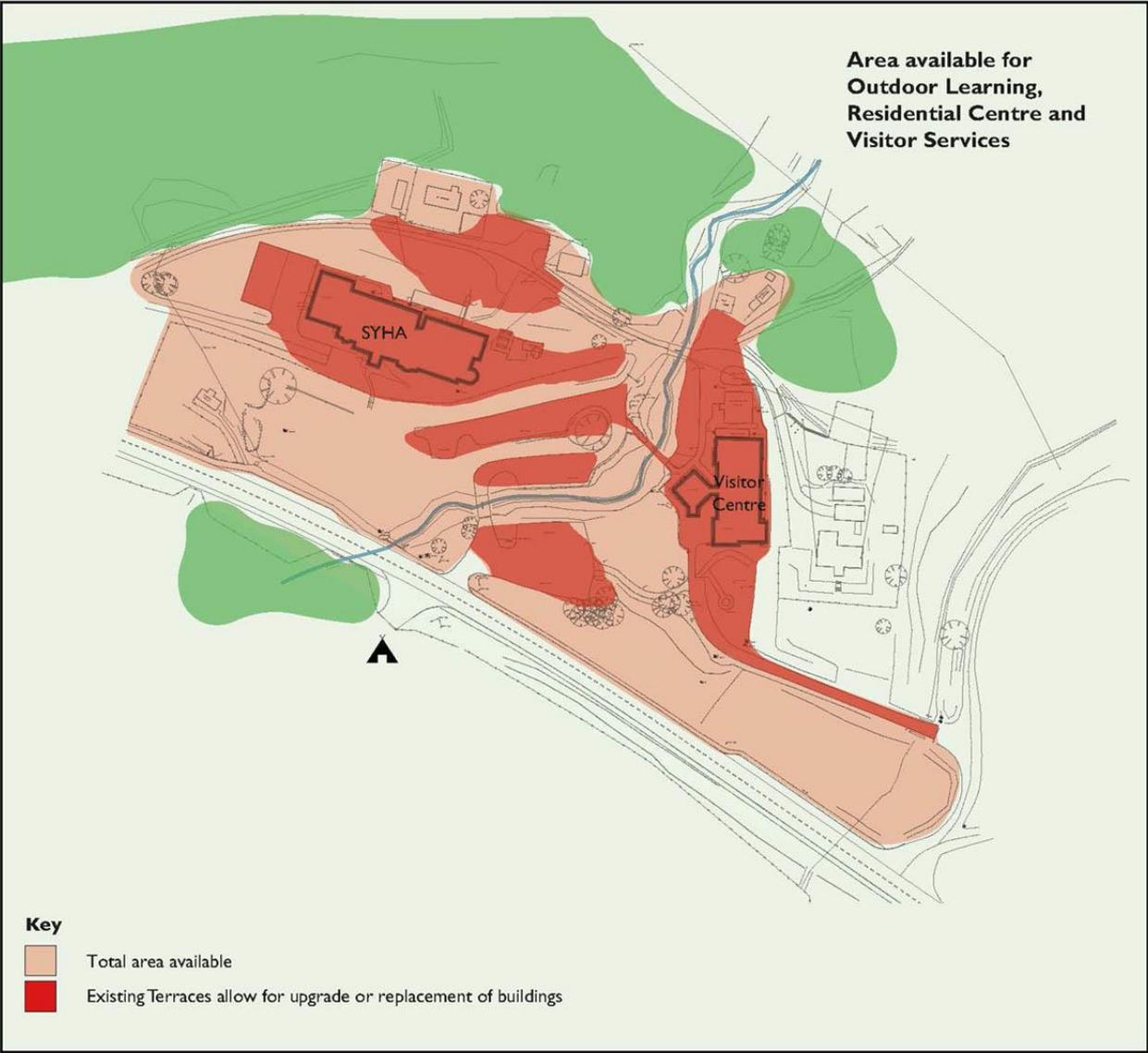
4.2 Outdoor Learning, Residential Centre and Visitor Services

Objectives	<p>a) Create a new or improved visitor hub as focus for visitor orientation and learning, incorporating information about Glenmore Forest Park, Cairngorm Mountain and the wider National Park. Connect visitors' expectations with the opportunities available, cross promoting the area as a whole. Must be high quality design which is appropriate for such a sensitive location.</p> <p>b) Work with SYHA to implement their preferred option for a new youth hostel facility to make best use of space and co-ordinated provision of facilities/visitor welcome.</p>
Outline Proposals	<p>2.1 Work with SYHA to enable its preferred option to build a new youth hostel incorporating a central reception facility with more flexible satellite accommodation (medium term).</p> <p>2.2. Develop plan to reconfigure buildings and layout across site of current youth hostel and visitor centre to provide new visitor hub incorporating shared facilities for youth hostel reception, visitor welcome and learning space (medium term)</p> <p>2.3 Reconfigure car parking around the visitor hub including provision for short term, coach parking and overnight parking for the SYHA (medium term)</p> <p>2.4 Improve physical accessibility of facilities for all</p> <p>2.5 Co-ordinate information provision and cross promotion across businesses in and neighbouring Glenmore (short term)</p>

The visitor hub proposals are the most significant proposals in terms of redevelopment of the existing facilities. The area occupied by the visitor centre and youth hostel is where there is most flexibility to redesign and change the layout of facilities to significantly improve the visitor experience. This site also provides a natural focal point and is well suited in terms of position and topography to accommodate the appropriate visitor infrastructure. The proposals are the result of a series of options analysis that takes account of the SYHA's preferred option to replace their current building with a new facility and recognition that the current visitor centre does not make it easy for visitors to engage with the place and plan their visit.

An initial appraisal confirms it is feasible to accommodate all the site requirements within the site constraints, physical capacity of the site, and landscape capacity of the area to the north of the public road incorporating the Youth Hostel, Visitor centre and associated car parking.

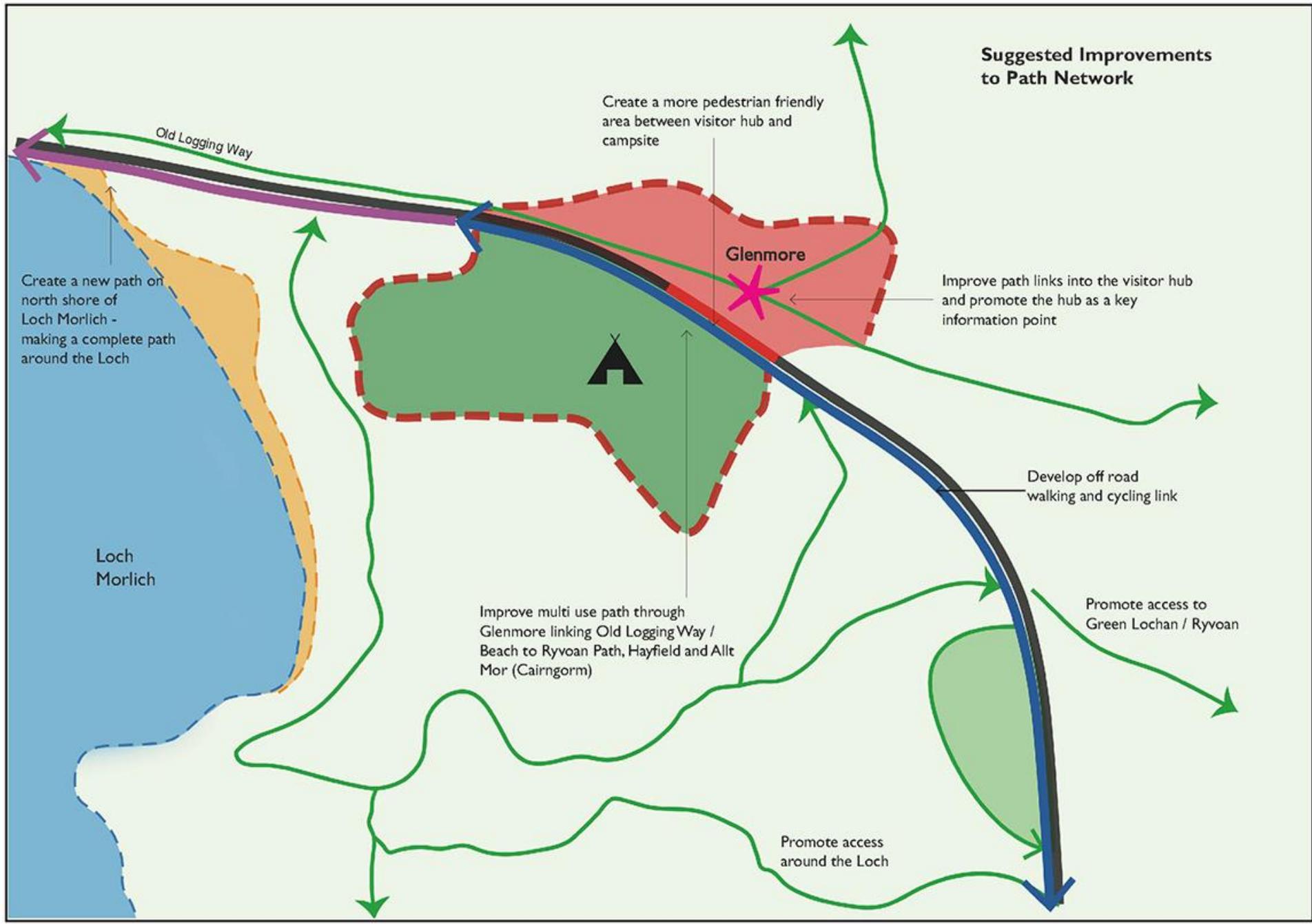
Highlife Highland have indicated a strong interest in establishing outdoor learning facilities at Glenmore as part of the wider renewal of facilities and enhancement of outdoor learning opportunities proposed.



4.3 Access Infrastructure

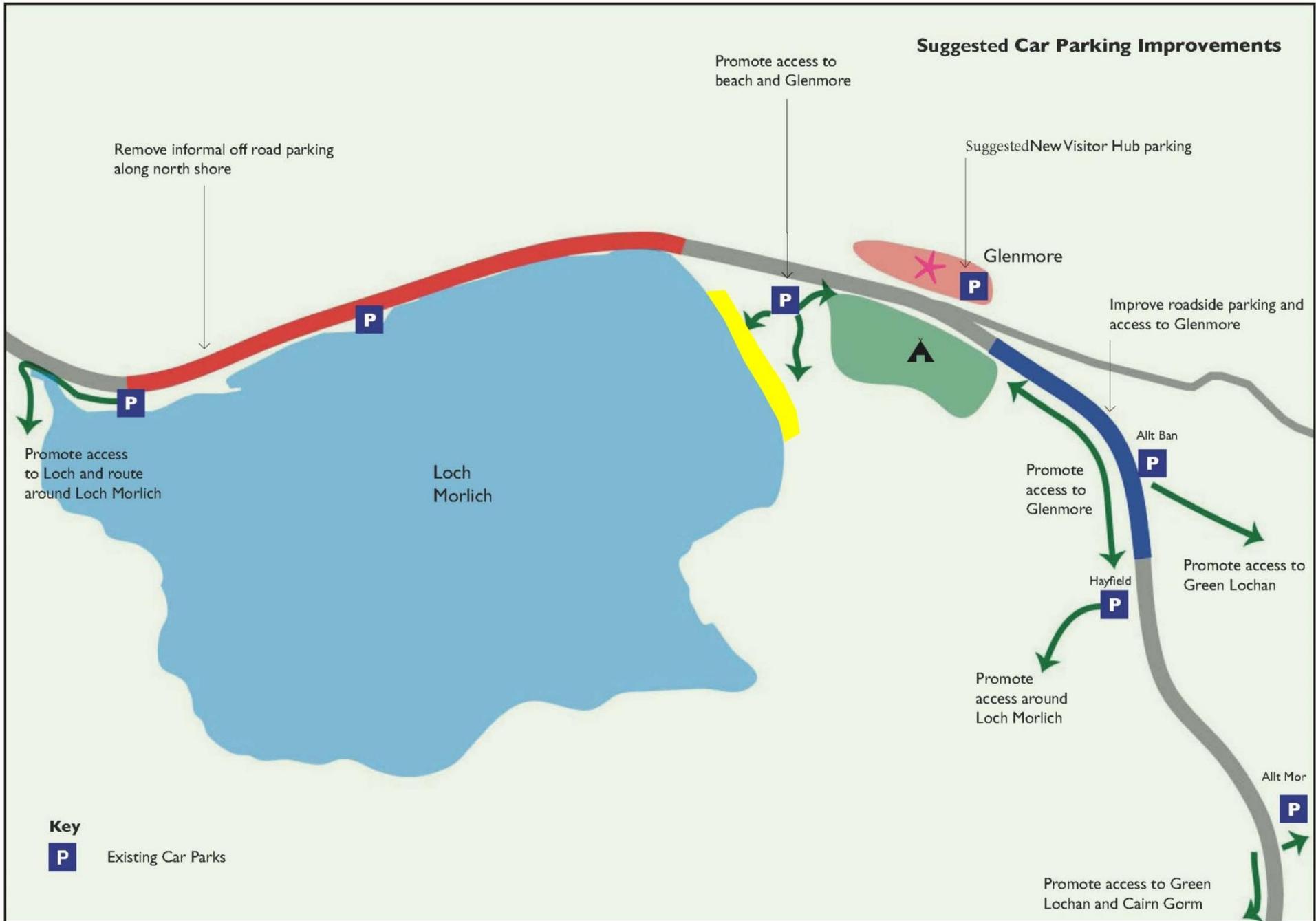
Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Improve access from Glenmore visitor hub and all car parks to the path network. b) Improve pedestrian/cycle access between existing facilities within the settlement and increase proportion built to Countryside for All standard. c) Design for positive behaviours and manage visitor flows to support capercaillie conservation through delivery of the Cairngorms Capercaillie Framework
Outline Proposals	<p>3.1 Increase understanding of visitor needs and motivations through further visitor experience analysis to help inform improvements to visitor approach, arrival, car parking and the trail network (short term)</p> <p>3.2 Improve path connections between facilities within the settlement – i.e. visitor hub, bus stops, car parks, shop/café, campsite, youth hostel, Glenmore Lodge, Reindeer Centre, beach, watersports centre (medium term)</p> <p>3.3 Improve wider connections, for example the Hayfield car park to the beach, to and along The Logging Way and from the Allt Ban car park to Green Lochan/Ryvoan Pass (medium term)</p> <p>3.4 Review path network and trailheads and more specifically complete round-the-loch path by building a new loch shore path along the north shore of Loch Morlich from the beach to Rothiemurchus Lodge bridge (medium term)</p> <p>3.5 Use the hub as the main orientation point for information about other walking and cycling routes from trailheads around Glenmore (medium term)</p> <p>3.6 Improve public toilet provision, particularly at the beach in conjunction with the watersports centre (medium term)</p> <p>3.7 Improve the pedestrian experience crossing the road through effective crossing point design (medium term)</p>

Suggested Improvements to Path Network



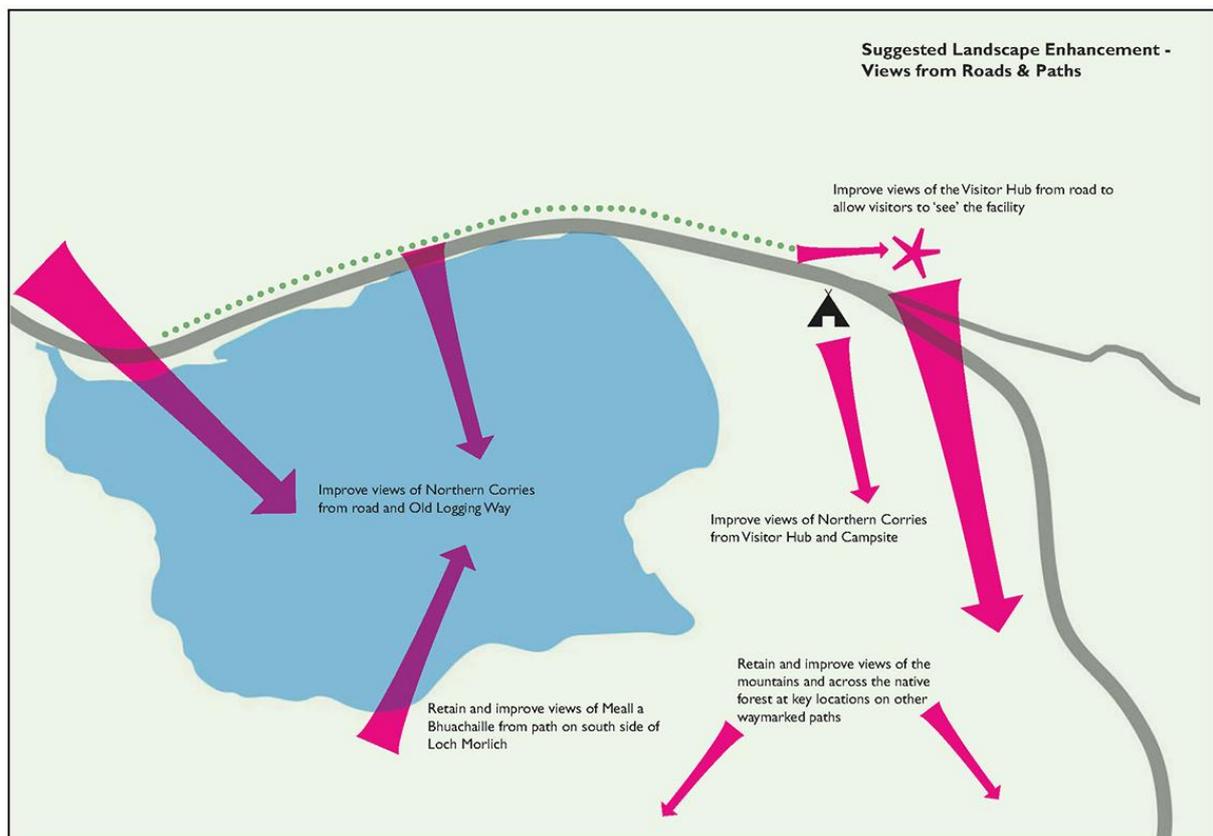
4.4 Parking

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Make it simpler for visitors to understand where to park when they first arrive and for specific facilities/activities/destinations. b) Reduce roadside parking on north shore of Loch Morlich and through Glenmore.
Outline Proposals	<p>4.1 Promote and manage the car parks as a network, each of which has a clear role (medium term):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Visitor hub: main car park for hub, SYHA, beach and local paths ii) Loch Morlich north shore car parks: short term parking, Sailing Club and round Loch Morlich trail iii) Beach: access to beach and watersports iv) Allt Ban: Green Lochan, Ryvoan Pass, v) Allt Mor: Green Lochan, Ryvoan Pass. Allt More Trail, event overspill vi) Hayfield: sledging, beach overspill, events, Loch Morlich Trail vii) New dedicated parking for the Reindeer Centre <p>4.2 Reduce informal roadside car parking along lochside and in settlement by introducing verge management and better use of other car parks (short term)</p> <p>4.3 Improve signage and orientation to help people choose where best to park (medium term)</p> <p>4.4 Co-ordinate approaches to car park charging with clear information about reinvestment (medium term)</p>



4.5 Landscape Enhancement

Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Open up strategic views by targeted tree felling from key points in Glenmore to the mountains and loch and to visually connect facilities within the settlement. b) Improve the design quality to reflect the distinctive character of Glenmore.
Proposals	<p>5.1 Identify and retain key strategic panoramas – eg from visitor hub to the Northern Corries and Loch Morlich (medium term)</p> <p>5.2 Identify the strategic view corridors within the settlement so that the visitor hub, shop/café, bus stops, Reindeer Centre etc are inter-visible (short term)</p> <p>5.3 Prepare Design Brief (for structures, materials surfaces, planting, furniture etc) and a landscape management and maintenance plan to deliver the high quality of visitor experience into the long term (medium term)</p> <p>5.4 Develop plans to manage the setting of all paths, opening up views, thinning trees and establishing new trees to improve the visitor experience (medium term)</p>



Question 6: Do you support the proposals? If not, what other proposals would help deliver the enhancements sought?