

Why the National Park cannot be trusted on Flamingo Land

Description



The West Riverside site at Balloch which Scottish Enterprise and the LLTNPA wish to develop is currently a greenspace

A month ago I received a response from the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority about their involvement in the west Riverside side and Flamingo Land. In their letter [eir-2016-051-responseb](#) the Park have tried to defend their integrity as a planning authority and their ability to make an independent judgement on the Flamingo Land proposals:

Scottish Enterprise invited the Park Authority's Head of Visitor Experience to be involved in the process of reviewing the submissions for the West Riverside site. This involvement was in an advisory capacity in relation to tourism considerations and separate from, and without prejudice to, any consideration of planning issues. The decision regarding a preferred developer was for Scottish Enterprise as landowner to make.

The documents which accompanied the letter [eir-2016-051-response-appendix-a](#) however contradict this claim and shows the Park were on the selection panel which appointed Flamingo Land. Here are some relevant extracts which prove this:

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 16 July 2015 14:27
To: Mairi Bell
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: RE: Closing Date Ex

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Mairi

Would you, or someone from your team, like to be in

Assuming we get submissions at the closing date it wo

Regards

[REDACTED]

So if the decision was for Scottish Enterprise to make, why were the Park involved in appraising the the LLTNPA would not later on object to this.

From:
Sent:
To:
Subject:

[REDACTED]
27 July 2015 10:0
Mairi Bell
West Riverside -

Hi Mairi,

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] has asked me to drop you a note to check your submissions week commencing 10th August? We plan to receive a full day may not be required.

I will circulate a scoring criteria and matrices in due course.

If you have any queries just let me know.

Best Regards,

This email makes it clear that LLTNPA were not just providing advice on the implications of each Decision. In agreeing to score bids the Park made themselves a party to the selection of the

Ac

West River

Wednesday 30th Sep

Scottish Enterprise Offices, Atrium C

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- 1. Introductions**
 - 2. Proposal Overview**
 - 3. Planning**
 - 4. Timescales/Milestones**
 - 5. Construction Costs**
 - 6. Land Price**
 - 7. Abnormal Costs**
 - 8. Gateway Centre/LLTNPA**
-

The emails about this meeting – the subject is deleted from the response – show both Stuart (S) meeting appears to have taken place soon after Flamingo Land had been appointed. It shows the Pa

While the FOI/EIR response is far from complete – there are references to other written material/meetings about which no information has been provided – they provide enough information to show that the LLTNPA was deeply involved in the selection of Flamingo Land.

What they also show is that the LLTNPA made a number of false claims in their [flamingo-land-news-release](#) issued on 26th September:

– [Scottish Enterprise recently appointed Flamingo Land Limited](#) as the preferred developer of their 20 hectare site at West Riverside, Balloch, in Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park. –

Comment: this is far from the full truth, the LLTNPA was clearly involved in the selection process

– *Scottish Enterprise kept the National Park Authority’s tourism team informed at each stage of the marketing of the site and the process of selection of their preferred developer.* –

Comment: this wrongly implies that LLTNPA were not involved in the selection process. The Park have bent the truth as far you can without actually lying. Yes, the Park were informed but they were also INVOLVED.

I am afraid this disregard of the facts and bending of the truth is what I have come to expect from the National Park Authority. Its how they got Government Ministers to approve their proposed camping ban. Perhaps before the same process is repeated with Flamingo Land, the LLTPNA Board could start to insist that its staff start working to some basic standards of governance. Perhaps they could also explain how in light of this level of involvement by their staff they can take an independent decision on any planning application from Flamingo Land?

I fear though that following all the bad publicity on Flamingo Land, the LLTNPA/Scottish Enterprise are working together intensively behind the scenes to win people over to the proposal and put propaganda into the press through their bloated communications team <http://www.dailyrecord.co.uk/news/local-news/community-council-back-flamingo-lands-9189747>. I am pretty sure Murdoch Cameron, chair of Balloch and Haldane Community Council, was not the person who contacted the media about this. Indeed, from the article its unclear whether the Community Council actually met to agree a position or whether the views expressed were personal but have been taken to reflect those of the Community Council. I say this because there are lots of people in Balloch concerned about the proposals and I would be surprised if the Community Council had been able to take such a clear position.

What might we learn from Flamingo Land in Scarborough?

Meantime, for those concerned about what Flamingo Land might do on the site, thanks to the reader who sent this press article from Scarborough. Although it dates from 2014, it is well worth a read as its very relevant to what is happening in Balloch. It provides further evidence of where Flamingo Land's expertise lies â?? bling!

â??Made up of three distinct environments â?? Subterraneanâ??, â??Coastlineâ?? and â??Skyâ?? â?? Flamingo Land Coast will feature an iconic glass roofed botanical gardens, roller coaster, 55 metre iconic lighthouse structure and Space Shot Tower, walk through aviary, sea view bar, restaurant and a new town square.â??

In both cases, Flamingo Land was appointed in secret. In Scarborough the Council were forced to reveal the mystery bidder to redevelop the Futurist Theatre site. In Balloch, Scottish Enterprise appeared to have appointed Flamingo Land back in September 2015 but they and the Park kept the appointment secret until after the Balloch Community Planning event.

In both cases the Flamingo Land development involves destroying something else. In Scarborough, for the last two years there has been a campaign to save the building and in effect prevent the Flamingo Land development but this appears recently to have failed (see here) In Balloch, it will involve the destruction of what is currently greenspace.

If the Scarborough development now goes ahead, it raises interesting questions about Flamingo Land's capacity to develop so many sites at once. This should have been considered as part of the tender evaluation and I wonder how the LLTNPA member of the panel scored this? (The answer is exempt from the Freedom of Information Act unfortunately).

And for those of us who are interested in the manipulation of public opinion and claims made that as Gordon Gibb is a Scot the development should be supported, the following quote should be of interest:

â??Flamingo Land boss Gordon Gibb said:

â??Scarborough is my home town so it gives me great pleasure, both personally and on behalf of Flamingo Land Limited, to be associated with developing a major visitor attraction on the old Futurist site.â??

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. flamingo land
2. LLTNPA
3. natural environment
4. planning
5. Scottish Enterprise

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