

Flamingo economics- there is an alternative

Description

14.13 Summary

Socio Economic

14.13.1 The socio-economic assessment shows that the proposed development will have a beneficial socio-economic impact through temporary construction employment supported through supply chain linkages in the wider economy and job creation during the operation of the development.

14.13.2 The proposed development would not result in any significant social or economic benefits.

Environmental Statement Volume 1 Main Report – Flamingo Land/Scottish Enterprise Planning Application

After my post on the huge visual impact of the proposed Flamingo Land development at Balloch ([see here](#)), the issue of job creation has been brought up as a reason to support the development. Employment and economic health is very important but because the area of Loch Lomond is unique from a landscape, wildlife and cultural heritage perspective, it was designated a National Park 16 years ago. If our National Parks were to be run like any other part of the landscape and economy, then pretty soon there would be nothing to value or protect.

This is why there is a requirement in the planning application process for potential developers to provide evidence of the effects their proposal would have on the landscape, wildlife and people of the park – including assessments of any economic benefits or detriments.

Flamingo Land and Scottish Enterprise (who own the land, meaning we still own it) have commissioned studies which give some insight into the effects the building and operation of this huge development would have. The following figures are taken directly from these documents ([See here for main report – 3MB file!](#)) which constitute a large part of the application. These are not my opinions or guesses but figures provided by Peter Brett Associates, a professional company who have done the investigation, calculation and then made expert judgements on behalf of Flamingo Land and Scottish Enterprise.

Construction

First the report considers the prospects for employment during the construction phase. The cost of building the development is priced at £35 million. That sounds like a great deal of money and

instinctively you feel that it must mean the creation of many jobs but the devil is in the detail. A figure of 328 jobs has been circulated but reading the documents that Flamingo Land has submitted, it is clear that this eye-catching number is not the whole story. Yes, many people could work on such a huge development but there will not be a recruitment session to find over three hundred people with the necessary skills to start a new job.

Construction is a process over a long time with many skills needed so it will work in phases with people generally working on short contracts to do things like steelwork, electrics or drainage. The headline 328 figure is really just adding up all the smaller bits of work which might range from a few days to a few months and of course the same worker could do a contract for groundwork at the start of the project and then landscaping at the end.

Economic analysis using industry standard formulae and done by Peter Brett Associates has calculated what this could mean.

West Riverside and Woodbank House

Environmental Statement: Volume 1 – Main Report

14.7.5 “It is generally accepted in economic appraisal of development schemes, that 10 person years of full-time continuous employment is equivalent to one permanent job. In light of this, the construction phase of the proposed development would support 328 gross temporary construction jobs, equivalent to 33 full time equivalent (FTE) jobs.”

The Flamingo Land resort construction could support 33 full time equivalent jobs. Considering the huge size of the development proposal, its potential for lasting impact on the loch and on the town and the National Park, the number is much lower than many expectations – but a job for Balloch and the surrounding area is still a job, right ?

The consultants report lays out the strong likelihood that companies getting construction contracts will **not** be based locally.

14.7.8 “high levels of connectivity to the Central Belt will likely lead to contracts being awarded to firms out with the Wider Region”

The report defines the Wider Region as a 45 minute drive from Balloch so workers could come from not just Glasgow or Stirling but from across Scotland or even the UK. This represents work for those people but does little for those who live within the area directly affected by the development and does nothing for Scotland's first national park.

Operation

Moving on to the Operational Phase, again the promises are detailed by the report. Peter Brett Associates notes that the applicant says what their expectation for worker numbers would be.

14.7.12 “...a total of 76 full time staff and 165 part-time or seasonal staff would be required annually to support the operation of the Proposed Development. Based on assumed ratio of part-time/seasonal staff to FTEs of 0.5, a total of 159 gross FTEs would be

required annually to support the operation of the Proposed Development.”

So this figure looks more promising however remember that the majority of the work will be done by 165 seasonal or part-time workers who will be on short contracts with no guarantee of work. This means difficulties renting or getting a mortgage, fluctuations in income that can make family life harder to manage and an insecurity which eats away at confidence. Only 76 jobs have the potential to be full time.

Then there is what I think is one of the biggest problems about any operational jobs at a potential Flamingo Land resort. The applicant's own document states quite clearly that the majority of those jobs **will earn lower wages**. It is laid out in black and white that the success of the development and in turn the profits of the company will depend on paying people a “lower’ wage.

Table 14.8 Operation Additionality Assumptions

...the majority of operational jobs will earn lower wages...

Developers try and put their best case forward so it is astonishing how downbeat the predictions for employment are. Fewer jobs than might be expected and a clear warning that the longer term prospects for anyone who works for Flamingo Land are low wages, part time work and no security. In return for this Flamingo Land would take any profit out of the area while degrading the landscape and the wildlife that depends on it.

There could be another way to spark economic activity in the site but Scottish Enterprise – on our behalf as a public agency and on publicly owned land – appear to not be interested in potential local drivers for business. How about investing in the infrastructure that local people have already clearly said they want in the 2016 Balloch Planning Charrette – things like an attractive safe public path along the west side of the River Leven with opportunities for pavilions housing small businesses, a bridge to connect the West Riverbank to the Balloch Castle side and improvements to public transport. None of these are on the table.

A much smaller scale but sustainable use of the land could encompass small cafes, bike hire, guided walks or creative enterprises and other small business spaces. How about Scottish Enterprise creating a hub supporting small business in rural or National Park areas which would encourage local enterprises to flourish rather than lavishing support on the millionaire owners of Flamingo Land ? Help economic activity that keeps profits in the area and offers jobs which are connected to local people and businesses. This could instil a much better sense of Balloch being able to have a say in it's own destiny. It would also offer the sustainable economics that the National Park is legally required to promote.

Links for further information

See the full report and many other documents which give insight into the actual impact of a development like Flamingo Land on the National Park and Balloch on the Loch Lomond and Trossachs Park Authority planning website.

<https://eplanning.lochlomond-trossachs.org/OnlinePlanning/?agree=0>

Search for 'Riverside' on the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park planning web pages for the main document which is referenced in this post. It is called "Environmental Statement : Volume 1 – Main Report"

https://eplanning.lochlomond-trossachs.org/OnlinePlanning/files/AE4432788BDDDCF7708E3677863DD31F/pdf/2018_0133_PPP-ES_Vol_1_Main_report-100305424.pdf

The 2016 Planning Charrette report offers an insight into what people want to see in Balloch.

<https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/rr-content/uploads/2016/08/Charrette-report.pdf>

A new report indicates that tourism and hospitality consistently offers jobs that are not well paid and so workers, no matter how skilled or dedicated, are unable to contribute to local economies. If your money is tight and your job insecure you cannot support local businesses.

<https://www.heraldscotland.com/news/17198009.scotlands-tourism-industry-is-fuelling-low-wage-economy-uk-advisor-says/?c=xe7y7b?c=qthhq>

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. Development Plan
2. economics
3. flamingo land
4. jobs
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6. LLTNPA

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