

Flamingo Land's spin about their proposals to take over Balloch

Description



Spin. The news release was headed by this photo which had the caption “Above is the view from Pierhead”. This was wrong, its the view from Lomond Shores TOWARDS the pierhead.

Yesterday, Flamingo Land's media consultants issued a [New release](#) on their revised Planning Application at Balloch. This received widespread media coverage and appeared designed to deceive.

Most of the media did not fall for the attempt to rename the proposed development Lomond Banks and continued to refer to it as Flamingo Land. No-one, however, questioned the description of Andy Miller, who is quoted in the news release, as “Director of Lomond Banks”. There is no company of that name registered at Companies House. Mr Miller was described last year as Director of Sales at Iconic Leisure Developments ([see here](#)), another company that does not exist. That has not stopped Scottish Enterprise claims its Exclusivity Agreement is with Iconic Leisure Ltd ([see here](#)) – shades of Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Natural Retreats for those of you who have followed the enterprise scandal at Cairn Gorm.

The photo (above) leading the news release provides a nice example of architectural spin. The PEOPLE in the foreground are irrelevant to the Planning Application. They are just there to catch the viewer's eye and sell the development, designed to distract the viewer from the appreciating the enormous size of the proposed development in the background. Note how it towers above the trees. Take out the people and move the viewpoint forward a bit, as the Developer has done in the "massing study" and the extent of the landscape impact becomes far more apparent:

MASSING STUDY OF PROPOSED DEVELOPMENT FROM VIEWPOINT (90° FIELD OF VIEW)



The illustrations in the massing study shows different shaped buildings to those in the news release.

Flamingo Land's description of how the proposals fit with the Local Development Plan

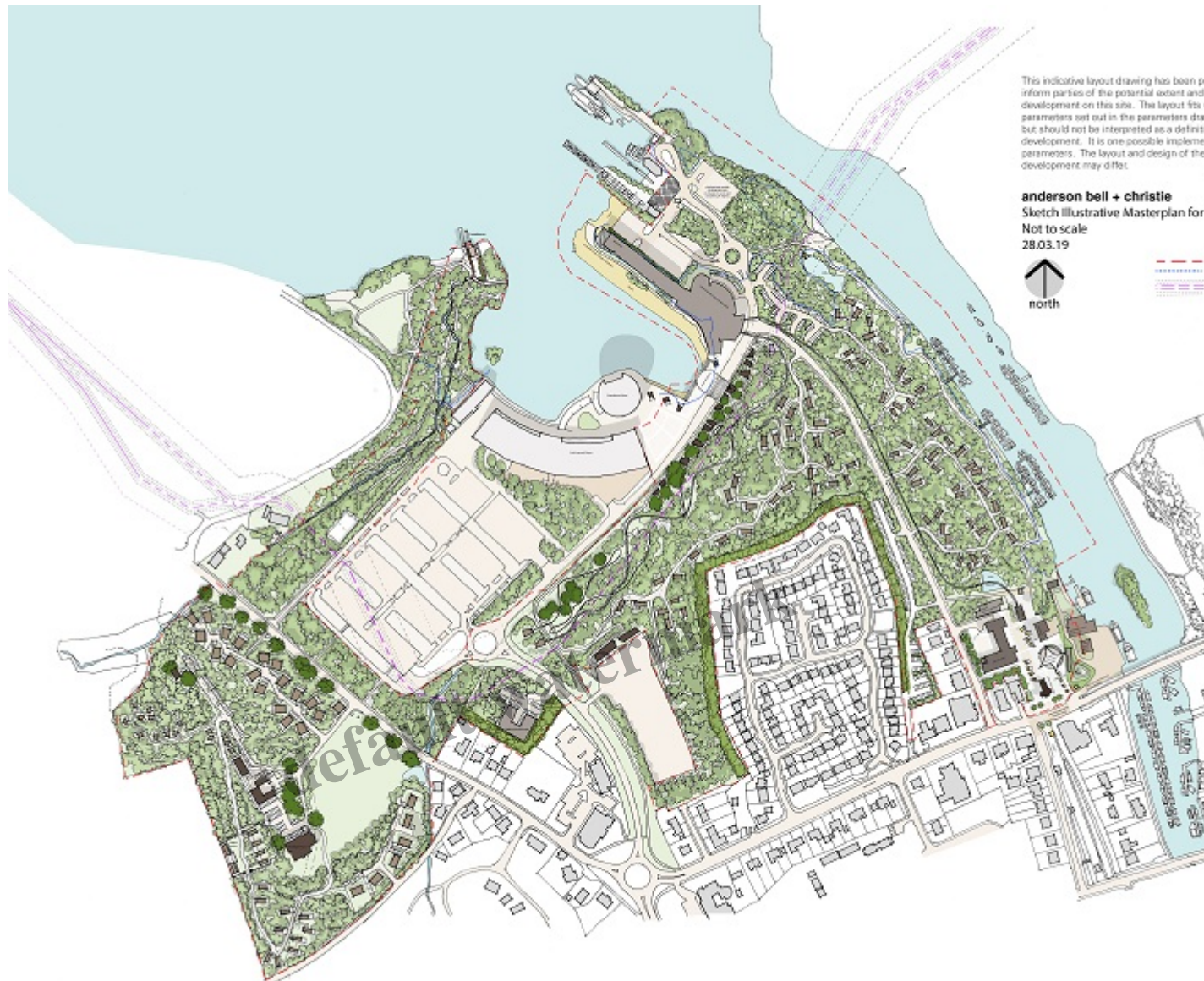
The media release goes on to claim:

The development, named Lomond Banks, will transform an area of Balloch currently marked for tourism development in the local plan.

This statement contains a LIE. Only part of the area was earmarked for "Visitor Experience" – not quite the same thing as a "Tourism Development" – in the Local Development Plan.



Only the areas marked VE1 and VE4 were identified in the LDP for development yet Flamingo Land's proposals are to develop much of the land inbetween



Extract from Flamingo Land's revised applications showing the extent of the development – all covered in green

Neither Drumkinnon Woods nor the point on the West side of Drumkinnon Bay were earmarked for ANY development in the Local Development Plan. Indeed the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority rejected an attempt by Scottish Enterprise to smuggle Drumkinnon Woods into the plan at a very late stage ([see here](#)). Yet Flamingo Land is still trying to claim that all this application is in accord with the Local Development Plan (32 Lodges in the case of Drumkinnon Woods).

How the 6 private houses and 15 flats for sale – behind the facade of Woodbank House – on the Woodbank Site which Flamingo Land now own classify as “tourism development” is not explained either. Perhaps the intention is to sell this residential accommodation as second homes?

Flamingo Land's description of the impact of the proposals on green space

A second attempt to fundamentally distort the truth about what is being proposed is the claim that the underlying vision behind the development is about *"Landscape upgrades to public footpaths, dog walking routes and greenspaces"*. The proposals for a walkway along the river, which was the main "upgrade" the local community requested when consulted through the Balloch Charrette, have been abandoned. At present, almost all the Riverside Site is open space and you have the right to wander or walk your dog anywhere. Flamingo Land's proposals to cover this area, as well as Drumkinnon Woods, with chalets (42 on Riverside) will change all that, as will the construction of the leisure complex along the shore of Drumkinnon Way. This is NOT about the upgrade of greenspace but its removal.

The media release twice tries to portray the development as being about families. The new buildings, both residential and tourist, are described variously as *"A variety of family accommodation facilities"*, *"Lomond Banks will be a world class family holiday village"* and *"affordable and family oriented"*. So are young single people and groups, for example, to be banned? Somehow, I think not. The word "family" is simply another marketing device and is being used here in an attempt to try and make the development of woodland and green open space more acceptable.

Has Flamingo Land surveyed families or anyone else for that matter to check whether they agree with Andy Miller's claim that:

"with Lomond Banks, Scotland will have a quality destination that respects and compliments the surrounding area."

I suspect Greta Thunberg and all those children who have been walking out of school because we are not doing enough to save the natural environment might have something interesting to say. That natural environment is why Scotland has long been a "quality destination" in tourism terms. It is, however, being increasingly wrecked by inappropriate developments with Flamingo Land being a prime example.

Flamingo Land, which is based in Yorkshire, also knows how to play the Scotland card:

"Scotland is frequently listed as one of the top tourism destinations in the world, with people flocking to experience its nature, landscapes, heritage and people. Loch Lomond and Balloch are already popular with day trippers and visitors from all around Scotland and the UK."

And,

"We know that our vision for the area will add tangible value to the community and to the rest of Scotland for the next 40 years and beyond."

What the media release omitted to mention is that Balloch and the whole of the southern half of Loch Lomond was gridlocked for much of the holiday weekend. This provided a frustrating experience for visitors and made the lives of residents hell. There are already too many cars yet Flamingo Land wants to bring in more. One of the fundamental failures of the LLTNPA has been to come up with any solutions to this issue. If this Planning Application is approved it will get a whole lot worse. Local

residents must be shuddering over what will happen over the construction period, which the media release reveals will extend to 2024. Yet Flamingo Land claims it *“will add tangible value to the community”*.

The role of the Scottish Government and Public Authorities in promoting this development

The media release refers to “Our Plan” without clarifying that Scottish Enterprise is the joint applicant. Nowhere are they quoted in the release. It is pretty clear they don’t want to bring any more public attention to their role in the sell-off of what is public land and how they are driving overdevelopment of the area ([see here](#)).

The release too is silent about the role of the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority, who sat on the interview panel which appointed Flamingo Land as “preferred developer” for the site. So what was agreed in the secret negotiations that have been conducted with Flamingo Land/Iconic Leisure/Lomond Banks over the last 8 months since the Planning Application was put on hold?

Two weeks ago in their update on the Planning Application the LLTNPA stated *“The Authority’s Board or Planning and Access Committee (made up by members of our Board) will then make a decision on the application at a meeting in public.”* Now Flamingo Land are claiming that *“The application will be determined by The Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Planning & Access Committee”* i.e the Planning Committee rather than the full Board. Why? and who took the decision? That would not be in the public interest and couldn’t have been made at the Board Meeting in March UNLESS the LLTNPA statement two weeks ago was another deliberate attempt to hide what has been agreed in secret.

Flamingo Land’s media release ends with another attempt to deceive:

“Local people will have the opportunity to view and comment on the plans as part of the process.”

What about the wider public? Clearly, Flamingo Land don’t want to attract any more objections than the 40,000 or so already received but they should not misrepresent who has a right to object.

What needs to happen?

This post has shown how Flamingo Land’s news release is full of spin and misleading statements which misrepresent the truth. The LLTNPA, if it was worthy of the name National Park, should have issued its own public correction to these errors. It won’t, however, do that, its already far too compromised by its role in promoting this development. That’s why I believe its time to start calling on the Scottish Government to call-in this application if ANY part of it is approved.

Meantime, its up to campaigners to expose what has been going wrong and put pressure on our politicians to intervene. There are lots of opportunities. Maybe Extinction Rebellion could get involved? If our National Parks carry on promoting development like this there really will be no hope

for our planet.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. Development Plan
2. flamingo land
3. landscape
4. LLTNPA
5. Local communities
6. planning
7. Scottish Enterprise

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