

No leadership on the bonnie banks – Tom Hunter’s plans for Loch Lomond

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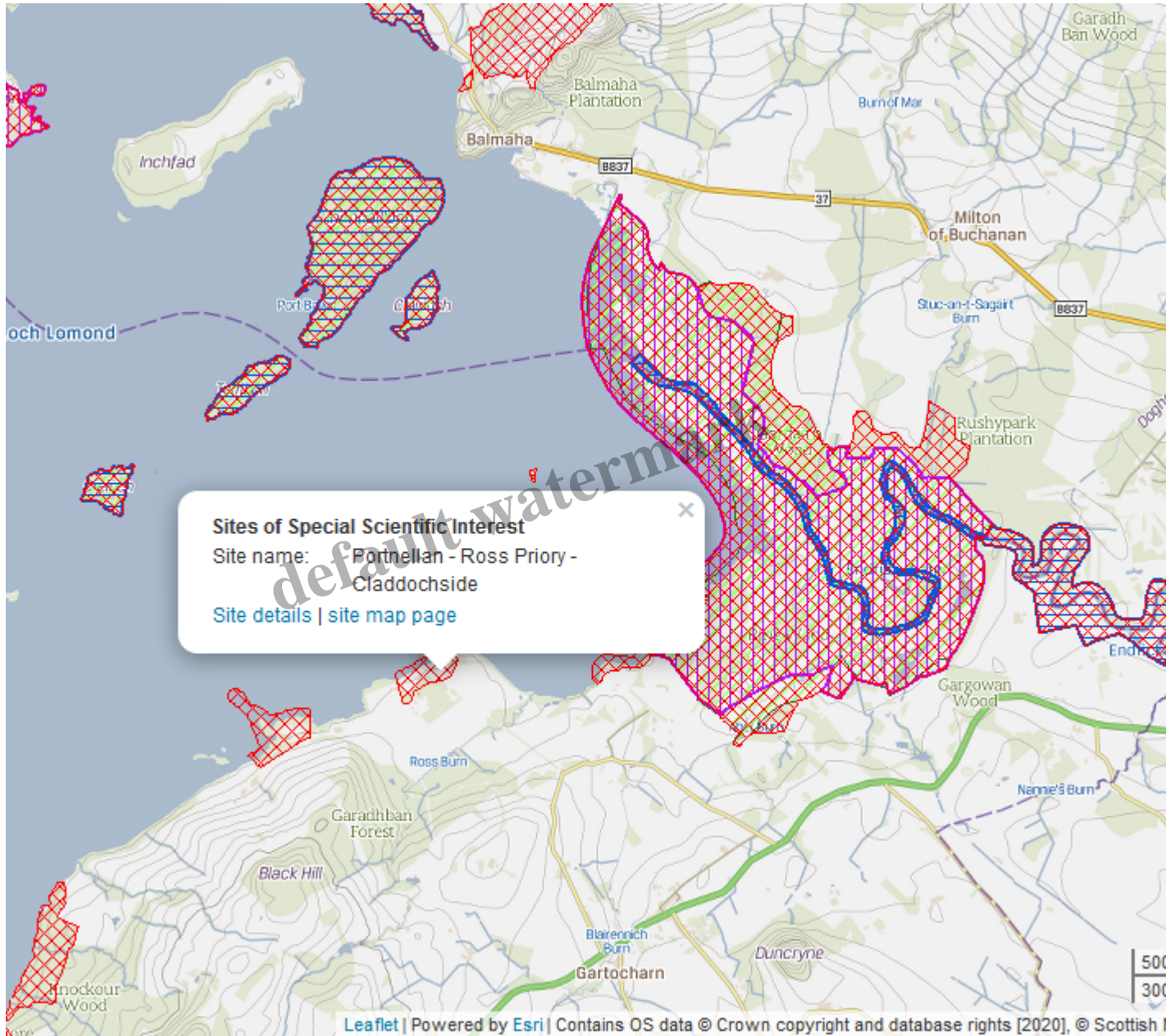
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Plan as revealed at the recent local community consultation

The latest plans to develop the shores of Loch Lomond were made known to the wider public at the weekend ([see here – includes photomontage](#)). Tom Hunter wants to develop a £10m “global

leadership centre”, named after him, at Ross Priory on the South West corner of Loch Lomond. Ross Priory is run as a conference centre by Strathclyde University ([see here](#)). The gothic building is set well back from the shore. Mr Hunter and Strathclyde University want to build a 10,000 square foot, modern building, with plate glass windows onto the Loch, and 10 pods all very close to the water’s edge.



The South West corner of Loch Lomond is famed for its wildlife and currently unspoilt. It is subject of numerous designations intended to protect its special character as shown by this map from SNH’s site hatching = SSSI; mauve hatching = special protection area for birds; blue = special area for conservation; green = national nature reserve

It appears that the Hunter Foundation proposal is right next to the Portnellan, Ross Priory, Claddochside Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated because of its value to earth science. That shoreline has been unmodified by humans and reveals 10,000 years of earth history since the Loch Lomond glacial re-advance (including when Loch Lomond was invaded by the sea for a time). The

plans revealed so far indicated that Tom Hunter wants to further artificialise the shoreline next door (see photo in Herald article above).

That Strathclyde University could contemplate backing a development adjacent to something so important to science tells you something about how the people who run our universities have abandoned values for business. Jim McDonald, Principal of the University, was quoted as claiming it is a *“socially progressive institution and we are always looking at new and innovative ways to drive societal change and boost economic growth”*. There appears to be little place for the natural environment in his vision. As for the Climate Emergency, there are no public transport links to Ross Priory and the plans include provision for yet more parking places.

That the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority could contemplate development in the south west corner of Loch Lomond, which is at present unspoilt and free of development, should come as no surprise. They have, I understand, been in secret negotiations with the Hunter Foundation for the last 18 months. Neither Strathclyde Regional Council nor West Dunbartonshire Council, when they were responsible for planning matters here, would ever have allowed a proposal such as this to get so far. It would have been ruled out at the start. Perhaps though, the LLTNPA will reject the application as they did with Ward’s Estate last year ([see here](#))? If that is the intention, however, why go through with the planning rigmarole?

The problem is that the LLTNPA are prepared to consider developments ANYWHERE. They have no effective plan for Loch Lomond. Developers know this and, as a result, there is a rush to develop the bonnie banks from Flamingo Land to Cameron House to Mouldsdale Properties at Tarbet. Parkswatch has revealed there are connections between all these developers. In 2013 Tom Hunter secretly helped rescue Optical Express, Mouldsdale’s company ([see here](#)). This suggests there are close links between Tom Hunter and David Mouldsdale. Unfortunately we are unlikely to ever know what information, if any, might have been shared about “development opportunities” on the loch. Whatever the case, any forthcoming Planning Application should not be seen as a one-off but part of a much wider development grab on the shores of Loch Lomond and Loch Long ([see here for latest on Portincaple](#)).

Tom Hunter is quoted in the Herald as saying the proposed Leadership Centre *“will provide a place where the future of Scotland will be discussed, debated and ultimately decided.”* If Tom Hunter’s vision for the future places so little value on the natural environment and treats this it like any other commodity, it doesn’t seem worth having. As a sign of good intent, it would be much better if Hunter Foundation Leadership Centre was built on one of the many derelict bits of land in the West of Scotland and somewhere accessible to all. That might even bring economic benefits to somewhere that needs it.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

1. conservation
2. landscape
3. LLTNPA
4. planning

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