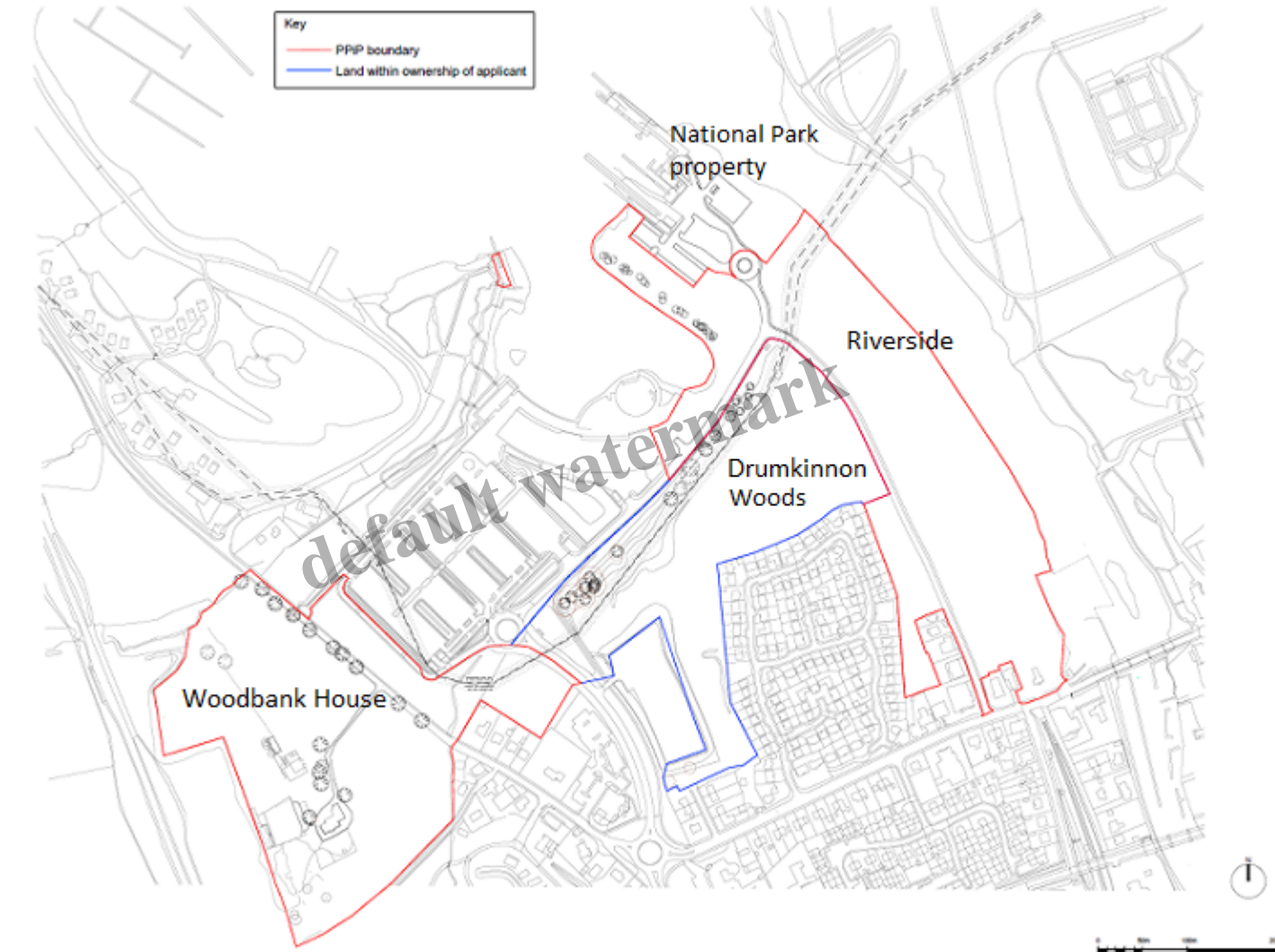


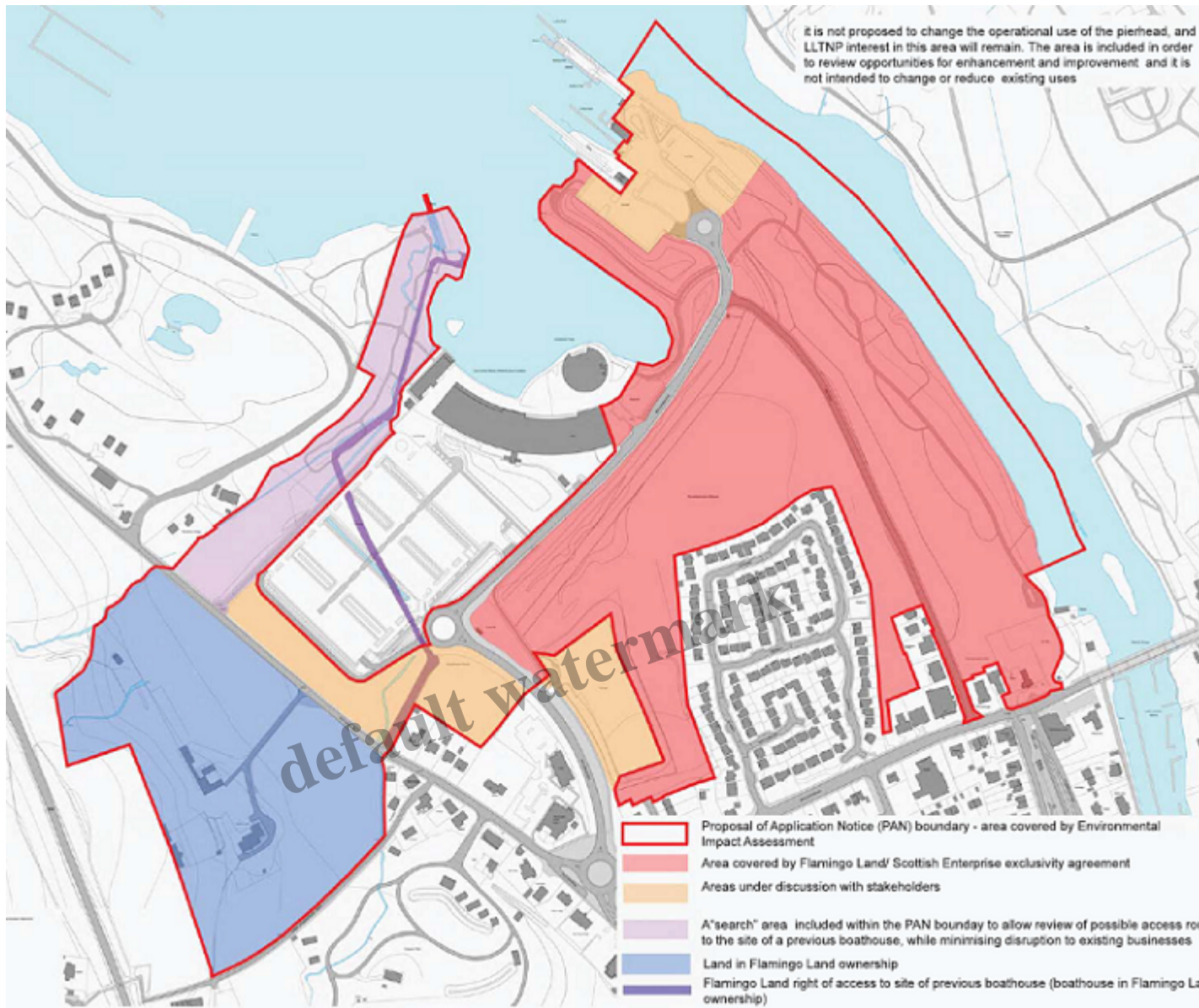
Flamingo Land – the same old planning application dressed up in a new guise

Description



The red lines demarcate the boundaries of the land included in the application for Planning Permission in Principle. I have added text to show the main areas referred to in this post.

Yesterday the revised planning application from Flamingo Land to develop Balloch was published on the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority (LLTNPA) planning portal ([see here](#)). The main differences to the planning application that was submitted in 2018 and then withdrawn in September 2019, just before the LLTNPA was due to consider it, is that Scottish Enterprise is no longer an applicant and it now covers a significantly smaller area:



The purple strip, left of Drumkinnon Bay, and pierhead area (light brown) to the right are both owned or managed by the Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park Authority

The land that has been removed from the new application consists of Drumkinnon Woods and land which is either owned or leased by the LLTNP, both of which I will consider below.

Apart from that, however, the main elements of the application as they relate to its footprint are more or less the same (it even has the same photo of the Maid of the Loch on the front of the Design Statement):

1.1 Development overview

Name of the scheme: Lomond Banks

Description: PPIp Application and EIA for proposed tourism and leisure-led mixed use development at West Riverside and Woodbank House (Total site area 25.9 hectares (64.3acres), Red Line Boundary area 18.8 hectares (46.9 acres) and Blue Line Boundary area 7 hectares (17.4 acres)), including:

- Refurbished visitor information building;
- 60-bedroom Apart-hotel;
- 32-bedspace budget accommodation;
- Up to 127 self-catering lodges comprised as follows:
 - 17 woodland bothies/pods (in grounds of Woodbank House)
 - 30 woodland lodges (in grounds of Woodbank House)
 - 37 Countryside Lodges (in grounds of Woodbank House)
 - 42 Lodges at West Riverfront
- Up to 15 apartments within Woodbank House
- Up to 6 apartments within the refurbished outbuildings of Woodbank house;
- 900m2 brewery;
- A boathouse c.95m2 for storage of equipment and operation of water-based activities;
- Leisure/pool/water park area up to approximately 2,500m2 ;
- Restaurants/Cafe & Retail areas up to 1,100m2 in total;
- Visitor reception areas & hub building up to approximately 2,000m2;
- External activity areas including tree top walk, events/ performance areas, children's play areas, monorail, forest adventure rides, picnic / play areas;
- Staff and service area of up to approximately 900m2;
- Associated parking (up to 393 additional spaces), landscaping and infrastructure development works;

The green lines indicate the elements of the development that are exactly the same as the original planning application before revision

- Access to be taken from the surrounding road network including Ben Lomond Way and Pier Road.

The proposed development also includes the remains of the Grade A listed Woodbank House and attendant structures. The conservation and redevelopment of Woodbank House and other listed structures within the site will be subject to future applications for planning and listed building consent.

As the Applicants are seeking PPIp rather than full planning permission, at this stage the proposed development comprises a suite of key parameters, within which the detailed design of the proposed development will be confirmed at a later date. Providing that the final design remains within these key parameters, this approach ensures that the likely 'maximum' extent of effects can be considered when determining the PPIp application for the proposed development.

The proposed development is shown on a Parameters Plan, which is included in this Design Statement (DS). The Parameters Plan is the development for which PPIp is being sought by the Applicants. All other plans submitted as part of the PPIp application are indicative and are provided for illustrative purposes only.

A more detailed description of the key parameters of the proposed development is provided in Chapter 3 of the Environmental Impact Assessment Report (EIA Report) and within the Planning Statement.

The Team:

- Applicant: Flamingo Land Resorts Ltd
- Project management: Glenfruin
- Planning and engineering services: Stantec
- Architecture and masterplanning: Anderson Bell Christie
- EIA: Stantec

Purpose and structure of this document: As the Applicant is seeking Planning Permission in Principle (PPIp) rather than full planning permission, there is no

While there are some significant differences between the new application and the **original** application (the areas not marked in green above), there are far less between the new application and the revised application which was due to be considered by the LLTNPA in 2019:

- the total number of self-catering lodges may have increased from 105 in the original application to 127 now but this almost matches the 125 in the revised application;
- the most significant difference to the revised application is that the proposal to construct 32 lodges in Drumkinnon Woods has been dropped – but this has been “compensated” for by an increase in lodges at Woodbank House (up from 50 to 84) leaving the total nearly the same;
- the original proposal to build 20 residential houses at Woodbank House, which was then reduced to 6 in the revised application, has been dropped but 6 new “apartments” are now to be built in the outbuildings at Woodbank House;
- the number of parking spaces has increased to 393 from 320 in the original application but is less

than the 493 included in the revised application.

While LLTNPA officers recommended to their Board that they reject the revised application, their reasons for doing so were extremely limited: the development of Drumkinnon Woods, the height of the hotel and the inadequate proposals to protect Woodbank House, a listed building. On all the other issues, as reflected in the changes between the original and the revised application, they had reached agreement. As I argued at the time ([see here](#)), this effectively gave the green light to Flamingo Land to come back with a slightly revised application.

While Covid may have had some impact, the fact that it has taken Flamingo Land over two and a half years to respond to that green light raises some questions which deserve to be answered. Has the delay due to Flamingo Land lacking money, a changeover in staff, disagreements with the LLTNPA about points of detail to do with the application or something else?

The answers to these questions will have different implications, for example if Flamingo Land is short of money to invest, has Scottish Enterprise decided to plough yet more money into the development to enable it to go ahead ([see here](#))?

Scottish Enterprise

Scottish Enterprise are no longer a party to the planning application, unlike the original which was submitted jointly with Flamingo Land, but very much remain a party to the development having in December 2020 signed a new agreement with Flamingo Land ([see here](#)). Early last year the Greens obtained a very heavily redacted copy after a Freedom of Information request. This revealed that Scottish Enterprise has entered a 125 year lease with Flamingo Land with a commitment to sell if and when the development is completed.

Scottish Enterprise has claimed ([see here](#)) this is not very different to what they had originally agreed. However, the lease is so redacted it is impossible to tell what area is covered (e.g have Drumkinnon Woods been included), what the financial arrangements are (is this yet another case of the public subsidising private business) or how the eventual sale price might be determined (i.e what the public will get back for the sale of what is prime land). I understand those redactions are currently subject to an appeal from the Greens the Information Commissioner.

It has come to something what a public body claims it is not in the public interest for the public to know about the disposal of public assets.

Drumkinnon Woods

Drumkinnon Woods are outlined in blue on the new location plan map (top) with the key stating that this is land in the applicant's ownership. Surely some mistake, unless Scottish Enterprise have secretly sold off parts of the Riverside Site that are now excluded from the proposed development? Woodbank House, however, which IS owned by Flamingo Land, is not also enclosed in blue which

suggests a mistake may have been made.

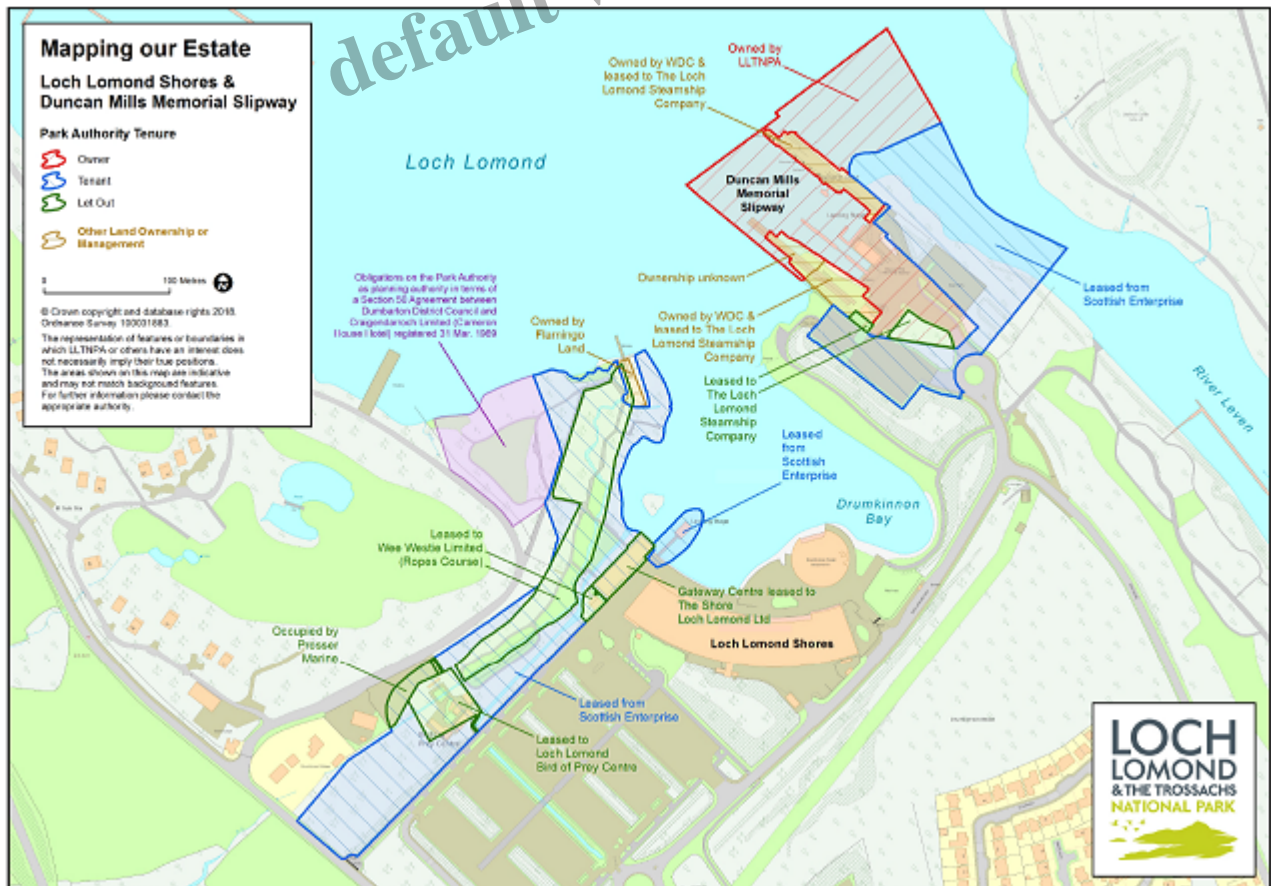
This raises an important point. Responding to the new application Green MSP Ross Greer stated yesterday that “it looks like our Save Loch Lomond campaign has scored at least one major win, the preservation of Drumkinnon Woods” ([see here](#)), but has it?

As long as Drumkinnon Woods are owned by either Scottish Enterprise or Flamingo Land they are unlikely ever to be safe. They may not be included in the current application, but what happens in five years time if the rest of the development goes ahead but does not attract enough visitors to pay for it? Flamingo Land could resuscitate its plans for Drumkinnon Woods claiming they are needed to protect/save jobs and there would be nothing then to prevent the LLTNPA from doing a U-turn, claiming a change in circumstances and allowing the development to go ahead.

Until there is a long-term plan for the ownership and management of Drumkinnon Woods that has been agreed with the local community and is properly financed, their future is far from assured.

Land under the control of the LLTNPA

The other major change is that land owned or controlled by the LLTNPA that was included in the previous application has now been excluded from the proposed development:



Apart from Drumkinnon Woods, the land removed from the new planning application (as

shown in maps above) almost exactly matches the land that owned or managed by the LLTNPA

The concerns I raised about LLTNPA staff agreeing to National Park land being included in a planning application, without their board ever having considered this publicly or whether it was in the public interest ([see here](#)), have been completely validated. The issues, however, have still not been discussed by the LLTNPA Board. Nor is it clear what discussions took place between LLTNPA staff and Flamingo Land before the decision to exclude their land from the new application. Much remains to be explained.

The most likely explanation for this decision is that LLTNPA staff, who have been behind the development since the start, wanted to reduce the likelihood of a legal challenge on the grounds of a conflict of interest should their Board give the development the go-ahead.

The fundamental conflict of interest of course remains. Jackie Baillie, MSP, in her objection to the proposal in 2019 revealed that her understanding was that Fiona Logan, former Chief Executive of the LLTNPA, had visited Flamingo Land in Yorkshire prior to them showing any interest in the Riverside Site. So, the LLTNPA was behind the whole idea of developing the site from the start. Meanwhile Scottish Enterprise, to give it credit, has always been open about the LLTNPA's involvement in the process that led to Flamingo Land being selected as preferred developer for the site ([see here](#)).

All this history should make everyone concerned about the future of Balloch and the National Park very sceptical about the future of the land currently owned or managed by the LLTNPA around the Riverside Site. The land they control may have been excluded from the new Planning Application but, just like Drumkinnon Woods, if the development goes ahead there is nothing to prevent the LLTNPA at a later stage handing over some of its land to Flamingo Land. Who knows what may have been discussed or agreed behind the scenes by Gordon Watson, the LLTNPA's Chief Executive, someone who has continuously tried to cover up and deny the LLTNPA's involvement ([see here](#))?

The fundamental issues with the proposed Flamingo Land development

This first post on the revised Flamingo Land planning application has attempted to show that all the issues with the original proposal remain. While it now has a smaller footprint, due to the exclusion of Drumkinnon Woods and LLTNPA controlled land, there is no guarantee that this land might not be included in an expansion of the development in future. The other elements of the proposed development remain fundamentally the same.

Flamingo Land, who are still the developer, may have re-branded their proposals as Lomond Banks but that illustrates the key question. Why should we allow the development of the bonnie banks and what is currently a public park along the shores of the River Leven in what is supposed to be a National Park? I will take a further look at that in future posts.

Category

1. Loch Lomond and Trossachs

Tags

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

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