

The West Highland Way

A strategic review of management and maintenance



Slater
Business
Services

On behalf of



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Executive summary

Since its official launch in 1980, the West Highland Way has grown in popularity to become a key recreational asset in Scotland and is promoted as 'Scotland's premier Long Distance Route'. The route is currently managed by five public sector organisations coordinated through a Management Group. This review, initiated by Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority, has taken an extended assessment of the management of the West Highland Way; evaluated its key characteristics and puts forward a number of significant recommendations based on the evidence gathered.

The review was carried out by Walking-the-Talk, Big Pond Scotland and Slater Business Services and is based on primary and secondary research.

1.1 Impact of the West Highland Way

- Approximately 25,000 people use the West Highland Way for multi-day journeys each year, as well as an unknown number who use part of the route for day visits.
- Visitors are thought to spend, on average, at least £250 per person during their journey, amounting to at least £7.5 million being injected into the local economy each year.
- More than a quarter of all users of the West Highland Way are from Scotland and almost 40% are from continental Europe.
- The West Highland Way is most popular with the 18-34 age group, particularly Europeans.

1.2 Key Management Issues

- Public sector finances remain under significant pressure and the priorities of five managing authorities vary for the West Highland Way.
- Information and intelligence about the condition of the route and the people who use it is not adequate for effective decision making and resource allocation.
- There is no strategic investment plan for the long-term management of the West Highland Way.
- Engagement with businesses and communities along the route is limited.
- Marketing and promotion is not strategically guided and needs to keep pace with changes in technology and visitor expectations.

1.3 Key recommendations

- ***A radical change of management model is proposed***, with a planned and costed transition to a single managing body to look after all aspects of the West Highland Way.
- ***The appointment of 'Champions' is recommended*** to advocate and promote the West Highland Way.
- ***Genuine engagement with stakeholders in the public, private and third sectors is recommended*** to guide the strategic management of the route.
- ***A revenue generation model is proposed*** that allows the people who benefit from the route to contribute towards its management and thereby help sustain the maintenance of the West Highland Way.

An ongoing programme of marketing and engagement with visitors is recommended to help enhance the visitor experience.

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2 Introduction, Context and Methodology

2.1 Introduction

The objective of this study was to review the management, economic impact and maintenance of the West Highland Way. The consultants were tasked with developing recommendations for a Management Strategy and Action Plan for the West Highland Way in order to help secure a sustainable future for its management and maintenance.

Changes to public sector funding arrangements in Scotland and increasing competition in the international long distance route market place mean that there is no longer any degree of certainty of resources, giving rise to genuine concern that walkers, especially those from outwith Scotland, could be attracted to routes elsewhere in the world.

Reductions in public funding levels have been taking place for over twenty years and the commissioning of this study is recognition that the management model for the West Highland Way needs to be re-examined to ensure that it is appropriate and provides best value for public money. This review has considered the full range of management functions from marketing to infrastructure maintenance and community engagement to income generation.

The research study has been carried out by a team of consultants from Walking the Talk, Big Pond Scotland and Slater Business Services.

2.2 Background to the West Highland Way

When looking back at the history of a long distance route, the very first spark of an idea is often hard to trace, but in the case of the West Highland Way that initial idea is widely attributed as coming from the Glasgow walking community in the 1960s and early 1970s, in particular from Tom Hunter of King's Park in Glasgow.

After more than a decade in development, the West Highland Way was officially launched on 6th October 1980, and became the first long distance route to be established in Scotland under the provisions of the Countryside (Scotland) Act 1967.

Thirty-six years later, the West Highland Way is used by tens of thousands of people each year and regarded as a Scottish icon. In that context, the West Highland Way is immensely popular and regarded as a great success story.

The success of the West Highland Way has also been a major factor in the creation of a long distance route industry in Scotland that has brought economic benefits to communities across the country, as well as providing much-needed recreational opportunities for the people of Scotland and our wider-UK and overseas visitors.

The money spent by walkers on the West Highland Way helps to support a wide range of accommodation businesses and other service providers, many of which are based in rural communities where opportunities for employment are limited. The West Highland Way has become a significant source of revenue for many businesses and contributed to the regeneration of many of the communities along the length of the Way. The prosperity of a number of rural communities, and survival of some local facilities, including schools, to some extent relies on the West Highland Way and the spending from those who come to walk it each year.

At 96 miles in length, the West Highland Way is considered a challenge, but one that is achievable by a wide range of people, with a typical walker taking six or seven days to complete the Way.

A more detailed strategic analysis of the history of the West Highland Way and its role in contributing towards current government and other policy agendas is included in Appendix A of this report.

2.3 Methodology

The overriding focus of the study has been on the optimal management and funding model for the future of the West Highland Way. The review has given in-depth consideration to whether the most appropriate means of managing the West Highland Way should be via the public, private or voluntary sector. It has been based on primary data and analysis of existing information.

This study comprised the following twelve elements:

1. Analysis of existing data from people counters and visitor surveys.
2. Analysis of the current marketing and communications operations.
3. Review of previous West Highland Way plans.
4. Survey of businesses via online survey and meeting with business community in Strathfillan.
5. Economic impact assessment based on business survey results.
6. Benchmarking of the West Highland Way against long distance routes around the world.
7. Stakeholder engagement.
8. Production of an options appraisal paper.
9. A workshop session for the West Highland Way Management Group.
10. Development of a set of recommendations.
11. Estimation of the financial implications of these recommendations.
12. Production of recommendations for a management strategy and action plan.

3 Strategic Analysis

We have looked at how the route is operated and the services offered, as well as considering the influences on what makes a positive experience for users. A SWOT analysis helped to identify issues and these have then been evaluated to prioritise between different types and magnitudes of problem.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scotland's top long distance route; • An 'iconic' route that is a journey from Scotland's largest city to its highest mountain, by way of its largest loch; • Provides vital economic input to remote rural communities; • Excellent public transport links to and from the start and finish points; • The route represents a realistic and achievable challenge for many people; • Can be completed within a week's holiday; • Wide variety of famous Scottish landscapes along the length of the route; • Passes through a range of communities that add value to the West Highland Way experience; • Great variety of follow-on activities and journeys after completing the Way, or as side-trips, including climbing Ben Nevis and one of the world's great train journeys past the Glenfinnan 'Harry Potter' viaduct. 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strategic plans are out of date and not fit for purpose; • Financial sustainability is uncertain with continuing pressures on public bodies' budgets; • Understanding and recognition of the route's economic importance within the managing authorities; • Lack of political profile / support or high level champion; • Highly variable resource allocation between access authorities; • Competing pressures for staff time; • Business engagement with the managing authorities is poor; • Very limited insight into users' needs and preferences; • Web presence is outdated and relatively static, with limited social media activity or development; • Marketing effort is not coordinated and lacks a clear focus and direction; • Quality of the recreational experience is not consistently to a standard associated with a world-class long distance route; • Integration with visitor related facilities at the start and end is limited and not fully realised; • Availability and choice of overnight accommodation is lacking at several key points on the Way; • National promotion via the "Scotland's Great Trails" branding is weak.
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of a coordinated and coherent management and development approach along the whole route; • Better engagement between those managing the route and service providers; • Engagement with recreational community; • Revenue generation from users, businesses or sponsors to help cover management costs; • Better provision of information and interpretation at the start, finish and along the length of the Way; • Improved intelligence about users' preferences and patterns of use; • Greater provision of innovative services and products to meet visitor needs; • Promotion and marketing as one of the great walks of the world alongside the likes of New Zealand's Milford Track; • Improve the start and finish experiences. 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sustained pressure on public sector budgets; • Temporary or permanent closure; or significant damage to path quality, due to landslip or other natural disaster; • Land management operations and potential developments; • Other routes in Scotland, rest of UK or overseas competing for the same users; • A significant drop in walker numbers could affect the viability of local businesses and have knock-on effects for communities; • Fragile communities along the Way may not have capacity or drive to continue providing services; • Commercial operators gaining a higher profile than the official WHW website or social media; • Over-promotion could lead to increased user numbers (particularly at peak periods), which could in turn impact on the quality of visitor experience.

There are a number of external factors that have an influence on the West Highland Way (such as currency exchange rates), but these have been omitted as being beyond reasonable control.

3.1 Evaluation

The main strengths of the West Highland Way are centred on the landscape and location of the route, including public transport, rather than the quality of facilities, services or management. The opportunities lie in better engagement with the business and recreational communities to improve the services available to users, and implement improvements to the information available prior to, and during the journey.

Whilst the managing authorities have made efforts to collect information about users and businesses that provide services along the West Highland Way there has been a lack of any detailed analysis and limited evidence of responses to the information. This has led to management decisions being made on the basis of assumptions about users, business practices and opportunities. There are no agreed criteria that should be used to evaluate and monitor the success of the route for example in terms of the physical capacity of the path, accommodation provision, services or quality of visitor experience.

The management of the route is currently dependent on the cooperation of five access authorities within the West Highland Way Management Group. This group is working at an operational rather than strategic level, partly because existing plans and strategies for the West Highland Way are dated and lack clear objectives. There is no formal representation from key stakeholder interests within the management group, such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, private landowners, communities, businesses or user interests.

The monitoring and management of infrastructure on the route varies along its length and there is no strategic prioritisation or reporting scheme used by route managers to manage and respond to issues that arise. There is no strategic capital investment programme, partly due to budget constraints, and the requirements for new investments are not based on detailed assessment or prioritisation of the route in terms of condition and accurate costing.

The most significant threat to effective management is considered to be continuing pressure on budgets of the public sector partners who manage the West Highland Way. It has to be recognised that for the foreseeable future, public sector organisations are unlikely to have sufficient resources to address the identified weaknesses. The West Highland Way Management Group recognises the risks to the route but some members do not see an alternative management structure as viable, preferring the status quo as their least-worst option. Coupled with the perceived lack of political support within some of the local authorities, this situation is considered to be unsustainable in the short- to medium-term and is likely to have a strongly detrimental effect on the visitor experience in the longer term. There is also a significant risk to the whole route that could arise from further reductions in budgets within any of the access authorities that currently provide financial support.

The potential for closure, temporary or otherwise, of sections of the route resulting from natural disasters, land management operations or other external factors is not fully understood by the management group and there has been no scenario planning exercise undertaken to assess the risks and potential controls, mitigations and contingencies. The implications of temporary or permanent closure for businesses on the route, and the reputational damage for the West Highland Way are severe.

Our strategic analysis indicates that the 'status quo' for management is not a viable or desirable option, and we have therefore undertaken a full options appraisal for potential changes.

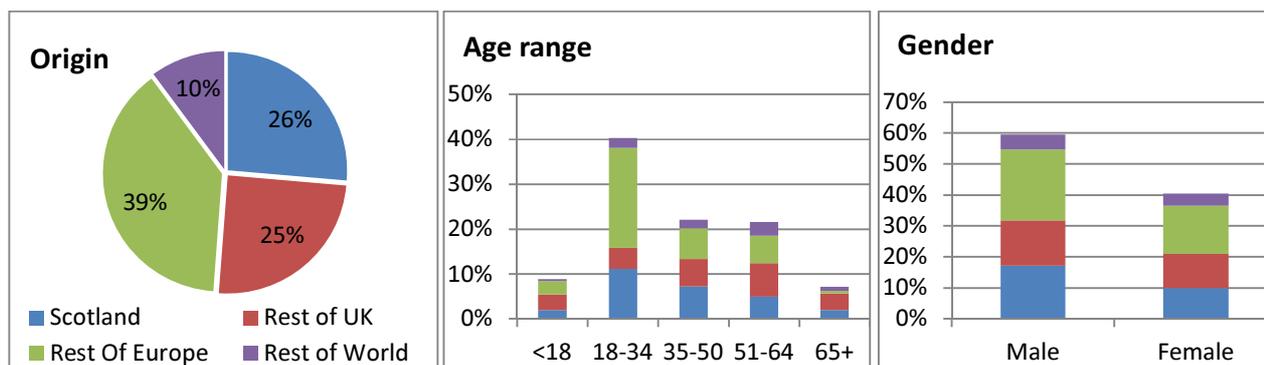
4 Users of the West Highland Way

A number of detailed user surveys have been undertaken over the years along the length of the route, and Highland Council has an ongoing annual survey, based on a self-completion questionnaire. We analysed the 2012 dataset, which had responses from almost 800 users of the West Highland Way. This gives a reasonably high degree of confidence that the responses are representative, with the caveat that there is always an element of self-selection in those who take part in surveys, and 'minority' interests such as mountain bikers may have avoided the survey – the degree of 'skew' is therefore uncertain.

In addition, ongoing collection of automatic people counter data helps to estimate the number of multi-day users and day visitors.

4.1 User Survey

Understanding the users, their choices, and potentially their preferences should be a key part of management decision making, and can be helpful in establishing, or countering, patterns of use. This information can be used by the managers of infrastructure, marketing and promotion, as well as businesses providing services along the Way, and can help to inform investment decisions.



The charts show that 49% of users are from outwith the UK, emphasising the international importance of the West Highland Way; 40% of users are aged 18-34, with almost a quarter of them coming from mainland Europe. There is a 60-40 gender split, but when this is compared with the response for group size it reveals that although 49% of respondents said that they walked in a group of two, only 26% are likely to be couples (i.e. adults of different gender, accepting that this does not take account of any LGBT diversity). This could potentially influence the offerings of accommodation providers.

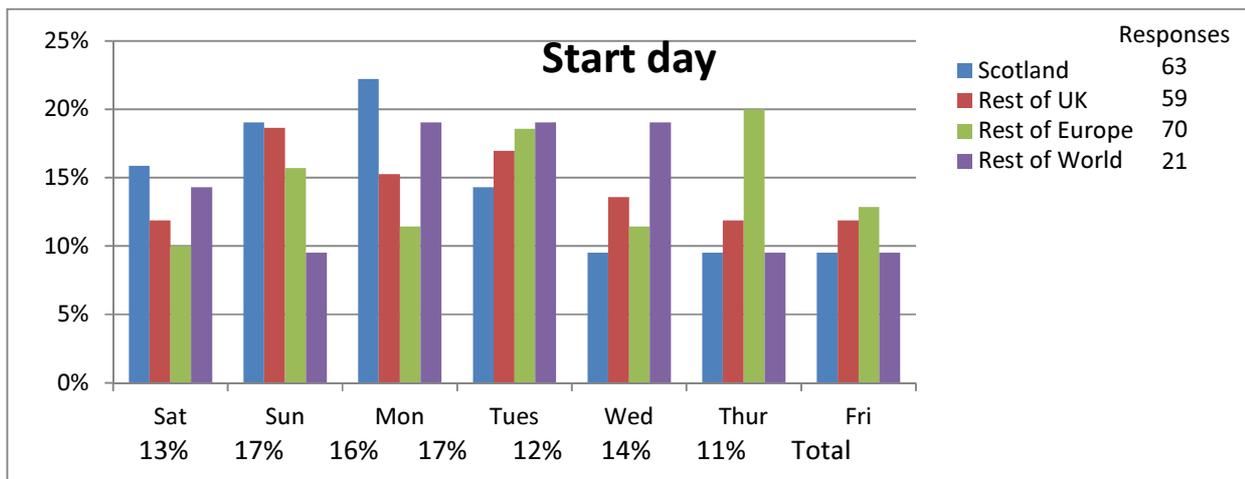
Accommodation choices have been interpolated from the data to reveal that 43% of respondents said that they camped at least one night. Over 50% of these were from Europe. The pattern of accommodation along the journey is not recorded but the following information can be determined:

- 25% Camped all the way
- 4% used only Hostels
- 9% used a combination of Hostel and Camping only
- 15% used a combination of Hotel / Guest House and B&B
- 9% used a combination of Hotel / Guest House, B&B and Hostel
- 8% used only B&B
- 6% used only Hotels / Guest Houses

- Only 1% said that they used a combination of B&B and Camping
- The remaining 25% used different combinations

The survey was completed by people classed as ‘multi-day users’, with only a small proportion of respondents (3%) doing only a section of the route (i.e. not starting or finishing at either end). It is not clear from the data how many people are unable to complete their intended route.

There is a perception amongst businesses and others that users all start at the weekend, leading to bottlenecks for accommodation. This is not borne out by the data available, although the sample size for this segment of the dataset is relatively small.



This smaller subset of responses can also be used to determine where people started and stayed overnight on their journey, which is potentially important for understanding existing demand for accommodation, as highlighted in Appendix C.

4.2 Automatic People Counters

There is a network of automatic people counters within the National Park, Stirling Council and Highland Council areas; however, a combination of differing recording methods, incomplete datasets and insufficient calibration makes it difficult to build an accurate picture of use along the West Highland Way. It is also hard to disaggregate multi-day users from day trippers (whose visit may be to walk a section of the route, or they may just be using a short section as part of their day), and to determine how many of the day trippers might be ‘out-and-back’ and therefore reducing the overall number of people the counts represent. Appendix 12.7C.1 includes the data available from people counters.

Given this range of issues it is not possible to give a reliable estimate of multi-day users and day trippers that use the West Highland Way. This has an obvious impact on estimates of economic impact based on visitor expenditure. The best estimate of multi-day users of the West Highland Way is 25,000 per annum (see Appendix 12.7C.1 for the rationale of this estimate).

5 Business Survey Outcomes

The economic benefits to local businesses and communities, along with a figure for the overall economic value of the West Highland Way, was arrived at by contacting 142 businesses identified as being on or adjacent to the Way, or being involved in providing services to users of the Way. 147 businesses were identified, but five were not contactable.

Detailed survey responses were received from 39 of these, an overall response rate of 27%, but this varied significantly across the sectors.

Breakdown of businesses and responses:

Location	Accommodation	Food & Drink	Retail	Other	WHW service	Total
Dumbarton	6	3	0	7		16
Stirling	53	6	3	5		67
Lochaber	28	1	1	1		31
Argyll	4	0	0	0		4
<i>Walking</i>					21	21
<i>Baggage</i>					3	3
Responses	20	8	3	3	10	
Population	91	10	4	13	24	142
Response rate %	22.0%	80.0%	75.0%	23.1%	41.7%	

NOTE: some businesses are in more than one business type.

The size of the businesses surveyed varied from B&Bs in the £0 to £40,000 turnover band, up to several businesses, also mainly in the accommodation sector, in the £300,000 to £1Million band.

5.1 Survey Results

5.1.1 Business Types

Business size	£0 - £40,000	£40,000 - £80,000	£80,000 - £150,000	£150,000 - £300,000	£300,000 - £1 million	over £1 million
Responses	7	8	3	5	6	5

Proportion of business generated by West Highland Way	1 - 25%	25 - 50%	51 - 75%	75 - 99%	All
Responses	10	6	5	11	2

5.1.2 Customer Origins

In considering the economic impact of the West Highland Way on the national and local economies, the importance of the overseas market is quite evident with an average breakdown of the three geographical segments as follows:

- 20% Scottish customers
- 30% Rest of UK customers
- 50% Overseas customers

This matches the responses from the user survey, suggesting it is accurate, but contrasts significantly with the profile of visitors within Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park, of which overseas

visitors make up only 13%. It therefore confirms the place of the West Highland Way as an international icon.

The main overseas countries recorded by the 39 businesses were stated as:

Germany	18
Netherlands	15
USA	15
Canada	11
Belgium	8
France	8
Australia	7
Norway	2

Also mentioned, though by only one respondent each, were: New Zealand, Eastern Europe, Spain, Switzerland, Denmark, Sweden.

Germany is therefore a key market with several responses saying 20% to 50% of their overall business came from this one country.

5.1.3 Trends

Looking at the next three years, businesses appear to have reduced confidence in terms of their expected turnover, compared to their actual turnover from the last three years:

Trends	%		%
Last 3 years - actual		Next 3 years - expected	
Increased Markedly	20	Increase Markedly	9
Increased Slightly	50	Increase Slightly	50
No Change	25	No Change	32
Reduced	5	Reduction expected	9

Reflecting this, only one-third of business owners who responded say they intend to expand their business in the next three years, with twice as many saying they are unlikely, or very unlikely, to do so (evenly split between the two views).

5.1.4 Sources of Customers

The key channels by which businesses said that they generate their customers are highlighted below; many respondents cited more than one source so the table does not reflect the amount of business generated or a priority.

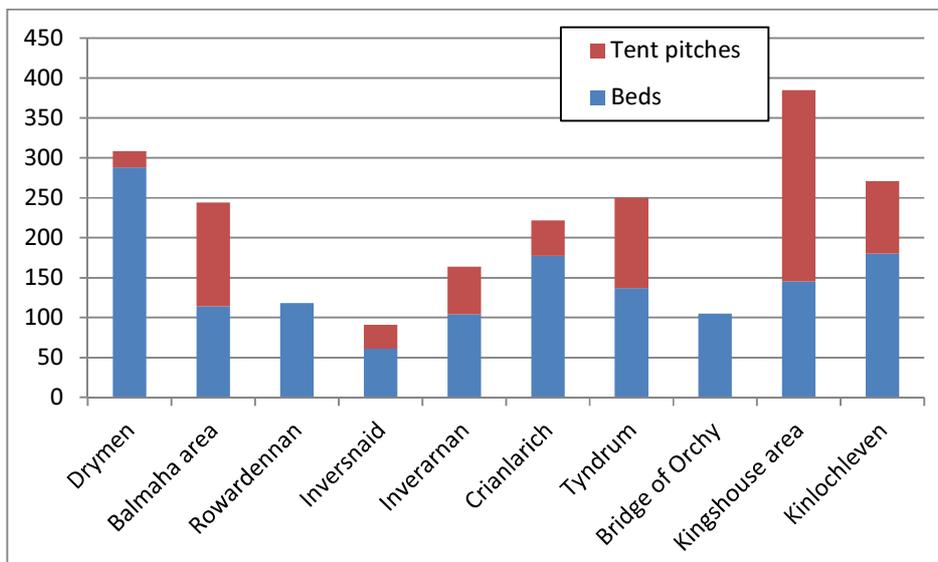
Proportion of respondents	Channel
55 – 66%	West Highland Way official website, word of mouth repeat business
45-55%	West Highland Way pocket companion online booking company, group booking
33 – 45%	
25-33%	visitscotland

The importance of the Website and Pocket Companion to businesses underlines the opportunity of generating income from these sources.

See Appendix D for breakdown of anonymised results.

5.2 Accommodation Capacity

Using the Pocket Companion and internet searches, an approximate level of potential capacity has been determined. This does not include small B&B establishments that are not listed in the Pocket Companion, but an internet search was used to estimate additional camping space at different types of establishment. Not all of the beds or camping pitches will be available for West Highland Way users throughout the year, but this estimate can be used to identify where visitor experience could be compromised by lack of accommodation. Place names on the chart below represent availability around the settlement or place, rather than the actual accommodation on the route itself. Milngavie and Fort William have been excluded as there is uncertainty about where people would stay the night before starting or the night after finishing.



The chart shows the accommodation pinch points, notably Rowardennan, Inversnaid and Bridge of Orchy, with approximately 100 beds available each night, and limited opportunities for serviced camping. A model of daily and weekly visitor numbers has been produced (see Appendix C) to estimate the requirements for accommodation for different annual user numbers and this is summarised below:

Annual users	Peak per week	Daily peak
10,000	500	71
15,000	650	93
20,000	850	121
25,000	1200	171
30,000	1400	200
35,000	1600	229

This indicates that if there were 30,000 multi-day walkers per annum, during peak season the requirements for accommodation would be beds and camping pitches for 200 people per night along the length of the way (assuming no preferred start day). There appears to be insufficient accommodation at these pinch points for this scenario, although if 10% of walkers were to wild-camp there may be enough provision to cope with 20,000 per year.

5.3 Key Issues

Key issues emerging from the Business Survey were as follows:

- Turnover contribution from the West Highland Way for B&Bs and for larger accommodation providers at key points on the Way was in the 70% to 80% range, indicating a significant dependence on this source of revenue.
- There are capacity issues along the West Highland Way, with 45% of responding accommodation providers reporting that they “rarely had capacity” from June to August. May was also a problem month for capacity because it is a popular time of the year – long days, good weather, pre-midge season. This represents the first “pinch-point”.
- There are two other pinch-points with varying management and development issues. One is at Bridge of Orchy where the lack of quantity and range of accommodation at this natural staging point results in many walkers having to taxi back to Tyndrum and Crianlarich for accommodation. This is far from ideal and raises the question of whether there should be additional capacity in the Bridge of Orchy, Inveroran and Victoria Bridge area, and if so, who should lead on attempting to address the problem.
- The other key pinch-point relates to the perceived timing of walks with accommodation providers in Tyndrum and Crianlarich reporting that they hit capacity on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in the season, (on this model Kinlochleven would hit capacity towards the end of the week). This perception does not appear to be supported by the self-reported start days from the user survey; however, if it is correct it might to some extent be manageable by flexible pricing. Where accommodation providers are at lower capacity at other times of the week, this opens the opportunity to attract return business for “loop” walks at different times of the week.
- Businesses and community representatives report a difficulty in knowing who “looks after” the West Highland Way and who to report their concerns to. Issues raised include: litter and human waste; damage to paths, infrastructure and surrounding environment; specific issues like the spur to Crianlarich from the Way, which a number of respondents feel needs to be redesigned as it is steep and challenging; re-alignment of the Way to take it through Crianlarich; and the river crossing at Lower Tyndrum which is reported to be difficult at certain times.
- 70% of respondents say they would not be willing to offer a discount to West Highland Way customers, which has obvious relevance to the future funding models for the Way. This is evidence, which appears in other studies, that it is a real challenge to engage businesses in helping to fund long distance routes, even though they acknowledge the financial benefit they receive.

6 Socio-Economic Impact Assessment

6.1 Multi-Day Users

The economic impact of multi-day users was calculated in two different ways:

- By estimating expenditure by users, based on the responses to the 2012 user survey; and
- by asking businesses about their turnover and customer base.

The user survey expenditure (direct spend) takes account of the different accommodation types and the length of time spent on the route. According to the model, on average, multi-day users are likely to spend £310 each during their journey, but the lack of reliable counter data means it is difficult to provide a robust estimate of total expenditure (see Chapter 4.2). Three sets of figures are presented, without prejudice, and include likely additional spend at the start and finish:

- For 10,000 users per annum the total income is in the range £2.9 million to £3.3 million
- For 25,000 users per annum the total income is in the range £7.3 million to £8.2 million
- For 35,000 users per annum the total income is in the range £10.2 million to £11.5 million

The business-based calculation is based on proportion of turnover derived from West Highland Way customers, and the turnover band that the business turnover was most likely to fall within. The midpoint of this band was used to estimate the turnover specifically from West Highland Way custom¹. The business-based calculation resulted in the West Highland Way delivering an average contribution to turnover of approximately £110,000 per business, aggregating to a Direct Economic Impact from the West Highland Way of approximately £15,900,000 per annum.

6.2 Day Users

The data available do not allow a reliable calculation of the economic impact of day visitors, and it is likely to vary along the length of the route. For example, the section from Balmaha to Rowardennan is likely to have many more day visitors than Altnafeadh (the Devil's Staircase).

However, on a simple estimate of 10,000 day visitors per annum and based on data from Inversnaid, and the economic contribution calculated by the John Muir Way for day visitors of £9, this adds £90,000 per annum to the economic benefit of the West Highland Way. This is likely to be a low-end estimate, but provides an 'at least' starting point that needs to be researched and developed further.

6.3 Social Impact - The Wider Benefits of the West Highland Way

In addition to businesses being asked about the impact of the West Highland Way on their community, a sample consultation took place with Strathfillan community representatives (Community Council and Community Development Trust). The community sector in particular is strongly of the opinion that the West Highland Way is crucial to the vibrancy, and indeed viability, of their communities.

¹ This convention is used by Event Scotland, UK Sport and Visit Britain, and is summarised as: "Collectively, visitor and organiser spending in the host economy that is directly attributable to the staging of an event can be termed Direct Economic Impact" (www.eventimpacts.com).

Responses from rural businesses also acknowledged the reliance of rural communities on income, direct or indirect, generated by walkers on the West Highland Way.

Further detail is given in the Appendices on the social and cultural impact of the Way.

7 Benchmarking the West Highland Way

A review of long distance routes from around the world was conducted in order to identify examples of good practice that could be applied to the West Highland Way, as well as looking to learn from what competing destinations are presenting to the international market place.

A range of long distance routes were chosen for this review and a list of each route's characteristics was compiled for comparison purposes (see Appendix B). The chosen routes were from a mixture of developed and developing countries, and from the UK, Europe and most continents of the world. The length of these routes varied from the Inca Trail in Peru at 28 miles up to the 2,600 miles of the Pacific Crest Trail in the USA.

7.1 Examples of Good Practice from Around the World

The various trails that were studied have evolved as a result of their unique elements of location and local characteristics, plus their long histories, and the traditions and cultures in their countries. We were unable to find one long distance route in the world that is the perfect model for how the West Highland Way could be managed, but there are features that can be adopted or adapted, and by taking a combination of factors from several trails we believe that valuable lessons from the worldwide network of trails can be harnessed to provide the West Highland Way with desirable features to adopt.

Clear vision and a champion / steward for the route

The Pacific Crest Trail in the USA is a great example of a well-managed trail with a clear vision that includes setting out to be the champion and steward of the long distance route. That vision provides the basis for underpinning the rest of the organisation's work. Whilst this aspect of the Pacific Crest Trail Association's work is an admirable example of what is possible and could be easily copied, another aspect of its work is the high level of volunteering that is relied upon to deliver the management of the infrastructure. This commitment to volunteering has taken 90 years to reach its current level and a volunteer network of this complexity could not be replicated in a short to medium timeframe.

Effective and efficient fund raiser

Like all long distance routes in England and Wales, the South West Coast Path is part-funded by Natural England (or Natural Resources Wales), managed by a trail partnership and the marketing and communications work is carried out under the National Trails branding by Walk Unlimited, a social enterprise based in Yorkshire. However, where the South West Coast Path differs from the other English and Welsh routes is that the trail partnership and trail manager works closely with a separate, charitable body, the South West Coast Path Association, which raises funds and organises a voluntary work force.

The Pacific Crest Trail Association and South West Coast Path Association are both effective and efficient fund raising bodies that a West Highland Way managing body could look to for useful lessons on developing a wide range of income strands. The Pacific Crest Trail website "Donate" button is easy to find, simple to use and provides an example of how a trail website can be used to generate income. The South West Coast Path Association website includes information on their Individual and Business Membership scheme. Furthermore, their accounts for 2015 show a total of £538,000 raised from donations, legacies, and charitable and trading activities.

Outstanding coordinator of management activities

The Pacific Crest Trail model demonstrates how a managing body for a trail can be an outstanding coordinator of all management activities. The Association exists for a very simple purpose, to protect, preserve and promote the Pacific Crest Trail, and its website demonstrates how this is achieved through the coordination of all its activities. The Association acts as a hub and its entire focus is on what is best for the trail and the people that visit to walk.

Sense of community

The South West Coast Path is perhaps the finest example in the UK of a long distance route that is managed in a way that encourages a genuine sense of community with businesses, local residents and the recreational community. Community representation is central to the running of the South West Coast Path Association, from board level to area representatives, and individual and business members.

Another example of community involvement is to be found in the European alps where the long distance routes are managed by their national walking bodies; the equivalent of the Ramblers in this country. The national walking bodies manage the routes, and local businesses and communities are active contributors in all aspects of managing the infrastructure and promoting the routes. Whilst this might not be a model that could be replicated in Scotland, the active inclusion of business and recreational community representation in decision making processes is a feature that builds respect and support for a managing body and could be introduced in some form on the West Highland Way.

Excellent communicator

Visiting the websites of trails from outwith Scotland gives an idea of the way in which information and news about those trails is communicated to potential visitors, those currently on the trail, those who have already walked the trail and those who have a business or some other stake in the management of the route. The website of the Pacific Crest Trail Association is particularly interesting with its use of stunning photographs designed to inspire potential visitors and easy-to-find information for all types of visitors to the site.

7.2 Six Key Factors to Success

As a conclusion to this review of long distance routes from around the world, we believe there are six key aspects of long distance route management that emerged as desirable features:

1. A management organisation with a clear vision;
2. A champion and steward of the long distance route;
3. An effective and efficient fund raiser;
4. An outstanding coordinator of all management activities;
5. A respected and supportive management organisation that encourages a genuine sense of community with businesses, local residents and the recreational community; and
6. Excellent communications with prioritised audiences, messages and methods.

Appendix B provides further analysis on the long distance routes in other countries from which these six key factors to success emerged.

7.3 Challenging, Achievable and Walkable in Seven Days

A conclusion that emerged from this study was that the West Highland Way is of an optimal length in terms of economic value to the local and national economy. At 96 miles, and typically taking six or seven days to walk, the West Highland Way is long enough to represent a challenging, although achievable walk for many people, but short enough to be walked in a week off work or as a one-week segment of an overseas holiday in Scotland. This potentially gives the West Highland Way a much wider appeal than some of the other long distance routes that were investigated. It is interesting to note that the most popular long distance route in England and Wales (in terms of walker numbers) is the South Downs Way, which has a length of 100 miles.

8 West Highland Way Running Costs

The complexity of management arrangements between different organisations along the West Highland Way makes it very difficult to identify the true cost of maintaining and developing the route. Some organisations have clearly established budgets that are allocated against the Way, whereas others have limited means of recording what resources are attributed solely to the West Highland Way. There is currently no established capital programme for the whole of the Way, and the estimated costs are based on a document submitted to Scottish Natural Heritage.

8.1 Revenue Costs

There is not a dedicated budget allocation for operating the West Highland Way within the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority (Park Authority), being one of many access routes in the National Park resourced by the Park Authority. However, by estimating the input of staff time and using an average daily rate for staff, the estimated cost to the Park Authority is at least £120,000. The Park Authority has, however, limited capacity for significant remedial repairs and capital works. These are often contracted out such as the Conic Hill path upgrades of £200,000 and replacement bridge at Beinglas £16,000. Projections of revenue costs submitted to SNH included £22,000 for other aspects including marketing, maintenance contracts, tools and vehicles although it is not clear how these were calculated.

The Highland Council had a budget of approximately £180,000 allocated to the West Highland Way in 2015/16, which included the employment of a senior ranger, ranger and maintenance warden/ranger, vehicles, equipment and materials, management support and access to specialist services within the Council. Some resources are shared with the Great Glen Way but the budget reflects the cost of the West Highland Way allocation. The staff are highly trained and competent to undertake a range of repair and capital tasks, significantly reducing the reliance on external contractors. They also cover the maintenance duties for the section of the route through the Argyll and Bute Council area.

Argyll and Bute Council has not contributed to the maintenance or capital projects of the West Highland Way for a number of years, although it retains a place on the West Highland Way Management Group and the Access Manager currently attends.

Stirling Council has £8,000 per annum for maintenance, which is spent on external contracts and some minor capital replacements. There is limited staff resource available for monitoring condition or interacting with users, and their access officer also attends the management group.

East Dunbartonshire Council does not undertake maintenance on the route, except through urban street management, but provides a member of staff from the tourism department to contribute to the Management Group.

Forestry Commission Scotland owns extensive sections of the West Highland Way and has invested an estimated £750,000 over recent years in capital works for an alternative route to help future management of access and forestry operations. Their maintenance budget is currently unknown. Discussions are ongoing with public sector partners looking at the maintenance liability of the Way. A nominal cost of £10,000 per annum has been allocated to maintenance by Forestry Commission Scotland within one of their forest districts.

It has been estimated that the minimum annual cost of running the West Highland Way is approximately £340,000. However, it is difficult to clearly identify these costs, particularly where they

fall within other budget lines in an organisation. More than half of the estimated costs are staff costs, with associated overheads.

8.2 Capital Costs

In June 2015 a document was collated at the request of Scottish Natural Heritage to estimate the capital requirements of the West Highland Way along its length. This was a rapid assessment, not based on a condition survey; the costings are therefore very approximate and largely based on lowland path construction standards, which do not apply along much of the length of the West Highland Way. The development of a realistic capital programme is beyond the scope of this study, therefore the estimates within the document submitted to SNH have been used as a minimum level of investment for the West Highland Way.

Access authority Area	Estimated Capital Cost
East Dunbartonshire Council	£43,000
Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority	£1,004,000
Stirling Council	£330,000
Argyll and Bute Council	£353,000
Highland Council	£354,000
Total	£2,084,000

In order to realise this level of investment it may be reasonable to develop a capital programme over a five-year period, which would require £400,000 per annum, or to look at a ten-year programme of approximately £200,000 per annum (plus inflation).

8.3 Value for Money

Based on the broad estimates of running costs, and the estimated figures for the total number of multi-day users of the West Highland Way, a very approximate cost per user can be calculated. This excludes the additional use by day-walkers, which could significantly reduce the overall costs per user.

Assuming that the capital costs requirements can be allocated over a 20-year period, and the number of users remain static (assuming 25,000 per year), this represents an investment of £4 per user over the period. This ignores any additional capital investment beyond those items currently identified, but if the capital investment was doubled (£4 million), this could be £8 per multi-day user. The revenue costs represent a cost per multi-day user of £13 at current levels of use.

This suggests that the public investment per user could be £21, compared with the likely economic benefit of approximately £310, a leverage of approximately 14:1. This figure is for illustration rather than a reliable estimate of real costs and benefits. It highlights the significant weaknesses in current data which reduce the confidence in calculations of the full impact of the route, its public value and the contribution of the West Highland Way to the local and national economy. The importance of this aspect of route management has not been recognised by managing authorities in recent years.

9 Outcomes of the Options Appraisal

A full range of future route management options were considered, from no change to radical adaptation. These are set out in full in Appendix E and cover the following options:

- **Existing arrangements** – Park Authority leading on marketing and promotion, access authorities responsible for management of infrastructure in their own areas.
- **Lead access authority** – one of the existing partners takes full responsibility for the whole route.
- **New independent body** – a new social enterprise or charitable trust created to take full responsibility for delivering management and maintenance of the route on behalf of the access authorities.
- **Transfer to an existing private or third sector organisation** – access authorities delegate responsibility for management, maintenance, marketing and promotion.
- **Transfer to a national public body** – SNH or an alternative takes full responsibility for management, maintenance, marketing and promotion.
- **Creation of an independent commissioning body** – all access authorities delegate responsibility and resources to a Trust and the Trust ‘buys’ necessary services to deliver the route from a range of sources, which could include the public, private or third sector.
- **Hybrid management** – delegation and outsourcing of some functions.
 - **Marketing and promotion transferred or contracted out** – access authorities continue with management and maintenance; or
 - **Maintenance contracted out** – access authorities continue with management and buy-in services.

The appraisal was based on a SWOT analysis of each option to identify the range of positives and negatives associated with each option. The inclusion of some seemingly impractical or administratively difficult options was deliberate, to ensure that a full range of scenarios was covered. The West Highland Way Management Group was given an opportunity to explore the options and provided feedback on a number of models. Most members of the Management Group indicated a preference for the public sector to continue to lead route management, whilst acknowledging the high degree of uncertainty and risk associated with public finances. Alternative options were viewed less favourably with most members of the group not seeing any as being workable.

9.1 Analysis of the Options Considered

The risks associated with the existing management arrangements, as highlighted in the Strategic Analysis (Chapter 3), indicated that they are not viable in the medium- to long-term. Therefore, other options were considered, even though none of them could be identified as ideal or risk-free.

The options for hybrid management and independent commissioning body were not considered to be efficient, requiring additional resources to manage contracts as well as deliver the outcomes. These models also break the direct link between the user and the managing organisation(s) by delegating tasks to one or more external body.

Although it might be desirable for a national public organisation to take responsibility for the West Highland Way, all public sector bodies are under similar financial pressures, which means that it is unrealistic to expect another public body to take over the management of any long distance route without significant additional resources being required from the Scottish Government (or re-allocated from the current bodies, which is unlikely to be possible). The potential for one of the access

authorities to operate significantly beyond their geographical boundaries is also considered to be highly unlikely due to the complexities and limitations of operating in other local authorities governed areas and may also be politically risky.

The remaining options involve transfer of responsibility to a new or existing organisation which could be in the private or 'third' sector. The significant public interest and sustained public investment in the West Highland Way since its inception need to be central to the management of the route: it is therefore considered inappropriate to delegate this entirely to the private sector, although there is no reason for excluding private businesses from helping to guide management of the Way. Any private sector involvement in the delivery of services would need to be controlled through public procurement to ensure transparency and value for money.

In the earlier Strategic Analysis (see Chapter 3) and Benchmarking the West Highland Way (see Chapter 6) chapters, one of the key issues that arose was the need for a 'champion' and political leadership for the West Highland Way. Delegating management of the West Highland Way to an existing organisation would potentially introduce a risk that it could become sidelined or diluted among other projects or issues. However, if an existing body were able to transform its operations to make the West Highland Way its core focus, this might represent a viable option.

Although there are set-up and establishment costs, there is a strong argument for developing a new managing body with the West Highland Way as its core business.

There remain significant risks with setting up a new managing body, but the potential benefits for the West Highland Way are considered to outweigh those risks.

9.2 A Proposal for Managing the West Highland Way

The key weaknesses identified in the current management of the route arise from financial pressure, fragmentation and lack of agreed strategic direction. We propose the development of a body (either newly formed or by transforming an existing organisation) that:

- has the whole of the West Highland Way as its core business,
- will champion the development and management of the whole route,
- works proactively with users and business, and
- responds to changing circumstances for the benefit of the visitor experience along the Way.

This will provide strategic oversight of all aspects of route management, leading to better coordination, and its primary focus on the West Highland Way will give it a dynamic edge for securing the necessary finance for both ongoing management and capital development. For the purposes of this report, it has been called the 'managing body'.

The set-up costs for a new body can be minimised by incremental capacity building, taking on different functions throughout the first five years of operation. This also reduces the risk to the route and visitor experience, such as transferring responsibilities before resources and systems are in place such as staff, contracts, standards and work programmes.

A non-profit orientated body is seen as a means of protecting the public interest and past investment by government, whilst allowing more dynamic management than the current arrangement with

coordinating priorities of five public bodies. This provides the potential to engage more effectively with the business sector, to be more responsive to users' changing expectations, and to invest revenue generated by the route in improving the quality of the visitor experience. A dedicated body for the West Highland Way will also give confidence to anyone that contributes towards the running of the route, that their contribution will be used for the benefit of the West Highland Way. It is likely that charitable status would be desirable, but this does not need to be a prerequisite for successful management of the West Highland Way.

The key to success of the proposed managing body is good governance, based on a clear and agreed vision that stakeholders can adopt. A small board of directors should be engaged to oversee the organisation and use strategic input from public bodies, businesses and recreational representatives. Directors should be appointed solely on merit and not tied to membership of any organisation to ensure that the body can act independently of any vested interest. Strategic management input from a range of sources will help to ensure that the organisation takes account of external influences and provide a link to key partners that can exert an influence on public policy decisions.

Community involvement in resource management is a government priority at the current time and with the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act coming into force in 2016, there is a positive policy environment and active support network associated with the engagement of communities in the way that is being proposed in this report. Furthermore, the involvement of the recreational community in the management of the West Highland Way would re-establish the link this community of interest had with the West Highland Way at its inception.

The managing body will need to develop a sense of community along the length of the West Highland Way, which will be a challenge given its linear nature with significant gaps between settlements. It is important, however, that the level of community involvement is informed by communities themselves and takes account of the varied community profiles along the routes length.

We propose that the vision for the route should focus on visitor experience and that strategic decisions be tested against the likely impact or benefit on that experience. This rationale is based on the physical journey, environmental context and landscape of the route. The managing body must take account of these three overriding factors to deliver social and economic benefits along the corridor of the route, whilst protecting the high quality of the experience for the visitor. The managing body must also recognise the wider context of environmental protection and enhancement, and work within the strategies and legislative framework of Scotland.

Before any new management body can be considered for the West Highland Way it will be necessary for stakeholders, including existing managing authorities, to agree to a new management approach.

9.2.1 Key Actions

- Establish an agreed vision for long-term management of the West Highland Way – based on a partnership of business and recreational community interests and public sector bodies.
- Plan for a new managing body and transition phase.
- Incorporate or adapt a managing body that has the capability of delivering dynamic and forward-thinking management of the route at strategic and operational levels.
- Appoint a board of directors and identify a strategic advisory group.

9.2.2 Operational Management

Dynamism is a key feature of the proposed body and a clear distinction will need to be made between the required capacity to manage the route and the employment of staff. Different skill sets will be required across the development phase and it may not be possible to find individuals who can cover all aspects within a single role. Experience from other organisations shows that in-house, full-time and part-time staff who can draw from an established pool of specialist contractors and consultants can deliver high quality outcomes and we propose that this approach be taken. The development of a new body also presents an opportunity to find the required skill sets through open recruitment.

We propose that the managing body takes an incremental approach to taking on the management of the route, based on a five-year programme of capacity building. This will allow competence and credibility to be established, as well as an opportunity to generate income that can then be recycled into route management. This approach naturally leads towards business and user engagement being early activities for the managing body, with route maintenance and capital programmes coming on-board later in this initial development phase.

Activity	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Business engagement	S	S	O	O	O
Visitor engagement	S	S	O	O	O
Revenue generation mechanisms	S	S			
Policy engagement		S	S	O	O
Capital programme			S	O	O
Maintenance implementation				S	O
Review of management functions and structure					S
Strategic forward planning					S

S - Start-up activity O – Ongoing activity

This requires a highly competent project manager or chief executive, with administrative support, to kick-start the managing body. It is important to recognise that small organisations cannot rely on having dedicated managers across different work themes and may require people who can work both strategically and operationally to deliver the required outcomes of the managing body's vision. There may be a need to issue short-term contracts during the initial phase, and/or use external contractors, so that the range of skills can be brought in as required, whilst balancing the cost of repeated induction of new staff and/or procurement.

There are a range of options that could be considered for transitional financing, and it is possible the public bodies may offer different forms of assistance. This could include secondment of staff to fulfil particular roles, such as setting up and advising on grant aid from each authority, service level agreements and/or direct contracts. These issues would need to be addressed at an early stage in the discussions with the managing authorities and other public sector bodies.

10 Capital and Revenue Generation

As part of the remit of looking for a sustainable management model, it is necessary to investigate ways of securing financial resources at a time when public sector budgets are under significant pressure to make savings and cut costs. However, it would be unrealistic to propose a single scheme that meets the entire funding needs of the West Highland Way and therefore a financial model that is based on multiple sources of finance has been investigated.

Given that it is not possible to charge people to take access along the West Highland Way under the current legislative context, any contributions from users or businesses need to be voluntary or based on services provided.

10.1 Potential Sources

The following list includes the most obvious sources of income, but is not presented in any particular order of importance or preference:

- Contributions from users
- Charity challenge contributions and events
- Advertising revenue (generated approximately £20,000 in 2015)
- Business sponsorship of the route (either a major sponsor or a series of sponsors)
- Contributions from businesses based on revenue from West Highland Way customers
- Retail operations (merchandising, etc.)
- Public sector core support
- Grants from public, private and third sector funds

None of the above is likely to provide significant income without a strong marketing campaign to raise awareness of the need for strong management and maintenance of the route to recognised standards.

10.2 Grants

It may be possible to apply for funds for capital renewal of specific infrastructure or identified sections of the route. It is necessary to consider each funding body, their aims and objectives and match those to the identified capital requirement. This is a critical task in maximising the potential for success and the cost/benefit ratio of applying for funds – small grants can take as much effort to achieve and administer as significantly larger ones, depending on the grant-giving body.

Schemes such as LEADER (European Commission) have already been used for the development of the West Highland Way and it may be difficult to repeat investment. Access to European funds is likely to be much more challenging following the UK-wide referendum decision to leave the European Union.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has a 'large grant' scheme but the West Highland Way fits awkwardly with their criteria. It is not certain that the route itself would be classed as 'Heritage' in need of protection and the purposes of Long Distance Routes are more clearly based on economic benefit for communities and enjoyment of a journey. The application process would require significant investment and would represent a definite risk: any award would need to be matched by funds from elsewhere and the higher the number of funders within a 'package' the more complex it becomes to manage. The Heritage Lottery Fund may be an option for specific 'heritage' items that could be funded, but is not likely to be the main funding source for overall route improvements.

The case for strategic investment in infrastructure to support and stimulate the rural economy is likely to be the strongest argument. However, it is currently difficult to accurately quantify and prioritise investment needs with the information available about the status of infrastructure and the likely cost of upgrade or replacement. It is also difficult to take advantage of any short-term funding opportunities to repair high-priority sections unless the projects are clearly identified and quantified. The Scottish Government has provided capital funding in, for example, underspend from previous financial years to fund 'shovel ready' projects.

Under the Scottish Rural Development Programme there is an option for Improving Public Access (IPA) which could potentially be used as a source of capital funds. It is based on lowland path standards, which limits the locations where this option could be used. It also requires a licence agreement to be in place with landowners prior to assessment. It pays a standard rate for new or upgraded paths, and lower rate for existing routes that are being resurfaced. Priority is given to routes that are strategic or core paths, which would improve the chances of success for the West Highland Way.

There are no known grant-giving bodies that will contribute to maintenance of existing facilities, and sustaining the core operating costs of any organisation (whether public, private or third sector) from grant funds is very challenging.

10.3 Potential Capacity for Revenue from Route Users

Some scenarios have been set out in Appendix E to determine potential income ranges from route users. These are highly simplified and not intended to provide any probability of success or basis for setting budgets – they are a starting point for determining the cost-benefit of developing different schemes. In each scenario, we have looked at potential income for different levels of 'compliance' / participation. The ranges shown relate to 30%, 70% and 100% participation. Although 100% participation is highly unlikely, it gives a maximum potential income for the number of annual users (based on 25,000) in each scenario.

If users are encouraged to make a donation based on what they think the route is 'worth', somewhere between £1 and £20 each, the total revenue could be anywhere in the range £7,500 to £350,000.

If users are encouraged to contribute between 50 pence and £1 'per day' (or a contribution is made on their behalf through a service provider) the revenue generated could range anywhere from £24,000 to £115,000.

In order to generate sufficient revenue from users to cover the minimum annual costs of £300,000 it would be necessary to collect between £17 and £40 per contributor (70% and 30% of total users respectively). It is not possible to anticipate how achievable this would be, but it seems unlikely.

10.4 Business Capacity for Capital and Revenue contributions

Businesses that benefit directly from the route could be encouraged to make a contribution towards the route's management costs. Some already purchase advertising space in official publications and online advertising. One of the issues that would be difficult to address would be determining a fair contribution from each business, particularly where they are not wholly dependent on the West Highland Way – this could lead to over-reliance on larger enterprises, or businesses that benefit not wishing to disclose relevant income.

Alternative sources of business revenue could come from corporate sponsorship through businesses not directly associated with, or benefiting from the West Highland Way. These would be sensitive to reputation of the route and may have to accommodate the corporate interests of the sponsor. In general, sponsors wish to be associated with a positive public image and usually invest as a means of strengthening their brand or public awareness of the brand. Potential sponsors would need to have a customer base that is likely to use their products and experience from other situations suggests that sponsors are more likely to contribute to tangible projects.

One of the key risks associated with relying on the business community is contributor fatigue – there are existing and planned ‘Friends of’ schemes within the area of the West Highland Way and it may be very difficult to encourage businesses to contribute to more than one scheme.

10.5 Merchandise

There will always be a role for West Highland Way branded merchandise, but the market is difficult to exploit effectively, and currently generates only a small income. Historically, merchandise brings in up to £7,000 (gross) annually, the surplus/profit from which represents approximately 1% of the annual running cost of the West Highland Way. Although merchandising has only a small role in revenue generation it is nevertheless regarded as an important service to users and is beneficial for marketing the West Highland Way.

10.6 Service Provision

There are a few accommodation bottlenecks along the route, which may provide an opportunity to provide additional accommodation and generate income for the route. This could be done using, for example, a non-profit business (e.g. social enterprise) that recycles any surplus to the management of the route. This would require a full business case to be made and for any new enterprise to only offer accommodation to West Highland Way walkers. The primary function of the service would be to generate income rather than act as competition to other providers and therefore charges would need to be set appropriately.

This option would require significant capital investment, which may be a limiting factor. Depending on finding a suitable location the building could function as a visitor centre for West Highland Way users, a hub for route management and a café providing a day-time service to West Highland Way walkers and the general public.

Operating costs need to be investigated to assess the likely surplus that could be donated to route management. Additional services, such as evening meals, a bar/café, etc. could increase the potential surplus that could be generated, providing that they do not unfairly compete with other service providers.

10.7 Mechanisms for Collecting Contributions

Assuming that it is necessary to generate income from ‘supporters’ of the West Highland Way, whether they are individuals, groups or businesses, one or more mechanisms will be required to manage contributions. Appendix E includes an analysis of the potential mechanisms for collecting contributions from supporters:

- West Highland Way website (donations)
- Advertising in official publications and website

- West Highland Way supporters
- Business sponsorship of the route
- Contributions from event organisers
- Charity challenge contributions
- Direct contribution from accommodation providers
- Commission-based earnings
- West Highland Way discount card
- Supporters' discount card and/or mobile App

Reliance on businesses alone to generate significant income would require large contributions from each business, which is unlikely to be practical, therefore sharing the contribution between businesses that benefit from the West Highland Way and individual supporters, including users, would be more realistic. The South West Coast Path Association generates around £100,000 per annum through 5,500 individual members and approximately £12,000 from its 230 business members, demonstrating that it is possible to generate reasonable levels of participation in membership schemes. However, it does require a great deal of work over many years to achieve that kind of participation and resultant income (see Appendix B). Furthermore, such a scheme is likely to have high administration and promotion costs, meaning that net income may be small, especially in the early years, and it is clear that direct contributions from businesses have limited revenue potential. The 'Friends of Loch Lomond' scheme has generated £200,000 over five years, at an unknown cost, and this includes some key businesses that might also be targeted for a potential West Highland Way membership scheme.

A revenue generation scheme that requires individual businesses to administer contributions from users, or as a proportion of their West Highland Way income, would be complex to oversee. It is also likely to be seen as a burden by all but the most dedicated and altruistic businesses, and for some of the enterprises along the West Highland Way it may be beyond their capacity.

An alternative would be to use a simple, centralised scheme that shares the contribution between businesses and users, and which is transparent and accountable. Users could buy a card from the managing body which then entitles them to discounts from participating businesses along the route. This is considered to be the most equitable means of generating income. Users can be confident that their contribution will be used for the benefit of the route. In addition, businesses have minimal administration and accounting to take on, and only contribute (through income foregone) to genuine users of the West Highland Way. However, this assumes that users are prepared to make a contribution rather than look for a benefit from a card.

It is clear from the business survey (see Chapter 5.1) that very few businesses currently offer, or plan to offer a discount to West Highland Way users. However, at present there is no incentive for businesses to treat these customers differently from others except as a commitment to the users of the Way. Linking the concept of discounts to revenue for managing and developing the route may help to encourage businesses to participate in a coordinated scheme – helping to improve the 'product' and therefore generate business.

Offering a supporters' card at £20, which allowed a 5% discount at participating businesses, would mean that the majority of users would contribute part of the cost, and businesses would collectively provide a discount that is less than the value of the card. Approximately 38% of West Highland Way users would gain more discount than their contribution (those spending more than £300 on their

journey, which is close to the average expenditure), but it is too complex to make this more 'progressive'. Assuming that there are 25,000 multi-day users, a shared contribution could generate £150,000 per annum at 30% participation up to £350,000 per annum for 70% participation, if a card costs £20. This contribution represents less than 10% of the average multi-day user's expenditure along the route (estimated at £310). However, a 5% discount may not be seen as sufficiently enticing to users.

A more 'user-orientated' scheme could offer either a lower cost (£15) and/or higher discount (10%), generating between £112,000 and £262,000 whilst allowing approximately 65% of users to save more than the cost of the card. A balance needs to be struck between the incentive for users to participate and the willingness of businesses to offer higher discounts.

Businesses would reasonably expect some form of return for their investment or loss of revenue and this could come in the form of stronger branding opportunities (as official supporters of the Way), reduced advertising costs (participating businesses could be offered free advertising space within official publications / apps and web presence), and potentially better customer intelligence (if aggregated and anonymous information about participants can be shared with those businesses).

It is likely to take time to garner support for such a scheme, and participation rates may be relatively low in the initial stages. There would be a cost associated with developing and running a 'discount scheme' but this could be partially covered as part of wider marketing of the West Highland Way.

The incorporation of a scheme within a mobile App could further simplify administration and promotion. The app could be developed as a combined marketing and route information tool – free to download with some basic features such as online maps, outline route descriptions and services available (and bookable), combined with using 'in-app purchases' to provide additional features (such as offline mapping) and access to a discount / supporter scheme. The app would allow sophisticated metrics to be collected that could offset the cost of visitor surveys and other marketing activities. The inclusion of service provider information will have high value to businesses as it is highly targeted with people already engaged by the West Highland Way.

10.8 Marketing and Communications Strategy

The foundation of all revenue generation is based on successfully selling the West Highland Way experience. If the West Highland Way is marketed successfully it will generate income for the national and local economies, some of which needs to be channelled into the management of the route.

The aim of a Marketing Strategy could be to position the Way as one of the World's Great Trails and use two key objectives to achieve this:

1. To promote the unique landscape, culture and history to sell the experience.
2. To develop a range of tools for engaging and communicating with identified audiences.

The actions contained in a marketing plan should relate back to these two main objectives (see Appendix 12.7E.10) and the plan needs to be costed and timetabled. The marketing plan should include the development of merchandising and communications planning.

The managing body would have at least five delivery options for implementing a marketing plan.

1. Provide existing employee with training in marketing and include in his/her work plan.
2. Employ a marketing specialist (perhaps a part-time post).
3. Employ a trail manager with marketing expertise and include marketing as a significant aspect of the job description.
4. Contract the marketing work out to a specialist company and provide the management of their work.
5. Use expertise from Park Authority to provide marketing support.

See Appendix 12.7E.10 for analysis of the advantages and disadvantages of each of these delivery options.

11 Financial Implications

The development of a new managing body has significant cost implications, mainly as the result of needing to transfer resources from the access authorities to an external organisation. It may be difficult to release funds that are currently accounted for in revenue budgets within the access authorities and provide that as a resource that can be used by the managing body. The National Park Authority and Highland Council provide significant resources at present and high level discussions will be required in order to facilitate any new funding arrangement.

Although it has not been possible to identify the total costs of running the West Highland Way, a budget limit of £300,000 has been assumed for the running costs of a managing body, with full management control of the West Highland Way, to provide a working comparison. This would be 10% below the 'best estimate' of current running costs.

The managing body would have the following capacity and costs:

- West Highland Way Manager: 220 days per year
- Route maintenance and development workers: 440 person-days per year
- Administrative support: 100 days per year
- Specialist contractors: 100 contract-days per year (estimated at an average rate of £400 per day)
- Marketing and communications budget: £30,000 per year
- Maintenance outsourcing (e.g. grass cutting): £20,000 per year
- Capital repair budget: £30,000 per year
- Governance (directors, legal support, etc.): £20,000 per year
- Overheads (office, travel, accountancy, etc.): £48,000 per year

Compared with currently:

- Strategic Routes Manager (Park Authority) – variable input, undisclosed
- Maintenance Manager (Park Authority) – variable input, undisclosed
- Rangers (Park Authority): 220 days per year (from time record summary)
- Rangers (Highland): 2 FTE shared with the Great Glen Way
- Technical and management support (Line management, Marketing, IT, administration, design, civil engineering)
- Maintenance contracts: £8,000 per year (Stirling); £10,000 (estimated for Park Authority)
- Management: time from five access authority staff, estimated at 20 person days per year

- Maintenance and capital investment by Forestry Commission Scotland

A new managing body would also have set-up costs and these have been estimated at £181,000 including the cost of conversion of an office, development of a new website and mobile app, purchase of equipment and the potential professional fees for setting up and guiding an organisation. Transition to an existing body could have a lower initial cost, but there are likely to be some areas of expenditure that cannot be avoided. The running costs would be likely to be incremental over the first five years while the managing body developed capacity, but the overall cost of running the West Highland Way would probably be static at £300,000 (2016 cost estimates) as these functions could continue to be met by the access authorities during the transition phase.

12 Recommendations

The key stakeholders, participating local authorities and national park authority, recognise and accept that the current framework is not a viable option for the future management, funding and development of the West Highland Way. Fundamental change is necessary to develop a model that works for the 21st Century. We therefore propose the following recommendations are incorporated into any future Management Strategy and Action Plan, and form the basis for effecting the changes set out in this report.

12.1 Development of a Managing Body

The main recommendation of this report is to set up an independent managing body for the West Highland Way and assign future budgets to this body as fully as possible. If an appropriate existing organisation can be found that matches the core requirements of managing the whole of the West Highland Way, then a process of adaptation could be undertaken.

It is recommended that agreement from the access authorities be sought in order to begin the process of development and transition to an independent managing body and this will need the support of senior managers and elected members to be achievable.

The key public and private stakeholders, with active support from the Scottish Government, should establish a small working party with the remit to design the new structure and operational arrangements. This working party would include potential West Highland Way Champions who could take the structure forward to implementation. It is considered important that the working party should be relatively small, well-resourced, have the authority to tap into wider resources, and be independent and time-bound.

The main focus of the managing body should be maintaining and enhancing the visitor experience of the West Highland Way and it should act as a champion at all levels and for the whole route.

This body should actively engage with the public sector, businesses and the recreational community in developing its vision for the West Highland Way and promote their involvement in the management of the body.

The managing body needs to build capacity in its early years to allow it to take on management responsibility for marketing and promotion of the West Highland Way, a capital programme of work and eventually co-ordination and delivery of maintenance and repair.

The managing body should be flexible and dynamic, free from direct control by the public sector, but open to guidance by key interests for strategic and operational management.

12.2 Revenue Generation

The priority for sustainable management of the West Highland Way is the development of a revenue generation scheme that contributes meaningfully to the cost of managing the Way. The revenue scheme needs to dovetail with other existing schemes and provide an incentive for both businesses and users to participate whilst recognising that business and user engagement in revenue generation is extremely challenging.

An essential part of the future revenue funding structure requires that the respective local authorities and the National Park Authority allocate budgets, or nominal allocations for the West Highland Way,

need to be transferred to the new Management Body in some way that is acceptable to the auditors. This may initially require a more substantial contribution in order to start the transition and allow any new body to establish alternative or additional funding streams. Funding from the access authorities and other public organisations will always be required to some extent, either in capital form for developments or revenue to support operational activity, and it is in the public interest to do so.

Revenue generation through merchandising and brand licensing should be considered strategically, focussing on brand development to increase the market and with better intelligence from users of the West Highland Way about the types of merchandise they would buy. It is important to recognise the input costs, including staff time, when considering the profitability, and therefore potential contribution to management costs.

12.3 Capital Investment

The shopping list of capital investment needs to be reviewed, prioritised and fully quantified in order to make a credible bid for investment. This should be programmed over a five- or ten-year period. It is recommended that further work is done to specify high-priority projects and bring them to contract-ready status. It is useful to note that where replacement or substantive upgrade of infrastructure is involved, the current state of the item does not necessarily affect the cost, meaning that any preparatory work is likely only to require updating for inflation if the project cannot be implemented immediately.

As part of the prioritisation process, it would be helpful to undertake a process of matching capital investment requirements to potential funders and identify whether significant gaps remain, particularly where such gaps would need to be covered by the public sector to safeguard the route.

Non-governmental sources of funding, such as the Heritage Lottery Fund may make contributions if the outcomes can be fitted within their own funding priorities – this would require a significant investment in bid preparation and it is recommended that this is instigated by the managing body as an early action.

12.4 The Visitor Experience

The economic impact has been calculated based on existing knowledge of visitor numbers and profile but the uncertainty within these datasets mean that estimates of economic impact are open to challenge. There is a need to review and agree the visitor counters to be used along the route to re-establish a consistent measurement of visitor numbers and identify multi-day use and day visits along the route. Given that the benefits of the route have always been based on supporting a fragile rural economy, this represents a significant weakness in knowledge to help inform the management of the route. It is therefore recommended that renewed effort is made to understand user profiles and re-establish a network of counters along the whole length of the West Highland Way so that realistic estimates of use and types of visitors can be made. It should be noted that calibration of the counter network should involve differentiating between user types.

Key locations for counters would be Milngavie / Mugdock Park (new), Conic Hill (replacement), Inversnaid (existing), Tyndrum, Victoria Bridge (replacement). This would provide a range of situations to estimate the overall usage of the route and account for different users (e.g. multi-day and day visitors).

It is a high priority to establish the optimum and maximum levels of use on the West Highland Way that have the potential to provide the best experience for users and generate minimum impact on the landscape and environment. There is currently no meaningful information that can be used to determine these levels. The optimum level would take account of seasonal variation in demand.

A system for collecting qualitative data should also be adopted in order to monitor opinions, expectations and feedback, with analysis of this data being used as the basis for management decisions. The existing visitor questionnaire operated by Highland Council provides a good baseline, but other methods of gathering feedback need to be implemented, such as the development of a West Highland Way app and occasional direct interviews with users.

12.5 Contingency Planning

A full understanding of the scale and probability of potential risks to the West Highland Way needs to be developed to enable contingency planning to be developed. A series of scenarios and potential responses can be developed in conjunction with key stakeholders along the length of the route to ensure that in the event of natural disasters or other negative events occurring, the impact on the infrastructure, visitor experience and businesses can be minimised.

12.6 Marketing and communications

It is recommended that the managing body develops a marketing strategy and a detailed marketing and communications plan based on a preferred delivery option (see Appendix 12.7E.10).

The key aspects of marketing and communications that need to be addressed through the strategy include:

- Development of the West Highland Way brand to project a high-quality visitor experience and reflect the character of the route.
- Identification of one or more 'Champions' of the West Highland Way, to raise the profile in relevant public, government and business platforms.
- Improved use of visitor feedback and better market intelligence to help businesses improve their product offerings and enable the managing body to provide visitors with the experiences they are seeking.
- The redevelopment of digital communications including the website, social media channels and web-based or mobile apps to provide high quality information and interaction along the Way, including the potential for e-commerce and user feedback.

The marketing and communications plan should also segment the worldwide market and identify how to target certain geographic areas, for example Scotland, rest of the UK, European countries and other overseas.

12.7 Transitional Arrangements and Dependencies

The process of transferring management to an alternative body needs to be coordinated and incremental to avoid any impact on visitor experience or infrastructure management. It will therefore require, given the iconic national status of the route, leadership at a national level to encourage the

cooperation of all existing public sector bodies with an interest in the West Highland Way, as well as input from the business community, recreational community and local communities along the Way.

A clear programme of transition is required to enable the managing body to be established, governance arrangements to be put in place and acquisition of responsibilities for the different aspects of the West Highland Way's management. It is not possible to devise a programme for the transition at present because the initial discussions between the public sector bodies are required first. Previous experience of setting up or adapting organisations suggests that it could take up to a year to complete, but could potentially be undertaken within six months if there is a 'fair wind'. In terms of public presentation, it would be advantageous for the managing body to be inaugurated at the beginning of a 'season', which means schedules and deadlines need to be worked back from April.

Action	Activities	Responsibilities
Public sector body engagement, discussions and agreements	Agreements in principle to future management model and funding arrangements Terms of reference / memoranda of agreement to transfer responsibility and resources to the managing body.	Directors / Elected members
Business engagement	Identification of business need and options for involvement in route management / resource allocation.	Business owners / operators
Identification of Champions	Wide-ranging trawl of appropriately experienced and high profile individuals.	Public sector managers
Managing body set up	Investigation of options – new or existing; optimum organisational arrangements; appointment of board and core staff; write strategic implementation plan.	Public sector managers and Champions; CEO to write strategic plan
Managing body inauguration	Set up systems and procedures; procure premises and equipment; take on business and user engagement; initiate marketing and communication planning.	CEO and administrator
Transfer of functions	Incremental transfer of functions over three- to five-years.	Managing body staff

Appendices

- A. Strategic Context
- B. Long Distance Routes from Around the World
- C. Understanding Users
- D. Business Survey Results
- E. Options Appraisal – Detailed Analysis
- F. Position statements from the managing access authorities

A Strategic Analysis

A.1 Historical Context

Management of the West Highland Way is coordinated by a partnership between the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park Authority and Highland, Argyll and Bute, East Dunbartonshire, and Stirling Councils. This partnership operates as the West Highland Way Management Group. The National Park Authority provides the lead for marketing, promotion, merchandising, distribution, information provision, website management, surveys and liaison with business operators on behalf of the Management Group.

The development of the West Highland Way has depended on the support of public funding over many years. The Countryside Commission for Scotland (CCS) provided 100% funding to the West Highland Way for its early establishment costs through the 1980s via grant support to the local authorities along the length of the Way. This reflected the importance of the national interest in the development of Scotland's first long distance route.

When Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) took over the duties of CCS in 1992, the level of grant support was reduced to 75% to reflect the fact that the West Highland Way was established and that local authorities should make their own contribution to the management of the route.

Since 2009 SNH has no longer been allowed by Scottish Government to provide grant support to local authorities, so funding from the four councils has come entirely from their own budgets. With council tax income frozen since 2008 and the block grant from Scottish Government to local authorities falling in real terms over that period, local authorities are in a position of having to take difficult decisions on the funding of recreational infrastructure such as the West Highland Way. It has often been with a degree of reluctance that they have felt it necessary to choose to reduce funding, and even to discontinue funding the maintenance and development of a nationally important long distance route.

The Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority, established in 2002, has recreational enjoyment of the countryside as a key priority and has allocated greater levels of funding to the West Highland Way. This is reflected in the fact that the park authority now takes on the marketing, merchandising and website duties for the whole of the West Highland Way. The park authority also hosted the West Highland Way Development Manager post from 2004 to 2006 as part of the West Highland Way Strategic Development Initiative funded by SNH and LEADER+.

Against this backdrop of shrinking levels of public funding, the West Highland Way is still Scotland's premier long distance route and provides substantial social and economic benefits to communities along its length, as well as having significant potential to contribute towards a range of government policy priorities in areas such as social inclusion and the health agenda (see below).

Despite this negative backdrop to the current funding environment, the West Highland Way continues to be popular and is considered to be a success story. Indeed, one of the individuals interviewed in the course of the stakeholder consultation for this study made the point that the problems and management challenges that this study is attempting to address are the problems and challenges associated with success.

The reality is that the West Highland Way has an urgent requirement for ongoing investment if its undoubted success is to be maintained, but the economic situation described above demonstrates the way in which funds are currently being drained away from the management of the route.

A.2 Policy Environment

The West Highland Way, and Scotland's Great Trails more generally, provide opportunities for healthy exercise and outdoor recreation for the whole of society, plus socio-economic benefits for remote rural communities. The wide range of opportunities and benefits that long distance routes provide to society amount to a significant contribution in the delivery of government policies. This policy context is often the basis for the justification of public sector funding of long distance routes such as the West Highland Way.

The section below explores the many contributions to the national policy environment that the West Highland Way is able to make.

A.2.1 Health

Promotion of long distance routes is a means of promoting a healthy lifestyle, and government agencies like Scottish Natural Heritage and charity sector bodies such as the Paths for All Partnership have, over the last decade or so, moved towards a position of actively promoting enjoyment of the countryside and highlighting the health benefits of activities like walking.

This is a section from the SNH publication **Developing our Natural health service**.

“Scottish Natural Heritage's policy Developing the contribution of the natural heritage to a healthier Scotland sets out how better places and increased involvement in the care and enjoyment of nature and landscapes can help tackle current health challenges. Building on our long-standing role in this area, SNH works as part of the Green Exercise Partnership to promote the use of the outdoors for better health and well-being, and contribute to a healthier Scotland.

Scottish Natural Heritage is leading work with the environment and health sectors to develop the concept and practice of a Natural health service to complement our existing National Health Service.

In September 2015 a draft action plan for delivering our Natural health service was presented to two cabinet secretary-chaired groups - the Rural Affairs, Food and Environment Delivery Board and the National Strategic Group on Sport and Physical Activity. Both groups endorsed the plan, which also received support from the Deputy First Minister as an important example of 'cross-Government thinking'.

Delivery of the plan, which brings together both environment and health policy areas, will require input from a range of Scottish Government divisions, agencies, NGOs and other stakeholders. Led by SNH, the plan seeks a step change in using the outdoors to deliver physical, mental and social health and well-being outcomes by addressing three strategic gaps:

- Better targeting to realise the benefits of new investment in green infrastructure for tackling health inequalities;
- Mainstreaming green exercise programmes and projects in health policy and practice;

- Maximising health outcomes from green exercise by developing a joined up approach between health, sport, active travel and environment sectors.”

Research into the health benefits of exercise has been a key area of study in recent years and this has given rise to estimates of the damage caused by inactivity and the budgetary savings that a more active nation will create. This is highlighted in the paragraph below, taken from the Foreword to the National Walking Strategy.

“Walking is highly cost-effective and demonstrates that prevention really is better than cure. The health risks of inactivity are stark – 7 Scots die every day due to inactivity, often long before they have to.”

A.2.2 Social Inclusion

Walking is also a relevant issue in social inclusion policy, being an activity that requires no special equipment or prerequisite experience to participate.

The National Walking Strategy focuses on all forms of walking, including functional walking, and makes this link between walking and inequalities in society:

“Crucially, with regard to tackling inequalities, walking acts as an important leveller in variations in participation. We know that participation in sport varies by age, gender, area deprivation and household income, but when we include walking for recreation, these participation gaps narrow.”

SNH’s policy to increase participation in enjoyment of the outdoors includes this reference to encouraging participation within socially excluded groups of Scottish society:

“A key priority for Scottish Natural Heritage is to ensure that the benefits from enjoying the outdoors are shared by all of Scotland’s people. Special effort is particularly needed to provide people of all abilities, ethnic minorities and less advantaged communities with a range of opportunities as well as the motivation and confidence to use them. Continued research and survey work is also needed to increase understanding of environmental, social and demographic changes, and their implications for enjoying the outdoors for all groups in society.”

One approach to tackling issues surrounding social inclusion is to introduce young people to the outdoors with a view to creating a connection with the outdoors at an early age. With this in mind, the Ramblers Scotland “Holyrood 2016 - Manifesto for a Walking Scotland” includes the following bullet point, which is aimed at promoting walking to everyone in Scotland and of introducing the joy of being outdoors to school-age pupils. This report has made the point that the West Highland Way is a Scottish icon, and this is backed up by its inclusion in this paragraph:

“The Chief Medical Officer in 2013 estimated physical inactivity kills 7 people in Scotland every day, contributes to over 40 chronic diseases, and cost the Scottish Economy £660Million per year. Walking is the most practical solution to this, and currently accounts for 54% of calories used in Scotland. Increasing walking would lead to better life expectancy, decreased pressures on the NHS, and a release of cash for the economy. Ramblers Scotland would like to see a Scotland where walking is part of everyone’s daily lives, whether as a way of spending time with friends, as a means of staying healthy, as a mode of transport or simply for the joy of being outdoors. We should ensure that we are able to capitalise on our unrivalled natural assets to transform the culture of our country, so that

everyone in Scotland feels a sense of ownership for Scotland's countryside and greenspaces, values our natural heritage and regularly experiences the many benefits of being outdoors. It should be a national aspiration for every person in Scotland to walk the **West Highland Way** or climb Ben Nevis, and every pupil should be given the opportunity during their school years to see the view from the top of Ben Lomond or Lochnagar."

A.2.3 Sport

Long distance routes have clear connections with policies for sport. A great deal of sport-related policy in Scotland over recent years has been driven by the push for Commonwealth Games legacy.

This statement is taken from the Foreword to the National Walking Strategy.

"Legacy 2014 is our chance to ensure that all of Scotland benefits from the Commonwealth Games and everyone is inspired to be more active. We want to capitalise on this golden opportunity for Scotland to achieve lasting change and make Scotland a world leader as a walking-friendly country."

Indeed, Scotland now has a National Walking Strategy and these are quotes from this strategy.

"Vision

A Scotland where everyone benefits from walking as part of their everyday journeys, enjoys walking in the outdoors and where places are well designed to encourage walking.

Our 3 Strategic Aims are:

- Create a culture of walking where everyone walks more often as part of their everyday travel and for recreation and well-being
- Better quality walking environments with attractive, well designed and managed built and natural spaces for everyone
- Enable easy, convenient and safe independent mobility for everyone"

"Scotland was one of the first countries to introduce a national physical activity strategy in 2003, Let's Make Scotland More Active (LMSMA). We are again leading the way with the publication of this National Walking Strategy."

"Our first ever National Physical Activity Implementation Plan (NPAIP), published in February 2014, seeks to adapt the key elements of the Charter [Toronto Charter for Physical Activity (2010)] to the Scottish setting and link it directly to the Government's active legacy ambitions for the Commonwealth Games. The creation and implementation of a National Walking Strategy is a crucial step in achieving the outcomes detailed in the five delivery themes of the NPAIP. In addition, increasing physical activity has been identified as a priority in the Single Outcome Agreements with local authorities. This strategy can help guide actions to deliver on this."

"Scotland's world-class access rights and a range of outstanding recreational assets for walking, including National and Regional Parks, Nature Reserves, Scotland's Great Trails, the National Cycle Network, Core Paths, canal towpaths and the wood and forests of the National Forest Estate. These assets need to be effectively managed and promoted if more people are to be encouraged to use

them. Awareness and use of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code by land managers and walkers also needs to be developed, especially among young people.”

A.2.4 Tourism

The West Highland Way caters for domestic and overseas visitors, and is a major Scottish visitor attraction, albeit a long, linear one. Tourism policy is relevant in that it helps drive visitors to the West Highland Way and provides a funding framework for public sector investment. The visitor figures and spending estimates presented in this report represent a contribution towards the national statistics for tourism numbers and income.

The following figures demonstrate the overall achievements of the Scottish tourism industry and highlight the bigger picture to which the West Highland Way is contributing.

Scotland. The key facts on tourism in 2014. VisitScotland.

“In 2014, over 15.5 million overnight tourism trips were taken in Scotland, for which visitor expenditure totalled £4.8 billion.

42% of tourism trips are by Scottish residents.

Overseas residents account for 17% of all tourism trips taken in Scotland but 38% of total visitor spend. They are therefore a valuable component of the visitor economy. The USA, Germany, France, and Australia are long-time major markets for Scotland. The last few years have seen growth from Sweden, Denmark, Switzerland and Poland.”

Scottish Government website Tourism page.

“Tourism is everyone's business - everyone in Scotland is an ambassador.”

“The tourism sector is of vital importance to the Scottish economy - latest figures indicate total overnight and day visitor expenditure in Scotland was around £9.7 billion in 2014 – this comprised of expenditure from overnight visitors of £4.7 billion and expenditure by day visitors of £5.0 billion.”

“Spending by tourists in Scotland generates around £12 billion of economic activity in the wider Scottish supply chain and contributes around £6 billion to Scottish GDP (in basic prices). This represents about 5% of total Scottish GDP.”

“Employment in the tourism-related industries sector (as measured by the Scottish Government’s Tourism Growth Sector) in Scotland was 196,000 in 2014 – accounting for around 7.7% of employment in Scotland.”

The National Strategy: Tourism Scotland 2020

“The industry-led National Tourism Strategy "Tourism Scotland 2020" was launched in June 2012. The strategy was developed and led by the industry under the umbrella of the Scottish Tourism Alliance (STA), supported by the public sector. It is based on an in-depth understanding of market

opportunities matched to Scotland’s capabilities. It provides a common agenda for the industry and supporting organisations, focusing on the national long term tourism growth ambition.”

A.2.5 Community Involvement

One of the organisations interviewed during the stakeholder consultation phase of this project was the Scottish Co-production Network. Their representative was enthusiastic about the potential for developing community involvement in the future management of the West Highland Way and expressed an interest in providing assistance with that process.

Community involvement in resource management is a government priority at the current time and with the coming into force of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act in 2016, there is a positive policy environment and active support network associated with the engagement of communities in the way that is being proposed in this report. Furthermore, the involvement of the recreational community in the management of the West Highland Way would re-establish the link this community had with the West Highland Way at its inception. However, it is important to recognise that any aspect of community empowerment requires grassroots support rather than top-down decision making. Offloading the management of the West Highland Way to the community sector could have disastrous and unintended consequences if there is no strong desire on the part of the communities themselves to assume a management role. A key factor identified in the criteria for a managing body is the ability to focus on the whole of the West Highland Way.

A major task for the managing body will be to develop a sense of community along the length of the West Highland Way, which will be a challenge given its linear nature and significant gaps between settlements. It is anticipated that there will be opportunities to establish new relationships between the management of the route and the communities through which it passes, and a pre-conceived model is unlikely to meet the needs of the communities themselves; instead, an open-minded and flexible approach will be required to gain trust and support in both directions.

A.3 A Managing Body for the West Highland Way

The key recommendation from this report has been for the setting up of a new managing body for the West Highland Way. It is recognised that this is not a new proposal for the West Highland Way, or a unique solution. A 1991 report for the Countryside Commission for Scotland, looking into the revenue generating opportunities for Scotland’s long distance routes, recommended the setting up of a company or trust to carry out this work.

“Company or Trust

8.106 Existing organisations, CCS and the managing authorities are not the most efficient vehicle for implementation of the revenue-generating recommendations. Public sector agencies and authorities are not likely to be viewed as favourably as a voluntary organisation by potential sponsors and the structure of these organisations makes reinstatement in the LDRs of funds generated difficult.

8.107 Two options for an implementation vehicle present themselves:

- A limited company (which could be established specifically for this task or could be franchised)
- A Trust (which could also be a limited company)”

Furthermore, the more recent work carried out for the Loch Lomond and The Trossachs National Park Authority by the West Highland Way Development Manager as part of the Strategic Development Initiative, came up with the following recommendation in 2006:

“Company Limited by Guarantee or Terms of Reference

This structure could be developed by agreeing terms of reference and support from each of the organisations or by setting up an independent trust. This is a decision that still has to be made by the current West Highland Way Management Group.”

However, as highlighted above there are significant differences in the current policy framework that make this option more viable and, perhaps more importantly, the state of public sector finances and institutions mean that the West Highland Way infrastructure is at serious risk of continued underinvestment. The creation of an independent managing body at this time is therefore considered to be a pragmatic option, based on a combination of need and opportunity.

B Long Distance Routes from Around the World

Chapter 6 of this report provided the results of a benchmarking exercise to compare the West Highland Way to 18 other long distance routes from around the world. The two tables on the following pages show the routes that were studied and the factors that emerged from this research.

Table 1 provides information on:

- The length of each route in kilometres and miles
- The usual time taken to walk the route in number of days
- The routes where employing a guide is a mandatory requirement
- The main source of web-based information
- Who appears to be responsible for marketing the route

Table 2 provides further information on:

- The managing authority for the route
- What the nearest Scottish equivalent would be to that managing authority
- The main strengths and weaknesses of each route

After compiling these tables, the South West Coast Path in England and Pacific Crest Trail in the USA were selected for further investigations. This fed into the findings of the benchmarking exercise in chapter 6. Further information relating to the management of these routes, and in support of the findings in chapter 6, is provided in sections B1 and B2 following tables 1 and 2.

It should be noted that websites change and the management of routes in some countries will transform over time. Furthermore, it was harder to find information about routes in certain countries compared to others, so there may have been websites or marketing initiatives that we did not manage to uncover. Nevertheless, every effort was made to develop a list of long distance routes from around the world and to gather information about them in order to conduct a benchmarking exercise to compare them to the West Highland Way.

Table 1.

Country	Route name	Kms	Miles	Days	Guide	Website	Marketing
Scotland	West Highland Way	154	96	7-9		Link	WHW website & Commercial operators
England	Pennine Way	429	268	16-20		Link	National Trails website
England	Cleveland Way	176	110	7		Link	National Trails website
England	South West Coast Path	1008	630	30-60		Link Link #	National Trails website & South West Coast Path Association
England	South Downs Way	160	100	7		Link	National Trails website
Sweden	Kungsleden	440	270	20-25		Wikipedia	Commercial operators
France	GR10 - Pyrenees	900	550	45-60		Wikipedia	Commercial operators
France	GR20 – Corsican High Level Route	180	112	15		Wikipedia	Commercial operators
F/CH/I	Tour du Mont Blanc	170	106	9-12		Link *	Commercial operators
USA	Pacific Crest Trail	4160	2600	200		Link	Pacific Crest Trail Association
USA	John Muir Trail	336	210	20-30		Link	Pacific Crest Trail Association
USA	Appalachian Trail	3504	2190	180		Link	Appalachian Trail Conservancy
Nepal	Everest Base Camp	80	50	12	Man	Wikipedia	Commercial operators
Nepal	Annapurna Circuit	230	145	18	Man	Wikipedia	Commercial operators
Bhutan	Chomolhari Trek	133	83	10-13	Man	Link	Bhutan Tourism Council / Commercial operators
New Zealand	Milford Track	53.5	33	4		Link	Dept. of Conservation / Air NZ
New Zealand	Kepler Track	60	37.5	3-4		Link	Dept. of Conservation / Air NZ
Australia	Overland Track	65	41	6		Link	Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania
Peru	Machu Picchu – Inca Trail	45	28	4	Man	Link	Commercial operators

Note:

- In the “Guide” column “Man” denotes that employing a guide is mandatory.
- The website column provides a link to the most useful website we could find for each route.
 - “Link” denotes an official website for that route.
 - “Link #” denotes an additional official website of a charitable managing body.
 - “Link *” denotes a commercial operator’s website.
 - “Wikipedia” denotes that the most useful information appears to be in Wikipedia.

Table 2.

Route name	Managing authority	Scottish Equivalent	Main strengths	Main weaknesses
West Highland Way	Five access authorities & WHW Management Group		Optimal length, Route. Scotland's iconic LDR.	Website, Path condition, Accommodation bottlenecks.
Pennine Way	Natural England / Local & NP authorities	SNH / LA & NPA	Challenge, Accessible, Good information.	Length, Time required.
Cleveland Way	Natural England / Local & NP authorities	SNH / LA & NPA	Optimal length, Moors & coast. Good information.	Rolling hills rather than mountains.
South West Coast Path	Natural England / Local & NP authorities + SWCP Association	SNH / LA & NPA + charitable trust	Coastal scenery, Good information.	Length, Time requirement.
South Downs Way	Natural England / Local authorities	SNH / LA & NPA	Optimal length, Easy walking.	Rolling hills rather than mountains.
Kungsleden	Svenska Turistföreningen (STF)	SYHA / Ramblers	Inside arctic circle.	Length, Inaccessible.
GR10 - Pyrenees	French Hiking Federation	Ramblers	Pyrenees landscape.	Length, Time requirement.
GR20 – Corsican High Level Route	French Hiking Federation	Ramblers	Landscape, Adventurous route, Island.	Technical route, Short season, Inaccessible.
Tour du Mont Blanc	Three national hiking associations	Ramblers	Alpine landscape, Accessible location, three countries.	Altitude, Short season, High mountain weather.
Pacific Crest Trail	Pacific Crest Trail Association	WHW managing body	Website, Well maintained path.	Length, Permits, Booking.
John Muir Trail	Pacific Crest Trail Association	WHW managing body	Website, Section of PCT.	Permits, Booking.
Appalachian Trail	Appalachian Trail Conservancy	WHW managing body	Website, No fees. No permits.	Length, Camping regulations.
Everest Base Camp	Government agencies & National Park	SNH & Park Authority	Reputation, Walk to Everest.	Altitude, Long haul destination.
Annapurna Circuit	Government agencies & National Park	SNH & Park Authority	Reputation, Big mtn landscape.	Altitude, Long haul destination.
Chomolhari Trek	Tourism Council of Bhutan	VisitScotland	Unspoilt, Quieter than Nepal.	Altitude, Long haul destination.
Milford Track	Department of Conservation	SNH	Reputation, Icon of NZ.	Short, Booking, Can be full.
Kepler Track	Department of Conservation	SNH	Quick, Easy, Intro to Fjordland.	Short, Can be busy.
Overland Track	Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania	SNH	Landscape, Australia's top LDR.	Book & fee.
Machu Picchu – Inca Trail	Government agencies	SNH	Reputation, Historical interest, Package trip destination.	Short, Altitude, Permits, Long haul destination.

The main strengths and weaknesses shown in this table are clearly subjective. One walker's strength will be another's weakness, and vice-versa. However, the given strengths and weaknesses are an attempt to view these international routes through the eyes of a typical West Highland Way walker, and are intended to give an impression of how such a walker may view these other routes in comparison to the West Highland Way.

So, whilst some walkers will prefer rolling hills to the mountains of the West Highlands, or a technical route on alpine terrain, the marketing advantage for the West Highland Way will be in appealing to the many walkers that want more of a challenge than rolling countryside in England and something easier than scrambling on Corsica or the altitude issues associated with a trip to the Himalaya.

B.1 South West Coast Path Association

Membership numbers as at 31st December 2015.

	2012	2013	2014	2015
Individual / Joint	5095	5319	5263	5513
Businesses	85	134	125	230

With individual membership costing £20 and joint membership and international membership at £25, the annual income from this aspect of the membership scheme is in excess of £100,000.

Further details about the Individual / Joint Membership scheme can be found at:

<http://shop.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/category-s/103.htm>

Business membership is based on three price categories starting at £60, with annual income from the scheme at around £12,000.

£60 - Small business (turnover £0-20k pa)

£180 - Medium business (turnover £21-81k pa)

£300 - Large business (turnover over £81k pa)

Further details about the Business Membership Scheme can be found at:

<http://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/love-the-coast-path/join/Advertise-with-us/>

The stated target for the membership scheme is to reach 6,500 members by the end of 2016.

The annual report and accounts for 2015 can be found at:

https://www.southwestcoastpath.org.uk/media/uploads/ar2015_web.pdf

B.2 Pacific Crest Trail

Details about the Pacific Crest Trail mission, vision and values can be found at:

<http://www.pcta.org/about-us/our-mission-vision-and-values/>

Details about the Pacific Crest Trail financial reports and plans can be found at:

<http://www.pcta.org/about-us/financials-reports-and-plans/>

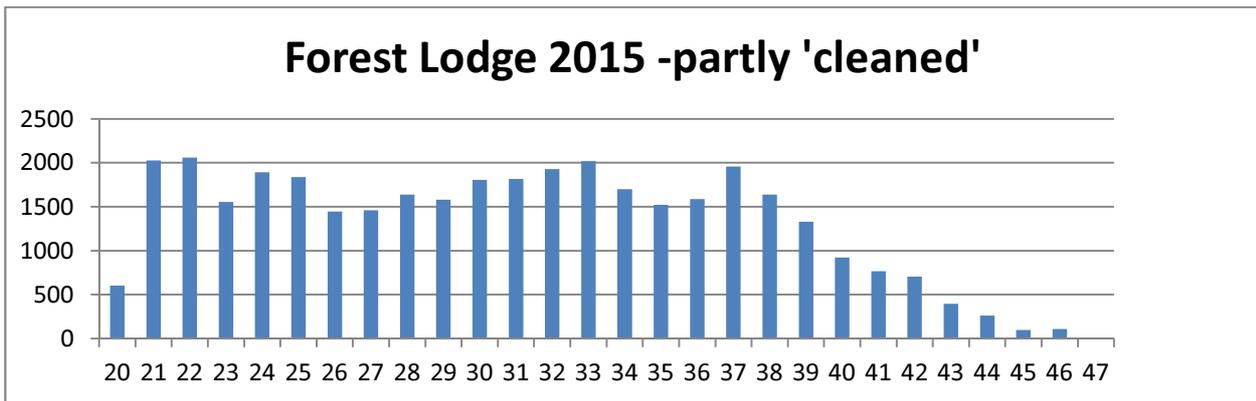
Details about the "Ways to give" to the Pacific Crest Trail via the Donate button can be found at:

<https://www.pcta.org/donate/#donate>

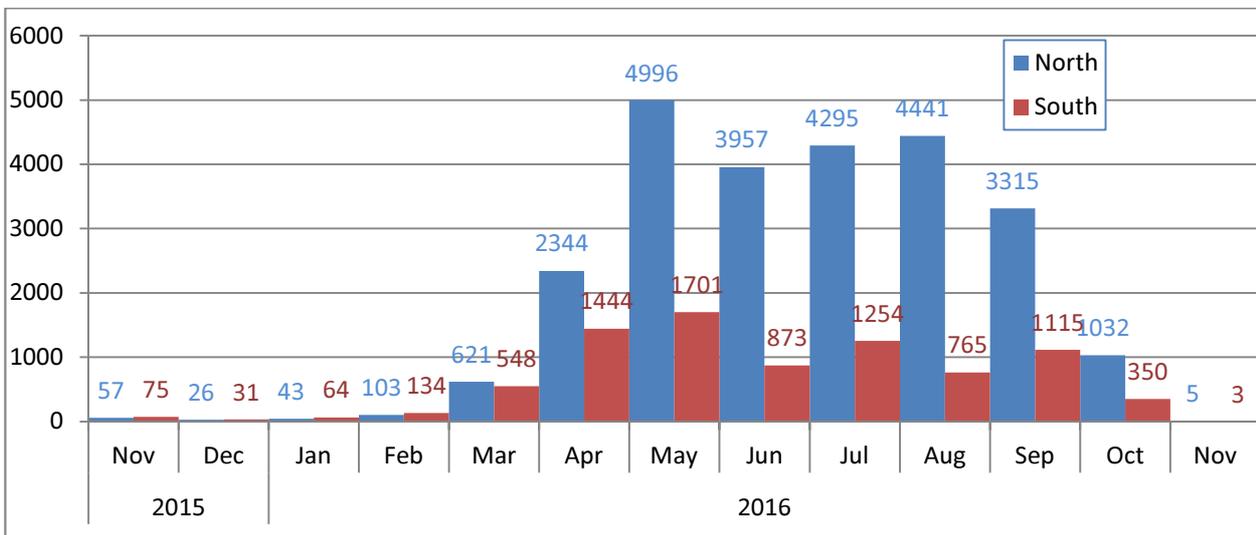
C Understanding Users

C.1 Automatic People Counters

Although there is a network of counters along the route, it has not been possible to produce a time-series for even a single year along the whole route. This situation reflects the importance placed on understanding visitors by the West Highland Way Management Group. The Management Group has assumed that the counter at Forest Lodge represents 'whole-way walkers' and therefore use this as the basis for estimating overall use. In 2015 there were approximately 40,000 counts and the 'best estimate of multi-day walkers' was suggested as more than 35,000. Closer analysis of the counter data in Highland Council area reveals some anomalies, reducing the total counts by at least 2,000 and it calls into question how well the data has been interrogated and 'cleaned'.



The most useful data has come from the Inversnaid counter which counted 29,000 in the 2015 calendar year – it is thought to have a calibration factor of almost 1 for counting accuracy. In September 2015 it was set up to identify people passing the counter in different directions. The chart below shows the data from November 2015 to November 2016 with north and south direction separated out.

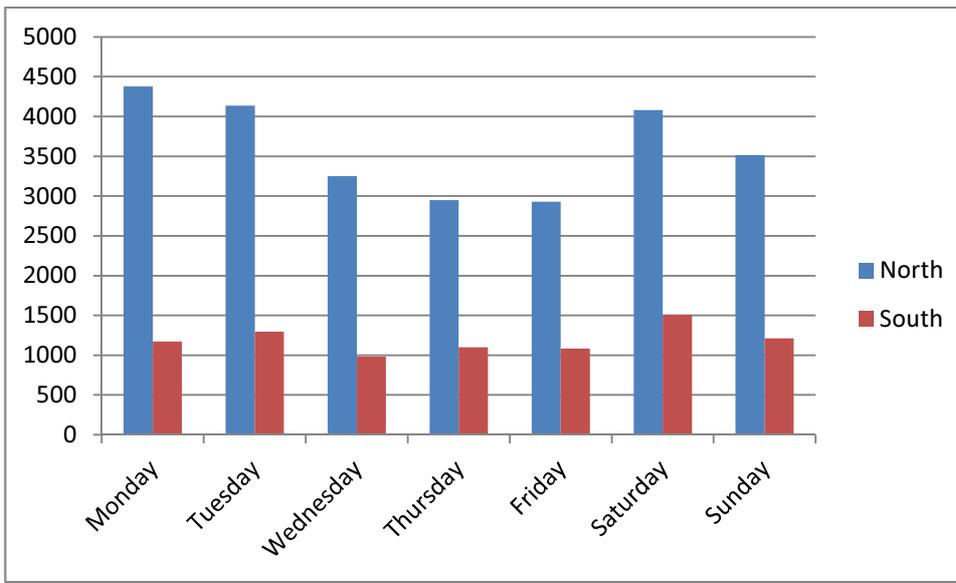


The Inversnaid counter indicates that approximately a quarter of counts are from north to south, which conflicts with all other information about the use of the West Highland Way. However, no calibration has been done to determine how many people are double counted on a single visit, or other ways to differentiate between day visitors and multi-day users of the West Highland Way. If all of the southward counts represented day-visits (i.e. double-counts on an out-and-back walk), then the multi-day users could be 16,000 or less. Based on discussions with Park Authority staff, the following rationale has been used and is robust as any other intuitive estimate:

Rationale	Adjustment	North	South
Counter Data – total for 2015-16	0	25,235	8,357
Exclude 9pm - 6am counts	-100	25,135	8,257
Treat half of South counts as 'out-and-back'	-4000	21,135	4,257
Highland Fling	-700	20,435	4,257

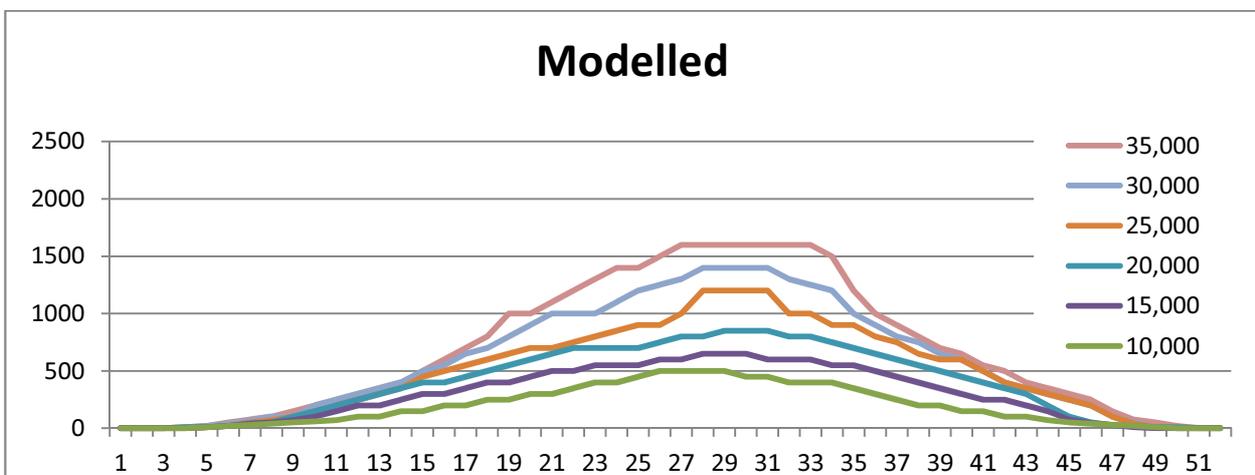
This would give an estimate of 25,000 multi-day walkers.

The counter also shows the following pattern (all counts) for daily use:



Although this is not corrected for day- versus multi-day users, it suggests that the accommodation bottleneck is not as pronounced as has been suggested. From this simple analysis, Tyndrum may expect busier nights on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

In the absence of reliable counter data during the research it was necessary to undertake some simple modelling of how use might be distributed over the year. A simple 'bell-curve' model was produced using different annual numbers from 10,000 to 35,000, which helps to indicate potential pressure on accommodation and may help to identify where additional capacity may be required.



This suggests that the maximum numbers on the route at any one time could be anywhere from 71 to 229 (see table).

Total annual users	Weekly peak	Daily peak
10,000	500	71
15,000	650	93
20,000	850	121
25,000	1200	171
30,000	1400	200
35,000	1600	229

C.2 Detailed Analysis of User Surveys

The 2012 survey undertaken by Highland Council had 762 responses with information about 2248 individuals (although opinion-based responses relate to the 762 people who completed the form). It is important to recognise that self-completion questionnaires do not always provide a fully representative picture of the whole population, but in the absence of other data sources this is deemed to be the best available.

The only analysis of this dataset was the production of simple charts showing categories of users and there had been no attempt to segment or further interrogate the data. Significant aspects of the following analysis represents new knowledge about users that has been available but untapped, and contradicts the received wisdom that has been used in management of the route.

C.2.1 User Demographics

The age range was based on the number given within the group by the person responding, so may be an approximation in some cases (e.g. the group of 30 women from the UK only had a response of four under-18s and two over-65s, leaving 24 unaccounted for). However, the West Highland Way appears to be most popular with 18-34s from the Rest of Europe and Scotland, but more evenly distributed among Rest of UK visitors. 35-64s represent over half of Rest of UK and Rest of World visitors.

Age range	<18	18-34	35-50	51-64	65+	n=2172
Scotland	7.3%	40.8%	26.6%	18.1%	7.1%	
Rest of UK	13.6%	18.6%	23.9%	29.5%	14.5%	
Rest of Europe	7.6%	57.5%	17.7%	15.7%	1.5%	
Rest of World	4.8%	25.7%	23.0%	35.3%	11.2%	
Combined	8.8%	40.3%	22.1%	21.5%	7.2%	

	Male	Female	n=2248
Scotland	17%	10%	
Rest of UK	15%	11%	
Rest of Europe	23%	16%	
Rest of World	5%	4%	
Total	60%	40%	

87% of all respondents were in a group of 1 to 4 and the table below shows the minor differences between where they are from and group size.

Origin / Group size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7 or more
Scotland	15%	43%	15%	13%	5%	4%	7%
Rest of UK	21%	41%	12%	11%	3%	3%	9%

Rest of Europe	15%	54%	9%	11%	2%	4%	5%
Rest of World	19%	55%	11%	8%	0%	3%	5%
Grand Total	17%	48%	11%	11%	3%	3%	7%

Family groups currently appear to comprise approximately 4% of respondents. These were identified as being small groups with at least one under-18 and one or two over-35.

Family groups	
Scotland	2%
Rest of UK	1%
Rest of Europe	1%
Rest of World	0%

Although 49% of respondents said that they walked in a group of 2, only 26% are likely to be couples, who potentially require double rooms (i.e. adults of different sex). This would be a maximum, as some of these may only be friends and some may prefer twin accommodation over double. The 18-34 age range represents a significant proportion of couples from Europe (over 60%) suggesting that 7% of couples are 18-34 from Europe.

Non-same sex Couples	26%		<18	18-34	35-50	51-64	65+
Scotland	5%		3%	40%	28%	18%	13%
Rest of UK	5%		0%	30%	25%	38%	8%
Rest of Europe	12%		0%	62%	20%	15%	3%
Rest of World	4%		0%	19%	26%	41%	15%

C.2.2 Time Spent and Accommodation

The length of time spent on the route was only completed by 287 respondents (margin of error for the following figures is therefore +/- 5.56%).

Days taken	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8+
287 responses	1%	1%	5%	4%	8%	18%	28%	35%

43% of respondents said that they camped at least one night. Over 50% of these were from Europe.

Camping (at least 1 night)	% from category	% of all walkers
Scotland	24%	10%
Rest of UK	18%	8%
Rest of Europe	52%	22%
Rest of World	5%	2%
All Walkers		43%

The data does not allow a straightforward calculation of nights spent in each accommodation type, as they are only asked which types they used. However, some patterns can be discerned. 47% of 742 valid responses said they were only using one type of accommodation, 39% of valid responses said they used two types of accommodation and 14% of valid responses used three types of accommodation.

From analysing the combinations of responses the following can be estimated (+/- 3.5%):

- 25% camped all the way (may include wild camping)
- 4% used only Hostels
- 9% used a combination of Hostel and Camping only
- 15% used a combination Hotel / Guest House and B&B
- 9% used a combination of Hotel / Guest House, B&B and Hostel
- 8% used only B&B
- 6% used only Hotels / Guest Houses
- Only 1% said that they used a combination of B&B and Camping
- The remaining 25% used different combinations

C.2.3 Economic Value

Daily expenditure is a conservative estimate of accommodation cost plus food, assuming campers and hostellers are more likely to cook (but probably not exclusively):

Camping / Hostel - £10 a day for lunch and evening meal ingredients; £5 pp camp fees; £15 hostel fee

B&B - £20 a day for lunch and evening meal; £30 pp accommodation

Hotel / Guest House - £30 a day for lunch and evening meal; £40 pp accommodation

No allowance has been made for other types of expenditure (including items such as baggage transfer, equipment, alcohol or gifts) as there is no basis for such estimates. This means that the user-based economic impact is an 'at-least' indication of the value of the route to the local economy.

A matrix was used to calculate the value based on the time spent on the route and accommodation used. This was then applied to different annual user estimates to provide overall estimates of expenditure by users (+/- 3.5%):

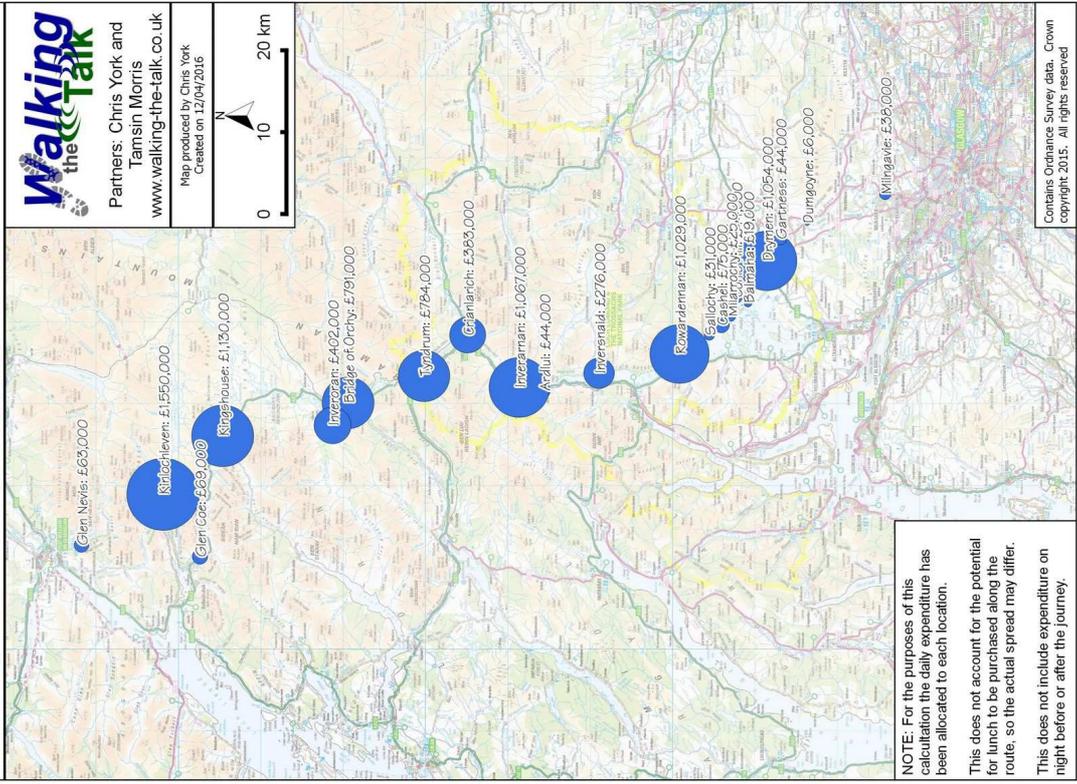
Annual Multi-day users	Lower range	Best estimate	Upper range
10,000	£2,412,500	£2,500,000	£2,587,500
25,000	£7,315,100	£7,771,250	£8,227,400
35,000	£8,607,800	£8,920,000	£9,232,200

On average, users of the West Highland Way are likely to spend at least £250 during their trip.

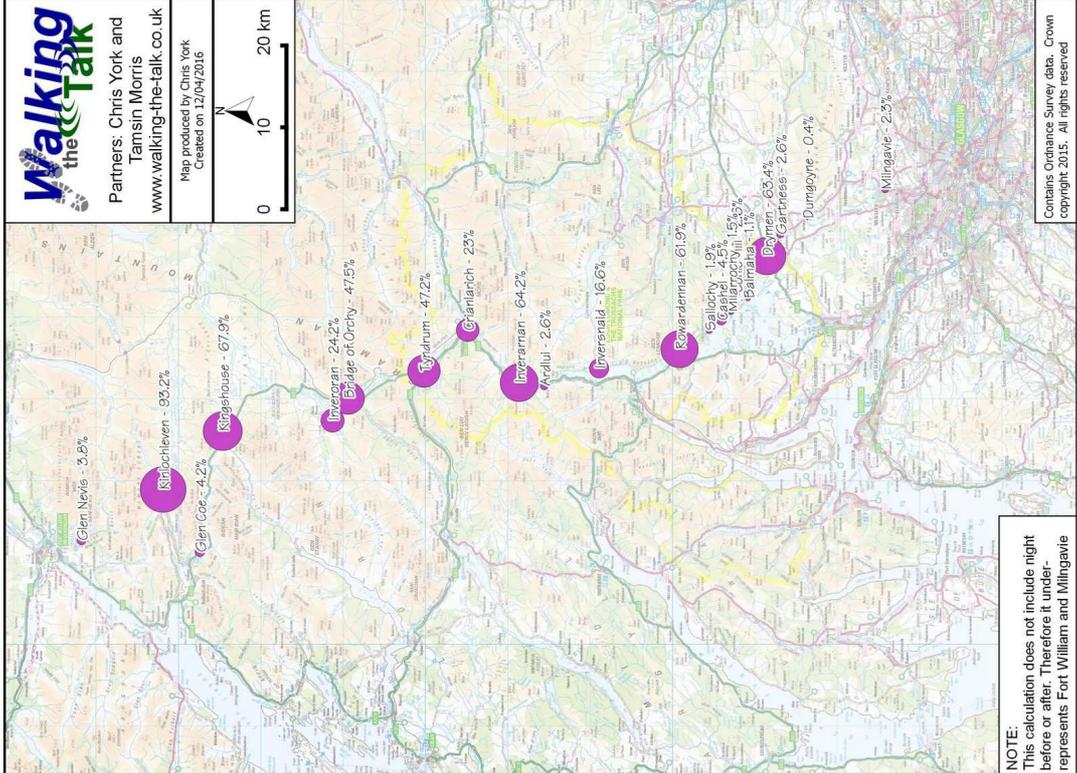
C.2.4 Benefits Along the Way

The patterns of start / finish and overnight stops have been mapped to indicate where the pressures and potential economic benefits exist. If this sample reflects the whole population of users, it highlights where efforts to increase accommodation and other services need to be focussed.

West Highland Way - Indicative value of walkers to each settlement



West Highland Way - Overnight stops by location



D Business Survey Results

D.1 Economic and Social Impact Assessment

D.1.1 Economic Impact

Section 4 of the report explains the methodology adopted for calculating the economic impact, and explains the difficulties in arriving at a robust conclusion. **It is estimated, however, that the West Highland Way generates nearly £16Million of turnover per annum in the businesses and communities along, adjacent to and dependent on the Way.**

There are a number of multipliers that can identify the additional income that is generated by indirect and induced expenditure. For example, additional tourism expenditure will result in additional employment, a proportion of the wages from which will be spent locally thus adding to the impact. There are also a number of metrics (additionality, displacement, etc.) that seek to eliminate any expenditure that is not properly additional and resulting solely from the existence of the Way. Given the scope, scale and budget of the contract it has not been possible to investigate these factors fully, not least because there are different views on the additional expenditure that would result in an additional job (SNH Report 398), and it is considered that the base figure is sufficiently accurate and that the multipliers are used differently in other reports, so are unlikely to add meaningfully to the estimates.

This figure of £16Million was arrived at by contacting 142 businesses identified as being on or adjacent to the Way, or being involved in providing services to users of the Way (147 were identified but 5 were not contactable). Detailed survey responses were received from 25 of these, a response rate of 17.6%. The breakdown of business type within the sample matches that of the population surveyed, so the results are considered valid.

Breakdown of Business Survey responses

Business Type	Sample	%	Population	%
Accommodation	16	61	91	64
Food & Drink	2	8	10	7
Retail	1	4	4	3
Walking / Booking Company	3	11	21	15
Baggage Transfer	2	8	3	2
Other	2	8	13	9
Total	26	100	142	100

There appears to be no current database of the business community that depends on the Way to some extent, although the National Park Authority holds a list of businesses that it communicates with on an occasional basis.

D.1.2 Methodology

Calculation of the economic impact of the Way was arrived at by asking the businesses what proportion of their turnover was derived from West Highland Way customers, and what the turnover of the business was, expressed as a band (as being more likely to be divulged than a specific turnover). The midpoint of this band was used to estimate the turnover specifically from West Highland Way custom. This convention is used by Event Scotland, UK Sport, Visit Britain and is summarised as "Collectively, visitor and organiser spending in the host economy that is directly

attributable to the staging of an event can be termed Direct Economic Impact" (www.eventimpacts.com).

This calculation resulted in the West Highland Way delivering an average contribution to turnover of £112,175 per business, aggregating to a Direct Economic Impact from the West Highland Way of £16 million per annum. An important assumption is that the sample is representative of all businesses, which may not be the case for accommodation providers. As many B&Bs are small enterprises, with lower turnovers than the sample, this is therefore likely to be a maximum Direct Economic Impact.

Calculation of economic impact can also take into account multipliers that measure indirect and induced impact, for example, through equating a certain level of additional spend to a requirement for an additional employee with a subsequent proportion of wages spent locally. These are generally based on ratios produced by the Surrey Research Group in 1993 (now somewhat dated) and are known as the Scottish Tourism Multiplier Study (STMS). There is some disagreement on the figure that would "trigger" a requirement for an additional employee (figures ranging from £19,200 to £27,000 are quoted in other economic impact reports (SNH Report 398, Assessing the Economic Impacts of Nature-based Tourism in Scotland, 2010, page 12).

On the minus side, additionality and displacement factors can be used to reduce the direct impact on the reasoning that, for example, if the Way did not exist then a proportion of tourists would still visit and spend. The third variable is that there is no standard metric for assessing economic impact – one study ignores day visitors, for example, whereas another values their spend at £9.00 per person per day. Since SNH Report 274 estimated 50-60,000 day visitors this could provide an economic impact of zero or £450,000 to £540,000 depending on which measure is used! Given the scale, scope and budget of the research and the differing approaches to measuring economic impact, it is considered that the above approach is sufficiently robust and illuminating.

Survey results Contribution to Business Turnover (anonymised)

Business Type	Turnover Band	Midpoint	Turnover Proportion	Midpoint	WHW Value to Business (£)
Walk/Tour Co	£150 - £300,000	225,000	51 - 75%	0.63	141,750
B&B	£40,000 - £80,000	60,000	75 - 99%	0.87	52,200
Not stated	£300,000 - £1M	650,000	1 - 25%	0.13	84,500
Baggage Transfer	£80,000 - £150,000	115,000	All	1	115,000
Hotel	£300,000 - £1M	650,000	75 - 99%	0.87	565,500
Campsite	£0 - £40,000	20,000	75 - 99%	0.87	17,400
Hostel	£150 - £300,000	225,000	1 - 25%	0.13	29,250
Guest House	£40,000 - £80,000	60,000	51 - 75%	0.63	37,800
Hostel	£40,000 - £80,000	60,000	75 - 99%	0.87	52,200
Support Service	£150 - £300,000	225,000	1 - 25%	0.13	29,250
Walk/Tour Co	£80,000 - £150,000	115,000	51 - 75%	0.63	72,450
Guest House	£40,000 - £80,000	60,000	75 - 99%	0.87	52,200
B&B	£80,000 - £150,000	115,000	75 - 99%	0.87	100,050
B&B	£0 - £40,000	20,000	25 - 50%	0.37	7,400
Food & Drink	£40,000 - £80,000	60,000	1 - 25%	0.13	7,800
Guest House	£40,000 - £80,000	60,000	75 - 99%	0.87	52,200
Retail	£300,000 - £1M	650,000	25 - 50%	0.37	240,500
B&B	£0 - £40,000	20,000	51 - 75%	0.63	12,600
Support Service	£0 - £40,000	20,000	75 - 99%	0.87	17,400
B&B	£0 - £40,000	20,000	51 - 75%	0.63	12,600
Food & Drink	£150 - £300,000	225,000	Specified	0.3	67,500
Hotel	£300,000 - £1M	650,000	Specified	0.2	130,000
Hostel	£150 - £300,000	225,000	Specified	0.3	67,500
Campsite	£300,000 - £1M	650,000	Specified	0.7	455,000
Lodges	£300,000 - £1M	650,000	Specified	0.3	195,000
Walk/Tour Co		450,000	Specified	0.67	301,500
Total					2,916,550
26	WHW contribution to turnover per sample business				112,175
142	WHW contribution to turnover - population				16,000,000

The size of the businesses surveyed varied from B&Bs in the £0 - £40,000 turnover band up to several businesses, mainly also in accommodation, in the £300,000 - £1Million band.

Although mountain bikers have been rarely seen on the Way up until now, the continuing growth of the sport together with the emergence of all-mountain and Enduro bikes means that more mountain bikers can be expected on the Way. The John Muir Way reports that 25% of its users are mountain bikers. This provides an additional opportunity for a new user segment but also introduces a demand requirement for secure storage, bike washing facilities, etc. This is very similar to the demand requirement in the early days of the Way when businesses were not generally designed for wet muddy walkers! The biking opportunity is likely to be focused on the mid-section of the Way as bikers would expect to do the trip in 3-4 days and this exacerbates the capacity issue in this mid-section.

D.1.3 Social Impact - The Wider Benefits of the West Highland Way

In addition to businesses being asked about the impact of the Way on their community, a sample consultation took place with Strathfillan community representatives (Community Council and Community Development Trust). The communities in particular are strongly of the opinion that the Way is crucial to the vibrancy and indeed viability of their communities.

Responses from rural businesses also acknowledged the reliance of rural communities on income, direct or indirect, generated by walkers on the West Highland Way.

Another threat is evident, therefore. If sentiment turned against the West Highland Way due to, as examples, trail deterioration, lack of services, high accommodation cost, poor customer service, competitor trails, then the rural communities of Drymen, Strathfillan and Kinlochleven would suffer significantly. Businesses would close, people would move away (generally younger families), school rolls would drop and the social fabric of the community would suffer.

In addition to the fairly quantifiable economic benefits from the West Highland Way, there are also the wider benefits to Scottish society at a local and national level. For example:

1. The social benefits to the local communities in terms of the employment the West Highland Way supports, thereby keeping people in the area, which in turn keep the schools and other local facilities open.
2. The health benefits to the nation gained from exercise in fresh air taken by many Scottish residents, whether by walking the whole Way or as "Day Visitors" walking short sections.
3. The cultural benefits from the resident population learning about their own country whilst walking on the West Highland Way.
4. The increased knowledge and appreciation of the natural environment and how individual behaviour impacts on it.
5. The West Highland Way is something that Scottish people currently feel proud of and are likely to promote when speaking to people from other countries.

In summary, The West Highland Way represents a major income source for the businesses and rural communities along its length. It underpins the economic and social health of businesses and communities. Particularly in the more rural communities, this represents an overdependence.

E Options Appraisal – Detailed Analysis

E.1 Options for Route Management

A range of potential management models have been investigated, including looking at how other routes are managed, and some alternatives have also been suggested. Not all of the options are viable, but it is incumbent on an options appraisal to consider all possibilities and discount those that have limited merit.

The following models have been considered:

- **Existing arrangements** - park authority leading on marketing and promotion, with access authorities responsible for management of infrastructure in their own areas.
- **Lead access authority** - one of the existing partners takes full responsibility for the whole route.
- **New independent body** - a new social enterprise or charitable trust created to take full responsibility for delivering management and maintenance of the route on behalf of the access authorities.
- **Transfer to an existing private or third sector organisation** - access authorities delegate responsibility for management, maintenance, marketing and promotion.
- **Transfer to a national body** - SNH or an alternative takes full responsibility for management, maintenance, marketing and promotion.
- **Creation of independent commissioning organisation** - all access authorities delegate responsibility and resources to a Trust and the Trust 'buys' necessary services to deliver the route from a range of sources, which could include the public sector.
- **Hybrid management** - delegation and outsourcing of some functions:
 - **Marketing and promotion transferred or contracted out** - access authorities continue with management and maintenance. or
 - **Maintenance contracted out** - access authorities continue with management and buy-in services.

It is clear from the investigations that there are advantages and disadvantages with each – compromises and shortcomings would need to be accepted as there is not a panacea to all issues of managing a popular linear route through challenging terrain and fragile rural communities.

E.2 Options Appraisal

A SWOT analysis has been undertaken for each option to allow comparisons to be made. The West Highland Way Management Group was invited to consider the merits of each option and use the analysis to stimulate discussion about potential future management arrangements of the West Highland Way.

E.2.1 Existing Arrangements

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established model • Access authorities have staff on the ground with knowledge and experience of WHW • Operates within scope of powers and duties of each access authority 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Established model • Budget cuts could affect one area more than others, leading to differences along the route • Needs buy-in from all partners and long term commitment • Elected members / senior management don't understand LDRs [exception Lochaber]
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for streamlining of roles and responsibilities • A central 'fund' for capital projects • POLITICS 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External funders may be reluctant to contribute to public sector • Businesses choose not to engage or contribute • Lack of coordination / communication between access authorities • Competing priorities for staff work plans • 'Systems' not being integrated between authorities • Budget cuts - lack of ring-fencing between authorities • POLITICS

Note: Items in bold were suggested by the West Highland Way Management Group

E.2.2 New Independent Organisation

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single point of management / contact for users and businesses • Has responsibility for whole route • Can potentially shift money between financial years with agreement from funders • Easily accountable to funders and users • Independent with own identity • Responsive to changing circumstances - light touch policies / bureaucracy 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy target for budget cuts - being external / arm's length • Cash flow, particularly with capital projects • Complex finance - multiple partners, multiple objectives • High mileage for maintenance staff unless based midway or have two teams with separate bases (higher overhead) • Set up costs and core running costs (vehicles, offices, equipment) • Requires a layer of management for governance • VAT liability for non-park authority investment unless it can be demonstrated that the organisation is delivering services on behalf of a VAT registered business • May not have full range of expertise in-house
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • May be able to leverage external funds • May help to encourage user 'pay back' or sponsorship • Dedicated resources to WHW • Potential to buy in specialist services on demand • Potential for users and businesses to contribute to management • Possible charitable status - good for Gift Aid 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not a statutory organisation and has no access powers / duties - still requires intervention of each access authority • TUPE - what to do with existing staff? • Transition arrangements could divert attention from route management • Budget cuts - core costs are usually targeted • External funding bids may not be successful • Organisation could become 'funding led' - resources diverted from route management to chasing and administering funds (and funders' requirements) • Cash flow - could bankrupt small organisation • Staff turnover if funding is uncertain • Potential lack of clear leadership or hijacking by single interest group • Specialist services subject to market forces - may be unavailable or too expensive • Charitable status may not be attainable (would need to have a clear charitable objective to qualify)

E.2.3 Lead Access Authority

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potentially efficient - no duplication of resources • Single point of management / contact for users and businesses 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-statutory / discretionary arrangement • Potential overstretch from staff base(s) into other parts of the route • Needs resources to be transferred from different authorities (non-ring fenced) • Not locally accountable (outwith lead authority area) • Implications of locally based staff (non-lead authority) are uncertain (can they be seconded?) - TUPE?
<p>Opportunities</p>	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Requires investment outwith lead authority's operating boundary - potential conflicts of interest where resources are limited • Lack of long-term commitment to resources by one or more partner

E.2.4 Transfer to SNH

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Single point of management / contact for users and businesses 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Does not fit with SNH corporate plan or national policy • Potential duplication of functions with access authorities • No existing capacity / expertise for on-the-ground management of the route • Not locally accountable • VAT liability - SNH cannot reclaim VAT
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A new operating model within the public sector • Could link to Scotland's Great Trails and grow the LDR brand 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not the access authority so requires input from each • At risk from changes to national budgets

E.2.5 Transfer to an Existing Third Sector Organisation

The SWOT is similar to that for creating a new trust (*highlighted in italics*) but with additional points.

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Single point of management / contact for users and businesses</i> • <i>Has responsibility for whole route</i> • <i>Can potentially shift money between financial years with agreement from funders</i> • <i>Easily accountable to funders and users</i> • <i>Independent with own identity</i> • <i>Responsive to changing circumstances - light touch policies / bureaucracy</i> • <i>Already operational, ideally with credibility</i> • <i>Reduced start-up costs and overheads compared with new trust model</i> 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Easy target for budget cuts - being external / arm's length</i> • <i>Cash flow, particularly with capital projects</i> • <i>Complex finance - multiple partners, multiple objectives</i> • <i>High mileage for maintenance staff unless based midway or have two teams with separate bases (higher overhead)</i> • <i>Core running costs (vehicles, offices, equipment)</i> • <i>Requires a layer of management for governance</i> • <i>VAT liability for non-park authority investment unless it can be demonstrated that the organisation is delivering services on behalf of a VAT registered business</i> • <i>May not have full range of expertise in-house</i> • <i>May not fit with the aims of the organisation</i>
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>May be able to leverage external funds</i> • <i>May help to encourage user 'pay back' or sponsorship</i> • <i>Dedicated resources to WHW</i> • <i>Potential to buy in specialist services on demand</i> • <i>Potential for users and businesses to contribute to management</i> • <i>An existing trust may have charitable status (good for Gift Aid)</i> 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Not a statutory organisation and has no access powers / duties – still requires intervention of each access authority</i> • <i>TUPE - what to do with existing staff?</i> • <i>Transition arrangements could divert attention from route management</i> • <i>Budget cuts - core costs are usually targeted</i> • <i>External funding bids may not be successful</i> • <i>Organisation could become 'funding led' - resources diverted from route management to chasing and administering funds (and funders' requirements)</i> • <i>Cash flow - could bankrupt small organisation</i> • <i>Staff turnover if funding is uncertain</i> • <i>Potential lack of clear leadership or hijacking by single interest group</i> • <i>Specialist services subject to market forces - may be unavailable or too expensive</i> • <i>Competing priorities from other projects / issues</i>

E.2.6 Transfer to an Existing Private Sector Business

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages private enterprise • Passes risk to private sector 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High risk to contractors (large unknowns) could lead to large margins • Requires good procurement and contract management processes • Potentially complex relationships between contractors • Potential lack of clarity for users - who is responsible • Potentially seen as profit driven experience
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Profit motive could lead to innovation 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suitably experienced contractor / consortia may not be interested / available • Profit motive and contract length could discourage long-term investment (similar to rail franchise issues) • Budget cuts - external organisation is easy target

E.2.7 Creation of an Independent Commissioning Organisation

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Could be strategic • Could be small operation with low overheads (e.g. project manager and admin support only) • Independent organisation for generating revenue • Potentially responsive to needs of users, businesses and infrastructure 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing authorities are not likely to reduce staffing levels so may have duplicate costs • Potential conflict of interest with access authorities if they are both clients and contractors (i.e. delegating responsibility but also competing to deliver work) • Start up and overhead costs need to be met additional to core WHW funds • Partial duplication of Countryside Trust in LLTNP
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Potential for securing external funding • Potential for payback / revenue generation schemes • Flexible delivery options - through public sector or contractors 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Budget cuts - as an external organisation • Potential to get drawn into delivery and operational issues • Mission creep / organisational change - could lead to large team if functions are brought in-house

E.2.8 Alternative / Hybrid Model(s)

If none of the above options are considered viable, an alternative model could be employed that splits the delivery according to different functions.

- Access authorities deliver maintenance only – capital projects and route marketing are taken on by a new independent body, an existing third sector organisation or contracted out
- Access authorities promote route and undertake capital projects – maintenance is contracted out
- Access authorities deliver maintenance and capital only – marketing and promotion is taken on by a new independent body, an existing third sector organisation or contracted out

For each of these options, please refer to the relevant section above to identify the SWOT elements that would relate to the respective part that is delegated, the Existing Arrangements SWOT also needs to be taken into account.

In addition, the following aspects apply to these hybrids:

Strengths <ul style="list-style-type: none">• No additional strengths have been identified	Weaknesses <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Potential for lack of coordination between activities• Complexity of responsibilities means users or businesses may not understand who to contact
Opportunities <ul style="list-style-type: none">• May lead to cost savings	Threats <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Poor contract management or procurement could lead to increased overall costs

E.3 Delivery Roles and Responsibilities

In order to deliver any of the models, the various roles have been identified for the management and maintenance of the West Highland Way. They are generic roles rather than job specifications: in some of the models these roles will be fulfilled by specific individuals, whereas in other situations the roles may be combined, fulfilled as part of a person's wider duties, or contracted out.

E.3.1 Governance

Some of the models will require full governance structures, whereas others may be able to rely on expert advice from within an organisation.

All appointments should be made on merit, but a balance between different sectors and geographical distribution should be sought to ensure that a range of interests are served by the governance structure. In order for some of these roles to be fulfilled effectively it may be necessary to offer remuneration to anyone not being paid a salary and able to attend on behalf of their organisation – without this, the field of potential advisors would be limited to those who can afford to contribute.

Board of directors

Mix of independent and public sector directors, focussed on governance of the organisation, financial and strategic matters.

Advisory group

Representatives from businesses, users, land managers and access authorities providing strategic input to the management of the route. Likely to meet twice a year.

E.3.2 Route Operation

Management group

Representatives from each access authority and the Advisory Group (if it exists) – dealing with operational matters and strategic guidance to staff. Likely to meet quarterly.

Route manager

Responsible for maintenance team(s), visitor engagers and marketing along the whole of the route.

Maintenance team(s)

Minimum two staff required – may require two teams to cover the whole route effectively.

Responsible for routine maintenance and remedial repairs; may undertake some capital projects.

Visitor engager(s)

Responsible for interacting with users along the whole route.

Route marketing and promotion

Responsible for strategic and operational marketing and business engagement along the whole route.

Administration support

Payroll, accounts and office management.

Specialist support

A range of technical roles such as GIS, engineering, legal, financial auditing, and potentially implementation of some capital works.

E.4 Summary of Potential Roles for Each Option

Functions / staff roles	Description	Existing Arrangement	Independent Trust	Single Authority	Existing Trust	Private sector	Hybrid / Public
Board of directors	Mix of independent and public sector directors, focussed on governance of the organisation, financial and strategic matters.	n/a	required	n/a	In place	Depends on business	n/a
Advisory group	Representation from businesses, users, land managers and access authorities – strategic input.	Not used	Beneficial	Beneficial	Beneficial	Beneficial	Beneficial
Management group	Representatives from each access authority dealing with operational matters and strategic guidance to staff.	In place	Required	Required	Project group	Required	Required
Route manager	Responsible for maintenance, visitor engagement and marketing staff. Ensures management plan is implemented.	Part of Strategic routes role	Required	Required	Project manager	Project manager	Project manager
Maintenance Team(s)	Minimum two staff required – may require two teams to cover the whole route effectively. Responsible for routine maintenance and remedial repairs; may undertake some capital projects.	Highland ranger service; Park Authority rangers	2 teams beneficial	2 teams beneficial	2 teams beneficial	2 teams beneficial	Highland ranger service; Park Authority rangers
Visitor engagers	At least one person responsible for interacting with users whilst on the route.	Highland ranger service; Park Authority rangers	Could be wrapped within other roles?	Ranger service	Could be wrapped within other roles?	Could be wrapped within other roles?	Ranger service?
Route marketing and promotion	Responsible for strategic and operational marketing and business engagement along whole route.	Part of Strategic routes role	Required	Required or contract out	Required	Required	Could contract out
Administration support	Payroll, accounts and office management.	Incomplete	Required	Required	Required	Required	Required
Specialist support	A range of technical roles such as GIS, engineering, legal, financial auditing, and potentially implementation of some capital works.	In-house and contracted out	Contracted out	In-house and contracted out	Contracted out	Contracted out	In-house and contracted out

E.5 Income Generation Options

As part of developing a sustainable management model we need to consider options for generating income as it is clear that the current public sector financial climate is unlikely to allow for significant investment in the West Highland Way. Reliance on grants and public sector funds is seen as high risk in the medium- to long-term and we have looked at ways of diversifying income streams. There are some significant unknowns, mainly focussed around 'willingness to pay' which cannot be anticipated without pilots or trials. The various options are presented as a means of stimulating discussion and we recognise that some options may require significant research and development.

E.6 Potential Capacity for Revenue from Users

Some scenarios have been set out to determine potential income ranges from users – these are highly simplified and are not intended to provide any probability of success or basis for setting budgets. In each scenario we have looked at potential income for different levels of 'compliance' / participation. The ranges shown relate to 30%, 70% and 100% participation. Although 100% participation is highly unlikely, it gives a maximum potential income for the number of annual users (optimistically assumed to be 35,000 at the time) in each scenario.

Scenario 1a – 1c: Fixed amount as a 'total contribution' - £1, £5 or £10 each person

Scenario 2a: 50p per day on the route (based on 2012 user survey for time spent on route) - 50p to £4 each

Scenario 2b: £1 per day on the route - £1 to £8 each

	Scenario1a	Scenario1b	Scenario1c	Scenario 2a	Scenario 2b
	£1.00	£5.00	£10.00	£0.50	£1.00
30%	£10,500	£52,500	£105,000	£34,000	£69,000
70%	£24,500	£122,500	£245,000	£80,000	£161,000
100%	£35,000	£175,000	£350,000	£115,000	£230,000

If users are encouraged to make a donation based on what they think the route is 'worth', the total revenue could range from £10,500 to £245,000 and it is impossible to predict where in this range the actual income is likely to lie.

If users are encouraged to contribute 'per day' (or a contribution is made on their behalf through a service provider) the revenue generated could range anywhere from £34,000 to £161,000.

In order to generate sufficient revenue from users to cover the minimum annual costs of £300,000 it would be necessary to collect between £12 and £29 per contributor (70% and 30% of total users respectively). It is not possible to anticipate how achievable this would be.

None of the scenarios include fees for collecting and handling contributions or administering a system of contributions – the net gain could be significantly lower, as there is a relatively high transaction cost compared with, for example, large donations. It is also important to note that at this stage we are highlighting the potential income, rather than probable amounts collected. There would be significant challenges to implementing any scheme that requires wide participation from users and businesses.

E.7 Business Capacity

Businesses that benefit directly from the route may be able to contribute towards the management costs, and some already purchase advertising space in official publications. One of the issues that would be difficult to address would be determining a fair contribution from each business, particularly

where they are not wholly dependent on the West Highland Way – this could lead to over-reliance on larger enterprises, or businesses that benefit not wishing to disclose relevant income.

Instigating some form of contribution per user could potentially generate revenue within the ranges highlighted above in Scenario 2.

Alternative sources of business revenue could come from corporate sponsorship through businesses not directly associated with, or benefiting from the West Highland Way. These would be sensitive to reputation of the route and may have to accommodate the corporate interests of the sponsor.

E.8 Mechanisms for Collecting Contributions

E.8.1 West Highland Way Website

It is clear that the website 'donate' mechanism is not working, despite having annual web traffic of over 186,000 'users' (source Google Analytics). However, it is not possible to estimate how many of the website visitors are people who are going to, or already have, walked the West Highland Way and may be encouraged to make a contribution. It may be possible to generate income through 'monetising' visitors, but this would need to be done without diminishing the user experience of the website.

E.8.2 Advertising in Official Publications and Website

This mechanism provides a clear link for businesses between their contribution and a public profile with West Highland Way customers – they are purchasing a service, which is also tax deductible. This mechanism is currently used to generate income (approximately £20,000 in 2015), although the costs of administration are not easily calculated.

E.8.3 Merchandise

There is an existing range of official West Highland Way merchandise. This generated approximately £3,000 of profit in 2015. Additional items could be added to the range, but it is difficult to envisage turnover at a level that would generate a significant proportion of the operating costs.

E.8.4 West Highland Way Supporters

Similar to a 'Friends of' type group, West Highland Way users and businesses could be encouraged to become Supporters of the way and make a contribution. This might require some form of 'benefit' to encourage people to join, and may not appeal to many West Highland Way users unless it can generate a sense of achievement or belonging. This could be developed on a subscription model to try to sustain income from individuals, or be used as a one-off payment / lifetime 'membership'.

The existing Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs is a model of how a scheme of this type could work. This is mainly focused on business supporters and has raised £200,000 over 5 years and it may be possible to generate a similar level of income using a scheme of this type.

E.8.5 Business Sponsorship of the Route

It may be possible to entice a high profile brand to sponsor the route, or to offer sponsorship to a range of businesses. The potential annual income is difficult to estimate but is likely to be in the order of £10,000 rather than £100,000. Highland Council has a sponsorship scheme and has not been able to match a sponsor to the West Highland Way so far.

E.8.6 Contributions from Event Organisers

Event organisers could be required to make a contribution for use of the West Highland Way, using a similar scheme to that used on the Great Glen Way. However, this would need to be administered and a service provided in return for the fee. At present two events make donations.

E.8.7 Charity Challenge Contributions

Although there is no hard data available on how many people attempt the West Highland Way for charity, it may be possible to develop and promote a scheme asking for people raising money to donate a proportion of the funds to the management of the route. It is unknown how much could be raised using this mechanism.

E.8.8 Direct Contribution from Accommodation Providers

Service providers could be requested to contribute a fixed amount or percentage per West Highland Way customer that they deal with. They would effectively act as the collection mechanism and could make annual or quarterly returns to the managing organisation(s) to account for their contributions. This would have a relatively low operational cost for the managing organisation(s), unless it needed to chase payments.

One option would be to tie advertising space to contributions, so that service providers would only be eligible to advertise in 'official' publications and applications if they have completed a return. Auditing the contributions would be virtually impossible and it would rely on each business keeping records. The tax implications of this mechanism need to be considered – as a 'voluntary' contribution it may not be viewed as a business expense by HMRC.

Another option would be for accommodation providers to participate in an opt-in surcharge where the West Highland Way walker is given the option of paying £1 or £2 extra per person per night as a voluntary contribution towards the management of the route. This would require the participation of accommodation providers to pass on the collected funds.

If the calculations of economic value can be shown to be robust, it may be reasonable for service providers to make a contribution towards the management of the infrastructure on which their customers rely. There is a direct benefit to businesses from West Highland Way users and this mechanism is directly proportional to the level of income from this source.

E.8.9 Commission Based Earnings

If users could be encouraged to book their accommodation through an 'official' online portal, it may be possible to charge a booking fee as a means of generating revenue. This is a highly competitive market, and the options for users are broad, which may make it difficult to establish a revenue stream. The West Highland Way website has high volumes of traffic and could potentially be used as a booking platform, but would require business owners to participate. The administration costs could potentially be high to develop and run such a booking service.

Given the demographics of users and the accommodation chosen by users (25% camp all the way), it may be difficult to capture a significant proportion of the potential revenue and it would require resources to promote it to a continuous stream of new customers (there may be some repeat business but this is not likely to be a large proportion).

E.8.10 Service Provision

There are a few accommodation bottlenecks along the route and the private sector does not appear to have responded to the shortfall. It may be possible to invest in a new hostel or bunkhouse and run this as a non-profit business (e.g. social enterprise) that recycles any surplus to the management of the route. This would require a full business case to be made and for any new hostel to only offer accommodation to West Highland Way walkers. The primary function of the service would be to generate income rather than act as competition to other providers and therefore charges would need to be set appropriately.

This option would require significant capital investment, which may be a limiting factor. Depending on the chosen location the building could function as a visitor centre for West Highland Way users, a

hub for route management and a café providing a day-time service to West Highland Way walkers and the general public.

The potential income and expenditure has not been fully investigated, but if it was possible to accommodate up to 40 people at a cost of £20 - £25 per person per night, the maximum likely income (with occupancy between 40% and 80% through the season) is £125,000. Operating costs need to be investigated to assess the likely surplus that could be donated to route management. Additional services, such as evening meals, a bar/café, etc. could increase the potential surplus that could be generated, providing that they do not unfairly compete with other service providers.

E.8.11 West Highland Way Discount Card

An official discount card (or a virtual one) could allow users to claim a discount at participating service providers along the route. The cost of the card could be fixed but the discount rates could be variable, depending on the business, although a minimum discount must be guaranteed. This would require a large proportion of businesses along the route to sign up for the scheme and for it to be difficult to fraudulently claim discount (either not being a West Highland Way user, or not having purchased a card).

5% DISCOUNT CARD	Typical Cost	Discount	Reduction	Total saving over 7 days
Luggage Transfer (total)	£40.00	5%	£2.00	£2.00
Accommodation (daily)	£40.00	5%	£2.00	£12.00
Food (daily) – to exclude alcohol	£10.00	5%	£0.50	£3.50
Camping (daily)	£10.00	5%	£0.50	£3.50

10% DISCOUNT CARD	Typical Cost	Discount	Reduction	Total saving
Luggage Transfer (total)	£40.00	10%	£4.00	£4.00
Accommodation (daily)	£40.00	10%	£4.00	£28.00
Food (daily)	£10.00	10%	£1.00	£7.00
Camping (daily)	£10.00	10%	£1.00	£7.00

If this were to be seen as a purely discount driven ‘product’ a 5% discount card could reasonably cost £6 or a 10% discount card could cost £15 for the majority of users to gain financial benefit. This would mean that although revenue was being collected from users, the contribution would effectively come from businesses through revenue forgone. If 70% of users could be encouraged to buy a card this would generate £105,000 / £262,000 (at £6 or £15 respectively).

Importantly, the card would need to be priced per person, rather than per group in order to ensure that sufficient revenue was generated from the discount offered. This could lead to some practical difficulties for large groups, but in most situations it should not be problematic to have a single card for each group.

The business survey has shown that there is not a strong ‘demand’ or willingness from businesses to offer discounts to West Highland Way users, so this would require significant work to encourage participation.

E.8.12 Supporters’ Discount Card

The discount card could be developed and presented as a shared contribution if the cost of the card was £20 to give 5% discount or £40 based on 10% discount. This would mean that the majority of West Highland Way users would contribute part of the cost and business would provide a discount that is less than the value of the card. Approximately 38% of West Highland Way users would gain more discount than their contribution (those spending more than £300 on their journey), but it is too complex to make this more ‘progressive’. It is likely that a £40 outlay may be a barrier to many users

and 10% reduction in revenue may not be acceptable to most businesses. It would be more beneficial to get wider participation than a high contribution per user / business, therefore the 5% version is recommended.

A shared contribution could generate £150,000 per annum at 30% participation, up to £350,000 per annum for 70% participation if a card costs £20.

Businesses might reasonably expect some form of return for their investment or loss of revenue and this could come in the form of stronger branding opportunities (as official supporters of the way), reduced advertising costs (participating businesses could be offered free advertising space within official publications / apps and web presence), and potentially better customer intelligence (if anonymous demographic information can be shared with participating businesses).

E.9 Summary

It is unlikely that any one option will provide a sustainable solution, but there may be some conflicts between some of the options – for example, businesses participating in a discount / supporter scheme may be reluctant to pay for advertising as well as forgoing income. However, these could potentially be turned into opportunities to encourage participation by cross-subsidising different approaches (e.g. free adverts, use of the brand).

E.10 Marketing of the West Highland Way

We recognise that marketing is a key part of the management of the route and has a role in increasing the economic benefits to communities along the length of the Way, through the promotion of shoulder seasons and promotion to three key target markets:

- Scottish residents for whom there will be health and social benefits as well as making their contribution to the local economy,
- residents from the rest of the UK, and
- overseas markets which have scope for further development.

A marketing strategy for the West Highland Way is likely to concentrate on communicating a vibrant message designed to portray the West Highland Way as a “must-do” experience, provision of a first-class information service and adoption of modern e-commerce technology to maximise income from users and businesses that can be invested in the management of the infrastructure.

A Marketing and Communications Plan needs to be developed and implemented based on the agreed strategy. It could include the following items:

- Set objectives for evidence-based decision making, using visitor feedback and market intelligence.
- Identify key market segments and appropriate mechanisms and messages targeting each segment.
- Adopt a series of clear, simple messages about what the West Highland Way has to offer.
- Review the brand identity (e.g. logo, strapline and colours).
- Embrace digital marketing including new website, mobile app, direct email, social media, video marketing and emotiveography (term used by VisitScotland).
- Communicate transport information (to and from Milngavie and Fort William) and promotion of other services (e.g. accommodation) to walkers.
- Adopt a merchandising and e-commerce plan.
- Adopt an information and interpretive plan to renew signs and noticeboards along the length of the Way, including at the start and finish.
- Renew all paper-based product literature.
- Promote shoulder seasons and shorter walking options.
- Enlist the support of high profile personalities as Champion or Champions to gain publicity and advocate on behalf of the West Highland Way.
- Highlight the management costs of the route and encourage participation in its upkeep (through voluntary effort or financial contributions).
- Offer a discount scheme to visitors on the West Highland Way with detailed explanation of how businesses will interact with the scheme.

- Communicate information about the West Highland Way to third party organisations (e.g. VisitScotland) that can in turn help to promote the Way through their activities.
- Conduct public relations work, including inviting the world's outdoor media to experience the Way so they become ambassadors in their own countries.

In order to implement the marketing strategy and plan, five delivery options are presented in the table below. The table includes some initial thoughts on the advantages and disadvantages of each option and is intended to form the basis of discussion for the managing body.

Delivery option	Advantages	Disadvantages
Provide existing employee with training in marketing and include in his/her work plan.	Employee would be likely to know the WHW well.	Employee would still not be a marketing specialist.
Employ a marketing specialist (perhaps a part-time post).	Integration of marketing with other aspects of management and based in the same office; provides specialist skills within the managing body.	Could be an expensive option, especially considering cost of recruitment.
Employ a trail manager with marketing expertise and include marketing as a significant aspect of the job description.	Puts marketing and communications at the heart of the manager's role.	Could take up a significant proportion of manager's time and would reduce the potential field of candidates for the post.
Contract the marketing work out to a specialist company and provide the management of their work.	Specialist team presented with an agreed plan at an agreed price. Relatively easy to control costs. This is the option employed in England and Wales (see 6.1).	May have to manage their work remotely if not based in the same area.
Use expertise from park authority to provide marketing support.	Staff already in post and can tie marketing with other aspects of national park.	May skew promotion towards national park area (particularly for day walks); may not have capacity.

F Position Statements from Each Managing Access Authority

F.1 East Dunbartonshire Council

Response from Shona Baird, Development Officer – Tourism

We only have a very small section of the WHW within East Dunbartonshire Council, nonetheless extremely important as it is the start, located in the heart of Milngavie town centre branded as the "jewel in the crown" long distant route. As a Local Authority we deem this as a real asset to East Dunbartonshire from an economic impact benefit assessment, albeit we are always striving to look at ways to make more of visitor spend.

There is strong political support for the WHW and as Milngavie is a Business Improvement District (BID) there are a number of local businesses who are keen to support and promote the West Highland Way. The Council supports the BID financially and via contribution in kind (officer support) looking at ways to improve the start, making the visitor experience as pleasurable as possible. The WHW offers a large contribution to the local area bringing visitors who may not have visited otherwise.

A new Community Development Trust has also been established, called Making the Most of Milngavie, and has devised an action plan for 2016-2021 which includes improving the look and experience of the first mile of the WHW, all weather path conversion, heritage interpretation route, mural and underfoot resurfacing and overhead clearing. Milngavie in Bloom, a community group consisting of local volunteers, also do a large amount of planting and maintenance works of shrub beds at the Railway station and at the start of the Way. A substantial financial investment has recently been made via funding from Transport Scotland by our Transportation team for improvement works within Milngavie Train station, including:-

- creating a transport interchange where users can transfer safely between public transport, bicycle or car and encourage a modal shift
- prioritising pedestrian movement
- enhancing parking measures
- making the area more attractive using distinct high quality materials and attractive planting
- encouraging greater active travel movement and use of economic opportunities

From our Access Officer's perspective the WHW also creates an opportunity to promote other routes that pass through the area including the John Muir Way and the Clyde Coastal Path, via a number of other East Dunbartonshire towns and villages and landscapes which offer visitors the opportunity to enjoy a number of different experiences.

Funding is difficult to quantify in relation to what has been committed to date and what would be set aside for future spend. There are a number of departments within East Dunbartonshire Council who support varying aspects of work e.g. our grounds maintenance (streetscene) service will fund a maintenance element of the Way, our Access and Transportation Team will be responsible for the promotion and maintenance of legible and additional signage and myself as Tourism and economic development team would have an input in promotion and marketing of the Way as a tourism destination.

F.2 Stirling Council

Response from Richard Barron, approved by Councillor Danny Gibson

Stirling Council has always been a keen supporter of the route and recognises the route's international appeal. People come from all over the world to undertake this iconic challenge, particularly now that it is part of the International Appalachian Trail and a member of Scotland's Great Trails. The nature of the route means that people tend to only visit the western rural area of the district and don't have time to explore the other offerings of the Council area such as Doune and Stirling Castles.

That said, the majority of users spend at least two nights within the Stirling Council area, typically Drymen/Balmaha, Doune Bothy/Beinglas Farm, Crianlarich/Tyndrum areas, and this trade has supported the development of a number of local, predominantly food and accommodation orientated businesses. Other businesses, such as the luggage transport services, base their entire business around the West Highland Way, but they are not located directly within the Stirling Council area.

The West Highland Way encourages people to visit Scotland and they undoubtedly contribute to the national and local economy. However, little of that actually comes back to the Council directly to be spent on managing the route. The only dedicated source of funding comes from the sale of promotional goods through the website or the occasional donation. This money can then be accessed by any of the four authorities who manage the route and can demonstrate a need for funds.

The Council recognises its role in maintaining and managing the route and there has been a revenue budget to do this for many years. This Council service is no different to any other and in the current financial climate has also felt the pinch. The availability of staff to carry out work and inspect the route has dropped drastically and now less than half of a full time equivalent post is spent on the West Highland Way.

No capital budget exists for the West Highland Way and the revenue budget currently stands at £8,500 per year with the majority being spent on two cycles of grass cutting. Whilst this budget is small and easily overlooked in the wider scheme of Council funding, there is no guarantee that it will be retained. It is extremely unlikely to be increased in the current climate and could easily be removed as the Council looks to save £25 million between 2016 and 2021.

Any works that are currently carried out on the West Highland Way such as signpost replacement, are over engineered to try to reduce future maintenance liabilities and to recognise the dwindling resources available for route management. On occasion resources allow nothing more than a stop gap measure to be put in place.

Engagement with businesses and users has always been part of the West Highland Way experience with the website and user survey being the most obvious. This provides an excellent idea of what people think and can highlight issues that need resolved, but rarely does it bring finance that can be used to carry out work on the route itself.

The majority of businesses are small and the approaches to generate income from them to date through "friends of schemes" or "business groups" have not been successful. This is hardly surprising as whilst their business may benefit in a big way from the route, the profit margins are still small. Businesses do help though and two recent examples in the Council area are the Beech Tree Inn and Glengoyne Distillery. The Beech Tree Inn actively maintain the West Highland Way as it passes their property. They collect litter, mow the grass and make it welcoming. Glengoyne

Distillery sits just off the West Highland Way and three years ago they sponsored two signposts that needed replacing.

There is no doubt that there are areas of support that could be exploited to help manage and improve the West Highland Way, but there is not the dedicated resource required to pursue these sorts of opportunities anymore. In the past the Government provided national funding for the original four long distance routes of Scotland. As the overall economic impact of visitors is much more national than local, it may be time for the Government to revisit this concept and reinitiate national funding for these iconic routes such as the West Highland Way.

F.3 Argyll and Bute Council

Response from Jolyon Gritten, Access Manager

The feedback I have had from my line managers is that the West Highland Way, only 11 miles of which are in Argyll and Bute, is not seen as a significant issue by the Council and probably not by elected members. The short section of the WHW in Argyll and Bute that passes through Bridge of Orchy, a small community with less than 100 residents. The Community is slightly closer to Fort William than Oban and will probably obtain most of its goods and services from there or Glasgow. The village does not have its own community council but is represented by Glenorchy and Innishail Community Council.

There is currently no funding for the West Highland Way. When the West Highland Way has been discussed with my line managers I have been told that if there was a catastrophic landslip or similar event leading to the closure of the West Highland Way it would be very difficult to obtain resources to repair the path. There is currently no budget for the Access Team, there is no Path Maintenance Team and it is probable that the Council would approach the Scottish Government asking them to pay for the repair of the route, with the West Highland Way remaining closed until this has been negotiated.

The West Highland Way already engages with businesses along the route, with many more benefitting from its presence without having a formal link. Although it has been suggested that businesses should be providing more financial support to the WHW I am not aware of another Long Distance Route in the UK that has managed to generate significant funding from the businesses that benefit from its presence. Any such scheme would probably need to be rolled out Scotland wide to be successful. Schemes of this nature where a visitor tax or levy is generated across a wide area have I believe worked well in Europe although a significant cultural shift would be required in Scotland for both businesses and visitors to support such a proposal. My understanding is that the costs of the administration of voluntary visitor levies can be greater than the funding they generate, at least during the establishment phase.

F.4 Highland Council

Response from Ann Hackett, Projects, Facilities & Long Distance Routes Manager

Highland Council is currently in the process of a fundamental review and re-design process which will determine future priorities across all areas of the Council's activities. It is not therefore appropriate for me to provide a formal statement from the Council at this stage. I can, however, provide the following general comments:

The Highland Council recognises that the West Highland Way makes a significant contribution to delivery of a number of the priorities identified within the current Programme for the Administration - Highland First. In particular, supporting the economic benefits derived from tourism through improvements in visitor experience, developing Highland as a world class destination and contributing to health improvements through promotion of access to the countryside. As the first of Scotland's Long Distance Routes and with worldwide recognition, the route is a highly valued and prestigious regional product. With estimates of the economic impact of the Way varying between eleven and twenty million pounds per annum, the Council recognises the success achieved to date and the value of the route going forward.

The Highland Council has allocated budget to the management and maintenance of the West Highland Way during the financial year 2016/17. Highland Council recognises the statutory nature of its duties in respect of Long Distance Routes.

The Highland Council works in partnership with other local authorities, through the West Highland Way Management Group, to provide a coordinated approach to management of the West Highland Way. Engagement with businesses and users is currently through the provision of a dedicated website and printed leaflet. Both of these provide a wide range of information to users as well as opportunities for business advertising. There also exist a number of independent West Highland Way branded websites and publications offering similar opportunities. Further engagement and direct contact with users is provided by a dedicated team of Long Distance Route Rangers undertaking day to day monitoring and maintenance of the route to ensure that it remains fit for purpose. The Council would welcome initiatives from within, and driven by, those business communities which benefit from the Way, which might contribute to sustaining the success of the route in times of reducing public sector spending.