

21st June 2021

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Argyll and Bute Council (Traffic Management and on street parking places and charges)**

**(Auchendennan Road, Duck Bay) (Lomond) Order 202\_**

**Argyll and Bute Council (Off -street parking places and charges)**

**(Duck Bay, Auchendennan) (Lomond) Order 202\_**

As follow up to our letter of objection to the earlier consultation we are writing to lodge a strong formal objection to this latest consultation and the proposed Traffic Regulation Order which will result in the introduction of parking charges in the car park and alongside the former A82 loop road at Duck Bay.

1. **Main Grounds of Objection**

We consider our grounds of objection detailed more fully below are all valid reasons for not proceeding with the introduction of charges. We would strongly urge the Council to reconsider the proposal which will:

1. have detrimental impacts on local resident usage of what has traditionally been a very popular countryside site with local residents thereby affecting their health and well-being;
2. lead to the displacement of vehicles to less safe areas such as road verges alongside the busy nearby A82 and on the old A82 between Balloch and the Cameron House Resort southern entrance potentially leading to more road accidents and the unsafe movement of vehicles;
3. act as a deterrent to weary travellers stopping for a rest on long journeys who will now be displaced to laybys along the busy A82 which are already very heavily used and have limited carrying capacities;
4. displace a large number of staff employed at Duck Bay Hotel who cannot afford to pay long stay parking charges and making it more difficult for them to travel to work;
5. undermine the operational capability of the Duck Bay Hotel complex which is a major employer in the area and drawing heavily for staff from communities in the wider area with poor and erratic public transport links; vi) add to the visual clutter of signage and poorly maintained street furniture in a high amenity area with open views of internationally famous Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond; and
6. be contrary to the original agreement between the former Dumbarton District Council and the late Bobby Cawley of Duck Bay that led to the Cawley family investing a substantial sum in building the car park on the understanding this would be available for the general public to enjoy the Duck Bay area free of charge for recreational purposes and for hotel guests and staff to Duck Bay Hotel to have access to free parking.

Our overriding objection to the proposed Traffic Regulation Order and related parking charges is on the grounds of road safety. Charging will result in the significant displacement of vehicles

to less safe areas where motorists and their passengers will be placed in more danger with the prospect of a higher number or road accidents alongside a very busy trunk road. Duck Bay is currently a ‘safe haven’ for travellers and performs important functions as a stopover rest area and a popular lochside recreational area.

1. **Grounds of Objection in More Detail**
2. ***The proposed TROs and introduction of parking charges will have a major detrimental impact on local resident usage of what has traditionally been a popular countryside site thereby affecting their health and well-being.***

The area of land wedged between the loch foreshore and the realigned A82 was gifted to local authorities to ensure members of the public could freely enjoy the special qualities of the site which has an expansive grassy area and a beach with stunning views of Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond at a very accessible location. Due to its strategic location close to major population centres and beside the A82 and Loch Lomond the site has proved to be popular with local residents, day visitors and tourists from further afield. It is also popular with travellers simply seeking to pull over for a rest on longer journeys.

Surveys have demonstrated the site is used by over 300,000 people annually making it one of the most popular recreational sites in the National Park. Surveys also reveal a high level of usage by residents from nearby communities who are drawn there by the ease of access to what they believe are safe picnic and beach areas. A significant proportion of the users are from low income households in the nearby Vale of Leven area. These site users have traditionally enjoyed free use of this popular site and no valid or strong justification has been put forward by the Council to introduce parking charges which stands up to close scrutiny.

The introduction of charges will reduce the ability of certain sections of the local population to access the site and they will seek less appealing sites closer to their homes or simply reduce their propensity to visit the countryside which will be detrimental to their health and wellbeing.

The plans to introduce charges are considered simply to be an opportunity being taken by the Council to generate income with no thought given to what impact this will have on site usage and particularly by local residents. There is also no evidence that the income generated will be used to invest in much need site infrastructure improvements which are badly needed. Evidence from other countryside car parking sites at locations such as Luss and Arrochar suggest income generated from parking charges is not re-invested in site improvements.

1. ***The proposals will lead to the displacement of vehicles to less safe areas such as road verges alongside the busy nearby A82 and on the old A82 between Balloch and the Cameron House Resort southern entrance potentially leading to more road accidents and the unsafe movement of vehicles.***

Evidence from the introduction of charges from other lochside car parks in locations such as Luss and Arrochar demonstrate that a proportion of car users will simply seek to park on road verges or nearby waste ground to avoid paying parking charges. This has led to road safety issues and has tied local authorities up in having to deploy traffic wardens and imposing fines which have risen significantly in number in recent times with the growth in popularity of hills and lochs for recreational visits and the introduction of stronger enforcement regimes. We consider this is a vicious circle and what is need at locations such as Duck Bay is the provision of increased parking capacity linked with improved traffic management regimes designed to encourage the public to stay and enjoy a safe recreational amenity area.

In the short and medium term the introduction of parking charges at Duck Bay in isolation from investment in site infrastructure improvements will simply displace vehicles to less safe areas nearby which, in turn, will lead to greater road safety and traffic management problems.

1. ***The proposals will act as a deterrent to weary travellers stopping for a rest on long journeys who will now be displaced to laybys along the busy A82 which are already very heavily used and have limited carrying capacities.***

When the A82 was realigned and improved along the west side of Loch Lomond we believe the designers and planners factored in the availability of the Duck Bay loop road as a rest area and as a consequence the number of new laybys introduced between Stoneymollan and Arden roundabouts was limited. The old A82 loop road plays a very important role as a free pull in /rest area and the introduction of charging would greatly weaken this role and lead to vehicles being displaced to low capacity laybys along the A82 as the availability of other safe pull ins on this busy stretch of the A82 are limited. This would be very undesirable on road traffic management and safety grounds.

1. ***The proposals to introduce charges would be detrimental to a large number of staff employed at Duck Bay Hotel who cannot afford to pay long stay parking charges and thereby make it more difficult for them to travel to work and retain their jobs;***

Duck Bay Hotel is a major employer in the area and all the staff are dependent on travelling to work by car or mini-bus. Some already car share and the scope for additional car sharing is limited due to varying shift patterns. The public transport links with Duck Bay are fairly poor with intermittent bus services which are severely disrupted by traffic congestion and poor frequency or no frequency at all at the start and end of shifts which makes this an unrealistic alternative for staff. They historically have enjoyed free parking facilities which is due to the substantial investment in the provision of car parking by the hotel owners back in the 1980s and it shameful that the Council has failed to recognise this investment and the long-established agreement with the former Dumbarton District Council. At the very least if the Council is determined to proceed with the introduction of charges, which is legally questionable, provision should be made for an allocation of spaces for hotel and staff use under a free permit arrangement.

1. ***The proposals will undermine the operational capability of the Duck Bay Hotel complex which is a major employer in the area and drawing heavily for staff from communities in the wider area* with *poor and erratic public transport links.***

This follows on from the last point and will make staff recruitment more difficult for what is a high quality and flagship Loch Lomondside hospitality and tourism business that has made an important contribution to employment opportunities for local residents over many decades in an area characterised by high unemployment and high levels of deprivation.

The hospitality and tourist industry is the largest private sector employer at the southern end of Loch Lomond and the non-availability of free parking at Duck Bay, linked to poor public transport services, will result real difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff to meet operational requirements.

1. ***The proposals will add to the visual clutter of signage and poorly maintained street furniture in a high amenity area with open views of internationally famous Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond.***

The Duck Bay area is characterised by poorly maintained sign clutter and countryside furniture including rusty signs; badly burnt and rotting picnic tables; outdated information boards and a mixture of old and broken litter bins. The introduction of parking meters and a plethora of associated poles and notices along the loch frontage will add greatly to the clutter and detract from the visual appeal and setting of what is a popular viewpoint and picnic area on West Loch Lomondside.

Historically there has not been a good track record amongst public agencies in maintaining ‘street furniture’ or installing appropriately designed signs in terms of height and materials used in sensitive countryside settings such as this. Urban solutions tend to be applied in countryside locations when there is scope for more sensitive solutions so as not to destroy the ‘sense of place’. Given the national and international scenic qualities of this site against with the backdrop of Loch Lomond and Ben Lomond a more sensitive approach to traffic management and dealing with site capacity issues is required and there is a strong justification for a serious investment in sensitively designed visitor infrastructure including additional parking capacity and permanent toilets **before** seeking to introduce parking charges.

1. ***The proposals to introduce car parking charges is contrary to the original agreement between the former Dumbarton District Council and the late Bobby Cawley of Duck Bay that led to the Cawley family investing a substantial sum in building the car park opposite the Duck Bay Hotel on the understanding this would be available for the general public to enjoy the Duck Bay area free of charge for recreational purposes and for hotel guests and staff to Duck Bay Hotel to have access to free parking.***

There is documented evidence that the Cawley family fully funded the large car park on ground opposite the Duck Bay Hotel with the full agreement of the former Dumbarton District Council and the terms of this agreement enabled visitors and staff to have free use of the car park which for many decades was maintained by the Duck Bay Hotel at their cost. The very effective arrangement for the maintenance and management of the car park was suspended by Argyll & Bute Council in recent years and as a consequence the car park has fallen into a state of disrepair with broken tarmac surfaces, potholes and poorly maintained verge areas. This is also not helped by poorly maintained signs and bins which are a very poor advert for internationally famous Loch Lomond at a key gateway location.

The Council’s proposals to introduce charges for the car park are very questionable on moral and legal grounds. It is for others to test this but we know former Councillors who were involved in the original decision to grant consent to the Cawley family to build the original car park and make it free for all users are of the view that what is now planned is contrary to the spirit and intent of the agreement minuted in Council records in the 1980s.

Turning to the benefits reasons stated in the TRO consultation documents for introducing charging in both the car park and along the extensive Duck Bay loop we would challenge their validity and they do not stand up to close examination. They are generally very weak and questionable.

It would appear from reading both statements of reasons for making the orders that standard benefits are given as opposed to site specific reasons.

1. No public transport uses either the car park or the loop road with bus services using the main A82 where there are laybys and bus shelters. This reason is therefore invalid;
2. The orders will not support the local economy as this is a rural site with one major hospitality business and their guests have historically enjoyed free parking. The introduction of charging will reduce dwell time, propensity to spend and act as a deterrent to visitors who may simply drive on to another destination. It will also undermine use of the popular picnic and beach areas by certain socio-economic groups to their disadvantage;
3. The suggestion that the introduction of charging will increase the vitality and viability of Argyll and Bute’s key tourist areas lacks credibility as no supporting evidence is provided to back up this sweeping statement. We fail to see how the introduction of charges will result in this claim being fulfilled. It will adversely impact on one of loch Lomond’s major flagship business and the public use of the large picnic area and beach. Charging could have the reverse impact leading to vehicle displacement, accidents and congestion elsewhere in what is a busy and congested trunk road nearby;
4. There is no evidence that the measures proposed will improve road safety for all road users including pedestrians and there is every likelihood that the measures will impact adversely on road safety with more car movements, displacement of vehicles to less safe areas beside the busy A82 and more; and
5. There is no evidence that the introduction of charges will lead to the improvement of amenities at Duck Bay as charges have been in place for some time at other locations such as Arrochar and Luss and no improvements to the car parks and surrounding open spaces have been made by the Council and there is no guarantee an investment would take place here to upgrade aging and poorly maintained public areas that are heavily used by locals and visitors; and
6. Why is it desirable to encourage turnover of vehicles at what is a major outdoor recreational site where the aim should be to encourage longer dwell times so that site users can enjoy the health and well-being benefits from being in the outdoors. This is a countryside site and not a town centre site with lots of retail business that would benefit from greater turnover of vehicles.

We would urge the Council to re-consider the plans to introduce TROs at Duck Bay and contend the charging proposals are premature in advance of deliberations on future infrastructure investment at the site taking advantage of RTIF funding that is currently available for projects that include car park extensions, provision of public toilets and effluent disposal points to cater for the growth in motorhomes. The National Park Authority has just secured funds to undertake a visitor management review of West Loch Lomondside and the Council’s own Estates department has been reviewing plans for the site so it would make sense to postpone the introduction of parking charges until the various reviews have been completed and there is a clear way forward with a timetable to progress a package of badly need visitor infrastructure improvement at this important gateway site at the entrance to Argyll and Bute and where visitors can enjoy their first proper view of Loch Lomond.

Yours Sincerely,

James Fraser

Chair



James Fraser

Chair of Friends of Loch Lomond and The Trossachs