



Great Glen Ways Business Workshop

26 November 2008

Present:

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| Russell Thomson | Highland Canals Manager |
| George Duff | Countryside and LDR Manager Highland Council |
| Lynda Dodd | Manager Great Glen Way |
| David Barbour | Footprint Maps |
| Dick Beech | Fiddlers café Restaurant |
| Ailsa Andrews | British Waterways Office Manager |
| Bruce Kocjan-Briggs | GGW Ranger/Maintenance Warden |
| Clelland MacCallum | GGW Ranger/Maintenance Warden |
| Mike Adams | Mac Guiding |
| Gavin Hogg | Roy Bridge |
| Liz Proudlock | Fort Augustus Heritage Group |
| Kirsty Mann | Forestry Commission Lochaber |
| Graham Ambrose | Destination Loch Ness |
| Anna Trafford | Outdoor Capital of UK |
| Bob Hunter | Bracadale |
| Carol Hunter | Bracadale |
| Gordon Forester | West Highland Way Development Manager |
| Jon Mercer | Glenloy Wildlife |
| Martin Balcombe | Fingal Barges |
| Errol Levings | Invermoriston Chalet Park |
| John Dougharty | |
| Mrs Blewitt | |
| Sandra Blewitt | |
| Christine MacDonald | Loch Oich Restaurant and Bar |
| Francis Jamieson | |
| Tina Cuthbertson | Snowgoose Mountain Centre |
| Brian Cuthbertson | Snowgoose Mountain Centre |
| Malcolm Sonley | Netherwood Aberchalder |

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| Pat Sonley | Netherwood Aberchalder |
| Linda Bowman | Aberchalder Tea Shop |
| Mark Bowman | Aberchalder Tea Shop |
| Amy Gentles | British Waterways Marketing Co-ordinator |
| Peter Macintosh | Distant Hills |
| Brian Burrows | Kings Inn B&B |
| Julie Fowers | Fort Augustus Chalet Park |
| Robert Hutchinson | Forest Lodge |
| Phoebe Hutchinson | Forest Lodge |

Apologies:

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| George Simpson | Loch Ness Baggage Transfer |
| Bill Barnett | Aberchalder Estate |
| Peter Walker | Well 7 Heads |
| Julie Snowden | Iceberg Glass |
| Frances Dent | Nevis Croft |
| Alan Muir | Mahaar B&B |
| J MacDonald | |
| Clr Drew Hendry | |
| Clr Alex Graham | |
| Clr Brendan Gormley | |
| Cllr Michael Foxley | |

Registration and Coffee

Welcome from the chair Russell Thomson, British Waterways Scotland Highland Canals Manager.

The Speakers

The meeting got underway with each speaker giving a brief presentation as per the agenda and directive of sharing information about their area. Presentations attached in power point format as they were presented.

The 2008 Season

Lynda Dodd

Talked through the season so far, given that the full numbers for the 2008 season would not be available till 31.03.09 when the year finished, numbers of schools assisted in the classroom, eco schools and ranger events. Maintenance and capital projects and an update on the Voluntary contribution programme were all highlighted along with the new Friends of GGW's with Red Star discount project for 2009. Continue to work with partners and other national long distance routes for various projects and networking.

Questions from the Floor

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| 1 | <p>When looking for cycling in the Great Glen and cycling needs to be typed in. There is no access from Visit Scotland web site. How do you market a massive resource like the Great Glen Way and how do you focus that?</p> <p><i>Gavin Hogg</i></p> | <p>It is extremely difficult to market the Great Glen. As the Manager of the Great Glen Way (GGW) the remit can only be to market the walking component, British Waterways Scotland (BWS) market the waterway and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) market mountain biking, Destination Loch Ness market Loch Ness.. There is no collective over-arching marketing group to market the Great Glen. Each organisation markets within its area of considered user groups and customers. You could not have a guide book that meets the needs of all the types of activities in the great glen and do them justice year on year. Each year the GGW writes a marketing plan, published in the Annual Report and gives the focus and targets to be achieved each year. From 2009 BWS and GGW will have quarterly meetings to work harder on this element of the routes sharing resources, ideas and time to be more effective and maximise opportunities. Eg London Boat Show, Outdoor Show Birmingham, etc</p> |
| 2 | <p>What's the difference between the Great Glen Way and the Great Glen Ways?</p> | <p>The Great Glen Way is the Walking route opened in 2002. The Great Glen Cycle route (1992) was the forerunner to the now known Great Glen Mountain Bike Trails. The Caledonian Canal is the water way that is a combination of the canal sections, and navigable lochs together. Together these are known as the ways – Boot - bike – boat that you can do the Great Glen. The logo is made up of a walker (boot), water (boat) and bike. From 2009 Great Glen Way Accommodation and Services Guide will be changed to the Great Glen Ways Accommodation and Services Guide.</p> |
| 3 | <p>The Great Glen Ways is a great initiative linking all the different elements together but what provision is there for canoeing and kayaking berthing and actually accessing the loch side?</p> <p><i>Martin Balcombe</i></p> | <p>There are proposals and funding being worked on at the moment for berthing but this is through Inverness City Partnership and will only be for Loch Ness. For kayakers, the Great Glen Canoe Trail will interest you. See notes below.</p> |
| 4 | <p>Someone needs to talk to unhelpful land owners.</p> <p><i>Martin Balcombe</i></p> | <p>While there are no proposals to move the GGW to the lochside and any area of the Great Glen, the issue of unhelpful landowners will be best addressed by the GG Canoe Trail Project Officer in trying to bring the landowners on board with</p> |

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| | | access to lochside properties within the access code. |
| 5 | Access pontoons should be taken up as an issue for the future for the whole of the Great Glen not just Inverness and Loch Ness <i>Tina Cuthbertson</i> | This can only be done through funding areas specifically for Lochaber. As the waterway covers 2 regions funding is from different sources and BWS will need to manage this. |

Events and Achievements

Anna Trafford

In the past few years the Outdoor Capital has undertaken several successful initiatives, such as the Outdoor Capital Booklet, the website, working with PRs to promote the area in national press and is currently developing a series of projects to encourage and promote sustainable use of Lochaber's Exceptional natural and cultural history

Questions from the Floor

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| 1 | Does Visit Scotland have a visible link on its website to the Outdoor Capital(ODC) of the UK? <i>Dick Beech</i> | No, but there is a link through the Active section of their web site |
| 2 | Does the ODC of UK work with other groups <i>Dick Beech</i> | Yes we have worked with Aviemore in the past and recently Lufthansa to establish new flights into Inverness |
| 3 | How is ODC of UK marketed overseas and to the disabled market? <i>Gavin Hogg</i> | ODC of UK only produces one brochure a year and targets people who read the Guardian and Times newspapers but don't specifically target the overseas market. There is no real provision for disabled market yet but ODC of UK has a whole raft of new ideas and the disabled market is in there. BWS have put new disabled access equipment into their locks including Lochaber area. |
| 4 | Why are there no statistics for water based sports and large scale events? Large scale don't actually bring much to the local economy compared with general users. <i>Tina Cuthbertson</i> | Large events can cause a detrimental effect on the general user if they are held during the main busy season but do bring a lot to the economy in shoulder seasons but can also act as a marketing tool. |
| 5 | Do the GGWs have any initiative to promote wildlife tourism? <i>Jon Mercer</i> | The GGW will be holding two volunteer days next year, these won't be open to the public as they are the Friends of the GGWs biodiversity days currently in the planning stage. |

The Great Glen Mountain Bike Trails

Kirsty Mann

Presentation over the types of trails at Aonach Mhor the world Class site, then lead onto the north shore at Fort Augustus and what is at Balnain Bike Park where you cannot go unless you have full kit. There is now a move away from building more technical tracks to maintaining the ones that FCS have.

Questions from the Floor

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| 1 | There was a red bull mountain bike course at Dalcataig, Invermoriston which has been left and has now completely disappeared. What is happening with it? <i>Errol Levings</i> | Will need to consult with FCS Ft Augustus but will get back with an answer. |
| 2 | Would like a new mountain bike route in Invermoriston. <i>Mike Adams</i> | The spate of mountain bike routes that FCS build will probably stop now and they will be concentrating on maintaining the ones already built but should contact FCS Ft. Augustus to discuss if he is really keen. |

Update on World Heritage Bid

Graeme Ambrose

Briefly went over the origins of Destination Loch Ness and then moved onto the elements of the World Heritage Bid process and where the bid stands at the moment. Stresses that we all need to get behind it to make it work, and there has been lots of press coverage over the last 2 months about it. For updates see <http://www.ness-link.visitlochness.com/>

Questions from the floor

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| 1 | English Heritage on a local basis is anti development why would you want a designation at a world level? <i>Brian Burrows</i> | Planning constraints and development shouldn't be any worse for a World Heritage site then in a normal situation We want the World Heritage designation because Loch Ness is a tired product and needs revitalised and suffers from chronic underinvestment in infrastructure which has had a knock-on effect to the tourist business. The process of going for World Heritage status would cause the improvements to |
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| | | be made along the way. Wouldn't organisation and people just wait until the designations in place before trying to improve things? |
| 2 | But what's the worth of the World heritage Status to a world wide product Like Loch Ness? <i>Brian Burrows</i> | It will need the Public and private sectors to get behind the project 100%. |
| 3 | Can the designation be removed? <i>Kirsty Mann</i> | Yes if things are allowed to slide they can be removed |
| 4 | What are the boundaries of the designation? <i>Anna Trafford</i> | Sea to Sea but the lateral boundaries haven't been established yet. |
| 5 | What do you expect the political buy in from Ft. Augustus south will be? <i>Tina Cuthbertson</i> | We would need everyone from the Public and private sectors to buy in for it to succeed. |

Road Cycling in Great Glen

Lynda Dodd

Very brief outline of road cycling in the Great Glen and outline of the 4 year working party on NCN78. Encouraged all people to view the last available public consultation meeting in Drumnadrochit to be held shortly. Leave your email and number at the back if you want to get the date and time of the exhibition for viewing. It was stated that NCN78's aim is to reduce the number of cyclists on the A82.

There will be one more exhibition, to view the plans, of the route and opportunity to ask questions on the project. This will be held on Tuesday 20 January 2009 between 6.00pm and 9.30pm at the Craigmorie Centre Drumnadrochit.

Great Glen Canoe Trail

Ailsa Andrews

Presented the project so far, in that a consultant had written a report on the feasibility of the route and the needs for one. The need for one was quantified in numbers and increase in numbers over the last 2 years and what this would mean if the current facility was enhanced to provide a world class canoe trail. Showed pictures of what might be expected with trail blazers rests, canoe hitches and other facilities along the way.

Questions from the floor

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| 1 | What is the anticipated timescale for this project? <i>Brian Burrows</i> | Depending on funding it will be a 3 year project, if funding isn't forthcoming the scale of the project will have to come down and it'll be done on a small scale ad hoc basis. |
| 2 | Is this similar to what's happened in Northern Ireland? <i>Anna Trafford</i> | Yes but with slight changes due to geography. Building on N.I's award winning trails as best practice. |
| 3 | Where will it go from? <i>Tina Cuthbertson</i> | Sea to Sea |

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| 4 | Would have a problem with marketing this to a beginner market? <i>Tina Cuthbertson</i> | This project isn't to draw in a new market but is a reaction to what people are doing anyway. Safety is already our top priority and this will not change. |
| 5 | Do we know what the economic benefit would be? <i>Lynda Dodd</i> | There are no figures from NI yet but there should be by the time the funding bid is put together. |

The Issues that were tabled prior to the workshop via the form provided with Business Workshop Invitation:

| Issues Raised: | Raised by | Discussion/Comments/Answers |
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| Re-opening the path alongside Loch Lochy (Gairloch to Bunarkaig) | Jon Mercer | This section of path is closed due to dead and dangerous trees overhanging the path. There is no formal agreement with the landowner, to maintain anything but the footprint of the path. The responsibility for dead and overhanging trees of this nature fall to the land owner. Landowner has been notified with copy of Risk Assessment and photos of site. Until resolution can be found the alternative route is used. GGW Rangers continue to work with the landowner to find a feasible resolution. |
| Access to the Canal/GGW from Glen Loy ie possibility of using Moy Swing bridge for pedestrian access to cross the canal | Jon Mercer | The bridge is currently only used by the local farmer to allow access across the canal between fields. When the bridge is not required by the farmer it is left open to boat traffic and would not therefore be available to pedestrians. When Moy is manned in the summer the bridge could be used by pedestrians <i>by prior arrangement</i> but boat traffic will always have priority. |
| Strimming of canal verges in summer, can it be timed to allow butterfly orchids to seed before it is cut? | Jon Mercer | The canal's grass and scrub cutting contracts are overseen by our environmental scientist and are timed to respect the needs of wildlife such as nesting birds. BWB will forward your comments to her. |
| What options for wildlife tourism can be created along the GGW? | Jon Mercer | Business make a plan to propose to the relevant agency/landowner. |
| More promotion of the route | Clr Michael Foxley | New promotion is been undertaken all the time. A marketing plan is written every year that combines work with partner agencies (BWB & FCS) along with the other National Long Distance Routes. Also includes contacts with media, newspapers, editors and travel writers in national, regional and international context. Marketing plan available from Manager: lynda.dodd@highland.gov.uk and the annual report for each year. |
| GGW need to consider joint | Clr Michael Foxley | Already working in conjunction with WHW, however, new person in |

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| initiatives with the West Highland Way | | post with a vacancy of some 18months. The 4 National routes all joined forces and had a stand at Outdoor Show Birmingham March 2008. |
| GGW need to consider links to adjacent links both east and west | Clr Michael Foxley | GGW already features as part of several routes east and west, eg Cape Wrath Trail and John o'Groats to Lands End. Links already exist between Speyside and the Great Glen with the Corrieyairack Pass. How active the links are marketed by adding to the GGW marketing plan will be forwarded and discussed at the Management Liaisons Group Meeting |
| More Gaelic in signage and interpretation needed | Clr Michael Foxley | The 49 new interpretative panels that were installed in Feb 2008 are a great asset and unless there are glaring gaps in the interpretation provided by these panels no more will be erected. All the new panels have an element of Gaelic in the text. The titles of the panels have Gaelic, and in addition there is a phonetic pronunciation of the title, which is not standard practice proposed by the working party but it was believed that it would be best practice to do so. Key words throughout the text are in Gaelic. The panels comply with the Highland Council Gaelic Guidelines at time of being created. |
| Viewing points, not enough, what can be done to create more | Bob Hunter | The viewing zones, have already been noted and while negotiated some time ago with Forestry Commission, the clearance of them has taken a little longer with joint working required and sharing of plant and resources. In November and December 2008 many view points will be cleared and the material chipped. |
| NCN78 Where will it be? | Bob Hunter | 1 more public exhibition will be held in Drumnadrochit. Call the Ranger office for date details. Route will only be confirmed after the public consultation phase is complete and a report has gone to Transport Scotland. |
| More leaflet information for people to pick us is needed | C MacDonald | While there is general move away from paper leaflets, and a general increase in web based information, the GGW does acknowledge that some customers still like to have hard copies of information. GGW and Visit Scotland can assist with many leaflets, let us know what you want and if the GGW can supply them then we will. We cannot get new leaflets printed without a good business case and related funding. |
| Lack of information going out to let people know what is going on and inform people about the walk | C MacDonald | The GGW team is available to come and talk to community meeting and other business groups and does so each year to many groups throughout the glen. If you want to know information and think we might know the answer, call us.01320 366 633. Articles are written for several village newsletters regularly, press releases sent to Highland Council Press Office, articles written for magazines etc all the time. The latest information is on the web site. www.greatglenway.com |

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| GGW has been changed without public meeting or letting local services providers know | C MacDonald | Referring to the Invergarry Link. GGW Manager addressed the community Council at Invergarry in April 2008. Press release was sent out September 2008. |
| Untidy along the walk- specifically Loch Lochy | C Macdonald | The GGW Ranger Team and FCS team have noticed an increase in some types of refuse along this section, bottles, gas canisters etc. It is believed that this kind of rubbish is generally not walkers, but fishermen. Work continues with FCS to reduce the incidences of vehicles entry that may encourage this. The GGW and FCS team do collect rubbish along the route and take it away, but also practice a 'leave no trace' policy which can be encouraged more with route users. |
| Public money used in this walk, we require a say in how it is run | C MacDonald | The Great Glen Way is part funded by Highland Council, if you have concerns on how it is managed and the service the route provides to customers let the Manager know and/or your local councillors. |
| Is all the slab signage required? | C MacDonald | Yes. The new monoliths form an integral part of the interpretative plan that has been document for some time and stems from the Great Glen Interpretative Plan 1994. This project was a joint project between Forestry Commission, British Waterways Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage with financial assistance from European Agricultural funds. However the route users have been asking for interpretation, wanting to know more about what they see on and from the route. |
| If walkers require help due to injury or sickness on the way how do we get to help them if all the forestry gates are closed? | Robert and Phoebe Hutchinson Forest Lodge | While this is unfortunate if route users have difficulty or suffer an injury, it is the recommendation from the GGW Ranger team, police and emergency services that they call 999. Do not attempt to deal with the situation as you may be putting yourself at risk and liability |
| Why was the GGW route changed for less services in the South Laggan area? | Christine MacDonald Forest Lodge Lilac Cottage Great Glen Hostel | The GGW footprint has not changed. The Invergarry Link was negotiated with Forestry Commission due to the old 'Great Glen Cycle Route' being disbanded. Many people think they can still cycle the old route, and you can, however with all the old signage down they get lost. The Invergarry Link simply way marks the old route. The Invergarry Link will be inspected 4 times a year by the GGW Rangers, who will maintain the way markers and do 1 Risk assessment/year. It will not be maintained to Long Distance Route Standard. It is not replacing the Great Glen Way, it is adding a link, and giving customers a choice on which way to travel. A timber tower with map is placed at the point where the choice is made, and this is up to the route user depending on where they have booked or choose to go. Many customers who have used Invergarry Village as their stopping point for that day have complained that they need to back track to pick up the GGW again. The Invergarry Link simply gives them a choice. |

Issues tabled at the meeting:

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| <p>Litter is a big problem is there anyway of signage to stop it?</p> | <p>Carol Hunter</p> | <p>There tends to be more litter around villages and key points but we have a leave no trace policy which is advertised in the GGW Accommodation & Services Guide as well as the website. GGW and partners would not want to see the countryside with additional signs either.</p> <p>The following suggestions came from the floor:</p> <p>Laura Blewit Volunteers could pick up rubbish, ie you and I when we are out there, along with the rangers</p> <p>David Barbour Education is the way to go. Volunteers Rangers are used by Sustrans and if there is specific issues around schools get the schools to deal with it</p> <p>Gavin Hogg School children aren't allowed to pick up rubbish Encourage the 'leave no trace' policy to be in use more GGW publications and leaflets</p> |
| <p>Whats the policy on clear up of major events after the event?</p> | <p>Julie Fowers</p> | <p>There are draft event guidelines on the web for event organisers. All event organisers must pick up their rubbish after a major event. If the event is not major and the GGW does not know about it, as it is a voluntary process, we ask your assistance to ensure that all events, big or small, come though the event process as this protects the environment and the communities in the process. Help us to keep cleaner communities after events.</p> |
| <p>Great Glen Cycle Route can only be done on an unloaded mountain bike is this still the case.</p> | <p>Gavin Hogg</p> | <p>The GGCR had been disbanded. The GGCR was for mountain bikes, not road bikes, NCN78 will be the road touring cycling route. Sustrans web site has some information on the new route. www.sustrans.co.uk</p> <p>The section of the old GGCR running from South Laggan through Invergarry to Aberchalder has been way marked as the Invergarry Link path because so many people were using it and getting lost, it will not be maintained to the GGW standards.</p> |
| <p>The 3 issues at Caol and Corpach, rubbish signage and vandalism could be resolved by moving the start of the GGW to Caol</p> | <p>Tina Cuthbertson</p> | <p>The decision to have the start of the GGW at the Old Fort, Ft William was a political one when the route was first set up. If it was to be moved it'd need to come through representatives from Caol (Councillors). Any change would mean the route would have to be re-</p> |

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| | | <p>designated. It is unlikely to change.</p> <p>The rubbish issue at Caol is a long standing issue, and not altogether the single result of walkers, given that it is at the head of a loch and attracts much flotsam and jetsam along with fly tipping and general littering from other users.</p> |
| How far developed is the plan for the NCN78 route | Brian Cuthbertson | <p>It is still in public consultation phase. The public comments will be collated and presented (in a report) to Transport Scotland. It will then go to report back to the working party. It will need funding, planning applications and implementation stages.</p> <p>There is one more consultation to happen at Drumnadrochit and if anyone is interested then leave a number and GGW office will forward on the date and time when it is known</p> |
| Where is the NCN78 going to be? | Dick Beech | Lynda and Ailsa showed the options for various routes on the map and encouraged people to go to the final consultation in Drumnadrochit. |
| People arrive at Gairlochy without anywhere to stay what can be done about this. | Martin Balcombe | <p>There will always be some people who do not book ahead. The GGW guide and web site encourages users to book before hand.</p> <p>Opportunity for businesses, either as an individual or a group of businesses to encourage late bookings and or with a pick up service if they phone this number, by utilising the notice board.</p> |
| What's happening to the GGW funding in the future | | SNH Funding will stop from April next year (2009) and will come direct from Central Government and will not be ring fenced. If people feel that the GGW is a valuable asset to the Glen, that the GGW provide some of their income then they should speak to their councillors to make sure that the GGW continues to be funded. |
| Route closure for 5 months, could this have been avoided | | <p>This year there is a trial of timber extraction on steep slopes by FCS This will continue for 3 years, two years Between Ft Augustus and Invermoriston and one between Alt Sigh and Bark Sheds. There will be an evaluation then more timber will be extracted along the whole of the A82.</p> <p>The closure at Invermoriston has come about because there is no alternative low level route. Work and negotiations continue with Forestry Commission for future harvesting projects where alternative routes may be able to be built as rough tracks eg Achnoconnan to Alt Sigh. The closure needs to put into perspective with on average for the same period for the last 4 years on average only 164 people walked the route for the same 5 month period.</p> |
| What's happening at the old railway platform at Invergarry | | This is a Community led project to make more of the heritage of Old Invergarry Railway Platform. This is still an active project lead by the community but supported by FCS |

Russell thanked all those that came and closed the Meeting at 2.30pm

The following is a written response from YHA, that came by email

Few things which may be helpful:

- Glen Nevis Youth Hostel

Will be part of a Lochaber group from 1 February 2009, with a Group manager and Duty Manager being recruited over the next couple of months. Full coffee shop menu all day from start of next summer, otherwise no significant changes for 2009 and 2010, full refurbishment planned 2011.

- Loch Lochy Independent Youth Hostel

Good hostel, but independent from us for the 2009 season.

- Morag's Lodge, Fort Augustus

Will be an affiliate member of SYHA for 2009, so we'll including in our brochure and website. Partly because of works at Loch Ness in 2009.

- Loch Ness Youth Hostel

Significant refurbishment planned (and required!) for 2009, with new heating throughout, extensive landscaping (including some tree-felling to open up the loch views), redecoration of all rooms, new bathrooms, and new beds. Works will be phased from February to June, though some painting already ongoing. We'll significantly tidy up the frontage too. We plan to run this site as a 21 bed hostel for 2009, mostly selling private rooms, to allow us to carry out works with minimal impact on guests. We'll then move back up to around 32 beds for 2010 onwards. This hostel is now run, along with Glen Affric, by a Group Manager based in Inverness.

We plan to replace the annex here in about 5 years, with a new 2 storey building. Until then, though, the undercroft offers excellent storage for kayaks, and with our lochside access we're very keen indeed to build up this area of our business.

- Inverness Youth Hostel

No significant changes planned at present.

Hope that's helpful tomorrow, in case anybody asks.

Graham Smith Northern Regional Manager

Scottish Youth Hostels Association

Victoria Drive

Inverness, IV2 3QB