

9.0 Proposals

9.1 The Master Plan

Figure No 1 shows the overall Master Plan. It defines the line of the proposed round the loch footpath, the location of proposed bridges and the type of surfacings proposed. It indicates the key locations for interpretation, sitting and picnic areas, viewing points, car parking and gateway signage. It also indicates linkages to existing and proposed paths and features of interest, which, with the loch side path, form a network of routes for walking, cycling and horse riding. Without doubt, there is the potential to expand this network further to the north, east and west of the Lochwinnoch/Castle Semple area.

The proposed route has been divided up into four sections, which reflect a similarity of construction and likely contractual packages. Funding could also be applied for on the basis of these sections. The following paragraphs describe the basic route as it might be on completion.

9.1.1 The Basic Route

- Lochwinnoch Station. This is the public transport Gateway to Lochwinnoch and Castle Semple, and it should look like it. The station should be well-kept including flowers, shrubs and hedging. The station should look so special that passengers want to get off the train to find out what the area has to offer. Once they do, they will find this out from special Gateway welcoming signage telling them where to go for what, and how long it will take to walk there.
The regular daily users of the station will also benefit from enclosed waiting shelters, access ramps, secure cycle storage, and increased parking all monitored on CCTV.
- Station to Castle Semple Centre
On leaving the station, visitors can go into the RSPB either as a destination in its own right, or en route to the village seeking refreshments, or Castle Semple Centre for activities, bicycle hire etc, etc, and a further pause on their circular walk around the loch. They should have a safe traffic free walk or cycle on a new tarmac surfaced footpath, parallel to the A760 and Lochlip Road to the village and Castle Semple Centre. There will be opportunities to learn about the marsh, its plant, animal and bird life, have a picnic beside the River Calder, a play on the swings in the park, join the cycle track to go into Ayrshire, or continue round to Castle Semple Centre.
At Castle Semple Centre, there should be opportunities to sit and relax, feed the ducks and swans, have an ice-cream or light refreshments, make a purchase from the well stocked shop, browse round a craft shop and other speciality outlets. From here, bicycles can be hired to continue the journey around the loch or join the cycle track and visit the nearby villages of Kilbarchan, Bridge of Weir, Kilmacolm, etc. Boats, canoes, and aqua-trikes can all be hired for a spell on the loch. Ranger-led walks and other activities may also be available. Alternatively, on chilly days, car borne visitors can remain in their cars and enjoy views over the loch southwards to the Peel Tower, and watch the feeding of the ducks and swans whilst having their picnic.

- Castle Semple Centre to Fancy Bridge

The footpath, tarmac surfaced, is likely to be shared with cyclists and the occasional horse-rider, although they will be encouraged to use the parallel cycle track instead, follows the loch edge to Blackditch Bay. En route, existing perches will be supplemented by seats and interpretation panels. At Blackditch Bay, there will be a sheltered grassy picnic area incorporating a formal edge to the loch. It should be a very popular area for walkers and cyclists alike. The link to the cycle track will have been ramped to make it wheelchair friendly. A reed bed at the mouth of the Burn to help clean out the nutrient rich water will provide a further opportunity for interpretation and education. At this point, there is the opportunity to return to Castle Semple Centre via the cycle track or divert into Parkhill Woods for a woodland walk, a wonderful view westwards of the three lochs, learn about the old fishponds, and ice caves, visit the Collegiate Church or continue on to the Fancy Bridge.

The path continues to follow the loch close to the fence to avoid the path flooding when loch levels are high. The views are open across the loch and eastwards are dominated by the deer park and temple on Kenmure Hill. This is the route of the old western entrance to Castle Semple Mansion, and avenue tree planting along the path will be undertaken to recreate one element of this historic landscape.

What was left of the Mansion after it burned down has been converted into three large houses providing another opportunity for interpretation. In this area, known as Low Semple, a further link to the cycle track will have been established offering a second opportunity to return to Castle Semple. The Fancy Bridge formed a part of the eastern driveway to Castle Semple Mansion. A beautifully ornate bridge, it will have been restored and there is the opportunity to continue over it eastwards past Kenmure Hill to the Howwood Road, and then to Howwood village with its bus services and Howwood railway station. This path, though privately owned land, will remain as a rough stone finish as far as the Elliston Weir, where there is a tarmac surface to the Howwood Road.
- Fancy Bridge to RSPB including path to Peel Tower

To continue round the loch, the Black Cart Water is bridged. At this point, there will be the option of following the Black Cart on an informal gravel footpath to Howwood, or to cross the Risk Burn on the way to the RSPB reserve and completion of the circular route. The path will climb up towards the main railway and follow this closely until the woodland edge, and the end of the canal are reached. The path will be surfaced with unbound gravel and will not be suitable for horses. Horse riders will have been discouraged from using this section of the route by a mixture of signage, Park Ranger, and RSPB contact. Before the woods are reached, a viewpoint and picnic area with seats, benches and interpretation panels will have been passed. The interpretation will include notes on the drainage and raising of the loch, and the associated engineering works such as the stone culvert in

the foreground, which is fenced where there are old inspection manholes, or it has collapsed. This is also an area of significant ornithological interest and will be included in RSPB and Park literature.

On reaching the woods, the footpath will pick up the line of a path built at the same time as the adjacent canal constructed at the time the Barr Loch was drained. The old ditch drainage systems will have been restored but the path construction works will have created minimum impact on the rest of the wood. The path will pass old and active Badger setts, and enjoy the odd glimpse of the loch where views have been opened out, until it reached Tod's Seat and the loch shore. There is a wealth of opportunity for education and interpretation along the path. At Tod's Seat, there will be a picnic area and viewpoint across the loch to Lochwinnoch.

A formal edge to the loch will have been created and adjacent rip rap edging restored to prevent further erosion of the loch edge. At this point, there may be the opportunity to visit the Peel Tower, restored to its condition in the early 1900s. A jetty or landing point for the Tower will have been restored, offering the opportunity for boat trips from Castle Semple Centre.

Interpretation in this area will include information about the Semple family, the family feuds, religious wars, the siege of the Tower, and the later building of the bunds and formation of the Aird Meadows as part of the draining of Barr Loch. The path will be narrow at 1.0m, surfaced with gravel, and follow the existing route on a repaired bund. The main route will follow the line of the existing gravel footpath, but be wider at 2.0m, and protected by drainage ditches until it reaches the access to Lochside House, where it will widen to 2.5 m. Interpretation and bird watching opportunities along this route are excellent, using two bird hides, fallen trees with their roots exposed, water filled ditches, the 'pond dipping' pool, and wild flower meadows. It is a popular area for RSPB educational activities and school visits. Once at the RSPB, purchases can be made in the well-stocked shop, books and binoculars – a speciality – and discussions with knowledgeable and friendly staff and volunteers be undertaken. A Toucan crossing of the A760 will allow train borne visitors to reach the station safely and await their train in an enclosed waiting room.

9.1.2. Linkages

Potential links have been outlined in section 8.2. Firm proposals are as follows:-

- Parkhill Woods to Jonshill
The route is all within local authority land ownership. It will provide access to Parkhill Woods and the cycle track from the upper end of Lochwinnoch. A good circular route taking in the village. Excellent viewpoint. Small car park proposed.
- Parkhill Woods to Small Holdings and South to Gates Road and the Loch Shore Path

Where the path comes out of Parkhill Woods to go up to Jonshill, a link south following the old Warlock Gates entrance track to Castle Semple Mansion to link with Gates Road and the opportunity to walk into the village, over the cycle track to link with the loch shore path.

This will complete a varied circular walk from Castle Semple to Blackditch Bay through Parkhill Woods to the viewpoint, which takes in the three lochs, and back round again to the loch shore path. Alternatively, it provides a walk from the village up Jonshill and down to the edge of Parkhill Woods and southwards to the loch or back into the village via Gates Road.

- Blackditch Bay to Parkhill Woods, Collegiate Church, Cycle Track, Low Semple and Lochside Path

The reopening of the path through the woods and past fishponds, ice caves, and the Collegiate Church with a link to the cycle track and the loch shore path in the vicinity of Low Semple, provides the possibilities for a series of circular routes and links. It provides ready access to the Collegiate Church and other interesting relics of Castle Semple Mansion. A small car park in the vicinity of Low Semple for car borne visitors will also allow walkers and cyclist's access to the network from the Howwood Road at Brides Mill Bridge.

- Private Track from Howwood Road (old eastern entrance to Castle Semple Mansion) to Fancy Bridge to join Loch shore Path and Cycle Track

This route allows access to Howwood Station providing a walking and cycling link between the two stations. Access can also be gained to the Temple on Kenmure Hill and advantage taken of long views eastwards and westwards up the Garnock Valley. A further link to Howwood would be the provision of a gravel surfaced but informal footpath following the southern bank of the Black Cart Water.

9.1.3 User Groups and Path Widths

As previously recorded the appointment brief identifies the following user groups:-

- Walkers (including young families with prams)
- Wheelchair users
- Cyclists
- Horse Riders

Having identified these groups, consideration was given to whether or not they should be segregated or unsegregated.

A number of factors were identified for consideration in determining this issue.

Bicycle and pedestrian volumes – if volumes of both categories are high (combined flows in excess of 200 per hour), they are likely to impede each other when mixed.

- The function of the area to cyclists – in our case, the route is mainly targeted at destination cyclists (i.e. commuter or local access routes with lower speed) for which the unsegregated option is likely to be acceptable.
- A preference was expressed for segregating horses from walkers and cyclists, as there was a perceived potential danger on mixed paths, and also the preferred surfacing for horses was different.
- The implementation of segregation has been recorded as leading to increased confrontation between users insisting that respective groups stay on their own side of the line.
- The land take necessary to provide separate paths for walkers/cyclists and horses limits the areas where this can be implemented.
- Local views and attitudes – these ultimately play a more important role in the decision process.

Following discussion of the options, it was decided that generally the route should cater for walkers and cyclists on an unsegregated path with horses being directed to the north side of the loch where, with the hard surfaced cycle track, a number of circular route options would become available to them. It also has the advantage that the BHS and Sustrans have already had meetings and agreed a Code of Conduct. The minimum path widths can, therefore, be determined as follows:-

- 1) Unsegregated path for cyclists and walkers
(in accordance with the Scottish Executive's
Publication "Cycling By Design" 2.0 metres
- 2) Separate bridleway for horses (following the
Horse Society guidelines). 2.0 metres with a
1 metre separation verge

9.1.4 Construction and Maintenance

The British Horse Society Guidelines recommend that new bridleways should be constructed of hardwearing and resilient turf.

This should be relatively straightforward to maintain with regular grass cutting and monitoring and repair of the surface.

For walkers and cyclists, a variety of path surfacing materials are available including:-

- Bituminous Material

- Bound Gravel
- Timber Boardwalk
- Dense Bitumen Macadam/Hot Rolled Asphalt

This material provides a smooth sealed surface suitable for all users, although not preferred for bridleways, as noted above.

The use of bituminous materials protects the subbase, the lower layers of the path construction, and sub-grade, the original ground on which the path is constructed, from adverse environmental effects i.e. frost/thaw, water damage, shrinkage.

Paths of this construction, with hard edges (see later), offer good resistance to wear and are likely to last eight to ten years before requiring resurfacing.

The more formal surfaces require less maintenance, if properly constructed, but will involve a higher initial capital outlay.

- Bound Gravel

This material provides an informal firm surfacing which will offer an adequate surface for walkers or cycle users. However, even a well-laid bound gravel path will have some loose stones.

Bound gravel paths are susceptible to water erosion on slopes and the recommended maximum gradient to mitigate this is 1 in 15. The surface can also break up under horse traffic.

Bound gravel paths generally require raking, the upfilling of low areas, and recompaction after two to three years. This maintenance is simple and relatively inexpensive.

- Timber Boardwalk

The main reason for adopting a raised timber boardwalk is to minimise the effect on the hydrology of the area, particularly at the River Calder where embankments would have significant detrimental effects. A boardwalk also minimises damage to area of habitat.

The construction can be of either hardwood or softwood, of which hardwood offers the longer maintenance free period and is less prone to vandal damage.

To produce a slip-resistant surface to the timber, the contact surface can be treated with an overlay incorporating an aggregate.

Other factors affecting the longevity of a path include:-

- 1) Path edge details
- 2) Drainage

- Edge Details

Paths without edges allow the construction materials to deform laterally resulting in localised settlement and cracking of the surface. Deterioration will therefore start earlier. If the paths are for vehicle use, any occasional overrun will most likely exacerbate the onset of damage.

Hard edges i.e. precast concrete kerbs, prevent the above noted deterioration and should themselves be almost maintenance free.

Soft edges i.e. timber, are simple and cheap to install but have a limited life. They confine the path construction where soft/loose surrounding soils exist therefore reducing localised settlement and surface damage.

- Drainage

The most straightforward method of removing surface water from the path is to camber or crossfall the surface to enable water to run off into the drainage system on one or both sides. The drainage system can also intercept water running off the hillside onto the path.

These drainage systems can take the form of:-

- 1) Open Ditches
- 2) Filter Drains
- 3) Pipes

- Open Ditches

Ditches are the easiest and least expensive form of drainage to construct. The size of ditch will depend on how quickly water can drain away, and the storage requirements. They can become blocked and require regular maintenance, which is relatively straightforward.

This solution offers a degree of risk to path users due to the drop beyond the path verge and also the hazard presented by standing water.

- Filter Drains

These comprise stone filled ditches either with or without a slotted or porous pipe at the base to convey water. This type of drain would also be suitable for conveying water from one side of the track to the other.

Filter drains offer a low maintenance solution at higher capital cost. They also eliminate the hazard posed by open ditches.

- Pipes

A solid walled piped drain would be suitable where it is necessary to culvert an existing watercourse which crosses the line of the path. This is the most expensive installation but should require little maintenance.

- Other aspects of maintenance include:-
 - 1) Clipping of shrubs
 - 2) Pruning of overhanging trees
 - 3) Mowing of grass verges

9.1.5 Signs, Site Furniture, Gates and Fencing

SIGNS

The development of the footpath offers many opportunities to announce arrival, advise, inform or direct, and the footpath proposals, extended to include links beyond the immediate environs, will require a hierarchy of signs.

Type	Materials
Gateway Features	Stone/metal to be designed
Road signs: speed, warning, tourist information, direction	Standard
Information : length of walk, destination, direction, points of interest, facilities	Timber
Interpretation Boards	To be designed
Incidentals: post with arrow, cyclists dismount, please take litter home, etc	Timber

SITE FURNITURE

Site furniture will comply with BS requirements and current design guides. The placing and style of “furniture” will contribute greatly to the character and quality of the footpath, and can subtly encourage and direct use to certain locations, for example, stone seating near the Fancy Bridge to reflect the stone in the bridge and the past grandeur of the Mansion House; creative and informal long seating in woodland; seating built into the hillside in a terraced fashion on Kenmure Hill; seating in the style of that used in the Titanic, and made in Lochwinnoch; use of old barrels from Lochwinnoch Cooperage for seating. The use of metal seating could benefit local companies such as Joth, Iron Art, and George Paton of Lochwinnoch.

Type	Materials
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Seat with backrest Bench	Steel Stone Reuse Todd seat
Picnic tables accessible for wheelchair use	Timber
Litter bins at picnic areas	Timber covered to prevent animal scavenging and wind scattering
Dog Bins, at regular intervals and sited away from seats	Timber

GATES AND FENCING

Although desirable to keep the footpath as open and accessible as possible, there are a number of locations where gates and fencing are required to control stock movement and discourage access by motorcyclists.

It is intended that the north side tarmac footpath be accessible to horses, in addition to pedestrians and wheelchair users, and this restricts the variety of suitable gates for selection.

Type	Material
Tarmac path; to be accessible by pedestrians, horse riders, wheelchair users and buggies	Galvanised metal wicket gate, painted.
Stockproof fence	Standard timber post and rylock
Path option B, canal to Fancy Bridge	Standard timber post and wire

Some typical signs and site features can be seen in Appendix 16.

9.1.6 Interpretation

First class interpretation is considered extremely important to the success of this project. Provision of interpretative facilities should be an integral part of the footpath construction programme.

It is proposed that use is made of the information in sections 8.12 to 8.15 to prepare a brief for consultants to prepare an interpretation plan for the Castle Semple Loch area. The proposals should include for the wide range of interest and resources of the area, for example, nature conservation, geology, the social and economic history of the landed estates, and Lochwinnoch Village.

We support the idea of re-opening the Community Museum as an aid to interpreting the development of Lochwinnoch. There could be a case for relocating this facility to a re-vamped Castle Semple Centre.

9.1.7 Landscape Improvements/restoration

Landscaping opportunities arising from the proposals fall into three categories:-

- 1) Enhancement
- 2) Restoration
- 3) Management

Enhancement

This category refers to landscape which is designed to enhance the user experience perhaps by screening, offering shelter, framing a view, or improving visual amenity and vegetation diversity. For the most part, the site is characterised by natural or semi-natural vegetation, and is protected by its Site of Special Scientific Interest status. It is the intention that this character be retained and where planting is proposed within the SSSI boundary, SNH approval would be sought. Specific locations where designed landscape input will be required are as follows:-

Hedge Planting

- South side of the A760 to restore overgrown and gappy hedges behind the existing footpath, providing shelter to pedestrians on this exposed section of road. Protective netting (0.5m height) is likely to be required here to help new planting establish.
- Lochlip Road improvements; if the existing hedge opposite the first houses past Church Street were removed to improve the roadscape and visibility, a new length of hedge set at the back of a new verge may be required to give some privacy from passers-by on the new footpath.

Formal Landscape

- Lochwinnoch Station.
- Car park at Castle Centre Centre.
- Recreation ground car park, if extended.

Informal Planting

- RSPB car park extension
- Blackditch Bay
- South Side bay
- Calder Bridge picnic areas (east and west)
- Incidental planting along footpath which may be required to replace vegetation removed, frame views, provide shelter or focal point (for example at Fancy Bridge).

Restoration

Historical maps dating from the late 19th century show the attractive designed landscape of Castle Semple policies (Figure 4). The proposed footpath offers

the opportunity to reinstate two features, namely, the tree avenue which led to Castle Semple from the West Gate on the north side of the loch, and the tree belt from Risk Burn to the “canal” end on the south side. Further research is required to confirm the tree types for these areas.

Management

Management within the SSSI and RSPB reserve would be a matter for Scottish Natural Heritage and RSPB to consider and implement. The primary aim of any management proposals would be to enhance ecological interest. However, the development of the footpath introduces a new dimension to management – that of visual amenity and clearing the footpath of encroaching vegetation. The latter can be dealt with through routine maintenance of the footpath. It is important that visual amenity is retained by ensuring that selected viewpoints and stretches of footpath continue to enjoy open or intermittent open views of the Loch.

9.1.8. Conservation and Wildlife

Using the large amount of existing ecological data, it has been possible to plan much of the route of the proposed path minimising the disturbance to wildlife. The final planning of the route of the path is dependant on further survey work outlined in section 12. Environmental Impacts. Ecological consultants should be contracted to undertake the recommended survey work during the spring and early summer.

No physical path construction should commence before this work has taken place. Further discussions should be held with Renfrewshire Council, SNH, RSPB and Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and agreement reached before work commences. The Scoping Matrix (Table 9) shows who should be consulted in respect of the path construction including those with interests in conservation and wildlife.

The study has also demonstrated the scope for conservation, wildlife and landscape enhancements such as pond creation, tree planting, Otter tunnels, viewing platforms etc., that should also be an integral element of the path construction project.

9.1.9. Education

A successful education programme already exists at both the RSPB and at Castle Semple Centres but we would like to see this expanded including the collaborative projects currently undertaken.

The RSPB Centre is slightly lacking in space and Parkhill Wood is quite a distance from the Castle Semple Centre, which restricts a significant increase in the education programme at both these centres.

The new path will provide access to new and interesting teaching areas, for example, Calder Bridge, Peel Tower and eastern end of the Loch. There are

also increased opportunities for joint projects between RSPB, CMRP and Renfrewshire Council Education Department, and the three should plan and coordinate the future development of education on the site.

The study has also indicated that there is real potential for increasing the scope of the topics taught here, for example, Scottish family history, agricultural and industrial revolutions, de-industrialisation, transport infrastructure, water engineering, recreation and tourism development. These are all included in schools curricula, and a demonstration site so convenient to Paisley and western Glasgow should be capitalised upon.

9.1.10 Listed Buildings and Structures

- **Collegiate Church**
The gem of the listed buildings, the structure and grounds are well maintained. It needs to be made accessible from the cycle track, the Parkhill Woods track, the loch shore path, and the Howwood Road. Signage off the Howwood Road and a small car parking facility in the area of Low Semple are proposed.
- **Peel Tower**
Now in a ruinous condition, our proposal is to restore it to its condition at the beginning of the 20th century. Drawings exist, and we believe most of the stone is scattered around. We also propose to restore water access to the Tower allowing visits from Castle Semple Centre by boat. The Renfrewshire Local History Forum might be persuaded to take the lead in this project.
- **Lochwinnoch Conservation Area**
We propose a small townscape study to examine the current situation and identify environmental, signage, lighting and building fabric improvements that should be undertaken to enhance the appearance of the village
- **Castle Semple Estate**
A number of interesting buildings and structures remain including fishponds, ice caves, grottos etc., which should be repaired and interpreted. Associated buildings such as the Temple, Walled Gardens, Laundry should be reviewed and a firm policy established for their protection, repair and interpretation. The Fancy Bridge should be repaired and restored as part of the round the loch footpath.
- **Engineering Structures**
A number of bunds/berms, culverts and sluices are in need of repair e.g. the bund separating the Aird Meadow from Castle Semple Loch, stone revetments/rip rap to the loch's southern shore. We propose an engineering study to identify areas of urgent repair to be undertaken in association with the footpath works. The old culvert going eastwards

from the canal to the area of the Elliston Weir should be investigated to ascertain how safe the ground is above it and whether it could or should be restored to working order.

- **Historic Landscape**
Little remains of the designed landscape in terms of tree planting. We propose that wherever possible restoration of the landscape structured tree planting should be undertaken.
- **General**
The area is so full of interest that professional or voluntary time (eg Renfrewshire Local History Forum/the Lochwinnoch Historical Society/Paisley University) should be directed and funded towards pulling together, from a wide variety of existing sources, a basic historical and social record of the development of the area. This would provide the basic information to develop educational and interpretation packages for the area.

9.1.11 Car Parking

Although public transport will be promoted, it is inevitable that implementation of proposals will increase the need for additional car parking. However, increasing the car parking provision at Castle Semple Centre, the RSPB, the Annexe, and Lochwinnoch Station is in each case limited by the land area available.

Each of the areas would most likely obtain benefit by formalising the parking and delineating spaces. However, this may detract from the rural aspect of the area, and to be effective, smooth paintable surface finishes are needed, or expensive blockwork installed.

The Castle Semple Centre has scope for additional spaces by remodelling the areas in front of the buildings and by reducing the grass area at the entrance. However, the proposed removal of the railway embankment would provide significant opportunity for the redevelopment of the visitor complex and should double the amount of parking available.

The RSPB Centre has space for some expansion southwards, and the existing car park could be better laid out. A continuation of the gravel surface would be appropriate.

There is also an opportunity to create an overflow car park by enlarging the existing facilities at the Annexe. It may be preferable to consider this in conjunction with footpath improvements beside the sewage works, or after the installation of the section of new cycle track/walkway around the sewage works.

Two options for car parking provision at the Station have been prepared, and are discussed in the engineering proposals section for Lochwinnoch Station. Option Two, Network Rail's preferred solution, involves the buy back of land

previously sold for development. The enlarged car park figure of 44, could also be used as an overflow car park for the RSPB. However, this would require the road crossing works at the station entrance to be completed to improve safety.

With improvement in the accessibility of the Collegiate Church, we suggest the provision of a small car park above, or to the north of, Low Semple. This will keep public cars out of Low Semple and provide an incentive for car borne visitors to visit the Church.

The following table summarises the proposals and shows an increase in parking of some 201 spaces. We believe this is a sensible increase in provision given the considerable effort the project will demonstrate to encourage more sustainable forms of transport.

Plans for a small car park at Jonshill are currently being proposed by the Park Authority for construction at the same time as a new electricity sub-station. A notional figure of 6 spaces is used for the purpose of this report.

Table 5

Car Parking Resources

Place	Existing Numbers	Proposal	Increase
Station	Say 15	24 (Option 1)	9
		44 (Option 2)	29
RSPB	40	60	20
Annexe	20	40	20
Castle Semple	140	280	140
Collegiate Church	Nil	6	6
McKillop Hall	40	40	nil
Jonshill	Nil	Say 6	6
Totals	225	456	201
		476	221

9.1.12 Lochwinnoch Station

The study has highlighted the pivotal importance of Lochwinnoch Station within the path network and noted that its current physical condition is neither welcoming and informative nor practical in terms of disabled/wheeled access, cycle storage, access safety or a comfortable waiting area.

Two sketch proposals of the station have been produced at 1:500 (Figures 10 and 11). Option 1 is based on existing land ownership whilst Option 2 indicates a proposal requiring additional landtake thus achieving a desirable greater number of parking spaces. Both options assume that a safe new crossing of the A706 will be provided at the Station Road access and that the existing unsafe access at the railway bridge will be stopped off.

The proposals include the following elements:

- Ramped access to both platforms
- Covered waiting area providing information on local facilities
- Shelter on west platform
- Paving of the main circulation area
- Provision of cycle storage facilities
- Formalised landscape structure to enhance the station with colour and texture
- Landscape treatment to A760 embankment (unmaintained trees and scrub at present) to improve visibility and perception of safety
- Information board and welcome sign
- Incidental seating and seasonal tub planting
- Demarcation of parking bays and bus layby with contrasting surface
- New secure fencing to south boundary
- Improved lighting

The implementation of the proposals would transform the image of the station and provide an important source of visitor information. It may also encourage the local community to use this facility for work or recreation in preference to the car.

9.1.13 RSPB and Castle Semple Centres

Mention has been made previously of the limited expected life of the RSPB building and the need to think “out of the box” and consider radical change, for example, relocation to Castle Semple. It is not for this report to make comment other than to welcome radical thought and a willingness to consider major change.

Castle Semple Centre suffers both a lack of internal space for Park administration staff, and other uses if they were to expand, and a lack of external space for car parking and other activities. The removal of the old railway embankment has been discussed in the report, but it is not a new idea. The plan in Appendix 8 was prepared some time ago, and whilst we would not support the layout shown, it does illustrate the space that removal of the embankment could release. We propose, therefore, that removal of the embankment be explored with its owner, Sustrans, and that a brief for a revised Master Plan be prepared. We have held preliminary discussions with a landfill operator regarding the recycling of the fill material for use in the footpath construction, and received a favourable response. We recommend, therefore, that the project is registered with EnTrust and that funding for the project is pursued.

9.2 Engineering Proposals

9.2.1 Lochwinnoch Station

Four significant improvements are proposed at the station which will enhance its facilities for three of the four user groups and these are indicated in Figures 11 and 12.

- Access Ramps

There is sufficient land available within the station curtilage to install ramps to improve access for the disabled.

On the southern platform, it will be necessary to install a ramp cranked through 180 degrees while on the north side, the ramp can be installed over the existing road embankment.

On completion of the access ramps, we recommend the existing entrance/exit from the northern end of the bridge onto the A760 is closed off, thereby directing pedestrians to the safe route to and from Lochwinnoch.

There are currently upgrading proposals in process for the Roadhead roundabout to the south of the study area, which we understand includes a new bus waiting area on the A737 to the west of the roundabout which necessitates passengers from Lochwinnoch crossing the A760 twice.

Pedestrians approaching the station from the south, currently do so on the east side of the road, and are obliged to step off the footpath onto the road to cross the bridge to access the station. The new proposals will mean a longer walk to the north to cross the road near the RSPB which will be much safer than now. We do not believe many passengers come from this direction.

- Waiting Rooms

The proposed waiting rooms would be fully enclosed structures offering greater shelter than is currently provided. Scotrail have verbally intimated that a structure comprising brick walls to mid-height with a polycarbonate shell above for walls and roof may provide a workable solution. Scotrail have also advised that depending on the waiting rooms positions, their cameras may have to be re-sited to provide security coverage.

- Secure Cycle Storage

To encourage the use of cyclists commuting to the station, it is necessary to provide a higher level of security and weather protection in the storage area.

In this instance, at an unmanned station already covered by camera surveillance, cycle lockers offer a secure parking facility in addition to providing weather protection.

- Car Parking

Improvements to the car parking facilities are recognised as a non-core element to the main user groups. However, they serve a secondary function to attract commuters to progress their journey by train.

Two options have been developed to formalise the parking and provide a recognised bus bay as indicated in Figures 11 and 12. The aspects of landtake and the possible use as an overflow car park for the RSPB are discussed in Section 9.1.11

Option 1 provides 24 spaces

Option 2 provides 44 spaces

Both options also provide a formalised bus bay.

9.2.2 Station to Castle Semple Centre

This length of the path network can be broken down into four distinct sections (See Figure 1)

- Station to RSPB – 1 to 2: Distance 0.28kn

This portion of the route is served by existing illuminated footpaths which have been considered as suitable for this project. In order to safely connect the footpaths either side of the A760, a number of options have been considered and are reported separately in Section 9.2.5

- RSPB to Calder Bridge – 2 to 3: Distance 0.4km

The ground conditions are generally soft and frequently marshy. The path's cross section, Figure 13, depicts the construction requirements.

To provide long-term stability, a geogrid by Tensar or similar, is laid at the formation level. Onto this the embankment is then raised in layers of compacted granular material. The geogrid is designed to interlock with the aggregate to minimise deformation and reduce settlement. The new path construction is then installed.

On this section, the path makeup detailed complies with Renfrewshire Council's specification. The path could therefore be submitted for adoption and receive the accompanying responsibility and maintenance benefits.

The section also depicts a planting strip to offer protection to the paths users from the prevailing weather and adjacent traffic.

Two new bridges will be required, over the Dubbs Water and Millbank Burn. At Dubbs Water, it may be possible to use the existing extended abutments of the Lochall Bridge to carry the new structure. Detailed design will be required prior to further consideration by Renfrewshire Council. Unfortunately, the Loch Bridge at Millbank Burn offers no abutments and it will be necessary to construct new concrete abutments.

- Calder Bridge and Boardwalk – 3 to 4:Distance 70 metres

Details of the boardwalk are provided in Figure 15. Constructed of hardwood, the boardwalk and its timber parapet will be supported on timber piles driven through the soft ground to a suitable bearing depth. The running surface shall be treated with an overlay of bonded aggregate to provide a slip resistant surface.

The boardwalk shall provide the approaches to a new Calder Bridge which requires the construction of concrete abutments.

For reference, photographic examples of the bridge and parapet forms are provided in Appendix 17.

- Calder Bridge to Castle Semple Centre – 4 to 5:Distance 0.8km

The path construction shall be the same as adjacent to the A760 detailed in Figure 13.

Two new bridges with concrete abutments shall be required, one at the overspill from the sports ground, and one by the Lade Bridge.

9.2.3 Castle Semple Centre to Fancy Bridge

In this section, the path construction is divided into two distinct types.

- Castle Semple Centre to gate (Fisherman's Gate) beyond Blackditch Burn – 5 to 6:Distance 1.2 km

The path is currently of unbound gravel construction which will be improved by the application of a 25 to 50mm thick macadam overlay. At the connection to the Sustrans route at Blackditch Burn, some granular material and possible retention works will be required to regrade the slope prior to the path construction.

- Fisherman's Gate to Fancy Bridge – 6 to 7:Distance 1.3km

The new path will be constructed away from the loch edge close to the boundary fence. Protection from ground water, draining off the hillside, will be provided by an open ditch. The path makeup will be to

Renfrewshire Council's specification which corresponds to the Cycling by Design requirements for rural areas.

- Low Semple to Cycle track

Whilst the exact line of this key link has not yet been determined, the construction will continue that used for the main footpath. In linking to the cycle track, gradients will conform to those required for disabled access.

9.2.4 Fancy Bridge to RSPB including Path to Peel Tower

The paths running surface throughout this section will be of bound gravel. The path width and embankment/cutting cross section varies throughout its length but the path makeup will be as follows:-

After clearance of vegetation and topsoil or scraping off of base material from the existing track, the line and width of the new track will be delineated by the installation of timber edging. Between the edging over the exposed ground, a geotextile membrane shall be laid to separate the new granular material from the sub-soil, and to minimise loss of stone into the soil. The geotextile shall then be overlaid with the stone sub-base and compacted gravel running surface, laid to a camber to assist the surface water run off. Spoil arising could then be replaced behind the timber edging. The proposed variations in the path types are as follows:-

- Fancy Bridge to end of Canal – 7 to 8:Distance 0.85km

The crossing of the Black Cart will require the installation of a new bridge on concrete abutments. Thereafter, two route options are proposed as described in Paragraph 6.5. Both proposals require open drainage ditches on both sides as indicated in Figure 14. The path width being 2 metres.

Both options require a bridge crossing of the Risk Burn, if Option 1 is adopted, then it may be possible to utilise the existing abutments at the old crossing position. If Option 2 is adopted, then new abutments will be required.

- End of Canal to Access to Lochside House – 8 to 9:Distance 1.7km

The proposed route follows the line of an old unmade path. This will require clearance of self seeded saplings prior to the path construction.

The majority of the path requires a single open ditch to the upslope side to cut off ground water from shedding onto the path.

- Access to Lochside House to RSPB – 9 to 1:Distance 0.5km

This section of path provides vehicular access and requires a width of 2.5 metres. After localised regrading of the existing track, the new gravel path will be constructed as previously described. The cross-section (see Figure 14) indicates the cut-off ditch on the upslope side of the path.

- Access to Peel Tower along bund

Prior to construction of the path it will be necessary to make localised repairs to the bund to ensure its integrity. Thereafter, due to the restricted width available a narrower path 1.0 to 1.2m wide could be constructed.

9.2.5 Other Engineering Considerations

- Bund separating Castle Semple Loch from Canal

The condition of the bund raises cause for concern, sections of the heavy stone riprap are missing thereby reducing the effective height of the bund. At current water levels, this breach of the containment works does not represent a risk to draining down the loch. However, it does represent a point of weakness more liable to further damage when water levels rise or to mechanical damage i.e. removal by hand.

We recommend an engineering assessment of the bund's condition is undertaken as matter of urgency and consideration given to effecting emergency repairs to the stonework and removal of trees and their roots which contribute to the degradation.

- Removal of Railway Embankment at Castle Semple Centre

The removal of the railway embankment offers significant advantages to the project including:-

- 1) The recycling of the various materials within the embankment, graded and upgraded granular material, tar planings and the constituent materials of the embankment, and stone bridge abutments, all of which could be used at various locations around the new path route for general infill.
- 2) The space created offers significant scope for development, initially to increase parking facilities, but potentially, as a site for a new visitor centre, in conjunction with the RSPB.
- 3) Improved access to and from the village.
- 4) The removal of the long-term maintenance liabilities of the three Victorian bridge structures.

In order to assess the suitability of the material, it will be necessary to carry out site investigation and laboratory testing of the embankment materials. These are sometimes contaminated, and it will be necessary

to confirm the extent and types of contaminants, if any, to enable an engineering judgement to be taken on the suitability of the material for reuse within the SSSI.

- Station Access and Pedestrian Crossing Proposals (Figure 16)

Three separate options have been considered for improvements to the station access:-

- 1) Minor alterations to the existing access to improve the tight turning circle, incorporating localised regrading of the access and increasing the kerb radius at the road edge.
- 2) Re-alignment of the A760 approaches to the junction
- 3) Major junction improvements located opposite the RSPB entrance.

As previously discussed, Options 2 and 3 offer little scope for development due to land ownership issues.

Option 1 can be reasonably easily undertaken to provide some improvement to those wishing to access/exit the station road.

Three options have also been considered for improved pedestrian crossing of the A760 near the station access:

- 1) Uncontrolled crossing
- 2) Toucan crossing
- 3) Pelican or uncontrolled crossing with a central island.

An uncontrolled crossing point could be developed by local improvements to the existing footpaths, installation of dropped kerbs and delineation of road markings to indicate the preferred crossing location. Work of this nature could be undertaken irrespective of the current speed limit and as a pre-cursor to re-aligning the A760 approaches to the junction.

The installation of a toucan crossing i.e. controlled by traffic lights could utilise the above works and offer further improvement to pedestrian safety.

The third option has been raised with the Local Highway Authority. A number of reservations were expressed concerning safety issues and land acquisition sufficient to create the island positions and road realignment. Further development of this option has therefore not been undertaken.

- Site Investigation and Topographical Survey

As referred to previously in this section, it will be necessary to implement a geotechnical site investigation of the railway embankment, including laboratory testing of the constituent materials to determine their suitability for re-use.

Further site investigation will also be required for assessment of bridge abutment construction, piling for boardwalks and viewing platforms.

A topographical survey of the paths route should also be carried out to enable more detailed work to be completed i.e. extent of embankments, path gradients, significant obstacles etc.

10.0 Estimated Costs

10.01 For costing and future design/construction works, the project has been divided into five construction packages, which include signage and site furniture, interpretation provisions and gateway features. A possible riverside link to Howwood, the removal of the railway embankment, a new site layout at Castle Semple Centre, loch side viewing platforms have been allowed for as well as a link between the station and the new Roadhead Roundabout and between the loch side footpath and cycle track in the vicinity of Low Semple. We have suggested other linkages but have not costed them at this stage.

10.02 The estimated costs are set out below. A breakdown of these costs can be found in Appendix 9.

(Ref 10.1)	Lochwinnoch Station Improvements to car parking, access ramps for wheelchairs, 2 waiting rooms, secure cycle storage, gateway feature and sign. landscaping and fencing.	
	Total estimated cost	£250,000.00
(Ref 10.2)	Station to Church Street Provision of tarmac finished path parallel to A760 and Lochlip Road as far as Church Street, Lochwinnoch. Includes costs for five bridges, a controlled crossing of the A760, a car park extension at the Annexe, gateway feature and sign at the RSPB.	
	Total estimated cost	£467,000.00
(Ref 10.3)	Church Street to Castle Semple Centre Provision for tarmac footpath, viewing point, gateway feature and sign at Castle Semple Centre, interpretation boards and road improvements at entrance to Castle Semple.	
	Total estimated cost	£132,000.00
(Ref 10.4)	Castle Semple to Fancy Bridge	

Provision for a 2.0m wide tarmac surfaced footpath, a wheelchair friendly link between cycle track and path, the construction of a picnic area at Blackditch Bay, avenue tree planting, and the repair of the Fancy Bridge.

Total estimated cost £280,400.00

(Ref 10.5)

Fancy Bridge to RSPB

Two options have been costed between the river crossing and the start of the canal, namely an upper one (B) where the path is close to the railway (privately owned land), and a lower one (A) within local authority ownership but the ground is very wet. Common to both is the crossing of the Black Cart Water and the Risk Burns and safety fencing to old culvert.

Total Estimated Cost for bridging
Black Cart Water and Risk Burn and safety fencing £30,000.00

Option A

The lower wet route. Gravel surface, some historic landscape restoration.

Total estimated cost £225,000.00

Option B

The higher drier route including viewpoint and picnic area. Gravel surface path.

Total estimated cost £138,000.00

- Footpath from Canal to RSPB
Includes for gravel path, interpretation boards and the extension of the existing RSPB car park.

Total estimated cost £412,900.00

- New Footpath to Peel Tower
A narrow 1.0m wide gravel path has been costed including vegetation clearance and repairs to the bund, the consolidation of the Peel Tower, sitting areas and interpretation boards.

Total estimated cost £177,000.00

(Ref 10.6)

Other Costs

- 01 Removal of complete railway embankment behind
Castle Semple Water Sports Centre

	Estimated cost	£1,095,000.00
02	Re-landscaping cleared area to provide car parking for 160 cars, cycle track, footpaths, landscaped open space	
	Estimated cost	£250,000.00
03	Linkage to Howwood on northern bank of river	
	Estimated cost	£64,000.00
04	Linkage of footpath from New Roadhead Roundabout to meet existing path	
	Estimated Cost	£24,000.00
05	Loch side viewing points	
	Estimated cost	£40,000.00
06	Village Gateway features on the A760 before the Mossend Hotel and St Josephs	
	Estimated cost	£10,000.00
07	Link at Low Semple between loch side footpath and cycle path. Tarmac surface	
	Estimated cost	£250,000.00
08.	Incidental directional signage	£10,000.00
09.	Otter tunnel under A760	£5,000.00

Table 6**SUMMARY OF COSTS**

REF	AREA OF WORK/ITEM	
10.1	LOCHWINNOCH STATION	£ 250,000.00
10.2	STATION TO CHURCH STREET	£ 467,000.00
10.3	CHURCH STREET TO CASTLE SEMPLE	£ 132,000.00
10.4	CASTLE SEMPLE TO FANCY BRIDGE	£ 280,400.00
10.5	FANCY BRIDGE TO RSPB (using Option A)	£ 844,900.00
10.6	OTHER COSTS	£1,523,000.00
10.7	INTERPRETATION	£ 60,000.00
10.8	SIGNAGE & SITE FURNITURE	INCLUDED
10.9	LANDSCAPE	INCLUDED
10.10	SPECIAL AREAS	£ 235,000.00
10.11	PROFESSIONAL SERVICES	£ 406,230.00
	TOTAL COST OF PROPOSALS INCLUDING PROFESSIONAL FEES EXCLUDING VAT AT SPRING 2003 PRICE LEVELS	£4,179, 530.00

10.7 Ten Year Maintenance

Table 7 sets out in some detail, budget costs for maintaining the paths with all associated seats, sitting areas, interpretation, facilitating bridges, and lighting etc, over a ten year period.

We believe maintenance operations at the frequency shown will secure a first class facility of the quality required of a well used and popular day trip destination in the CMRP.

10.8 Priorities and Phasing

10.8.1 The brief identifies three main aims, namely:-

- 1) Completion of a footpath right around Castle Semple Loch
- 2) Establishment of a footpath network linking routes and facilities
- 3) Upgrading of the link from the railway station to Lochwinnoch

10.8.2 In order of priority, we recommend

- 1) Establishing the round the loch footpath by the very straightforward and low cost option of bridging the Black Cart water at the Fancy Bridge and the Risk Burns with minimal additional footpath works. With the link in place walkers will undoubtedly walk around the loch. Provision of a safer A760 crossing close to the RSPB by means of a Toucan crossing.
- 2) Establishing a new footpath link between the station, Lochwinnoch and Castle Semple.
- 3) Improving parking and the station generally as proposed including a new junction where the access road joins the A760.
- 4) Completing the tar footpath from Castle Semple Centre to Fancy Bridge including a link to the cycle track in the vicinity of Low Semple.
- 5) Completing the footpath on the southern side of the loch including the RSPB car park expansion.
- 6) Improvement of Castle Semple Centre facilities by removing the old railway embankment and providing increased parking and landscaped areas.
- 7) Additional parking at the Annexe and improvements to Lochlip Road from Calder Bridge to Castle Semple Centre.
- 8) Other projects e.g. the Peel Tower, repairing loch shores etc.

10.8.3 The link between Jonshill and the Parkhill Wood is an important one and could proceed with a minimum of delay if funding was available. Alternatively it could be a part of this project and be implemented in its early stages.

10.8.4 While the physical projects are progressing, priority must be given to enhanced marketing, promotion of events and pursuing other opportunities that are almost bound to arise as the project gets underway.

10.8.5 Projects cannot proceed or serious fundraising begin without a further commitment of professional time to undertake the surveys required by SNH

for the EA process, and the gaining of planning permission for the whole or segments of the project. Table 8 sets out some very preliminary thoughts on timescales, but much will depend on the commitment of the Core Group, the duration of the planning process, and the success of the fundraisers. Table 8, however, suggests that a start on site of the main footpath works may not be achieved until the second half of 2005. This seems a long way off and to show that something is happening and maintain interest, it is always useful to undertake early projects. In this case. They could be the Gateway feature to the village, the pelican crossing at the RSPB, and a start on “Castle Semple Destination” literature

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11 Funding Sources

11.01 No single organisation will fund this project. However, without a doubt, the study clearly demonstrates that the project satisfies a wide range of government objectives and programmes. Funding and implementation will, therefore, depend on the skill of the lead organisation in successfully putting together a variety of funding sources to achieve the complete project or elements of it. It is likely that implementation will need to be phased, probably over a three-year period in order to spread the draw down of funds. In Section 5.1.1.. the various funding buttons were listed. Using these to identify relevant funding programmes, we have generated a list of likely funding sources. Below, we briefly summarise the objectives of each programme, fund or organisation. We have not attempted to source funds for the project, and the listing is not in any particular order related to certainty of participation or possible scales of donation.

11.02 Renfrewshire Council

As Local Plan author and circular route landowner, funding assistance could be made via a variety of programmes and departments. Indications have been given that the scale of any assistance would, of necessity, be modest, but immensely valuable given the need for matching funding to trigger grants from other sources. It is our understanding that the Council have offered to “Project Manage” the implementation of the project. This is an important and valuable commitment, particularly if European funding is involved where project drawdowns are retrospective, thus necessitating a project banker.

11.03 Scottish Enterprise Renfrewshire

Project funding is becoming harder to access and the amounts involved tend to be reducing and spread over a two or three year period. However, consultation has suggested that SER is likely to be a funding partner as the project does press some of the right buttons for them, for example, access and social inclusion, sustainability, health, economic development/rural deprivation.

11.04 The National Lottery

The Lottery was established to create extra funds for six good causes, namely:-

- New Opportunities Fund
- Heritage
- Sports
- Arts
- Charities

Awards for all

The purpose of funding from the National Lottery is to make an important and lasting difference to the quality of life for the people of the UK. It is conceivable that this project could benefit from all six funds given that the community, through LMEG, is a partner in the project, that LMEG has established a charity to enable it to receive funds and there are elements of the proposals that appear to qualify in each category.

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11.04.1 New Opportunities Fund

This fund was created to distribute grants for education, health and environmental initiatives. It is the latter strand of environmental that is most relevant to this project. The initiative on green spaces and sustainable communities is a partnership between SNH and Forward Scotland, and is titled 'Fresh Futures'. Within this there is an initiative titled 'Transforming Your Space' which is available in Renfrewshire, North and South Lanarkshire, South Ayrshire, Dundee and Glasgow. Funding will be awarded to projects that meet the programme priorities namely:-

- Improving local environments
- Public green and open spaces
- Local access
- Community gardens
- Making community assets more sustainable

The Local Access priority covers projects that inter alia:-

- Provide new access to green spaces from residential areas
- Develop good links between communities and the core path network to provide for walking and cycling as a form of recreation in the area
- Develop safe foot and cycle links between residential areas and local services to encourage more sustainable local travel.

The average grant rate of Fresh Futures is 30%, typically funding between £3,000 and £50,000.

Whilst the New Opportunities Fund is identified as ongoing, there are funding rounds and deadlines, which have to be observed.

11.04.2 Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF)

The objective of this fund is to, "Preserve, enhance or widen public access to, or increase understanding and enjoyment of, one or more aspects of the physical heritage". Heritage covers

- Countryside, parks and gardens.
- Objects and sites that are linked to our industrial, transport and maritime history
- Records such as local history archives, photographic collections or spoken history records.
- Museum and gallery collections.

Countryside projects will be of particular interest to SNH where the emphasis would be on the conservation of habitats.

There are a number of grant-giving schemes designed for different types and sizes of heritage projects, for example:-

- Heritage Grants
- Awards for All
- Local Heritage Initiative
- Your Heritage
- Townscape Heritage Initiative
- Landscape Partnership Initiative
- Young Roots

For preference, projects should involve more than one aspect of heritage, for example, containing both built and natural environment. There are a number of key assessment criteria:-

- importance of project to the heritage
- conservation benefits of the project
- associated socio-economic benefits of the project
- access benefits of the project
- additional public benefits
- quality of the design of the project
- financial need and viability
- strengths of the organisation

There is no official limit to the size of the projects but HLF are particularly keen on projects between £5,000 and £100,000. It is an extremely competitive fund and is over-subscribed by four or five times, and there is an increasing emphasis on smaller projects.

11.04.3 Sports Lottery Fund

This fund is intended to provide assistance to sports related developments, which serve the public good, and provide community benefit. It is targeted at areas of long term past neglect, and initiatives additional to mainstream activity, which bring added value. Whilst we believe the fund is somewhat fringe in relation to the SRANI project, sports such as orienteering have received significant grant aid.

In terms of criteria, there has to be a clear demand for what is proposed and applicants have to be able to demonstrate that funds are needed for the benefit of the sport.

11.04.4 Scottish Arts Council

This fund is intended to fund arts projects that will make an important and lasting difference to the quality of life for the general public. There are six programmes, but it is the Capital Projects Fund that is the most relevant one to SRANI in that it provides funds for artists work in public places. Examples include the redevelopment of the seafront area at Portpatrick and the Castlemilk Gateways Project, which involved a range of artists working with the local community to create a series of landmarks for the area to help develop a strong visual identity for the local people. Local people should be involved to increase their awareness of, and pride in, the local environment. Projects with a high proportion of partnership funding are favoured, as this demonstrates commitment from the local community and potential users.

For projects involving artists work in public places, priority is given to projects that show an imaginative and integrated approach and those that are community driven.

Priority is given to projects over £10,000 and for Artists Work in Public Places, the minimum grant is £5,000 and the highest grant is £350,000.

11.04.5 Community Fund

This was formerly the National Lottery Charities Board, and the fund is intended to help meet the needs of those at greatest disadvantage in society and to improve the quality of life in the community.

The Community Fund will give grants to:-

- recruit and train volunteers
- provide community facilities
- provide learning and training opportunities

All of the above are of interest to SNH as a partner. Grants are awarded for both capital and revenue funding and matching funding is not necessary.

Priorities for 2002/2003 are:-

- people in areas disadvantaged by social or economic change
- disabled people and their carers
- Black and minority ethnic communities

The maximum grant is £300,00 – the average around £120,000, and applicants must be established for charitable, benevolent, or philanthropic purposes.

11.04.6 Awards for All

This provides funding for small group projects under £5,000 and is only likely to be of interest to LMEG representing the community of Lochwinnoch.

11.05 Landfill Tax

The objective of the tax is to encourage the use of more sustainable waste management practices and technologies, and to encourage partnerships between landfill operators and the local communities. Of the six measures funded under the scheme, two seem to be particularly relevant, namely:-

- reclamation, remediation or restoration of land where its use has been prevented or restricted because of previous use
- provision and maintenance of public amenity (cycle routes etc)

Relevant projects benefiting from landfill tax credits include:-

- South Ayrshire Paths Initiative
- Aberdeen Countryside Project, a network of paths around Aberdeen
- Alloa's Paths for the Partnership

Preliminary enquiries have suggested that the Renfrewshire Environmental Trust could be sympathetic to an application for funding, but any grants are unlikely to exceed £30,000. We are also aware that SNH could be involved on a partnership basis.

To achieve a higher level of spending SRANI, or the agreed representative environmental body, should seek approval of the project, or aspects of it, with Entrust. Once approval is given, the project then needs to find a landfill operator willing to fund the project. There are three major landfill operators working in Renfrewshire, namely: Shanks, Malcolm, and Tracey plus other smaller companies.

It is important that the first stage of qualification and approval from Entrust is completed as soon as possible, thus allowing the project to seek out a landfill operator to fund the project or a part of it.

An initial enquiry of a local operator regarding the removal of the old railway embankment behind Castle Semple and recycling the material in path building indicates three things immediately. Firstly, that it would be likely to qualify as an eligible project; secondly, that this particular operator was interested in becoming involved; and thirdly, that not insignificant sums of money could be available to undertake the works.

11.06 Scottish Rural Partnership Fund (SRPF)

The Fund was established to provide resources to support the development of communities throughout rural Scotland. The Fund offers grant aid from three separate schemes. They are:-

- Rural Challenge Fund
- Local Capital Grants Scheme
- Rural Strategic Support Fund

The Fund offers funding support to communities in taking forward rural development activities. It is an annual, competitive fund, which invites applications from not-for-profit community organisations. LMEG has already been successful in applying for assistance, and the Sustainable Communities Officer in Lochwinnoch is funded by a partnership including the Rural Challenge Fund, the RMC Environment Fund, Renfrewshire Council and Forward Scotland.

The SRPF contribution has to be 'match funded' from other services. Community support is essential and evidence is required of consultation with the local community in developing the bid. Bids need to be submitted by October and successful applications are notified in January with payment of grant commencing in the new financial year beginning April. In terms of capital grants for the proposed footpath, the Local Capital Grants Scheme which encourages and assists local community organisations to provide new, or improve existing, premises for educational, social and recreational purposes is probably the most appropriate fund provided a footpath can be substituted for a building. Under the scheme, grants of up to 50% of eligible costs are available up to a maximum of £100,000.

11.07 European Regional Development Funds

Preliminary enquiries to the West of Scotland European Partnership have been made and the initial response has been encouraging. The project would likely qualify for assistance under the headings of upgrading an existing tourism product, and sustainable transport.

Application dates are spaced throughout the year with the next two being June and October. We were advised to assemble a partnership at an early date, and begin to consider an application. Key to a successful application will be identifying the economic benefits of the proposals.

The advice included a suggestion that the application should identify a modest intervention rate; say between 25% and 40%, to increase the likelihood of a successful application.

The offer by Renfrewshire Council to lead or Project Manage implementation of the Project was considered to be a most positive, valuable and welcome initiative.

11.08 The Scottish Forestry Grants Scheme (SFGS)

The Woodland Grant Scheme and the Farm Woodland Premium Scheme have been superseded by a new scheme, the SFGS, which begins in June 2003.

Grants are available under three main headings:-

- grants for woodland expansion – new woodlands
- restocking grants
- stewardship grants, for a range of activities in existing woodlands.

Most SFGS grants are based on a percentage of Standard Costs of agreed operation. Depending on the level of public benefit, grant payments are either at 60% or 90% of the Standard Cost.

Both the grants for woodland expansion and stewardship include purposes relevant to the Project, for example, improvement of riparian habitat, improving the quality and setting of urban or post-industrial areas, improving the ecological value of native woodlands, landscape improvement, woodland recreation, developing community involvement. To qualify for a grant, the application must include a five-year plan of operations and all work proposals must meet SFGS objectives.

11.09 Historic Scotland (HS)

Contact with HS has been made in respect of the Peel Tower, and the urgent need for its consolidation. Grants are awarded for the preservation, maintenance, and management of a monument, and also for provision by a local authority of facilities, information or other services at or near a monument open to the public. This consolidation and interpretation should be eligible for grant assistance.

There is no fixed rate of grant, but it is rare for them to exceed 75% of the eligible costs or 50% where applications are made by local authorities. HS state that in assessing the level of grant, account is taken of the monuments importance relative to others being considered for grant, the urgency of these works, and alternative sources of funding available to the applicant. HS have also intimated that they only have limited funds for this type of work and that there is a great demand for them.

11.10 Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH)

SNH offer a very wide range of grants and their potential involvement as partners in Lottery Funding, in particular, is likely to be crucial to the success of applications related to the project. They work, therefore, with others to conserve and enhance the natural heritage, and to help people understand, enjoy, and care for it. Grants are available for projects which:-

- improve the conservation of spaces, habitats and landscapes
- promote public enjoyment of the natural heritage
- increase awareness and understanding of the natural heritage.

All SNH grants are discretionary, but Rates are usually set at 50% but can go to 75%. Applications can be considered at any time, but as far in advance of any proposed start dates as possible. Any grants given will normally come out of area grant budgets. Funding for the next financial year needs to be submitted no later than 31/10/03. It is advisable to discuss projects with SNH at an early stage.

11.11 SUSTRANS

SUSTRANS have no funding themselves but has a great deal of experience in assisting organisations to access funds. They also have experience of the new Aggregates Tax (a recent tax on quarrying), which is available for footpath construction.

SUSTRANS suggest that Sports Lottery is becoming more amenable to funding for access projects.

SUSTRANS have been promoting two initiatives, namely, Safe Routes to Schools, and Safe Routes to Stations, using monies from the Community Fund of the Lottery.

11.12 Other Sources

The grant sources listed in previous paragraphs we believe to be the ones most likely to support SRANI and possibly allocate funds in response to applications.

However, there are other funding bodies, government or EU programmes, charitable trusts or potential sponsors that, in the fullness of time, may well be worth approaching. For example:-

- funds with health objectives, such as “Have a Heart” or “Walking the Way to Health” initiative

- funds with an educational bias
- funds for the disadvantaged
- funds for small scale community and capacity building objectives
- EU funds, such as LIFE, looking for innovative, environmental projects
- charitable trusts with specific aims and objectives
- private or commercial sponsors

There are web sites, in particular, which list funding bodies and provide a wealth of information. Three such sites are :-

www.fundraising.co.uk/grants.html.

www.defra.gov.uk/environment/eaf/pdf/sources-grant.pdf

www.snh.org.uk/wwowwwo-grant-intro.htm

The basic fundraising rule, however, that should be applied throughout is.....

“if you don’t ask, you don’t get!!!”

12 Environmental Impacts

12.01 Identifying the environmental impacts

A large proportion of the path will be following the route of an existing path network and will therefore have very limited environmental effects. The areas of new path network have been examined very carefully to identify and limit any potential disturbance. Preliminary consultations with Renfrewshire Council and SNH indicate that an EIA would not be required for the project. However, there are a range of organisations which should be kept informed of the proposals so that any potential concerns or objections can be addressed at an early stage. The Scottish Executive Development Department Planning Advice Note PAN 58, Environmental Impact Assessment, includes a scoping matrix (Table 9) which, if followed, ensures all interests are taken into account (the table has been adapted to suit the Castle Semple Loch project).

Discussions were held with Scottish Natural Heritage, and advice was given on requirements for additional survey work for some habitat areas and some species. These are detailed below in the relevant sections.

12.2 Birds

Discussions were held with Zul Bhatia and Jen Walker of the RSPB, Len Howcutt and Ken McGinegal of Clyde Muirshiel, local bird recorder, Clyde area, Iain Gibson, and with Starling Learning staff. Bird sensitive areas around the loch were identified and implications and recommendations made to minimise disturbance. These are discussed in Table 10 below, and shown on Figure 17.

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TABLE 9 SCOPING MATRIX FOR CASTLE SEMPLE LOCH FOOTPATH

Based on Scottish Executive Development, Planning Advice Note, PAN 58

	Issues											Cumulative Impact	
	Visual impact	Noise	Tourism & Amenity	Archaeology	Socio-economic	Ecology/wildlife	Hydrology/Water protection	Soils	Landuse	Construction work	Roads/traffic		Safety/risk
Scoping Organisation													
Renfrewshire Council	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Community Council	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
LMEG	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
CMRP	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
SNH	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
RSPB		•	•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•
Scottish Wildlife Trust						•	•	•					
SEPA						•			•			•	
SUSTRANS			•		•			•	•	•	•	•	•
Historic Scotland				•					•			•	
Renfrewshire Local History Forum				•					•			•	
Ramblers Association			•							•			
Tourist Board (ATB)			•		•								
NFUS			•		•				•	•			
Farming & Wildlife Advisory Group			•		•	•	•	•	•	•			
Scottish Environment Dept	•		•		•			•	•	•	•	•	•
HSE									•			•	
Scottish Water									•	•	•	•	
SLF			•		•			•	•	•	•	•	•
SER	•		•		•	•	•	•	•	•	•	•	
BHS			•					•	•	•	•	•	
Angling Clubs			•			•		•	•	•			

Table 10**BIRD SENSITIVE AREAS**

Bird Sensitive Areas	Recommendations
5 – The bay in Castle Semple, good for wintering wildfowl.	Path and viewing platforms to be carefully sited to avoid scaring wildfowl away from the bay.
6 – The mouth of the river Calder, important for winter wildfowl, especially when the lochs are frozen as this stays ice free.	No extension to existing path beside the Calder. Avoid increasing use of this area.
4 – The area of marsh stretching from Castle Semple Centre car park parallel to Lochlip Road, up to Calder Bridge. Breeding Sedge Warbler, Grasshopper Warbler, water Rail and Reed Bunting, Wintering Snipe and Jack Snipe.	This area should not be divided in two by the path, and should be constructed close to the road.
4 – Meadowsweet stand in marsh beside Lochlip Road. Pied Wagtail roost site.	Path to avoid this area and keep close to road. Any viewing platform to avoid cutting through this vegetation type.
11 – Third island in Castle Semple Loch. Possible Long-Eared Owl roost site.	No bridge to cross on to island.
1 & 2* – Edge of Aird Meadow loch, nesting Great crested Grebe in Yellow Water Lily.	Path to extend no further than the Dubbs Water Hide.

* N.B. – Figures relate to those shown on Figure 17.

12.2.1 Scottish Natural Heritage advise construction of the footpath as close to the edge of the SSSI as possible, on the stretch adjacent to Lochlip Road to minimise disturbance and to prevent the habitat being divided in two. A viewing platform is proposed for the area. It is suggested that this goes a short distance only into the marsh, and is constructed within the area of Reed Canary Grass close to the Calder Bridge end of the site. Although this path will lead to increased recreational use, this is already a busy area with dog walkers and fishermen, and this should minimise the disturbance to quieter areas of the marsh. The vegetation of this area along with a proposed viewing platform is shown on Figure 1. No seating should be placed here to avoid encouraging visitors spending too long in the area.

12.2.2 Recommended Survey, analysis and assessment methods

Bird survey is required for the section of marshy grassland at the north east of the site outwith the SSSI, and for the marshy area in the southwest. Detailed bird surveys for areas surrounding the proposed viewing platforms to determine likely disturbance.

The standard mapping census technique (IBCC, Bibby *et al* 1992) and that adopted by the British Trust for Ornithology for the *Common Bird Census* is recommended. Three visits to each site (April, May and June) should provide sufficient information to determine any sensitive areas. Visits should be undertaken in early morning in suitable weather conditions with an attempt to vary the route on each occasion, with each visit conducted at a speed that ensures that most birds would be detected if singing or visible. Use of a tape-lure to confirm the presence or absence of Water Rail at the wetland areas is recommended.

12.2.3 In the woodland to the south of the loch, there are many dead trees providing nesting and feeding habitats for many birds. It is understood that several of them will be removed to make way for the path and for safety reasons, however, care should be taken to limit the removal of dead wood as much as possible. If the trees are cut down, they should be left on site.

12.2.4 Path development should not take place in the marsh or the woodland during the breeding season (March to early July) to avoid disturbance of nesting birds.

Assessment should highlight bird sensitive areas showing places to avoid building the path, alternative recommended routes or viewing stations.

12.2.5 Survey work should be discussed with the RSPB.

12.2.6 Recommendations for Conservation Improvements

Digging of ponds in the marsh near Calder Bridge to increase the water/marsh interface will improve the habitat for breeding Reed Bunting and Sedge and Grasshopper Warbler.

The RSPB and local recorder, Iain Gibson, can advise on size and style.

The erection of more nest boxes a suitable distance from the path will provide nest sites for a variety of birds and potential views of nesting birds for path users.

Woodland planting should include native species and berry bearing shrubs suitable for nest sites and for feeding birds.

12.3 Mammals

12.3.1 Scottish Natural Heritage recommend the following mammal surveys:-

- A Water Vole Survey for the whole site
- An Otter Survey for the whole site

12.3.2 Recommended methodology for water Vole Survey

Surveyors should follow the guidelines contained within *Water Vole Conservation Handbook*, Rob Strachan, Wildlife Conservation Research Unit,

1998. A *Generalised Catchment Survey* should be carried out including ditches, any backwaters off main river channels as well as ponds, the lochs, rivers and burns.

12.3.3. Should water Vole be recorded, conservation advice from Scottish Natural Heritage should be sought before any riverbank or loch shore work is carried out. Best practice for habitat management for water Voles should be followed where any drainage work is being carried out.

- Access to site, selection of working bank and choice of machinery to minimise impact.
- At least one third of the channel plan area should be left untouched
- Asymmetric working, creating a sinuous de-silted channel should mimic natural self-cleaning channels.
- Work in an upstream direction.
- Where banks are re-formed, new profiles should provide gradual transition at the bank toe to create marginal habitat.
- Ensure sensitive spoil disposal.
- No de-silting from March to September, to protect breeding Water Voles.
- Careful working to avoid the slumping of marginal vegetation into the channel.
- Existing marginals can be lifted and returned to site.

12.3.4 Recommended Methodology for Otter Survey

The entire loch and surrounding riparian habitat should be walked and systematically checked for evidence of Otters. All loch side and riverbanks and under bridges should be checked. Spring and Autumn are optimum survey times, avoiding summer when the vegetation is too high. Periods of heavy rainfall and high water levels should also be avoided. All evidence of Otters should be recorded including spraints, footprints, holts, upper couch sites. Should Otter be recorded, conservation advice from Scottish Natural Heritage should be sought before any riverbank, bridge construction or loch shore work is carried out. Also, if the survey confirms their presence on site, an underpass will have to be created. It is recommended by Joseph Greenlees of Starling Learning, that this should be sited close to the bridge over the Dubbs Water and Millbank Burn.

12.3.5 Badger

Although the large Badger sett has not been used for some years, some digging activity was recorded in March 2003. On the chance that the Badgers may return, the path should not be constructed too close to the site and no attention should be drawn to the Badger setts.

12.3.6 Bats

Any trees that need to be removed for the path should be checked for bat roosts or breeding colonies. If evidence of bats is found, these trees must be left. This should be discussed with Len Howcutt, local bat recorder of Clyde Muirshiel Park.

12.3.7 There is also an area marked on Figure 16 at the Howwood end of the loch where there is some concern for disturbance of Roe Deer, which is a species of Conservation Concern. At the end of the woodland, entering the grassland area, it is rather limited where Roe Deer can hide or escape to as people approach. It may be improved by planting Hawthorn, Hazel, Blackthorn and willow species to increase the existing area of scrub as an area for the deer to hide in.

12.3.8 A list of the mammals of Castle Semple Loch area is given in Appendix 10.

12.4 Vegetation

Scottish Natural Heritage have requested a vegetation survey to be carried out for any section of the proposed footpath or viewing platforms that do not have any current survey information.

12.4.1 The existing National Vegetation Classification (NVC) Survey was carried out in 1994, and for planning purposes is therefore out of date, as it was carried out more than 5 years ago. It is therefore recommended that an updated NVC with detailed target notes is carried out along the length of the path, around the viewing platforms and anywhere drainage works will be carried out.

12.4.2 Due to the importance of the marsh, it is recommended that the proposed path avoids cutting through it as much as possible.

12.4.3 No planting of any plant species within the area of the SSSI should take place without previous discussion with SNH.

12.4.4 The area of marsh adjacent to Lochlip Road should be mapped and viewing platforms leading out into the marsh through the Reed Canary Grass (*Phalaris arundinacea*) and not the Meadowsweet (*Filipendula ulmaria*) or Mountain Water Sedge (*Carex aquatilis*) areas.

12.5 Other species

Scottish Natural Heritage believe that it is unnecessary to carry out survey work on fish and invertebrates as it is thought that the proposal is unlikely to have a significant impact on these species.

13.0 Increased Usage and Anticipated Benefits

13.01 Throughout the study we have questioned the consultees about the likely increases in visitor numbers and the probable benefits of implementing the proposals. Almost every consultee confirmed that usage of the area has been increasing and that the project would likely accelerate this trend significantly. In detailed discussion with Professor John Lennon, tourism advisor to Renfrewshire Enterprise, significant rises in visitor numbers were agreed to the extent that we suspect the project would be beginning to tap into the latent

day trip demand identified in the LEC Tourism Strategy (Ref No 3 Appendix 16). However, demand or user forecasting is rarely a science and the user numbers discussed below are not based on any formula other than experience and reasonableness. We believe they err on the side of caution and are not exaggerated.

13.1 Economic Benefits

- Castle Semple Centre

Table 1 in Section 4 shows that in three years visitor numbers to the Centre have risen from 40,000 to 70,000 in 2002. It is an impressive rate of growth and reflects the development of the café and shop, longer opening hours, events and weather.

With a new path network, a recently surfaced cycle track with a forecasted doubling of users within three years to 130,000 per annum, more events, an ever improving café and shop, and doubling of the car park area, we see no reason to doubt that the 70,000 visitors figure could be doubled within three years of the implementation of the project. We also believe that with a continuing improvement to the standard of catering and retail that spend per head could more than double, giving a turnover in the order of £300,00 per annum. This size of operation would need significantly more full and part time staff and it could also consider supply by the local bakeries, craftsmen and artists etc.

With a doubling of the car park area, and improved facilities generally, the number of annual visits to the Car Park could rise from 250,000 to around 500,000. We believe this number could generate opportunities to establish the following commercial facilities at Castle Semple Centre:-

- A bicycle hire, repair and showroom facility
- Craft/artists workshops and sales
- Sports equipment and clothing outlet

- RSPB

Visitor numbers to the RSPB have also risen steadily between 1999 and 2002 to 36,000 visitors per annum. The improved station, a safe usable and enjoyable link to and from the village and Castle Semple, the likely increase in cycle visits to the Centre, a 50% increase in car parking capacity, and continuing improvements to the retail and educational activities could lead to a doubling of visitor numbers to 72,000 or so within three years of project implementation.

Like Castle Semple Centre, the increase in visitors will lead to a significantly increased turnover in the shop necessitating the appointment of further full and part time members of staff, and external consultants to assist with the expanded educational programmes.

- Lochwinnoch
The increase in car borne visitors, cyclists and walkers to the area should provide a positive boost to turnover for all the village shops, carryouts, cafes, restaurants and pubs. Good food and eating out is an essential element of most days out, and those businesses should maintain or improve their high standards and cooperate closely with the Core Group, the RSPB and CMRP authority in promoting the area and their facilities. Being a part of and sponsoring the village web site should be an important element in the marketing effort.
- Lochwinnoch Station – “A Gateway to Lochwinnoch”
The improvements to the station itself, additional car parking, secure cycle storage, weatherproof shelters, and a safe route between the village and station should lead to a greater use of the train on a day-to-day basis.
The footpath network and associated enhanced marketing effort (including SPT) should lead to increased use of the train by visitors. It is not feasible to put numbers to these increases but we are certain there will be increases. An enhanced train service would also have significant benefits for the project and the development of sustainable transport.

13.2 Other Benefits

- The project implements tourism, environmental and sustainability policies in both Structure and Local Plans.
- The project implements elements of the Renfrewshire Council Transport and Cycling Strategies
- Will add value to recent Sustrans/Scottish Executive investment in cycle track.
- Will form an important part of the required Renfrewshire Core Footpath Network.
- Provides access for the disabled.
- Provides access and activities for those often excluded from these types of facility. A number of Johnstone, Paisley and Ayrshire SIPS convenient to cycle track.
- Village entry and project gateway signage will enhance profile and image of Lochwinnoch.
- Encourages environmental improvements within the village.
- Educational facilities and interpretation help us to understand our own history and environment.
- Enhanced opportunities for healthy exercise, walking and cycling.
- Enhanced recreational opportunities and variety through walks of differing lengths, surfaces and gradients.
- Enhanced opportunities for significant community involvement.
- Enhanced opportunities to use and encourage local talent.

- Enhanced opportunity for Core Group to encourage cooperation of a wide range of interest in implementing and marketing the proposals.
- Enhanced opportunities for extended CMRP and RSPB activities and educational programmes.
- Enhanced opportunities for a greater “Events” and activities programme.
- Access to Collegiate Church resolved.
- Peel Tower consolidated and restored.
- Listed buildings and structures repaired and restored.
- Lochlip Road improved and Church Street/Winnoc Road junctions improved.
- Provide a “destination product” for the area and establish Lochwinnoch as an important day trip destination.
- Removal of the old embankment at Castle Semple Centre has numerous benefits
 - recycles material to form path through marsh.
 - allows doubling of parking area.
 - allows creation of larger grass area for picnics and activities
 - removes visual barrier and restores linkage of village to loch, opens up village to visitors.
 - reduces “isolation” of Castle Semple to village.

14.0 Conclusions and Next Steps

14.1 Conclusions

Support for the concept of a round the loch footpath has been general. There is a great deal of enthusiasm within the Core Group, and the Lochwinnoch community, and the question has been, “When are we going to start?”, rather than “Whether it is going to go ahead”. We suggest that this enthusiasm for the project is not allowed to dissipate and that action, however minor, is seen to be taking place as a first step towards establishing the path.

The project is multi-faceted and satisfies a wide range of green, environmental, economic, sustainable, and health related objectives adopted by Renfrewshire Council, the Local Enterprise Company, SNH, and the Scottish Executive. For the establishment of a footpath the range of benefits are surprisingly wide and varied.

Research has emphasised the importance of the day visitor market and the project fits this aspect of the LEC tourism strategy very well. It has the capability to transform Lochwinnoch into a whole day trip destination and the area is within an hour’s drive of half of Scotland’s population! The potential is enormous!

Research has also emphasised that whilst interest in Castle Semple was assumed to be active water sports, fishing, birds and special plant communities, there is a huge historic, social, economic and industrial past to the area which is at least as valuable and interesting, but which to date has been largely ignored. There is a real need to pull all the information together into one place to use as an educational and interpretation resource.

The surfacing and improvement of the cycle track has, and will continue, to make a significant impact on visitor numbers to Castle Semple. It has opened up the area for use and access by horses and doubtless will form a key ‘spine’ in the wider core footpath network in Renfrewshire. It has made Lochwinnoch and Castle Semple more accessible from Ayrshire as it also has a number of Social Inclusion Partnership areas in Johnstone and Paisley.

The basic path around the loch can be established entirely on Council owned land, although this would not be the best option in the northeastern section of the route. The basic around the loch path route can also be established by the relatively inexpensive option of bridging Black Cart Water and Risk Burns without any path construction. Whilst establishing the basic route might be a first priority, we believe the reorganisation of the area around Castle Semple is also extremely important.

It is clear that encouraging more car borne visitors to Castle Semple Centre should be preceded by the removal of the railway embankment and a re-organisation and re-design of the external space around the Centre. A further attraction of this proposal is the possible reuse of the embankment material in forming the key footpath route from the station to Castle Semple Centre.

The one burning issue we encountered is access, or rather lack if it, to the Collegiate Church. The only conclusion we can reach is that the Council and CMPA should assert the public’s existing rights and proceed to secure access rights using the new powers and responsibilities contained in the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003.

The study has highlighted the success of both the RSPB and CMRP in attracting increasing numbers of visitors to their respective centres. It reflects hard work, improved services, an active events policy, and improved facilities. We believe there are real benefits to be gained by closer cooperation of the two organisations particularly in coordinating their events calendar and marketing efforts.

The estimated costs of up to £4.2m or thereby is a large sum of money. However, the benefits of the footpath project press so many “funding buttons” that we believe the sum is achievable. We conclude that an application for the whole project for ERDF funding should be submitted with a minimum of delay. A positive response to this application would be the cue to target all the other potential funding sources.

Success in taking this project forward will depend on the community remaining involved and the agreement or nomination of a person or organisation to lead it and, once nominated, pursue it with vigour and enthusiasm.

14.2 Next Steps

- 14.2.1 We propose the following tasks be addressed in the first eighteen months of the project following acceptance of the Feasibility Study.

14.2.2 Months 1 to 6

- Report accepted by CMRPA, SNH, the three managing Councils, and other organisations required to support the project.
- Decision as to who in what organisation will lead the project and naming of project 'leader' or manager.
- Allocation of sufficient resources to allow the 'leader' to pursue the project with consistent vigour. Adequate "core funding must be secured."
- Confirmation of Renfrewshire Council's willingness to Project Manage the initiative.
- Seek approval for bridge over Black Cart Water and secure funding.
- Consultations with landowners and other organisations who may have an interest and/or a role to play in the project.
- Appoint consultants to implement Black Cart Water bridge installation.
- Begin contact with potential funders and allocate projects to potential funders.
- Register the Castle Semple embankment removal as a project with ENTRUST after detailed consultations with Sustrans.
- Install car and people counters at RSPB and Castle Semple Centre.
- Establish Core Group as "Project Steering Group" and have regular progress meetings.
- Prepare consultant briefs for studies required by SNH in lieu of an EIA and put out to tender.
- Encourage continuation of Three Lochs Study and Initiative.

14.2.3 Months 6 to 12

- Establish content and timing of a planning application.
- Encourage enhanced marketing, promotion of events, and pursuit of other opportunities as the project gets underway. The local communities of interest should be kept informed.
- Pursue and put together a detailed funding and action programme.
- Prepare consultant briefs for studies to cover the following:-
 - historical, social and economic research of the area.
 - Lochwinnoch townscape study.
 - Peel Tower consolidation.
 - detailed interpretation proposals.
 - Removal of embankment and redesign of site layout at Castle Semple Centre.
 - site investigations of embankment materials.
 - detailed design for Lochwinnoch Station.
 - detailed design for station to Castle Semple Centre footpath.
- Design and construct village "Gateway" features.
- Involve Local Community in a range of small initiatives that contribute to the project e.g. sculpture, poetry, and events.

- Authorise construction of bridge over Black Cart Water and Risk Burn.
- Liase closely with Sustrans re railway embankment and prepare legal agreement allowing use of their land.
- Liase closely with Railtrack re works to the station.

14.2.3 Months 12 to 18

- Commission as many of the required studies as funding will allow.
- Pursue funding organisations and submit application wherever possible.
- Establish a group or working party to plan and coordinate the future development of education in the Castle Semple/Lochwinnoch area.
- Consider establishing a use-zoning plan for the loch water area.
- Prepare planning application for footpath and recommended links.
- Develop and agree a marketing strategy for Lochwinnoch/Castle Semple area.
- Confirm and agree with landowner's proposals for footpaths and ongoing management on privately owned ground.
- Continue regular Core Group meetings and encourage community involvement.
- Keep under constant review the detailed funding and action programme.

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