



East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan

LOCAL
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN

Supplementary Planning Guidance: Dams to Darnley Country Park June 2015



Supplementary Planning Guidance

Dams to Darnley Country Park

June 2015



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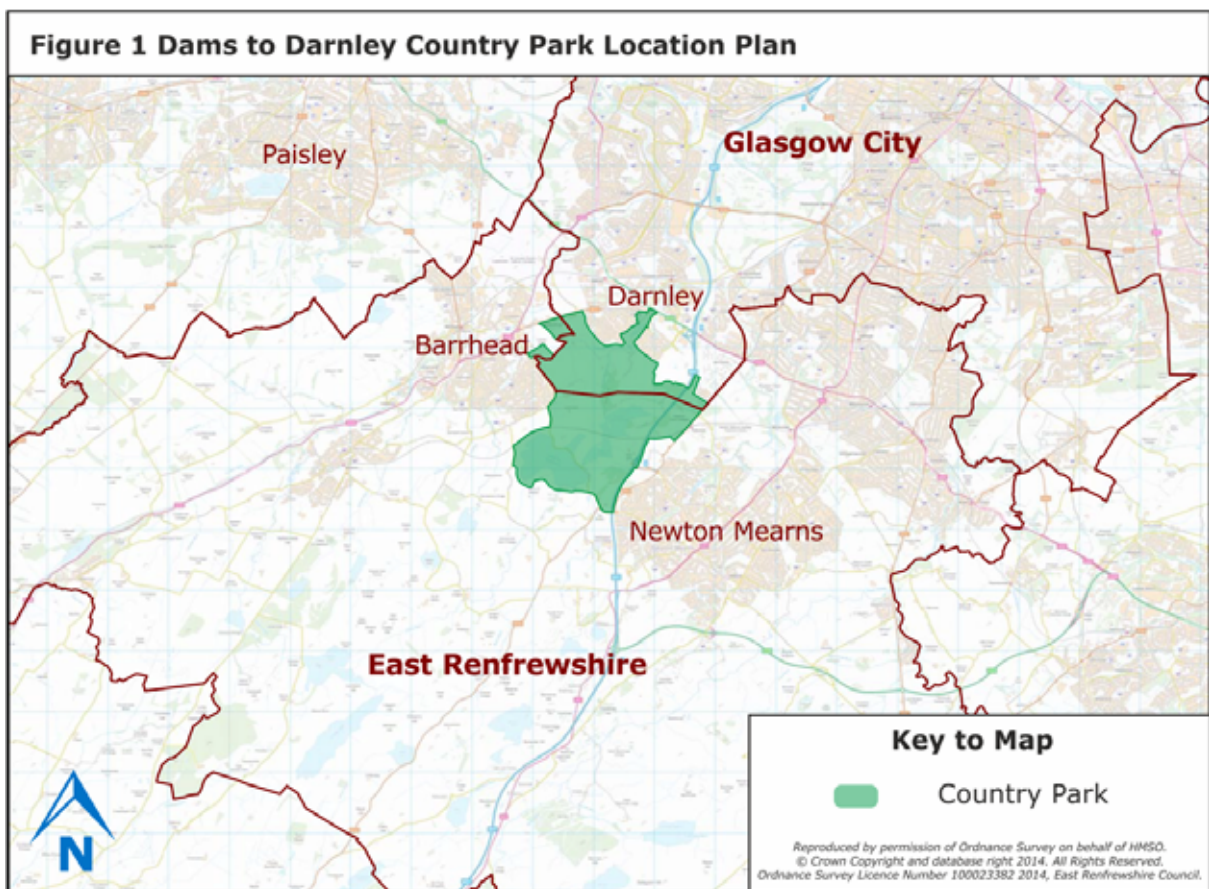
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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1.1 This Supplementary Planning Guidance has been prepared under Section 22 of the Town and Country Planning (Scotland) Act 1997 (the principal planning act) and forms part of the East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan.
- 1.1.2 Since 2004 East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils have worked in partnership to develop and manage Dams to Darnley Country Park. The Country Park sits in the green space separating Barrhead, Darnley and Newton Mearns (figure 1). Within East Renfrewshire, the Country Park forms part of the green network as identified in the Local Development Plan.



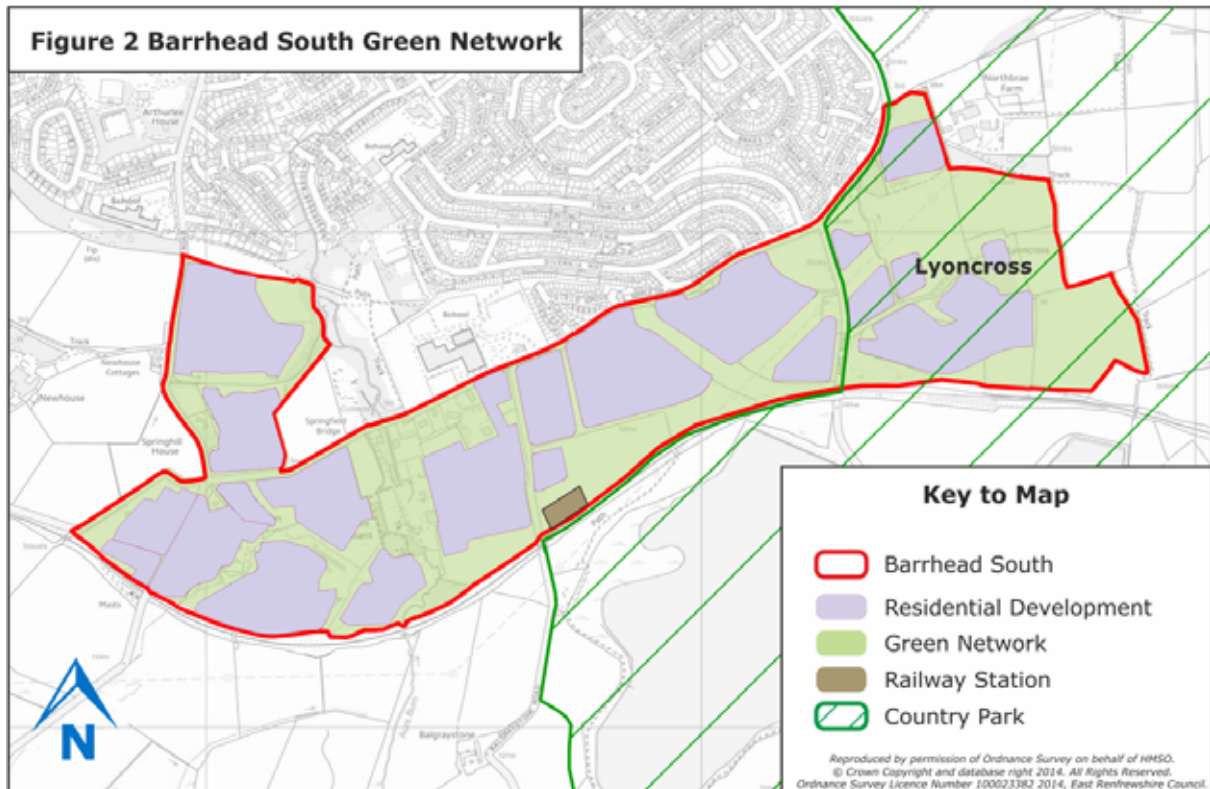
- 1.1.3. During the last five years the Country Park has seen a significant increase in visitor numbers, resulting largely from the creation of new paths and car parking, the success of countryside ranger led activities and increased publicity and promotion. Annual Country Park visitor numbers are estimated to be 90,000, with the vast majority of visits being made by residents from surrounding communities.
- 1.1.4. Despite progress, Country Park facilities are limited; there is no visitor centre, toilets or indoor education or volunteer space. In addition access remains problematic. Key walking and cycling links are absent, public transport choices are limited and car parking options are restricted within the heart of the Country Park.

- 1.1.5. The Country Park plays a pivotal role in the priority to create an attractive and sustainable place for residents and businesses to grow. This is reflected in the East Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement and Council A Place to Grow and A Place to Visit strategies. But improving access to the Country Park, and establishing facilities within it, is critical if the vision behind Dams to Darnley is to be realised and its potential as a regional visitor attraction and valued community resource fulfilled. Facilities are also central in terms of the potential to generate income to support the long-term sustainability of the Country Park.



- 1.1.6. Support for Dams to Darnley is established within the Local Development Plan. East Renfrewshire Council is pursuing the enhancement of the Country Park in part through policies contained within the plan associated with the M77 Strategic Development Opportunity. The M77 area spans Junctions 4 and 5 of the motorway, taking in the urban edges of Barrhead and Newton Mearns and the green belt in between. Much of the northern extent of the M77 area is within the Country Park.
- 1.1.7. The M77 area has been defined through a comprehensive master planning process which was reflected as Policy M2: M77 Strategic Development Opportunity in the Local Development Plan and supported by two complementary Strategic Development Opportunity locations at Barrhead South (Policy M2.2) and Malletsheugh/Maidenhill, Newton Mearns (Policy M2.1). This process culminated in the publication of Supplementary Planning Guidance for each location. The guidance sets out detailed requirements for each site and forms part of the Local Development Plan. The central portion of Barrhead South adjoins the Country Park, whilst its eastern extent (Lyoncross) is within its boundary (figure 2). As a result the Barrhead South guidance, amongst other objectives, addresses in broad terms improvements

associated with Country Park in relation to access, biodiversity, landscape and management.



- 1.1.8. The Local Development Plan also establishes East Renfrewshire Council's position whereby it wishes to secure development contributions, via Strategic Policy 3, to support community infrastructure and environmental benefits associated with new developments, including Barrhead South and Malletsheugh/Maidenhill, by way of mitigation for the removal of these areas from the green belt and their likely impact on existing infrastructure. These contributions will be used in part to enhance the Country Park, given its status as a key recreational and environmental resource.
- 1.1.9. The signing of the Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal in August 2014 has additional and significant implications for the enhancement of Dams to Darnley. The City Deal has enabled East Renfrewshire Council to secure £44M funding to support major infrastructure projects. This will include funding to facilitate visitor, community and transportation infrastructure associated with the Country Park, which to date has been beyond available resources.
- 1.1.10. This guidance aims to identify the priority enhancements that the Council wishes to support in order for the Country Park to realise its full potential as a visitor and community facility. The guidance details enhancements based upon four themes:
- Access
 - Facilities
 - Natural and built heritage
 - Promotion and management

- 1.1.11. This document provides further detail in relation to how access, biodiversity, landscape and management improvements identified within the Barrhead South Supplementary Planning Guidance integrate with the Country Park and how they contribute to its development and management. Additionally, this guidance identifies priority Country Park enhancements which the Council wishes to see supported by development contributions and other secured and future funding, in particular the City Deal. Finally, this guidance supports the rationale behind identified priorities, details preferred locations for facilities and provides outline design principles.
- 1.1.12. The implementation of key proposals contained within this guidance will be set out in the Action Programme that accompanies the Adopted Local Development Plan.
- 1.1.13. East Renfrewshire Council has compiled this guidance in cooperation with Glasgow City Council, reflecting the partnership arrangements associated with Dams to Darnley Country Park. The proposals contained within the guidance only relate to the portion of Dams to Darnley within East Renfrewshire, but it is recognised that their impacts and benefits will be felt across the entire Country Park. The potential for East Renfrewshire Council and Glasgow City Council to prepare Joint Country Park Supplementary Planning Guidance, relating to the entire Dams to Darnley area, is to be examined in the future. This guidance will be reported to the Dams to Darnley Joint Committee for noting early in 2015.
- 1.1.14. A Strategic Environmental Assessment has been carried out in parallel with this guidance. This assessment relates to new proposals identified within the guidance and not to those assessed as part of the previous East Renfrewshire Local Plan (2011) or Local Development Plan (2015). The assessment process has guided and influenced the preparation of this guidance and the proposals contained within it. The assessment also identified relevant mitigation measures associated with the proposals.

2. BACKGROUND

2.1. Dams to Darnley Country Park

- 2.1.1. The Country Park encompasses approximately 550 hectares of green belt land across the boundary of East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City, sitting between Barrhead, Darnley and Newton Mearns (figure 1). The Dams to Darnley boundary is referenced within the East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan.



- 2.1.2. The Country Park is made up of a variety of habitats. The southern half of Dams to Darnley encompasses the open reservoirs of the Barrhead dams, whilst a mosaic of wetland, semi-natural woodland, scrub and grassland habitats make up its northern spine through Darnley Mill and Waulkmill Glen. The Brock Burn connects the entire Country Park; it feeds the Barrhead dams and slices through the geological landscape of Waulkmill Glen, before weaving its way through the scrub and grassland of Darnley Mill.
- 2.1.3. The geodiversity of the Country Park is dominated by Waulkmill Glen, a location of national significance and a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its importance in the study of Carboniferous rock.
- 2.1.4. Unlike most country parks, which are owned by local authorities, just under two thirds of Dams to Darnley is in private ownership. Much of the area remains a working agricultural landscape. In addition the Barrhead dams, the largest of which is Balgray Reservoir, are owned by Scottish Water, accounting for approximately one-fifth of the Country Park area. East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils own a little over one-tenth of Dams

to Darnley. Negotiations and agreements with landowners will play an essential role in delivering many of the proposals contained within the guidance.

2.1.5. Country Park capital and revenue costs are split between East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils. Match funding to support the development of Dams to Darnley has also been secured from a range of sources.

2.1.6. The initial development of Dams to Darnley has been guided by a Country Park Master Plan, approved by both Councils in 2004. The master plan identified a network of existing and aspirational paths to and through the Country Park, in addition to broad biodiversity and infrastructure proposals. The initial development of the Country Park focused upon improvements to existing infrastructure, the establishment of new path links, the creation of new car parking and habitat creation and enhancement.

2.1.7. In 2006 a minute of agreement was signed outlining the terms of the partnership, this enabled a Joint Committee to meet for the first time. The agreement also established the aims of the Country Park initiative:

- Develop a range of inclusive land and water based recreation opportunities within the Country Park, suitable for all ages and abilities, and manage their impact upon heritage and land management interests;
- Provide good quality, appropriate, sustainable and inclusive facilities for visitors, in keeping with the landscape of the Country Park;
- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity, geodiversity and landscape of the Country Park;
- Conserve, protect and enhance the built heritage of the Country Park;
- Raise awareness, understanding and appreciation of the Country Park and promote its responsible use through information, interpretation and education;
- Develop inclusive opportunities for training, volunteering and business diversification as part of the development and management of the Country Park;
- Promote community safety and tackle antisocial behaviour within the Country Park;
- Ensure that the Country Park and its resources are effectively managed and maintained.

2.1.8. Since 2009 a countryside ranger led programme of activities has been established. During 2014 nearly 3,000 people took part in Country Park guided walks, volunteer tasks, events and school visits. These activities have enabled the Country Park to contribute significantly towards health and well-being promotion and hence the East Renfrewshire Community Planning Partnership Single Outcome Agreement. But despite the success and



popularity of regular countryside ranger led activities, the lack of toilets and wet weather space currently restricts their duration and nature.

2.1.9. A series of studies and associated consultations have been undertaken since the publication of the Country Park Master Plan in 2004, including:

- A landscape character assessment which quantified key Country Park landscape features and areas and identified opportunities for improvements;
- A recreation study which aimed to define a clear vision for recreation provision within the Country Park and provide outline proposals for the facilities and infrastructure needed to achieve it;
- A feasibility study which sought to establish business cases for four viable commercial or not-for-profit opportunities within the Country Park, including the delivery of facilities.

2.1.10. These studies sought to further guide the development and management of Dams to Darnley, culminating in the approval of a Country Park Plan by the Joint Committee in 2014. The plan seeks to guide the Country Park's development and aid its effective and efficient management. The master plan and subsequent Country Park Plan have assisted to establish the key priorities outlined within this guidance which the Council wishes to see supported through development contributions and additional match funding, in particular the City Deal.



2.2. Policy Context

2.2.1. National Planning Framework 3 (June 2014) establishes a long-term vision for the development of Scotland. It details the Scottish Government's ambition for the country, providing a framework for the spatial development of Scotland as a whole. The framework will be taken into account in all strategic and local development plans in Scotland. The Central Scotland Green Network is one of fourteen national developments identified to deliver the framework's

spatial strategy. The green network will seek to improve quality of place, address environmental inequalities and enhance health and well-being.

- 2.2.2. The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan (May 2012) aims to create a long-term sustainable future for the city region. It comprises a Spatial Vision for the region to 2035 along with a Spatial Development Strategy to deliver it. The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network is a component of the Spatial Strategy. The network seeks to support economic competitiveness, tourism and day visitor attractions, renewable energy, health and well-being, play and recreation provision, sustainable access, biodiversity, landscape quality, climate change adaptation and soft infrastructure solutions to flooding. The Glasgow and Clyde Valley Green Network is a large scale, long-term transformational programme of action, which is an integral part of the Central Scotland Green Network.
- 2.2.3. At a local level the East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan seeks to secure benefits associated with an East Renfrewshire Green Network. This provides a local network of natural, semi-natural and man-made green space; including watercourses, woodlands, grasslands and other habitats, together with active travel and recreation routes. It surrounds the urban areas and provides connectivity to the adjacent green belt and countryside around towns. It links habitats and sustainable access routes through the protection and enhancement of a network of sites.



- 2.2.4. Support for the East Renfrewshire Green Network is provided through the Local Development Plan (Policy D4: Green Network). Additional Green Network Supplementary Planning Guidance sets out policies and other advice

to assist in its delivery. The inclusion of the Country Park as a component of the green network means that its development and management is pivotal to the future protection, promotion and enhancement of this resource. Support for Dams to Darnley, through the implementation of priorities contained within the Country Park Plan, is also established within the Local Development Plan (Policy D10.1: Environmental Projects - Dams to Darnley Country Park).

- 2.2.5. Policies contained within the Local Development Plan relating to the M77 Strategic Development Opportunity are key drivers in support of aspirations to improve access to, and establish visitor and community facilities within, the Country Park.

2.3. M77 Strategic Development Opportunity

- 2.3.1. Strategic Development Opportunities have been identified to accommodate new growth within East Renfrewshire up to 2025 and beyond. Barrhead South and Malletsheugh/Maidenhill Strategic Development Opportunities will be delivered through a master planning, phasing and infrastructure requirement approach, set out in Supplementary Planning Guidance. Both will deliver benefits directly to the Country Park.

- 2.3.2. The Barrhead South Supplementary Planning Guidance provides details of new infrastructure and green network improvements that will contribute to the enhancement of the Country Park, including:

- A new rail station;
- New and upgraded paths, improving access to the Country Park;
- A new Country Park car park at Lyoncross;
- An enhanced green network incorporating biodiversity and landscape improvements, paths and open space and play provision;
- Enhanced green network management and maintenance.

- 2.3.3. A key element of the Barrhead South Green Network is adjacent to the Country Park and will provide strong linkages to it, whilst its eastern portion at Lyoncross lies within the Country Park (figure 2).

2.4. Developer Contributions

- 2.4.1. Contributions associated with existing developments have in part supported the enhancement of Dams to Darnley. These contributions will continue to support the Country Park's enhancement going forward. Local Development Plan Strategic Policy 3 sets out the Council's wish to secure community infrastructure and environmental benefits arising from new developments, including both Barrhead South and Malletsheugh/Maidenhill, to mitigate their impacts.

- 2.4.2. It is proposed that development contributions will support the Country Park's enhancement through a number of proposals, including:

- The realignment of Aurs Road, including safe walking and cycling access between Newton Mearns and the Country Park;
- The completion of a circular path around Balgray Reservoir, potentially encompassing the creation of a boardwalk;
- New path links between Patterton Train Station and Darnley Mains to Waulkmill Glen Reservoir;
- A new path link to Waulkmill Glen Reservoir from Barrhead South at Lyoncross;
- The new rail station at Barrhead South (in part);
- A new Dams to Darnley Wake Park on the west shore of Balgray Reservoir;
- A new Dams to Darnley Environmental Education Base;
- Improvements associated with the promotion and management of the Country Park;
- The expansion of the countryside ranger service.

2.5. Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal

2.5.1. Through the Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal, funding has been secured for major infrastructure projects within East Renfrewshire. Subject to the requirement for all City Deal projects to be considered at a cumulative level and as to how they perform against a Strategic Assessment Framework, an element of this funding will specifically support new visitor, community and transportation proposals associated with the Country Park:

- The provision of utilities infrastructure to facilitate all future Country Park visitor facilities;
- The realignment of Aurs Road and the associated creation of a Dams to Darnley Visitor Centre and car parking on the east shore of Balgray Reservoir;
- The new rail station at Barrhead South (in part).

2.5.2. It is also proposed that City Deal monies will support the creation of a new Balgray Link Road, connecting M77 Junction 5 to Barrhead, to the west of the Country Park. This proposal is supported in the Local Development Plan (Policy SG10.3: Balgray Link Road), whilst its impact was examined in the Strategic Environmental Assessment that accompanied it. There has been no detailed consideration of options surrounding the route of this link to date, as a result the proposal does not form any detailed part of this guidance.

2.6. Additional Funding

2.6.1. Council capital allocations will continue to support the ongoing development and management of the Country Park, augmenting monies secured through developer contributions and the City Deal and contributing to the cost of the proposals noted above. The Council will also continue to seek to secure external grant funding from a range of sources to support the delivery of the proposals contained within this guidance, in addition to smaller scale actions, detailed within the Country Park Plan. Key future potential funding sources include sportscotland and LEADER.

3. ACCESS

3.1.1. The Country Park Plan identified a number of problems relating to access to Dams to Darnley and the functionality of the path network within it, which required to be addressed:

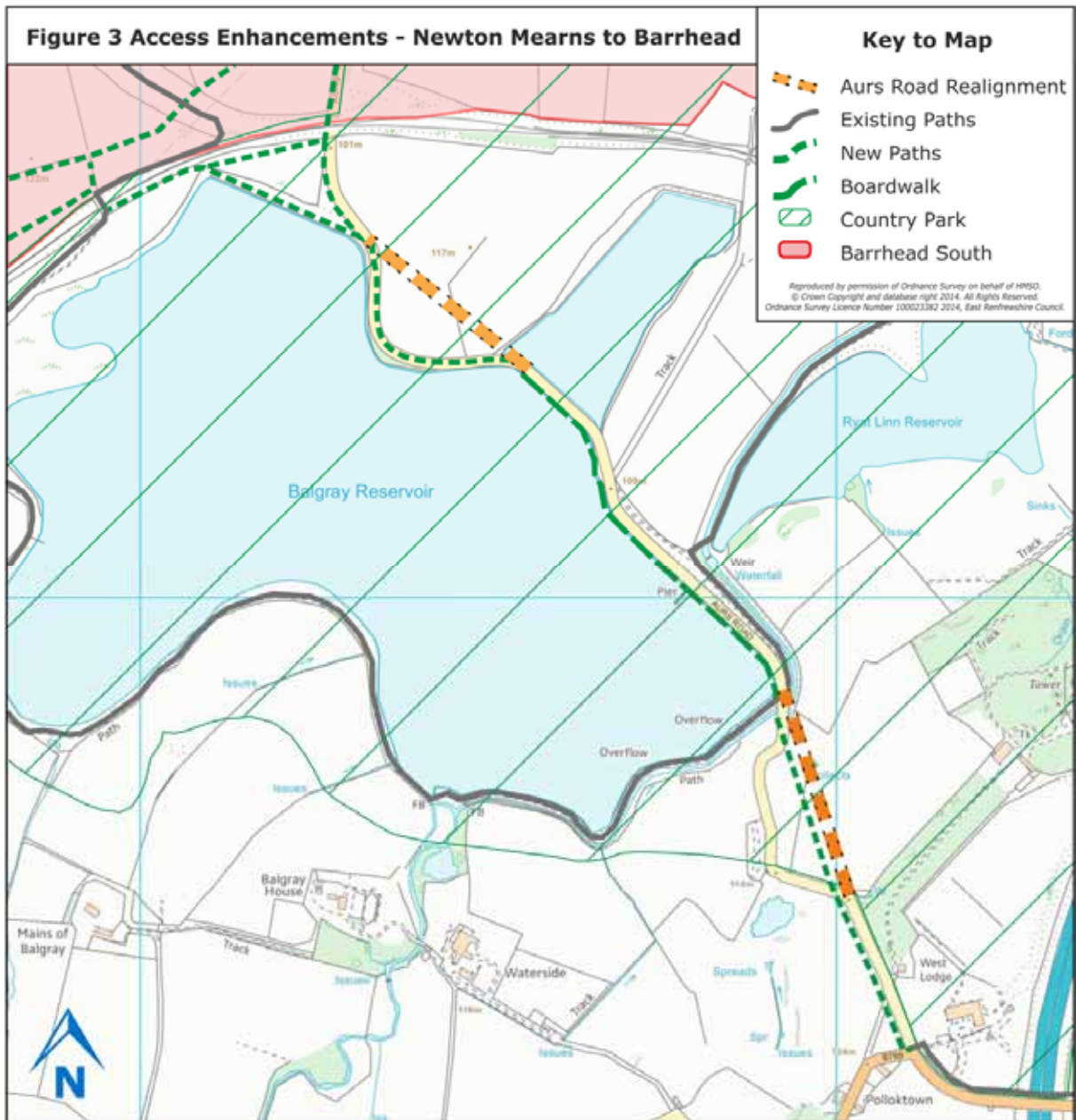
- The lack of car parking within the heart of the Country Park;
- The absence of safe access to the Country Park from Newton Mearns and Barrhead, adjacent to Aurs Road;
- A lack of circular path routes;
- Limited public transport options.

3.2. Road Realignment and Car Parking

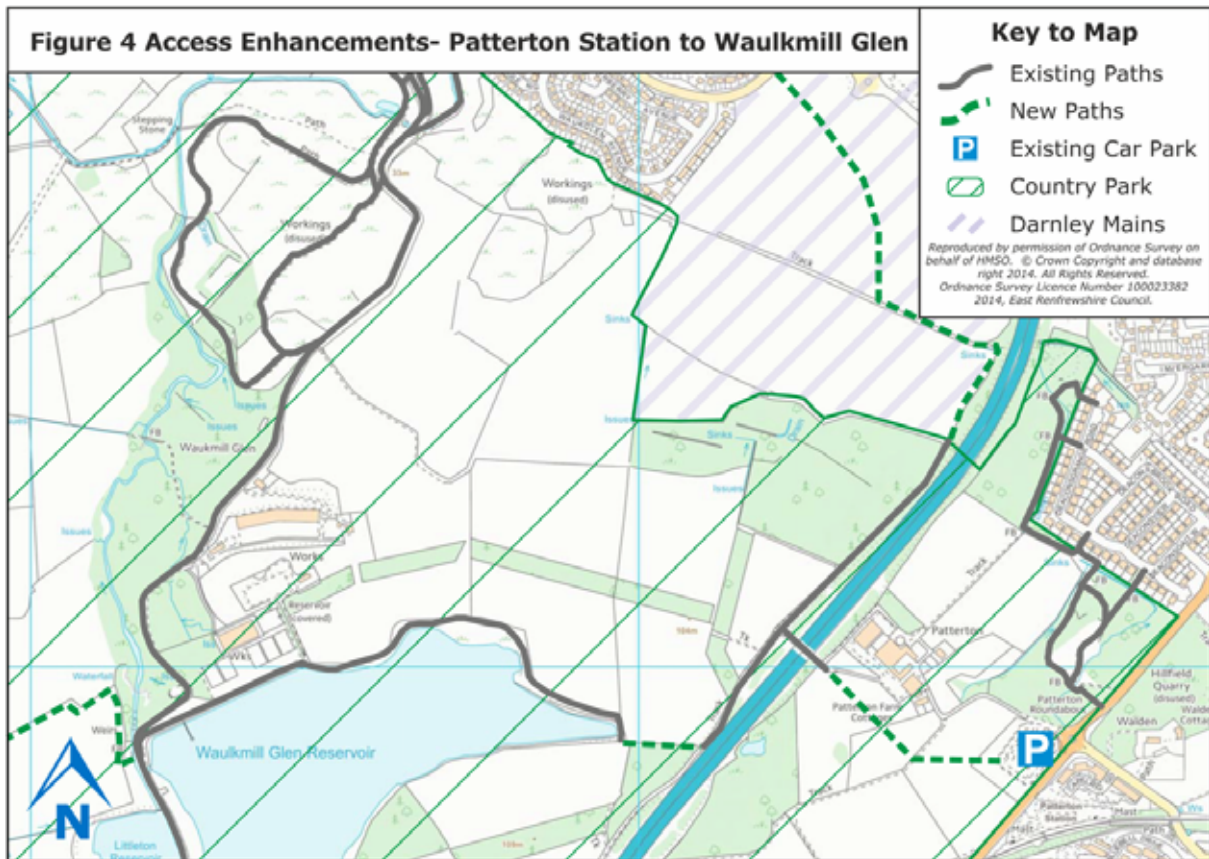
3.2.1. The Country Park Plan recognises that the lack of car parking, especially within the heart of Dams to Darnley, remains a barrier. Establishing car parking off Aurs Road is the most significant challenge. The alignment of Aurs Road means that no options currently exist to establish safe car park entrance/egress points. The Local Development Plan supports the realignment of a section of Aurs Road, to the west of Newton Mearns (Policy SG10.11: Aurs Road, Newton Mearns), as one of a number of key infrastructure projects (figure 3). The announcement of City Deal funding, in addition to anticipated developer contributions, has subsequently enabled the Council to plan for the realignment of a second section of Aurs Road, south of Barrhead (figure 3).



3.2.2. Both proposals will improve access to the Country Park, whilst the realignment of Aurs Road south of Barrhead will facilitate path improvements and space for car parking associated with a Dams to Darnley Visitor Centre, identified in Section 4 (figure 6).



- 3.2.3. Car parking provision was improved at the western Country Park entrance through the opening of a 70 space site in 2011, adjacent to Balgray Reservoir, accessed from Balgraystone Road. The location of this car park would benefit the development of watersports activities at Balgray Reservoir, identified in Section 4 (figure 6). The construction of an overflow car park at Patterton Station, completed in 2010, provides approximately 130 spaces. This serves the station and is also intended to provide future car parking at the eastern entrance of the Country Park, provided access can be achieved through the new path proposed to link to Waulkmill Glen Reservoir (figure 4).

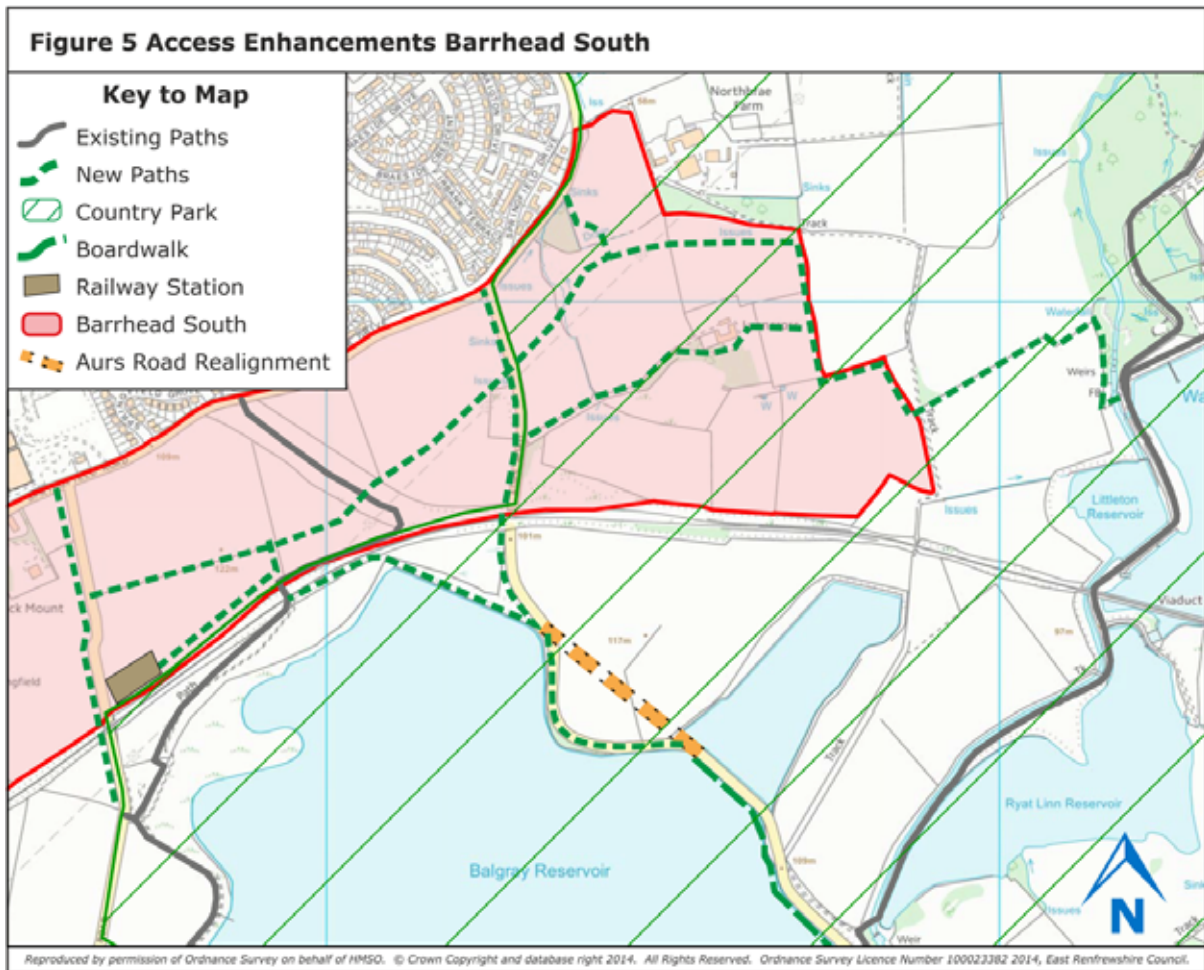


3.2.4. Finally, proposals for Barrhead South establish an indicative location for a car park at Lyoncross. This car park could be associated with a Dams to Darnley Education Base; the potential for which is identified in Section 4 (figure 6), assisting to facilitate school visits. The car park would also cater for Country Park visitors, provided it was connected to the existing path network through the proposed link from Lyoncross to Waulkmill Glen Reservoir (figure 5).

3.3. Path Projects

3.3.1. A number of path routes identified within the Country Park Master Plan have been delivered, creating a 12km network. The network provides good access at the western and northern Country Park entrances from Springfield Road and Balgraystone Road (Barrhead) and Nitshill Road and Parkhouse Road (Darnley). Aspirations remain to establish a number of key remaining routes. The Country Park Plan identifies two path projects which aim to address the access deficiencies noted above. These proposals will be taken forward as priorities and are supported through this Supplementary Planning Guidance:

- Establishing safe access to the Country Park from the south adjacent to Aurs Road, connecting Newton Mearns and completing a circular path around Balgray Reservoir;
- Access to Dams to Darnley from the east, linking Patterton Station to the heart of the Country Park at Waulkmill Glen Reservoir, with an additional connection from the Darnley Mains development within Glasgow City.



3.3.2. It is envisaged that the proposed Newton Mearns path link will be delivered through a series of elements (figure 3):

- A new safe path link from Newton Mearns to Balgray Reservoir, integrated with the realignment of Aurs Road (west of Newton Mearns);
- The construction of 650 linear metres of new path/boardwalk adjacent to Aurs Road alongside Balgray Reservoir;
- New Balgray Reservoir paths associated with a visitor centre, integrated with the realignment of Aurs Road (south of Barrhead);
- A new path link from the visitor centre to connect to the existing Balgray Reservoir path, completing a 4km circular loop.

3.3.3. The proposed Patterson Station to Waulkmill Glen Reservoir and Darnley Mains path link would similarly require to be delivered through a series of elements (figure 4):

- A new path link from the overflow Patterson Station car park, across the M77 accommodation bridge (the route of which remains to be finalised);
- A new link between the farm track parallel to the M77 and the existing path along the north shore of Waulkmill Glen Reservoir;
- Completion of a planned connection between the Darnley Mains development site and the M77 farm track.

3.3.4. The Barrhead South Supplementary Planning Guidance establishes further opportunities to address the access deficiencies noted above. These opportunities are also supported through this guidance (figure 5):

- Establishing safe access from Barrhead (Springfield Road) to the Country Park adjacent to Aurs Road, linking to the Balgray Reservoir circular path;
- New access links through the Barrhead South Green Network, providing an opportunity to complete a second 4km circular four reservoirs path through a new link from Lyoncross to Waulkmill Glen Reservoir.



3.4. Public Transport

3.4.1. As noted above, the Country Park Plan highlights that there are few options to access Dams to Darnley using public transport. The Council is supporting a number of proposals that will help to address this situation.

3.4.2. The proposal to establish a new rail station at Barrhead South, located immediately north of the Country Park, is supported by the Local Development Plan (Policy SG10.4: Sustainable Transport Network – New Rail Station). New paths are identified within the Barrhead South Supplementary Planning Guidance, linking the station to the Country Park along Balgraystone Road and at Balgray Reservoir (figure 5).

3.4.3. This Supplementary Planning Guidance also supports path improvements to connect Patterton Train Station to the Country Park, as detailed in figure 4.

3.4.4. At present bus access along Aurs Road between Barrhead and Newton Mearns is not possible because of a weak bridge. The Council is proposing to replace the bridge as part of the realignment of Aurs Road, noted above. The

realigned road and new bridge may in time lead to a viable bus service through the Country Park along Aurs Road.

3.5. Design Principles

- 3.5.1. The Strategic Environmental Assessment identified that the realignment of sections of Aurs Road was more significant in scale than other access proposals. Appropriate mitigation measures are of particular importance to reduce the potential impact of this proposal upon the landscape character of the Barrhead dams.
- 3.5.2. The Strategic Environmental Assessment recognised that the design and setting of paths and car parks within the Country Park required careful consideration in order that they did not detract from its landscape character, particularly within those areas defined as being sensitive within the Landscape Character Assessment. Appropriate mitigation measures have been identified within the Strategic Environmental Assessment.
- 3.5.3. The Strategic Environmental Assessment established that cumulatively the proposals contained within this guidance will lead to a substantial increase in visitor numbers. The path network proposals highlighted are key to managing future visitor pressure, assisting to reduce potential impact upon the Country Park's natural and built heritage.
- 3.5.4. The Country Park path network is made up of a variety of surfaces and widths, reflecting landscape setting, topography and use. Importantly it also offers Country Park visitors a varied experience. It is envisaged that new and enhanced paths identified within this guidance will similarly reflect these variations. The aspiration is that the new routes identified within this guidance will be fully accessible, with a minimum width of 1.5m. Whilst it is not envisaged that all new paths will provide multiuse access, all routes will be as barrier free as possible and follow the principles of least restrictive access. Maintenance considerations must also be taken into account in terms of path design.
- 3.5.5. The potential to create a boardwalk adjacent to Balgray Reservoir noted above is in response to specific constraints associated with Aurs Road and the dam embankment. The Council is currently undertaking a study, in consultation with Scottish Water, to examine the feasibility of this proposal. Specific design and construction requirements associated with the dam will require to be taken into account. The Strategic Environmental Assessment highlighted the potential impact of a new structure on the natural and built heritage associated with Balgray Reservoir. Critically any structure must complement and enhance the sensitive landscape setting overlooking the reservoir, and address any potential impact. The feasibility study will also address these issues and propose mitigation as required.

4. FACILITIES

- 4.1.1. Drawing upon the results of previous research and studies, the Country Park Plan highlighted that facilities are key to realising Dams to Darnley's vision and fulfilling its visitor number potential; they are also central to its capacity to generate income in the longer-term.
- 4.1.2. The recreation study undertaken in 2008 established the need for a single visitor centre as a focus for the Country Park. In contrast the more recent 2014 feasibility study proposed an action programme around three complementary facilities; a watersports facility, visitor centre and education base. Each site would provide specific facilities and offerings, catering for different activities and visitor groups.
- 4.1.3. The confirmation of City Deal funding and anticipated developer contribution monies enables the Council to begin to plan for the potential establishment of the three complimentary visitor facilities across the Country Park, noted above. Future commercial investment may also play a role in the establishment of Country Park facilities. Collectively the facilities aim to establish the Country Park as an important regional visitor attraction and contribute towards its sustainability. Nevertheless robust business models must be established and agreed to merit investment in each facility. The viability of creating a number of complementary, but not competing, visitor facilities across the Country Park also needs to be established. Crucially further examination as to how such facilities would be delivered and operated will help to establish whether any have the potential to contribute to the sustainability of the Country Park through income generation.

4.2. Dams to Darnley Wake Park

- 4.2.1. The potential for watersports activities at the Barrhead dams is clear. This potential is supported by consultation and background studies undertaken to date. The consultation undertaken as part of the Country Park Recreation Study established from an early date that there was little desire for motorised activities at the Barrhead dams. Crucially, water based recreational activities need to be developed and managed carefully in order that they did not detract significantly from what the study identified as the Country Park's main strength: an area for peace, quiet and relaxation.
- 4.2.2. The potential for non-motorised watersports activities establishes a unique opportunity to develop a facility at the Barrhead dams. Such a facility could be an iconic, sustainable building, complementing its setting and other Country Park developments. It would be inclusive in terms of its design and the activities promoted from it, catering for all ages and abilities. A facility would benefit a wide audience: individual users including family and friends, clubs, youth and community groups and general visitors. The Council recognises that a facility would also provide a fantastic resource for local schools to utilise.

- 4.2.3. Balgray Reservoir offers the greatest scope for the development of watersports at the Barrhead dams; it is the largest water body and development at Waulkmill Glen or Ryat Linn Reservoirs would require significantly greater investment to establish access.
- 4.2.4. Clearly there are a range of non-motorised activities that could operate from a facility. But given existing neighbouring sites at Clyde Muirshiel Regional Park and James Hamilton Heritage Park it is more realistic and viable for a facility at Balgray Reservoir to initially develop around a proven, but less well catered for activity, in Scottish terms. It would complement rather than compete against well established operations.
- 4.2.5. The Country Park Feasibility Study identified cable wakeboarding as a viable activity around which to develop a facility. Cable wakeboarding uses an overhead cable to pull participants over the surface of the water. Participants are attached to a wakeboard, so it is similar to snowboarding, except on water. The cable is run between two A-frame supports, approximately 9m in height, producing minimum noise. Cables pull a single rider at any one time at approximate speeds of between 5km per hour for beginners and 22km per hour for advanced participants. Most other wakeboarding facilities in the UK operate via participants being pulled by a speed boat. The study emphasised that it was a sport that was relatively easy to learn quickly, suited ages six upwards and was accessible for first time users, families, school, youth and community groups and general visitors. Crucially, it would provide a recognisable identity for the Country Park; there are currently only two other cable wake parks in Scotland.



- 4.2.6. A subsequent initial needs analysis commissioned by the Council has highlighted that cable wakeboarding does present a proven, sustainable business model. Analysis has been informed by the fact that there are nearly

30 cable wakeboarding locations within the UK. This analysis concluded that the initial development of wakeboarding at Balgray Reservoir, through a Dams to Darnley Wake Park encompassing two cables, would establish a strong identity for the Country Park, one that would be lost in trying to compete with established facilities through the creation of a broader based watersports centre. A wake park would concentrate activities within a relatively small area of water. A facility could provide access to the water and as a result also create recreational, competition and event opportunities in relation to open water swimming, angling and triathlon, using the wider Country Park path network. Such activities would bring additional revenue streams throughout the year. In addition sports such as open water swimming may broaden the age demographic associated with the use of the wake park.

4.2.7. In time potential exists for a facility to operate across a range of non-motorised activities, as a multi sports venue, emphasising the importance of future proofing any location in terms of access, services and space. Yet regardless of the type of activities which operate initially or in the future, a watersports facility would ideally provide elements such as:

- Changing areas
- Toilets
- Showers
- Lockers
- Reception/office/shop
- Equipment hire
- Storage (internal and covered external)
- Dry training/venue hire space
- Café and toilets
- Decked area
- Slipway
- Parking

4.2.8. Importantly the wake park could deliver and facilitate inclusive coaching, training and educational opportunities across a range of activities, including cable wakeboarding, open water swimming, triathlon and angling. A facility would also be well placed to deliver national priorities and programmes promoted by sports governing bodies, relating both to land and water, as well as contributing to Council and Scottish Government priorities and strategies associated with employability, health and well-being, sport, tourism and education.

4.3. Location

4.3.1. The gently sloping shore topography of the western half of Balgray Reservoir makes it the Council's favoured location for a watersports facility. It provides the best location for accessing the water and benefits from a number of sheltered bays which could accommodate cable wakeboarding. A site adjacent to one of these locations would also offer calmer waters, benefiting a number of potential activities.

4.3.2. Access by car to the western side of Balgray Reservoir is from Balgraystone Road, with a facility at this location using the existing car park site. Additional generated traffic may require associated car park and road improvements. The new link road from M77 Junction 5 to Barrhead, proposed through City Deal funding, would also improve access to any facilities on the western side of Balgray Reservoir.

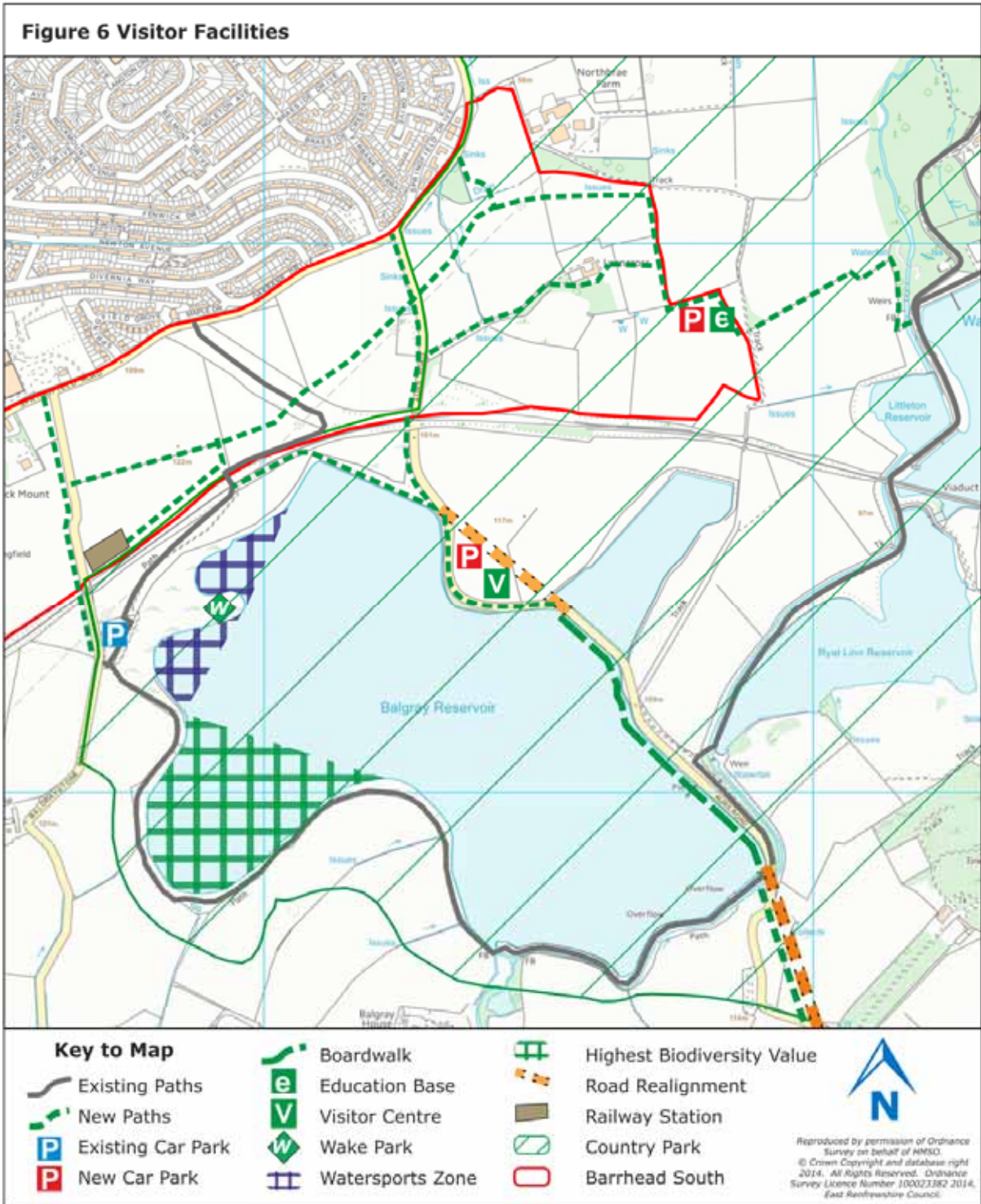
4.3.3. Safe walking, cycling and horse riding access to the western and southern shore of Balgray Reservoir is in place through a 2km multiuse path, with entrances from Balgraystone Road and Springfield Road, Barrhead. Path proposals noted above would in turn provide safe access from Newton Mearns and Barrhead, via Aurs Road. The proposed rail station at Barrhead South would provide further access improvements to visitor facilities adjacent to Balgray Reservoir.



4.3.4. Whilst topography and access point to the western side of Balgray Reservoir as being the most appropriate location for a facility the Strategic Environmental Assessment, undertaken in parallel with this guidance, highlighted the significance of the reservoir for biodiversity. Balgray Reservoir is one of the best inland ornithological sites in the East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde area, having over 180 recorded species. It is important for both nesting and wintering wetland and terrestrial birds. Data gathered through the Strategic Environmental Assessment has assisted to highlight those locations across the reservoir which have the highest levels of interest. Specifically a survey of Balgray Reservoir, commissioned by the Council in 2014, provided up-to-date records.

4.3.5. The data used within the Strategic Environmental Assessment has enabled a preferred location for a wake park facility to be identified, adjacent to two small sheltered bays on the western shore of Balgray Reservoir (figure 6). This site would enable activities to be zoned within these small areas and crucially away from the large sheltered bay in the south-west corner of the reservoir, identified within the Strategic Environmental Assessment as being of greatest biodiversity interest, in terms of nest sites, habitat value and levels of use. This larger bay could be isolated to ensure that no activities take place within it.

4.3.6. Even with the zoning of activities, the impact that watersports could have upon biodiversity across the reservoir cannot be accurately predicted. In addition to its importance for breeding birds, data used within the Strategic Environmental Assessment also highlights the regional importance of Balgray Reservoir for wintering species. As a result, the assessment recognised the potential environmental impact of watersports activities, whilst noting uncertainties surrounding judgements as to its extent and permanency.



- 4.3.7. Whilst watersports activities will be more limited in the winter months, given the above uncertainty the requirement to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment will be established. Such an assessment would provide a detailed examination of proposed activities and their likely impact and ultimately accompany a subsequent planning application, assisting to inform the decision making process.
- 4.3.8. An Environmental Impact Assessment would also identify potential management, mitigation and habitat enhancement measures. The Strategic

Environmental Assessment notes a number of specific mitigation and proactive management measures that will need to be considered, including:

- Minimising the impact of facility proposals upon biodiversity and built heritage, through careful planning, design, operation and management;
- Identifying and implementing specific design, operational and management measures to ensure that facility proposals do not impact upon protected species;
- Zoning watersports activities to avoid areas of highest biodiversity interest, restricting their use to defined locations;
- Biodiversity improvements, including new floating islands, measures to sustain fish populations and healthy aquatic life, improved scrub vegetation and grassland habitat enhancement and creation at key locations away from the focus of watersports activity;
- Ensuring that the seasonal potential for nest sites is addressed as part of the routine operation of a watersports facility;
- Ensuring that construction, including any vegetation clearance, takes place outwith the bird breeding season;
- Data recording to warn of potential impacts upon biodiversity.

4.3.9. Additionally, it will be important to ensure that existing and future non-motorised watersports are managed effectively so as not to impact negatively upon each other. Each watersports activity has its own requirements. Different activities could be accommodated by spatial management or allocated time phases if required. This is particularly the case in relation to fishing. Balgray Reservoir is already used by anglers, with investment in three disabled fishing platforms having taken place in 2013. As part of Country Park path enhancements opportunities to improve access to the water's edge for anglers will be examined at suitable locations, in partnership with the Dams to Darnley Angling Club.

4.3.10. The Council has commissioned further work around the feasibility and design of a watersports facility based upon cable wakeboarding, also recognising the potential for additional future activities. This work will continue to be progressed and will include preparing a business model to establish the commercial viability of a facility; detailing how it would be funded, operated, managed and maintained to ensure that it does not present long-term revenue costs to the Council. Discussions will also continue with Scottish Water, who own and maintain the Barrhead dams.

4.3.11. The Council recognises the importance of consultation with sport and recreation interests as part of the potential development of watersports activities within the Country Park. Discussions have taken place with sportscotland and a range of Sports Governing Bodies and clubs. These discussions will continue. Specific proposals to develop a wakeboarding facility at Balgray Reservoir will involve a range of partners, including East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils, sportscotland, operators, landowners, governing bodies, youth, community and recreation clubs and schools. The potential for a Dams to Darnley Wake Park to be run through a trust, social enterprise or community interest company, enabling any surplus

revenue to be reinvested in its future operation or the wider Country Park, will also be considered by the Council.

- 4.3.12. The Supplementary Planning Guidance on Rural Development, which accompanies the Local Development Plan, also highlights a potential market for overnight or short stay accommodation within East Renfrewshire, associated with recreational facilities such as Dams to Darnley Country Park. This could relate both to camp sites and small-scale overnight accommodation. A watersports facility offers a specific opportunity to develop appropriate, small-scale accommodation at Balgray Reservoir, provided it meets requirements set out within the rural development guidance.

4.4. Dams to Darnley Visitor Centre

- 4.4.1. The Country Park recreation and feasibility studies both highlighted the importance of a visitor centre in establishing a focal point for Dams to Darnley. The feasibility study also noted that whilst the presence of a visitor centre is often an important motivational factor in non-local visitors to an area, they are rarely attractions in themselves; rather they are a primary conduit for revenue. A visitor centre offers the greatest potential to increase Country Park visitor numbers and generate a long-term income stream. As a result it represents the most realistic opportunity to contribute towards the sustainability of Dams to Darnley.

- 4.4.2. The feasibility study further highlighted that with the right audience development plan any size of visitor centre will eventually find its market. Crucially, given the opportunity to establish three Country Park facilities, the offerings provided at a visitor centre and in turn its audience, need to be markedly different. As noted above, a robust business model requires to be completed, this must establish that a visitor centre would compliment rather than compete with other Country Park facilities, in particular a wake park, in order to merit future investment. Yet both facilities would also benefit from their close physical links by being connected through an inclusive path network.

- 4.4.3. With greater clarity and progress regarding supporting infrastructure, such as the realignment of Aurs Road, future discussions will assist in the development of a business case, detailing how a visitor centre would be funded, operated, managed and maintained.

- 4.4.4. A visitor centre is likely to have a strong focus upon diversifying and enhancing the rural economy in line with the requirements of the Supplementary Planning Guidance on Rural Development. In addition to delivering economic outcomes, any proposal would also require to provide environmental or community benefits, again in line with rural development guidance. As a result a visitor centre is likely to focus around:

- [Appropriate retail/commercial use](#)
- [Restaurant and toilets](#)
- [Meeting/community space](#)
- [Countryside ranger space](#)

- Interpretation space (biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and built heritage)
- Business location
- Events space
- Car parking

4.4.5. City Deal funding would enable the Council to potentially deliver a Dams to Darnley Visitor Centre. This would create potential revenue streams associated with commercial leases, enable not-for-profit elements to be delivered and contribute to the wider revenue costs associated with the Country Park.



4.5. Location

4.5.1. A visitor centre needs to benefit from a locational setting associated with the Barrhead dams. Aurs Road, located between Balgray and Ryat Linn Reservoirs, provides the most direct vehicular access. A centre located off Aurs Road would benefit from significant passing traffic between Barrhead and Newton Mearns. The realignment of Aurs Road would unlock the Country Park's potential by releasing a visitor centre and car parking site at Balgray Reservoir as noted above. The location associated with the realignment of Aurs Road, south of Barrhead, represents the Council's preferred site, primarily in relation to suitability and feasibility (figure 6). A visitor centre located on the eastern shore of Balgray Reservoir would enable a facility to make the most of its setting overlooking the water. It would provide fantastic views to the south and west, adding to its attractiveness as a destination and ultimately its potential viability and sustainability.

4.5.2. Integrated access improvements linking a visitor centre to the wider Country Park path network and surrounding communities, are crucial. New path links identified within the Barrhead South Supplementary Planning Guidance,

together with connecting routes to Balgray Reservoir, will create walking and cycling connections from Barrhead. The proposed new Barrhead South Rail Station will also provide sustainable transport options. The priority to establish access to the Country Park from the south is crucial in ensuring that the visitor centre is connected to Newton Mearns by safe walking and cycling routes.

- 4.5.3. The Strategic Environmental Assessment established that a visitor centre located on the north eastern shore of Balgray Reservoir is likely to present less significant issues in terms of natural heritage than facilities on the west. The eastern side of the reservoir is less important for breeding birds because of the steep, stone faced embankment. The assessment does highlight the landscape sensitivity associated with this location and the importance of retaining and enhancing a narrow strip of birch woodland adjacent to the reservoir because of its habitat value and screening function.
- 4.5.4. The Council will continue to develop proposals for a Dams to Darnley Visitor Centre in parallel with the realignment of Aurs Road.

4.6. Dams to Darnley Environmental Education Base

- 4.6.1. Whilst the Barrhead dams provide opportunities for outdoor recreation, the mosaic of habitats within Darnley Mill and Waulkmill Glen offer the greatest scope for environmental education, outdoor learning and volunteer activities. As noted above, the lack of facilities currently curtails environmental education activities. A Dams to Darnley Environmental Education Base would create a valuable local resource. Such a facility would not need to be large, but ideally sufficient to provide:

- Countryside ranger base
- Toilets
- Indoor environmental education classroom
- Outdoor learning spaces
- Picnic/play space
- Parking

- 4.6.2. A facility would greatly enhance the delivery of the countryside ranger service's outdoor environmental education programme for schools. It would also provide multifunctional indoor classroom space which would further enhance the learning opportunities that could be delivered within the Country Park. An environmental education base would be pivotal to the delivery of the Curriculum for Excellence within the Country Park, across a range of curriculum areas:

- Expressive arts
- Health and well-being
- Sciences
- Social studies
- Technologies

- 4.6.3. A base could also provide basic services, benefiting health walks, event participants and general visitors in the northern half of the Country Park, complimenting facilities based around Balgray Reservoir to the south. As noted above, nearly 3,000 people took part in Country Park walks, events school visits and volunteer activities during 2014. With sufficient staff resources there is clear potential for this to increase and for a significant percentage of visitors to use an environmental education base. Such a facility would also enhance the delivery of volunteer activities within the Country Park. It could be central to the delivery of an expanded corporate volunteer programme with its associated revenue generating potential.

4.7. Location

- 4.7.1. A site on the eastern edge of Lyoncross provides one potential location for an environmental education base (figure 6). The development of Barrhead South would help to facilitate deliver vehicular access to an environmental education base and associated car park at Lyoncross, although public transport options are more distant. The proposed new path between Lyoncross and Waulkmill Glen Reservoir would also require to be established to link the site to the wider Country Park path network.

- 4.7.2. The site is somewhat removed from Waulkmill Glen and in particular Darnley Mill, where the majority of countryside ranger led environmental education and volunteer activities take place. Any established facility must ultimately function effectively in terms of promoting and delivering Country Park education and volunteer opportunities. Habitat



improvements could enhance the biodiversity value of the site and thus its suitability as an outdoor learning resource. Nevertheless parallel indoor learning opportunities, in particular based around sciences, could be delivered regardless of the location of an environmental education base.

- 4.7.3. The delivery and operation of an environmental education base would most likely be Council led, with developer contributions supporting its creation. Limited revenue streams associated with environmental education, corporate volunteering and events could be generated, but these are unlikely to go anywhere towards meeting running and maintenance costs.
- 4.7.4. The Council is committed to further work towards establishing the viability of an environmental education base. Given that the focus of environmental education and volunteer activities is within Darnley Mill and Waulkmill Glen,

East Renfrewshire and Glasgow City Councils will also continue to discuss options around suitable locations.

4.8. Design Principles

- 4.8.1. Depending upon ongoing feasibility work and discussions with Scottish Water the proposed Dams to Darnley Wake Park is likely to be the first Country Park facility to be established, primarily because it is not reliant upon major infrastructure improvements. As a result design considerations relating to this facility are of great importance, not only because of the sensitive landscape setting adjacent to Balgray Reservoir, but also because this Country Park facility would influence subsequent ones. As noted above the wake park facility and its activities would be inclusive, catering for all ages and abilities. All Country Park facilities must be similarly designed and operated.



- 4.8.2. Supplementary Planning Guidance on Rural Development supports creative and innovative solutions within rural areas which respect the vernacular and relate to the environmental setting. Designs that are distinctive and responsive to their setting, whilst respecting traditional proportions, scale and massing are encouraged. Designers are challenged to achieve contemporary design solutions that meet the requirements of Scottish Planning Policy Designing Places and Planning Advice Note 72. All development proposals must also meet the principles set out in the East Renfrewshire Local Development Plan (Policy D1: Development Strategy). Specifically the rural development guidance also identifies a number of key design issues that require to be considered in relation to new buildings in the countryside: proportions, massing, windows and doors, roofs, external materials, timber cladding, local materials, timber framed construction and external lighting. This guidance will apply to all new Country Park facilities.

- 4.8.3. The Strategic Environmental Assessment recognises that the design and setting of all Dams to Darnley facilities requires careful consideration in order that they did not detract from the sensitive landscape character areas associated with the Barrhead dams. The sensitivity of this area is highlighted within the Country Park Landscape Character Assessment. The potential to establish an environmental education base, with its associated road access and car parking, within Lyoncross would also have to address the particular landscape sensitivity of this Country Park location when viewed from Waulkmill Glen Reservoir.
- 4.8.4. Specific design considerations relevant to future Country Park facilities are reflected within the rural development guidance. This guidance highlights that proposals for new outdoor leisure facilities, such as a wake park and environmental education base, will be considered favourably where it can be demonstrated that:
- The emphasis is on outdoor pursuits, compatible with the rural area and there are no suitable sites within the urban area;
 - Any ancillary buildings or other works, such as access and lighting are required to serve the activity and do not prejudice the rural character and local environment;
 - Environmental mitigation measures are included, such as landscape screening, water filtration systems and rain water catchment systems;
 - The proposal, where appropriate, should maximise opportunities for access and biodiversity enhancements;
 - The design criteria set out in the guidance has been taken into account.
- 4.8.5. As noted above the Council has commissioned initial design work associated with a watersports facility. This has identified internal space requirements and has begun to look at suitable materials, opportunities around clustering elements and how a facility would interact with, and benefit the reservoir edge.
- 4.8.6. The rural development guidance also highlights that proposals will be considered favourably by the Council that support rural diversification or enhance the rural economy, such as a visitor centre, where it is clearly demonstrated that:
- Justification has been provided for its countryside location;
 - Any existing building is not capable of physical repair and re-use through the submission and verification of a thorough structural condition report;
 - There would be a resultant economic, environmental or community benefit from the proposal;
 - The level of traffic and any other disturbances resulting from the development, such as noise and light, do not prejudice rural character and the environment;
 - The requirement for new development is supported by a business plan that demonstrates longer term viability;
 - The design criteria set out in the guidance have been taken into account.

- 4.8.7. Supplementary Planning Guidance associated with Energy Efficient Design will provide additional input in relation to detailed considerations around the establishment and operation of all future Country Park facilities.

5. NATURAL AND BUILT HERITAGE

5.1.1. Amongst the aims of the Dams to Darnley initiative is to conserve and enhance the biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and built heritage of the Country Park. The ongoing development of partnerships will be key to the conservation and enhancement of the biodiversity, geodiversity, landscape and built heritage resources contained within the Country Park.

5.2. Biodiversity and Geodiversity

5.2.1. The conservation and enhancement of the Country Park's biodiversity and geodiversity, including elements funded in part through developer contributions, will be delivered through objectives contained within the Country Park Plan, including:

- Implement habitat enhancements, including working with land managers, schools, volunteers and conservation groups;
- Carry out surveys and maintain records of the Country Park's biodiversity and geodiversity assets;
- Manage other Country Park uses in relation to safeguarding its natural heritage.



5.2.2. The Strategic Environmental Assessment highlighted that the Country Park contains a number of priority habitats and species identified within the East Renfrewshire, Renfrewshire and Inverclyde Local Biodiversity Action Plan. The assessment also identified key themes, habitats and species associated with Dams to Darnley, including butterflies, pond life, grassland habitats, Balgray Reservoir and its importance for birdlife and Waulkmill Glen as a source for geological history. Biodiversity and geodiversity enhancements will focus on supporting relevant Habitat and Species Action Plans, contained with the

Local Biodiversity Action Plan. Conservation and enhancement will also focus upon the key themes, habitats and species identified within the Strategic Environmental Assessment. The significance of Waulkmill Glen SSSI, and the benefits that its national designation can bring, should provide a specific focus. The assessment noted that mitigation measures associated with the proposals contained within this Supplementary Planning Guidance should be similarly directed.



5.3. Landscape

5.3.1. The Country Park Landscape Character Assessment classified areas of sensitivity based upon the strength of their typical character, condition/intactness and scenic qualities. The assessment established that the strength of the landscape within much of the Country Park reinforced the effectiveness of the green belt, as a result of its value in separating urban areas and its elevation, which created a physical backdrop. Crucially the assessment also identified measures for improving the defensibility of the green belt boundary and landscape setting of settlements. These measures can be used to establish key landscape enhancements and direct mitigation measures, again to be supported in part through developer contributions, including objectives to:

- Utilise a planting 'design palette' based upon existing woodland types to highlight Country Park entrances and sympathetically set new paths and facilities into the landscape;
- Reinforce the Country Park's agricultural landscape patterns and network of stone walls, hedgerows and tree belts and groups;
- Create open viewpoints, to provide visual links across the Country Park and provide a contrast in experience from the more enclosed Waulkmill Glen woodland.

5.4. Built Heritage

5.4.1. The Strategic Environmental Assessment identified key historic and cultural heritage themes associated with Dams to Darnley, including its farming landscape, the Barrhead dams and the Victorian railway viaduct. The conservation and enhancement of the Country Park's built heritage and the implementation of mitigation measures to support this guidance will focus upon these key themes through objectives contained within the Country Park Plan, including:

- Protect and enhance the sites of historical importance within the Country Park;
- Work with, and contribute to, the work of local history groups;
- Manage other Country Park uses in relation to safeguarding its built heritage.



5.5. Barrhead South Green Network

5.5.1. The Barrhead South Supplementary Planning Guidance details a green space and landscape framework which aims to integrate the development within the wider countryside, including the Country Park. The enhanced green network associated with Barrhead South is key to this integration (figure 2). In addition to providing new and improved path links, the green network will provide multifunctional benefits, including biodiversity and landscape enhancements, Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS), together with open space provision providing play and recreation opportunities.

5.5.2. The green network proposes to integrate biodiversity through retaining, enhancing and creating woodland, hedgerow and grassland habitats, where possible. In addition to engineered solutions, new wetland features will be established as ecologically designed SUDS ponds and basins. This will help to

establish a diverse network of connected habitats, linking with wider ecological habitats and corridors within the Country Park and beyond.

- 5.5.3. Open space is provided as a series of corridors integrating play and recreation opportunities within areas of biodiversity interest. There are specific opportunities to develop play spaces based upon a journey through the green network. The creation of natural play spaces, utilising elements of nature such as wildflower meadows, water, earth mounds or bunds, boulders and logs will be examined as part of the green network.
- 5.5.4. The central portion of the green network, adjacent to the Country Park, is identified within the Barrhead South guidance as being of greatest potential community benefit, in terms of use by existing and future residents. This resource will evolve and develop over time, but its promotion amongst the local community will be essential if it is to become a successful and popular resource. The area could be structured so that it is divided into a number of elements. Hedgerows and stone walls can be used to contain and define different compartments or uses, incorporating existing landscape features and acting as wind breaks to the prevailing south-westerly winds, creating shelter. The area will complement and enhance the Country Park and consideration could be given to the extension of the Dams to Darnley boundary to incorporate this resource.



- 5.5.5. It is intended that views into Barrhead South will be partly mitigated by retained open space and habitat creation. This is of greatest significance in relation to Lyoncross, given the loss of Country Park green space associated with its development. Open space within the green network will also take advantage of views out to the surrounding landscape. Viewpoints across the Country Park to the south and to the north to Glasgow and the Campsie Fells have been incorporated.

- 5.5.6. The green space and landscape framework is designed to integrate the development with the surrounding countryside. The framework will combine strong boundaries to provide screening, with more open edges to allow visual and physical integration between the development and the surrounding countryside. Enhanced planting will provide screening along the outer development boundaries within Lyoncross and Balgraystone Road to help maintain the existing landscape character, when viewed from within the Country Park. The framework aims are to prevent an abrupt change from the built form to rural surroundings by integrating some rural features into the development where possible and allowing some urban features to integrate with the surrounding rural character. The transition from rural to urban character will be supported in part by the creation of the green network. It will also be achieved through the retention of existing landscape elements where possible, including hedgerows, tree belts and changes in topography. Additional planting of native trees and shrubs will improve biodiversity value and help to establish these areas as green corridors. Where there are breaks in vegetation, new planting will be established to further support the integration of the existing rural character into the development.



5.6. Design Principles

- 5.6.1. As noted above, natural and built heritage enhancements will focus upon the objectives, themes, habitats and species identified within the Strategic Environmental Assessment. The assessment also highlighted that mitigation measures associated with this Supplementary Planning Guidance will be similarly directed. Future enhancement and mitigation will be guided by a number of existing design principles, including:

- New wildflower meadows will use a species-rich seed mix as standard. Locally specific species mixes can be specified, such as the 'Glasgow mix' that has been used to create new wildflower areas within Darnley Mill. There are opportunities for new wildflower meadows to be created within

Barrhead South and potentially associated with an environmental education base at Lyoncross;

- New hedgerow planting within the Country Park has primarily utilised a mix of hawthorn, blackthorn, hazel, dog rose and elder. There are opportunities for new hedgerows within Barrhead South and adjacent to the Barrhead dams to enhance the existing landscape character of these areas. Hedgerow planting will greatly assist to enhance the landscape setting of new paths and the realigned sections of Aurs Road;
- A number of wildlife ponds have been created throughout the Country Park with the support of volunteers. These help to expand habitat networks across Dams to Darnley. Further opportunities exist associated with the environmental education base. Within Barrhead South SUDS ponds or basins and their marginal and land zones will be ecologically designed wherever possible and where this does not affect their function. Swales will be seeded to achieve the greatest sward diversity, relative to the management required;
- There are opportunities for planting associated with landscaping to accompany Country Park facilities, surrounding new and existing entrances and associated with key boundaries of Barrhead South. This planting will help to enhance the Country Park's landscape character areas. These should be based upon a planting 'design palette'. Large geometric blocks of planting should be avoided as they would reduce the strength of landscape character. Woodland edges should have a scrub component blending out to grassland, with scrub managed to avoid encroachment into grassland habitats. New woodland will be planted, monitored and managed to create woodland layers: ground, under-storey and canopy;
- The Barrhead South Green Network offers potential settings for viewpoints and picnic locations. These will utilise existing materials and designs where appropriate in order achieve continuity;
- There are opportunities to enhance the landscape character of the Barrhead dams through the continued repair of stone walls and the installation of new sections across the Country Park.



- 5.6.2. Supplementary Planning Guidance associated with the Green Network and Environmental Management, together with Management and Protection of the Built Heritage will provide additional detailed input to guide enhancements.

6. PROMOTION AND MANAGEMENT

6.1.1. A number of Country Park Plan aims focus upon the promotion and management of Dams to Darnley. The plan identifies a series of objectives in support of these aims, including:

- Increasing awareness of the Country Park locally and regionally and promoting the Dams to Darnley identity;
- Developing and delivering an environmental education programme, guided walks and events within the Country Park;
- Increasing awareness of the Country Park's natural and built heritage and promote its importance as an asset;
- Encouraging volunteer activity within the Country Park;
- Establishing initiatives to address community safety and antisocial issues across the Country Park.

6.1.2. Future funding, including monies secured through developer contributions, will support the ongoing promotion and management of the Country Park, in line with objectives contained within the plan. In particular there is potential to support:

- New directional signage to support an expanded Country Park path network;
- Interpretation and promotional material to increase awareness of the Country Park and its natural and built heritage;
- Expansion of the successful countryside ranger led environmental education programme for schools;
- Expansion of the existing programme of countryside ranger led volunteer opportunities, health walks and community events and activities;
- Improved management of habitats across the Country Park, including those within the Barrhead South Green Network;
- Practical measures to combat community safety and antisocial issues across the Country Park.



6.2. Countryside Ranger Service

- 6.2.1. The enhanced promotion and management activities noted above can only be brought about to any degree through additional staff resources. In particular any expansion in environmental education activities, volunteer opportunities and community events is likely to require additional countryside ranger staff. Such additional resources could be focused upon the Country Park or have a wider remit across East Renfrewshire, enhancing the scope of activities that promote health and well-being.
- 6.2.2. Additional Country Park countryside ranger staff could also be vital to the success of the Barrhead South Green Network. The network is seen as critical in terms of integrating existing and new communities. As noted above it is also recognised that the network has the potential to deliver multifunctional benefits in relation to access, play and recreation, biodiversity and landscape, flooding solutions and health and well-being. Yet the success of the network is likely to depend upon facilitating local events and activities to ensure that existing and new residents are able to contribute to its design and function. Its future use would also be greatly supported and promoted, in particular in its early days, if the successful programme of Country Park community events were expanded to include activities within it.



- 6.2.3. Finally, the Strategic Environmental Assessment also identifies a range of mitigation measures, in light of the proposals contained within the Supplementary Planning Guidance. These critically include monitoring activities, associated with the potential impact of watersports activities on nesting and wintering bird species across Balgray Reservoir. The success of mitigation measures, in particular monitoring, will be reliant upon the countryside ranger service resource.

6.3. Design Principles

6.3.1. For consistency new path routes will be promoted using existing fingerpost signage designs. Routes within the Country Park will use existing bespoke Dams to Darnley signage. Routes to the Country Park from within Barrhead, including the Barrhead South location, will be promoted using signage developed through the Barrhead Smarter Choices project.



6.3.2. Proposals to create new path links to the Country Park will also offer opportunities for entrance features and signage. Existing Country Park path entrances, although not identical, utilise a number of standard elements including stone walling, sets and cubes. New entrances should utilise these existing materials. Entrance signage will be based upon the existing wooden design used at Country Park entrances at Balgray Reservoir and Darnley Mill. Signage opportunities and design guidance are further detailed within a Country Park Signage Plan; this will assist to direct future enhancements.

6.3.3. Standard bench and bin designs already used within the Country Park will also be installed across new path links. The BT Countryside for All Good Practice Guide recommends a seat or perch every 200m and this will be adhered to wherever possible.

6.3.4. Interpretation enhancements will be progressed based upon the key Country Park natural and built heritage themes, habitats and species that have been identified. A Country Park Interpretation Plan provides further details relating to opportunities and design; this will be used to guide future enhancements.



7. CONCLUSION

- 7.1.1. This Supplementary Planning Guidance identifies the enhancements that East Renfrewshire Council wishes to prioritise in order to support the development and management of Dams to Darnley Country Park. These enhancements will be delivered through a number of mechanisms, including the Barrhead South Strategic Development Opportunity, developer contributions, the Glasgow and Clyde Valley City Deal, Council capital allocations and grant funding.



- 7.1.2. Dams to Darnley is recognised by the Council as a valuable but underutilised resource. The proposals contained within this guidance are seen as essential if the vision behind the Country Park is to be realised and its full potential in terms of visitor numbers and long-term income generation fulfilled. The proposals will also significantly enhance the Country Park's contribution to the Council's wider aspirations set out through its Single Outcome Agreement, Local Development Plan and A Place to Grow and A Place to Visit strategies.

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