



2022 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title of the Story: A view from Nessie: Inverness Loch Ness' Climate Action Plan

Destination Name: Inverness Loch Ness

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Submission category:

- Governance, Reset & Recovery
- Nature & Scenery
- Environment & Climate
- Culture & Tradition
- Thriving Communities
- Business & Marketing

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Issues faced

Popping her head above the waters of Loch Ness, Nessie reached out to Visit Inverness Loch Ness (VILN) about her concerns for the area’s climate. She mentioned how well VILN had got on with reducing their carbon footprint and how impressed she was with the organisations recent carbon neutral status. Nessie’s main concern was the rising raised the issue of climate change and tourism within the Inverness Loch Ness destination. The VILN team decided to help Nessie and found that creating and implementing a Climate Action Plan (CAP) for the destination could be the way forward and would help preserve Nessie’s home for generations.

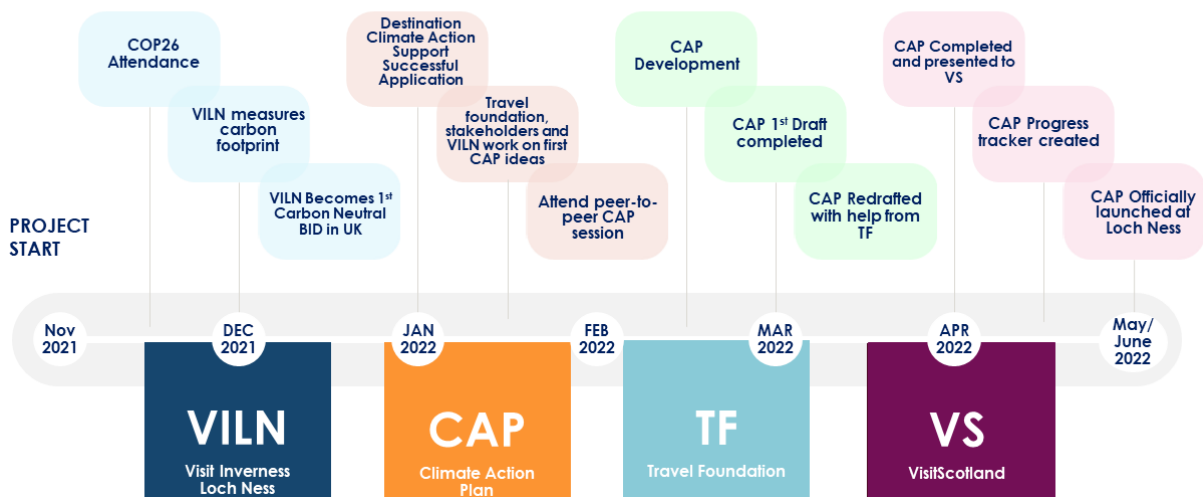
The Inverness Loch Ness destination is located in the North of Scotland and covers 1,200 square miles. Our main attractions and assets include Urquhart Castle, five-star loch ness cruises and Culloden Battlefield where Bonnie Prince Charlie’s Jacobite army stood against the redcoats in 1746. Climate Action Plan, this term was not familiar to many in the Scottish tourist industry, just over a year ago. However, it all changed at COP26 when climate action in tourism highlighted a need to reduce carbon emissions and become carbon neutral in line with targets set out by the Scottish Government.

Whilst working on our organisations carbon footprint and carbon neutral status we initially thought of developing a CAP for the organisation, but when attending COP26 events in November 2021 we realised this was something we could do as a destination wide project. With some research we found that a plan did not exist within our local authority or national tourist board at the time. By creating and implementing the Inverness Loch Ness CAP we and our membership are now committed to achieve various goals and targets to improve sustainable tourism in our area and encourage businesses to start their journeys towards low-carbon living and achieving carbon neutral status.

Methods, steps and tools applied

The figure below outlines the roadmap of creating our climate action plan.

Climate Action Plan Roadmap





To fill the gap in sustainable tourism in our area we realised the need to pursue and promote climate action in tourism. We applied for support from VisitScotland and the Travel Foundation to help us create a plan, to which we were successful with. As part of the criteria for this support we needed to gather a stakeholder group for the opportunity of discussions and ideas. Once this was all in place, training was given on identifying which issues we could tackle. The stakeholders included the following sectors: self-catering, hotels, outdoor experiences, cruises and local authority project management. Much of the content within the CAP are ideas from the VILN team and stakeholders, in addition the Travel Foundation gave guidance on goals and targets. The main source of information and resources were received from the Travel Foundation at training sessions.

Key success factors

Once the project was completed we invited our stakeholders to the launch of the plan in early June 2022, some of those invited in addition to those who worked on the plan, included local members of the Scottish Parliament, staff from Highland and Islands Enterprise (the economic and community development agency in our area), other members of the local authority, and our VisitScotland regional director.

Lessons learned

The major challenge we faced was time and resources. We only had 2 months of support from stakeholders and the Travel Foundation. Due to stakeholders' other commitments it was difficult to receive feedback in time for our meetings and difficult to have all stakeholders attend collectively as their availabilities differed. However, we did most of our meetings just before the tourist season started in February/March 2022 so were able to get stakeholders to at least one meeting during this time. If the process had taken place within the tourist season we would not have received our essential stakeholder support. Everyone was updated via email throughout the project which ensured no one missed anything. The next challenge was making the plan clear and concise for a large audience to read, we wanted to make sure we were not too technical and the plan was of easy reading. The plan could have been officially launched earlier but due to other time commitments within VILN, postponement was needed to ensure we could do something special for it and have attendance.

Results, achievements and recognitions

Our project officially started in May 2022 so only some data has been collected. To track our progress of the plan, we have created a spreadsheet which includes our targets, goals, and their progress. Our full list of goals and targets can be found within our CAP, the targets featured below are what has progressed since the launch of the plan in June 2022.

- Events – participants offered trees instead of t-shirts, target 125/year, progress: 152 offered, 121% of target met
- Promote local employment, 5 mentions/month, progress: 4 mentions, 6.67% of target met
- Recycling during events, target 5 times/year, progress: 1 event completed, 20% of target met
- Improve biodiversity in our area, target 3/year, progress: 1 project completed, 33.33% of target met
- Promote funding schemes, target 20 mentions/year, progress: 1 mention, 5% of target met.
- Administer community development grant to at least 3 projects, target 3 projects/year, progress: 5 projects, 166% of target met.

Our organisation has over 400 members and these will be the main beneficiaries of the project, however the plan has been targeted at the entire destination so we hope non-members will support it too. In June 2022 businesses are being encouraged to offset their carbon emissions through our partnership with trees for life.





This has been made an event at the Highland Climate Festival, which tied in with their Net Zero Day, a webinar containing the details of this is featured in the additional references section. As a result of the climate action planning process we have signed up to the *Glasgow Declaration: Climate Action in Tourism and Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency*. We are also featured in *SUNx Malta's Climate Friendly Travel Register*.

In June 2022, we applied for the Highlands and Island Tourism Awards, under the category RBS Climate Champion which includes our work on our climate action planning. We also intend to apply for other awards which will be announced later in the season. Firstly we will be entering the Climate and Net-Zero Towns category of the Scotland Loves Local Awards in September 2022, winners are announced in November 2022. Secondly the Highland Business Awards have a category for Environmental Sustainability which we will enter by August 2022, with the winners being announced in September 2022. Finally we have been nominated to enter the Scottish Thistle Awards – Responsible Tourism Award, if we are shortlisted we will go on to compete with others at a ceremony in February 2023.

Additional references

- Climate Action Plan – <https://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/sites/default/files/2022-06/VILN%20Climate%20Action%20Plan%20June%202022.pdf>
- New Sustainable Tourism Section on our website thanks to the plan - <https://www.visitinvernesslochness.com/sustainable-tourism>
- Climate Action Plan Launch Press Releases –<https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/climate-action-plan-launched-by-local-tourism-group-278282/>
- <https://www.thenational.scot/news/20198437.kate-forbes-attends-launch-visit-inverness-loch-ness-climate-action-plan/>
- Business Offset Support Webinar - <https://visitiln-my.sharepoint.com/:v/p/bryony/EbFBDDmRtYRIroIZ70S6nQAB3uT2gl96cpyvtaBLH-ggYw?e=slcPbk>
- Visit Inverness Loch Ness joins SUNx Malta - <https://www.thesunprogram.com/news/articles/nessie-joins-climate-friendly-travel>
- Visit Inverness Loch Ness Features as a signatory to the Glasgow Declaration: <https://www.oneplanetnetwork.org/programmes/sustainable-tourism/glasgow-declaration/signatories>
- Visit Inverness Loch Ness listed as a member of the Tourism Declares a Climate Emergency - <https://www.tourismdeclares.com/members>
- Visit Inverness Loch Ness First Carbon Neutral Bid Status Stories - <https://www.inverness-courier.co.uk/news/tourism-group-becomes-first-carbon-neutral-business-improvement-263133/> , <https://www.businessleader.co.uk/visit-inverness-loch-ness-becomes-uks-first-carbon-neutral-business-improvement-district/> , <https://www.buildscotland.co.uk/construction-news/281922/visit-inverness-loch-ness-one-of-uk-s-first-carbon-neutral-bid> , <https://www.scotlandstowns.org/visit-inverness-loch-ness-becomes-first-carbon-neutral-business-improvement-district-in-the-uk>

