



The multi-million pound refurbishment of Loch Lomond Arms Hotel (above) is just one of many commercial developments undertaken by the Luss Estates Company in recent times, including weddings (below right). Items such as organic candles and Scottish water are sold at Luss General Store.



LUSS ESTATES

# Luss leader

The threatened closure of a local school prompted the creation of an innovative development plan to breathe new life into one of Scotland's most attractive areas

**A** process of diversification and modernisation undertaken by Luss Estates has transformed the nature of its business and helped bring a new sense of vibrancy to the local area.

Luss Estates Company has long had a desire to grow the local economy and the sustainability of the local community. The first big steps were made by facilitating, through land release to tenants, the development of two international golf courses – Loch Lomond Golf Club (in 1993) and The Carrick (in 2007).

That was followed by the development by Luss Estates of Glen Douglas Hydro and the company's multi-million pound refurbishment of the Loch Lomond Arms Hotel, which took

place between 2010 and 2012. The efforts gained extra impetus following the threatened closure of Luss Primary School. That began a process that saw the creation of a new plan, the Luss Strategic Development Framework.

Simon Miller, Luss Estates Chief Executive, explained: "Our main task is to preserve and enhance the area for future generations. The most important steps we can make are to provide economic and employment opportunities, and create new family housing."

"This is at the forefront of what we do, by investing in and developing our own enterprises and encouraging others to invest in the local area and live here."

"The Luss Strategic Development Framework was prompted by the potential closure of our primary school, and the simple

question: 'What could we do to help stop this happening?'"

Taking over two years to create, and involving local stakeholders and community groups, the Framework details possible commercial, housing and urban realm sites, and other improvements such as traffic management and the general upkeep of the area.

The Loch Lomond Arms Hotel has shown the positive effects of change. Since its reopening, it has built a successful weddings business, winning numerous awards for its wedding capability and attracting clients from the USA, Australia and New Zealand, as well as the UK.

Simon added: "Since then, Luss Seafood Bar, The Clan Shop, Luss Filling Station and Luss Smokehouse have been developed in

the village, all but the later operated by Luss Estates. We have planning for six artisan retail units, which we will be marketing to the rental market this year."

Not directly linked to the Framework, Luss General Store opened in 2014.

"The biggest challenges we face in bringing the plan to life are the process of getting it incorporated into the next local plan, and then finding the time, resources and partners to help deliver the various components."

"Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park recently approved the next local plan, and it is great to see large chunks of the Luss Strategic Development Framework incorporated into it. Now it's time to bring the whole thing to life."

## Visitor experience

One of the area's major advantages is its ability to attract local, national and international visitors. It currently draws more than 750,000 visitors a year and one part of the plan is to enhance what's on offer.

Among other things, The Clan Shop now includes historical information and artefacts relating to the Clan Colquhoun and other families. And Luss Estates has worked with Luss & Arden Trust and Community Council to create a series of information boards around the village and the Luss Guidebook.

There is co-operation with VisitScotland to increase exposure to foreign markets,

particularly the USA and China. The marketing efforts also include working with other local businesses, such as Cruise Loch Lomond. Similarly, there are activities with other firms including Amazing Days, which organises corporate events and other activities, and boat tour operators, Loch Lomond Leisure. A new partner is Boots 'N' Paddles, which specialises in active pursuits such as gorge walking and canyoning.

The Luss Estates team tries to glean as much information as it can from other estates and appreciates the value of Scottish Land & Estates events, where it's possible to learn about subjects such as marketing as well as operational matters.

On infrastructure development, Link Housing, the local housing association, has five houses under construction on land gifted by Luss Estates (for £1).

"A further £80,000 contribution is being made by Luss Estates to bridge a funding gap in the build cost," said Simon. "Luss Estates

## A family concern

Luss Estates is on land that has been in the hands of the family of Colquhoun of Luss for many centuries. It covers more than 40,000 acres on the banks of Loch Lomond, stretching west towards Loch Long and south to Helensburgh and includes some of the islands on Loch Lomond.

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SIMON MILLER, LUSS ESTATES CHIEF EXECUTIVE

has applied for planning for another 30 family houses. Of the houses under construction or in planning, only one has fewer than three bedrooms, for the simple reason that Luss desperately needs more family housing."

Looking ahead, he added: "In the immediate future, we hope to make significant progress with housing, subject to the planning process. And working with Luss & Arden Community Council and Argyll & Bute Council, we hope to make a huge improvement by keeping tourists' cars to the fringes of the village via new traffic management orders."

Developments spearheaded by Luss Estates gained additional momentum after the threat to the local school and it may be that the experience has useful lessons for others across Scotland.