



Loch Ness Hub Road To Green Tourism Gold Award



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BAGGAGE & SHUTTLE TRANSFERS
Great Glen Way & Highland Trails
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Loch Ness Hub Gold Tourism Award

Loch Ness Hub & Travel Achieves Gold Green Tourism Award (The only non-Visit Scotland Visitor Information Centre with a Green Tourism Gold award)



Loch Ness Hub & Travel is thrilled to announce its 2024 accolade of achieving GOLD Green Tourism Award Status, building on its commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism. This achievement comes on the heels of the company's previous accreditation for the Real Living Wage, showcasing its dedication to both environmental stewardship and fair labour practices.

The Gold Green Tourism Award recognises Loch Ness Hub & Travel's outstanding efforts in their net zero ambitions, implementing eco-friendly practices, reducing its carbon footprint, and contributing positively to the local environment and community. This achievement underscores the company's unwavering commitment to sustainable tourism practices, ensuring that visitors can explore the breath-taking beauty of Loch Ness while minimising their impact on the environment.



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Our Green Story

Loch Ness Hub & Travel is thrilled to announce its recent accolade of achieving Gold Green Tourism Award Status, building on its commitment to sustainability and responsible tourism. This achievement comes on the heels of the company's previous accreditation for the Real Living Wage, showcasing its dedication to both environmental stewardship and fair labour practices.



As a community benefit company, taking care of our people and planet is at the forefront of everything that we do. From day 1, we have promoted and helped deliver slow and sustainable tourism by not only supporting all the long distance trail walkers to The Highlands, but also collaborating with our community and national partners to ensure our community is a better place to live, work and visit.

On the shores of world famous Loch Ness, we are very fortunate to live in an area of great natural beauty here in Glen Urquhart, and with Glen Affric on our doorstep, protecting these areas of natural beauty are vital for their very existence and future. At Loch Ness Hub & Travel, we are passionate about the area that we are lucky to represent and call home, so we work tirelessly to promote green tourism by encouraging and providing tools for visitors to make ethical, responsible and sustainable decisions during their visit to our community.



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Tourism With A Purpose

As a community-owned company, sustainability is ingrained in our ethos. Our anchor shareholder is the community itself, and our commitment to green tourism is a testament to our dedication to the well-being of our community members and the environment they call home.

Every service we offer, every experience we curate is designed with sustainability in mind. From facilitating sustainable luggage transfers for long-distance trail walkers to promoting e-Bike rentals as an eco-friendly alternative, our goal is to redefine tourism as a force for good.

We actively follow Green Tourism on our social media platforms, regularly liking and sharing their posts to amplify messages related to sustainable practices and green initiatives within the tourism industry. As well as engaging with campaigns that align with our values and share our contributions to sustainable tourism.

We have achieved additional awards for our approach to sustainability and the environment.

SHIRES Award (2021): We are proud recipients of the SHIRES award for rural community in 2021. This prestigious recognition highlights our dedication to sustainable practices and environmental stewardship within the rural community.

Thistle Awards Finalist (2022): We have been shortlisted as finalists in the 2022 regional Thistle Awards for thriving communities. This recognition further acknowledges our commitment to creating a thriving and sustainable community through our tourism initiatives.

Highlands & Islands Thistle Awards – Climate Seminar (2023): Our Managing Director Russell was invited to speak at the Climate Seminar as a recognised business leader promoting sustainability and the environment.

Highlands & Islands Thistle Awards Winner (2024) Innovation in Tourism: This award acknowledges our continued commitment to adapting new approaches in our work to create a thriving, sustainable Tourism centre.



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Efforts Towards Gold Green Tourism Award Status

Below are just some of our efforts towards this:

- Installation of Air Source Heat Pump and new radiators
- Installation of solar panels
- Connection to RHI via Local Energy Source
- New double glazed units
- New loft insulation
- Free Motorhome Service Point to ensure safe and appropriate disposal of toilet chemicals
- LED lighting throughout the site
- Battery storage and on site EV charger for our own vehicle
- Partner with Scottish Water to host a top up tap scheme, also partnering our local DMO, Visit Inverness Loch Ness on their top up tap scheme
- Promoting responsible tourism via the Scottish countryside code
- Providing authentic tours in our Glen, e.g. our, Heritage Trail Walks, Self Guided e-Bike Trails and our Croft and Highland Coo Tour
- E-bike Hire to facilitate less car journeys, for visitor authentic experience, community E-bike trials, staff commuting and more
- Luggage Transfers for Great Glen Way, Affric Kintail, East Highland Way and Loch Ness 360 trail users
- Developed our own walking leaflet to include heritage trails, leading to associated sign boards
- Partnered with Scottish Woodlands and Forestry Land Scotland to develop new sign posting for walking trails in our community
- Partner with Historic Environment Scotland to deliver shuttle transfers via electric vehicle
- Deliver community transport with our Electric Vehicle to local Primary Schools, (including school meals), Childcare Centre, local sports clubs



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Carbon Reduction Plan Training

Participation in RBS Carbon Reduction Plan Training: Our team is actively participating in the RBS Carbon Reduction Plan training facilitated by Edinburgh University.



This comprehensive program covers various aspects of carbon reduction, sustainable practices, and environmental stewardship.

Participation in Community Tourist Programme led by HIE which included sustainable and responsible tourism.

Loch Ness Hub is leading a programme to recalibrating tourism in our community with SCOTO – Press Pause Event. We have hosted 2 workshops in conjunction with GURCA and are actively following up the actions from those workshops.



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Green Purchasing

Our green purchasing practices are grounded in a commitment to supporting local economies, reducing environmental impact, fostering community ties, promoting responsible consumption, and setting an example for sustainable business practices. These initiatives align with our mission to create a positive and environmentally conscious impact.

Local Sourcing Priority: Our first choice is always to source products and services locally. We prioritize suppliers within our immediate community to support local businesses and reduce the environmental impact associated with transportation.

Highlands Sourcing: If local options are not available, we extend our search to the Highlands, promoting regional sustainability and minimizing the ecological footprint associated with transportation.

Scotland Sourcing: The next tier of our sourcing strategy includes products and services from within Scotland. This allows us to support a broader range of local economies while still prioritizing regional sustainability.

Responsible Out-of-Area Sourcing: Only if local, Highlands, and Scottish options are not feasible do we consider sourcing products from outside the region. Even in such cases, we prioritize suppliers with a proven commitment to sustainability and responsible production practices.

Promotion of Local Artisan Crafts: Our commitment to green purchasing is evident in our promotion and sale of local artisan crafts. By showcasing and supporting these crafts, we contribute to the local economy while also encouraging sustainable and ethical production.

Creation of Local Craft Trail: As joint instigators of the local craft trail, we actively promote and connect visitors with local artisans. This initiative not only supports local businesses but also encourages visitors to engage with and appreciate sustainable and locally-produced crafts.



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Maintenance Regime

Our maintenance regime is driven by a commitment to optimise performance, uphold sustainable energy practices, fulfil our responsibility as a community-owned facility, reduce environmental impact, enhance user experience, and support local suppliers. These efforts align with our mission to create a well-maintained, sustainable, and community-centric environment through Loch Ness Hub.

Air Source Heat Pump, Solar Panels, and EV Charger: These essential components were installed by a local supplier, and we ensure they are regularly checked by the same supplier. This proactive approach aligns with manufacturer specifications, guaranteeing optimal performance, energy efficiency, and longevity.

Maintenance Contract: A local maintenance contractor, oversees the upkeep of our community-owned public toilets. This individual ensures that all sensor flushes, taps, and other facilities are operating correctly. Regular checks and prompt repairs are integral to maintaining a high standard of hygiene and functionality.



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Community Social Projects

As a community benefit society, surplus profits from our operations are reinvested back into our local community. This ongoing commitment ensures that the benefits derived from tourism directly contribute to the social well-being of the community.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we conducted a community share offer that raised a total of £110,000 in just four weeks. This initiative not only demonstrated community buy-in and support but also provided crucial funding for local projects.

We ran an e-Bike trial scheme, offering residents free trials of e-Bikes. This initiative aimed to encourage sustainable transportation options, promote eco-friendly commuting, and gauge community interest in alternative modes of travel.

Our community transport services include school meal transport and out-of-school club transport, facilitated by an electric vehicle (EV). This initiative ensures that essential services are accessible to all, contributing to the inclusivity and convenience of community life.

We actively support our local Care Centre and RNLI through various fundraising events. These initiatives help raise funds for vital services, promote community engagement, and strengthen our bonds with these essential organisations.

We maintain open communication and collaboration through regular meetings with local enterprise organisations and the community council. These discussions foster partnerships, provide updates on community initiatives, and ensure that our activities align with broader community goals.



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Community Environmental Projects

As a community benefit society, surplus profits from our operations are reinvested back into our local community. This ongoing commitment ensures that the benefits derived from tourism contribute directly to the well-being and sustainability of the community.

Local Litter Picks: We initiated and continue to organize local litter picks, actively involving community members. These efforts contribute to maintaining the cleanliness of the area, fostering community pride, and promoting a cleaner environment.

Collaboration with Local Woodland Trust:

We have established a collaboration with our local woodland trust to contribute to reforestation efforts. This involves planting new trees around the village, promoting biodiversity, and enhancing the overall environmental health of the region.

Participation in Top-Up Tap Scheme: Being an active participant in the local destination Top-Up Tap Scheme, we promote the use of reusable water bottles. This initiative helps reduce single-use plastic waste and encourages responsible water consumption among locals and visitors.

Sale of Recycled Water Bottles:

In our visitor centre, we sell recycled water bottles to further support sustainable practices. These bottles are not only environmentally friendly but also serve as a tangible reminder for visitors to adopt eco-conscious habits during their travels.

Motorhome Service Point:

We have a motorhome service point on-site, providing a convenient and eco-friendly facility for motorhome travellers. This service point is equipped to manage waste responsibly, contributing to the overall cleanliness of the area.



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Greener Customers

We actively promote within the hub the following initiatives:

Walking and Cycling Map: We have developed and distribute our own walking and cycling map for the local area. This map not only guides visitors to scenic routes but also provides information on sustainable practices, such as waste disposal points and eco-friendly attractions, encouraging them to explore the destination responsibly.

E-Bike Rentals: To reduce the carbon footprint associated with traditional transportation, we offer E-Bike rentals as an eco-friendly alternative to car travel. This option not only promotes a greener mode of exploration but also allows visitors to experience the beauty of our destination in a sustainable manner.

EV Shuttle Transfers: When Urquhart Castle reaches capacity, we provide shuttle transfers using an electric vehicle (EV). This initiative not only addresses the challenge of overcrowding but also promotes environmentally friendly transportation options, minimizing the impact on the local environment.

Top-Up Tap Promotion: We actively promote the use of our top-up tap for water refills. Additionally, we participate in a local top-up tap scheme, collaborating with our Destination Management Organization (DMO) to encourage visitors to reduce single-use plastic waste by refilling their water bottles at designated locations.



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Public Transport

How we work to reduce the impact of the travel associated with Loch Ness Hub.

Public transport : We have a real-time bus timetable display within the hub in partnership with Hi-Trans and Vix technology which enables us to promote the use of public transport within the area.

Business travel: We walk, car share or take public transport as appropriate to any business meetings or events, depending upon location. We also attend meetings virtually to reduce our footprint. When technology allows we will utilise EV vehicles for all business trips – currently we are limited by range.

Electric vehicles: We have invested in an EV Vehicle and e bikes to provide alternative transport for visitors to the area. We conduct tours using the EV vehicle as well as facilitating transport for the local child care centre and moving the school meal provision between the local high school and primary school. The EV vehicle is also utilised to transport members of the local community groups e.g. walking and bowling groups.

Group travel: We minimise visitor car use by providing shuttle transfers for both long distance walkers and tour experiences e.g. Highland Coo Tours

Baggage Transfer: We facilitate sustainable and green tourism by offering luggage transfers for visitors walking the long-distance trails in our area. This reduces the need for individual transportation of luggage, promoting a more sustainable travel experience.



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Energy Use

How we work to reduce the impact of energy usage associated with Loch Ness Hub.

Monitoring energy use: We continue to contact our energy supplier for the installation of a smart meter. So far they have not facilitated our request. In the meantime we are using the applications that form part of our solar and battery installation to monitor energy usage and we provide regular energy readings to our energy company and local agent for submission to the RHI scheme. Outputs from this are included as line items in our accounting process and forecasting which we review at our monthly board meetings.

Lighting: All our lighting is LED bulbs and we optimize energy usage, by implementing procedures to ensure lights are turned off when not required. If they are not already on an automatic sensor system. Toilets and security lights are on a sensor and timed.

Air-Source Heat Pump:

Loch Ness Hub is equipped with an air-source heat pump, a sustainable technology that efficiently extracts heat from the air to provide heating.

Battery Storage System:

To enhance energy efficiency and resilience, we have implemented a battery storage system. This technology allows us to store excess energy generated during peak times and utilise it during periods of higher demand, contributing to a more balanced and sustainable energy profile.

Thermostatically Controlled Radiators:

Our heating system incorporates thermostatically controlled radiators, offering precise temperature regulation for individual spaces. This feature optimizes energy usage, ensuring that heating is provided only when and where it is needed.



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Energy Use

How we work to reduce the impact of energy usage associated with Loch Ness Hub.



Thermal Efficiency Improvements: We have made substantial efforts to enhance the thermal efficiency of our buildings, contributing to energy conservation and a more comfortable environment for our visitors.

We have replaced glazing units with double glazing throughout our buildings. Double glazing provides improved insulation, helping to regulate indoor temperatures and reduce energy consumption.

We have also invested in insulating the roof space of our building. Adequate roof insulation plays a crucial role in preventing heat loss during colder months and maintaining a consistent indoor temperature.



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Water Use

As a community owned company it is vital for us to measure the impact of providing public facilities to both visitors and highland residents.

Monitoring water use: We take regular water meter readings to monitor the usage which are then reported to Business Stream. Outputs from this are included as line items in our accounting process and forecasting which we review at our monthly board meetings.

Water Conservation: We have invested in water conservation measures extending to our restroom facilities where we have implemented water-efficient fixtures, including infra-red taps, reduced flush toilets, and sensor-operated urinals. These fixtures are designed to optimize water usage and contribute to significant water savings over time.

- Infra Red Taps
- Reduced Flush Toilets
- Sensor-Operated Urinals:

These fixtures are designed to optimize water usage, activating only when necessary. The implementation of these water-efficient fixtures contributes to a substantial reduction in water consumption over time.

Water Quality: We are dedicated to maintaining water quality and preventing the disposal of inappropriate items down sinks, toilets, and drains.

We have legislative notices for grey and waste water alongside our investment in a motorhome disposal point.

We provide designated sanitary disposal bins which are strategically placed to encourage individuals to dispose of sanitary products, wipes, and other items appropriately instead of flushing them down the toilet.

We display prominent legislative notices within our toilet facilities, informing visitors about the importance of responsible disposal. These notices highlight the types of items that should not be flushed and emphasise the impact on water quality and environmental conservation.



Waste

We actively work on the following initiatives in the Hub:

Avoiding / reducing / reusing / recycling waste: We've invested in a digital platform with our baggage transfer bookings – no longer printing out emails/bookings but now saving documents digitally to SharePoint. Huge reduction in our usage of paper and ink and power. We recycle all cardboard that our products are delivered in and we are in the process of seeking more storage space so that we can reduce the number of orders made for products by ordering larger volumes thus reducing packaging and transport costs associated with delivery.

Single-use Items: In our gift shop we only provide paper bags on request and have a range of cotton tote bags that customers can purchase instead to reduce the use of paper bags.

Waste Management & Monitoring: As a business we produce minimal waste just card board packaging and some plastic containers from cleaning products etc. We utilise all the facilities available to us to recycle this waste.

We encourage employee involvement in waste reduction and implement training to raise awareness about proper waste disposal and the importance of recycling. We aim to adopt best practises and innovative solutions to minimise our waste footprint.

We have approached Highland Council to provide facilities to further enable our ability to further recycle. This is ongoing and we will actively follow up.



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Carbon

We actively work on the following initiatives in the Hub:

We have taken the following steps to manage our carbon emissions by implementing the following actions:

- EV Vehicle Purchased
- EV Bikes Purchased
- Air source heat pump installed
- Battery storage installed
- EV Charging Point installed
- LED Lighting installed
- Double glazed windows to replace single glazing installed
- Increased roof insulation added
- Solar panels installed
- RHI Scheme membership
- Recycle Facilities implemented utilising all the facilities available to us

The following installations evidence our commitment to renewable energy

- Solar panels
- Battery storage
- EV Charging Point



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Chemicals

We actively work on the following initiatives in the Hub:

Public Toilets: We currently use many eco friendly products including soap, and cleaning products in our public toilets. Products display eco-friendly or the GreenTick showing they have no or low environmental impact. We are currently working towards having a full range of eco friendly cleaning products.

Staff Kitchen/Toilet: We use eco friendly soap in the staff bathroom and eco friendly washing up liquid in the staff kitchen.



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