

£2m marina scheme and adjacent cafe faces rival with plans for nearby site

Loch-side visitor project opens ideas to the public

By Helen Paterson
h.paterson@inverness-courier.co.uk

DETAILED plans for a multi-million pound visitor development on the shores of Loch Ness will go on display next week.

Brothers Robert and David Bremner own the existing harbour and adjoining land at Brackla next to the Clansman Hotel and want to build a £2 million centre, incorporating jetties for small boats and canoes and a cafe.

Plans will go on display at the site on Thursday.

The scheme is one of two proposed for the area. Jacobite Cruises also has plans for a visitor centre, cafe and car park on a site 800 metres away.

Last month a decision on its proposals was deferred by the local planning committee to allow Highland councillors to visit the site.

It is now likely the Bremners' and Jacobite Cruises' schemes will be considered in March.

The Bremners' plans include a new shore-side car and coach park, picnic area, gift shop and cafe.

"Local elected representatives, community groups and business groups will get a first-hand look at the plans for the £2 million expansion that will be an exciting addition to the tourism offer of Loch Ness, creating local job opportunities and long-term business opportunities for local operators," explained Robert Bremner, whose family own the Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition in Drumnadrochit.

"As local residents themselves, the stakeholders, will be very much aware of the increasing number of visitors to Loch Ness that has brought about a need for improved shore-side access to Brackla Harbour that is safe and direct as well as additional car parking facilities and provision of catering and retail services."

Ian Miller, who runs the Clansman Hotel, explained visitors to Loch Ness use the hotel car park.

"It is true that during the peak weeks of the season the car park becomes quite full," he said.

The plans, he added, would be an improvement for visitors and locals, and create more jobs, giving the economy a boost.

Mr Bremner added contracts to operate the gift shop and cafe would be opened up to local operators if planning approval granted.

Jacobite Cruises uses the harbour at Brackla but wants to create its own £2.3 million development.

The planning office is looking at the possibility of holding a special meeting of the Inverness, Nairn, Badenoch and Strathspey planning committee to hear both proposals.

Last month Graeme Ambrose, the executive director of tourism organisation Destination Loch Ness, said visitors would benefit from both proposed schemes.

Family's tourism credentials

THE Bremner family have been central to Loch Ness tourism for three generations.

Willie and Jean Bremner bought the Drumnadrochit Hotel in 1964, before their son, the late Ronnie Bremner, opened the Loch Ness Centre and Exhibition in 1980.

It is now a five-star visitor attraction.

The family bought the Clansman Hotel and adjoining land in 1986 and Ronnie's sons, Robert and David Bremner, opened The Loch Ness Experience on Edinburgh's Royal Mile in 2005, to encourage visitors to the Highlands, while middle son Michael Bremner runs Highland Experience Tours from the Scottish capital.

The present small harbour at Brackla on Loch Ness-side.