

LOMONDGATE + VoLIE 2020: THE STRATEGIC VISION

1. Introduction

1.1 The Strathleven Regeneration Company (SRC) was set up in April 2000 as a private-public partnership. The company's objectives were to deliver the regeneration and redevelopment of the former J&B site on the outskirts of Dumbarton, to create jobs and promote economic development. SRC is now a Community Interest Company (CIC).

1.2 In 2003, the company appointed the Walker Group as its development partner for the site, now known as Lomondgate. A Strategic Development Masterplan was adopted which set out a blueprint for a mix of residential, business, commercial, leisure and tourism uses.

1.3 In 2004, a vision statement was adopted.¹ It stated that the regeneration of the J&B site would have "a major impact on the ability of Dumbarton to compete for new residents, business, employment, private investment, and visitors and tourists". The vision statement described the masterplan proposals and enumerated the "wider benefits" that would flow from the proposals, including:

- helping Dumbarton to attract and grow modern service sector businesses
- population growth and increased prosperity
- a step change in West Dunbartonshire's business property offer
- a better image for the area
- enhanced tourism infrastructure
- sustainable communities
- employment, training and business opportunities.

1.4 The 2004 strategic vision has served its purpose well, but it was necessarily a generic statement which has been overtaken by events. At the SRC board workshop in November 2011, it was agreed that **the vision should be refreshed, updated and made more specific**. The new vision statement should reflect achievements to date at Lomondgate and identify opportunities and priorities for the rest of the decade.² The board decided that the vision should address an extended area including the Vale of Leven Industrial Estate (VoLIE).

1.5 Following discussions with the board and partner organisations it was agreed that the vision should:

- reflect SRC's strategic aspirations for Lomondgate + VoLIE
- provide a context for effective partnership working between SRC, West Dunbartonshire Council (WDC), Scottish Enterprise (SE) and other key partners
- set out a shared vision which will inform the operation of the Development Agreement between SRC and the Walker Group, and

¹ *Strathleven Development Vision Statement*, undated report (2004/05) by EKOS Ltd

² The Development Agreement between SRC and the Walker Group runs until the end of 2018.

- be shared with WDC as part of the West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan (LDP) process.
- 1.6 This document is a **working draft** of the vision statement. It was discussed at Strathleven Regeneration board meeting on 10 February 2012, and it will be submitted to WDC as an input to the Main Issues Report stage of the LDP. It will provide the basis for future discussions with the Walker Group, WDC and SE.
- 1.7 This paper is in four sections:
- Section 2 reviews progress to date at Lomondgate and sets our priorities for the next phase of development
 - Section 3 examines conditions and trends at VoLIE and describes emerging proposals for reviving the fortunes of the site
 - Section 4 presents for discussion the **draft vision statement for Lomondgate + VoLIE 2020 – Scotland’s national park for business**.³

2. Lomondgate: achievement in a time of austerity

- 2.1 The Lomondgate site extends to 120 acres straddling the A82 trunk road at a gateway location north of Dumbarton. The current masterplan comprises four key elements:
- 35 acres of **residential development** on the south side of the A82: the site, which is being developed by the Walker Group, Persimmon Homes and Taylor Wimpey, will create a new residential community of more than 330 quality homes
 - **BBC Scotland** has located its drama production studios, including the River City set, to a site on the southern edge of Lomondgate; the studios have hosted Scottish and UK drama productions including Hope Springs, Garrow’s Law and The Deep
 - the **Lomondgate Services** area already boasts a 60 room Premier Inn, a Brewers Fayre pub restaurant (the Malt & Myre) and a drive-through Costa coffee outlet; the masterplan also makes provision for a tourism/visitor facility and a petrol filling station: the aim is to create destination services which will enhance the competitiveness of the business park (and VoLIE), serve visitors to the National Park and other travellers on the A82, and provide amenities for local residents
 - Aggreko is the first major employer to be attracted to **Lomondgate Business Park**: it is one of Scotland’s leading international businesses, and the manufacturing facility and offices will accommodate up to 400 jobs when fully operational in mid-2012; essential infrastructure and services are in place for the rest of the business park, together with a masterplan which envisages up to 200,000 sq feet of office space in “high quality office pavilions set in a mature landscaped setting”.

³ Scotland’s national park for business is a working title only.

- 2.2 The development is anchored by **two key employers**, Aggreko and BBC Scotland. Both are of national significance. Securing Aggreko's world-leading manufacturing facility was a vital success for the stakeholders, and a resounding expression of confidence in Dumbarton as a location and in the skills of the local workforce. When the site is fully operational, the total number of jobs at Lomondgate will be more than the number lost when the J&B bottling plant closed. BBC Scotland's production centre is a key piece of Scotland's cultural infrastructure, which should be the catalyst for growth in the creative and media industries.
- 2.3 Progress has been slower on the rest of the Business Park. This is hardly surprising, given the "near-absence of new office development [in Scotland] since 2008".⁴ The development partners recognise that attracting speculative development to Lomondgate will continue to be challenging. They have therefore supplemented an already proactive presence in the market place with **a niche marketing strategy**, targeting prospective occupiers and supply chains. The essential infrastructure is in place to accommodate the next wave of development. Lomondgate has been included in the Clyde Waterfront regeneration area, and is identified in the proposed Glasgow & Clyde Valley Strategic Development Plan as a Strategic Economic Investment Location (SEIL).
- 2.4 Lomondgate has already attracted total **investment** in the region of £45m, without any capital funding by the public sector. There are already more than 300 full- and part-time **jobs** on site, which will rise to around 700 when the Aggreko site is fully operational.
- 2.5 These are very considerable achievements, especially at a time when business and investor confidence are low. The progress we have made reflects the value of SRC as a special purpose vehicle, the strength of the Development Agreement with the Walker Group, the skills, determination and resilience of the partners and stakeholders, and an excellent working relationship with West Dunbartonshire Council. Working together, the key partners have shown that Lomondgate is an outstanding location for business and other investment, strategically located, well connected and in an outstanding landscape setting. We have pioneered **a sustainable, private sector-led development model for a time of austerity**.
- 2.6 Strathleven Regeneration's approach to the development of Lomondgate might be described as **enlightened pragmatism**. It is founded on a clear-sighted appreciation of market realities and of the commercial imperatives driving the Walker Group and other potential investors. It recognises the need for flexibility and compromise. But, at the same time, the CIC is very conscious of the risks of a "race to the bottom". It is all too easy for places that have been starved of investment in the past to behave as if any development is good enough. Supported by the planning authority, the Walker Group and SRC have resisted this temptation and continued to champion quality, aiming to ensure that all development at Lomondgate is of a standard consistent with its iconic location. Lomondgate is not just about attracting

⁴ Ryden, *Scottish Property Review*, 69, October 2011

investment and delivering development – it is about **making a distinctive and sustainable place**.

3 Reviving the fortunes of VoLIE

- 3.1 The Vale of Leven Industrial Estate (VoLIE) is situated to the north of Lomondgate, with the Aggreko factory creating a physical link with Chivas Brothers' Kilmalid bottling plant and VOLIE. The Strathleven Industrial Estate opened in 1949 as a location for light industry; it provided 4,000 jobs at its peak in the early 1970s, with major employers including Burroughs and Westclox. Since then, VoLIE has had a chequered history and employment has declined steadily.
- 3.2 Today, **VoLIE is at a tipping point**. Vacant sites, decaying buildings and low value uses such as storage and vehicle repair have combined to create an air of neglect, which is compounded by the lack of a cohesive management regime. But Chivas Bros have made major investments in their facility, and the site is still home to some important industrial employers, including Polaroid Eyeware, Wideblue, Diamond Power and firms servicing the drinks industry such as Houston Co-Pack. Some of these are housed in good quality premises dating from the 1980s and 1990s.
- 3.3 These key companies can help to provide the platform for the regeneration of VoLIE and its reinvention as modern, competitive business location. But SRC and its partners also recognise that there is a danger that the poor condition of the site and the increasing number of unsightly, low value secondary and tertiary activities could tip VoLIE into an irreversible decline. In the **worst case scenario**, the negative image of the site could deter future investment and drive out existing key firms.
- 3.4 The warning signs are already there. Apart from Diamond Power's 2008 relocation to VOLIE, there has been no significant development and investment activity at VoLIE since the 1990s, when Scottish Enterprise (SE) built and let three advance factories and Strathleven House was restored as the centrepiece of the Estate. Before Aggreko moved to Lomondgate, they had expressed interest in developing SE site 3, but there were objections from local residents. Over many years, a combination of low rentals, low values and weak demand has rendered private sector investment in VoLIE unviable. The problems are compounded by a lack of liquidity in the commercial property market and the "flight to prime locations". **Building value** at VoLIE is therefore vital if private sector property development is ever to be achieved.
- 3.5 There are other **barriers to progress**. Scottish Enterprise (SE) owns about 30 acres of land zoned for development at VoLIE and has appointed SRC as joint marketing agents. But VoLIE has not fitted with any of SE's national priorities since the responsibility for local regeneration transferred to local authorities in 2008. Multiple ownerships have made it difficult to establish a proper management and maintenance regime, especially because some owners do not have an interest in the public image of the site.

- 3.6 It does not have to be like this. VoLIE has enjoyed success in the past and it has the potential to complement and add value to the Lomondgate vision. The site is in an attractive landscape setting adjacent to the River Leven, with mature trees, remnants of the formal landscape of Strathleven House and grassland which is used and valued by local people for informal recreation. SRC and a number of concerned owners continue to champion the cause of VoLIE, and they have drawn encouragement from the success of Lomondgate, and especially the major investment on their doorstep by Aggreko. The VoLIE business community and WDC have been discussing options including a Business Improvement District (BID) to manage and promote the site, and the potential to secure JESSICA funding for new development. A Green Network Enhancement Study commissioned by WDC has identified a range of possible projects.
- 3.7 Against this backdrop, the SRC board has decided that the regeneration of VoLIE should form a key element of its future plans for Lomondgate and the Vale of Leven. A board workshop, held in November 2011, decided that SRC should take a more active role in marketing the site, raising aspirations and brokering the BID discussions. The board is convinced that **a revived VoLIE has a key role to play in complementing and extending the offer at Lomondgate**. It is a great opportunity but also a considerable challenge. With limited resources, SRC has to devise new ways of working with interested parties to turn around the fortunes of VoLIE and turn it into an investible proposition.
- 3.8 In Section 4 we set out our vision of Lomondgate + VoLIE working together at the heart of Scotland's new *national park for business*.

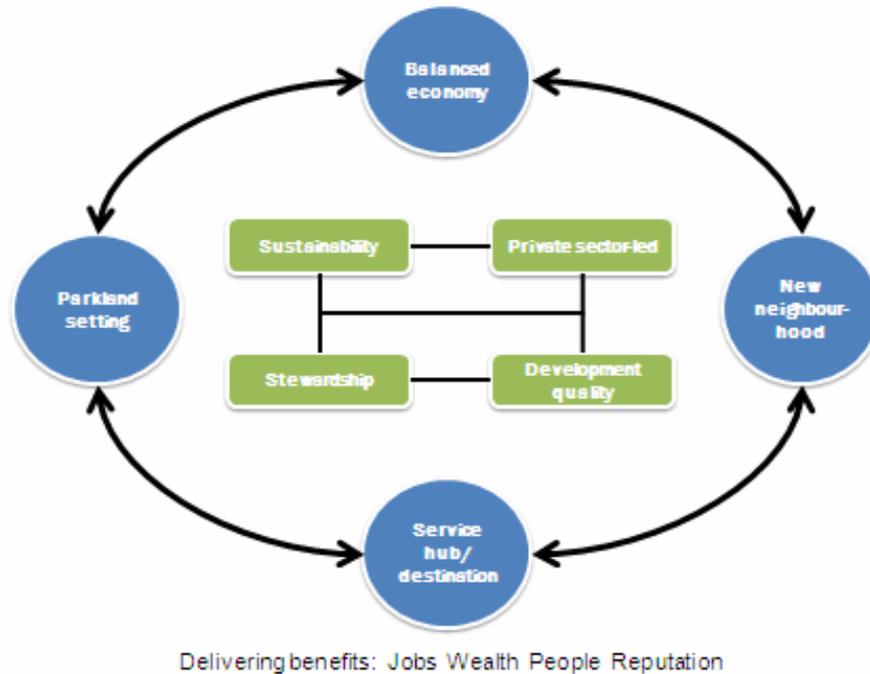
4. The vision: Scotland's national park for business

- 4.1 Our long-term vision is **to make Lomondgate + VoLIE Scotland's national park for business**.⁵ Building on the continuing success of the Lomondgate development and the reinvention of the former Vale of Leven Industrial Estate, SRC will work with partners in the private and public sectors to create an internationally competitive location for high-value, high-skill manufacturing and service businesses in the west of Scotland.
- 4.2 The concept of the national park for business is founded on our belief that the future success of Lomondgate and VoLIE will produce something greater than the sum of the parts. The success of Lomondgate has already helped to create the conditions for a revival in the fortunes of VoLIE; each will have a distinctive and complementary role to play in the national park for business.

⁵ Please note this is a working title only.

4.3 Our vision is summarised in the diagram below:

Figure 4-1: The national park for business: key features and principles



4.4 Our aspirations for the year 2020 are:

- Scotland's national park for business will accommodate **over 3,000 jobs** and contribute at least **£750m** to GVA
- West Dunbartonshire's historic **jobs deficit** will have been significantly reduced, cutting unemployment and enabling many more residents to secure good quality local jobs
- the national park for business will be a key **driver of growth** in some of Scotland's most strategically significant industries, making a vital contribution to the revival of Scottish manufacturing
- the park will be an important new business location in the **Glasgow city-region**
- the site will set the benchmark for **sustainable development**: Lomondgate Business Park will be Scotland's greenest business location and a natural home for low-carbon industries, capitalising on its location close to the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park
- 400 new homes will have created a popular and attractive **new neighbourhood** in Dumbarton; the final phase of the development (Area 5) will act as a gateway to the town and define the edge of the urban area
- the park will have transformed the **image** of Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven, which will once again be seen as places of dynamism and opportunity – and great places to live and work
- opportunities in Lomondgate and VoLIE will help to create stronger and more prosperous **communities**: aspirational working families will be attracted by new jobs and the excellent quality of life, and West Dunbartonshire will retain more of its best young talent

- Lomondgate Services will provide **services** for residents and the businesses, and a popular stopover for visitors to the Loch Lomond & Trossachs National Park
 - the business hub at Lomondgate Park will provide **amenities** for people working in the area.
- 4.5 The national park for business will be home to nationally significant firms and new businesses in key strategic sectors including food and drink, creative and media, defence, energy, engineering, tourism and financial services. It will accommodate a **dynamic, diverse, balanced economy** of knowledge-intensive services, modern manufacturing, research and training facilities. It will become a vital strategic asset for the Scottish economy, generating net economic growth, a home for the industries of the 21st century and a beacon of excellence.
- 4.6 A flexible and entrepreneurial approach to development means that **modern offices and industry will co-exist successfully** in the spacious landscape setting, with businesses concentrated in two locations. Lomondgate will be dominated by modern offices, research and training facilities, while VoLIE will be the preferred location for manufacturing and logistics. But zoning will be flexible: we will consider proposals for high quality complementary uses at Lomondgate Business Park, and as the national park for business takes shape, a range of activities will operate together in an integrated landscape setting, sharing services and amenities.
- 4.7 Businesses will be attracted to the park by its strategic location, outstanding telecoms infrastructure, easy access to the Glasgow conurbation, Glasgow International Airport and the motorway network and its outstanding natural setting. With a market of 2.5 million people within an hour's drive of the site, and access to a skilled, motivated and adaptable workforce, the national park for business will become **one of Scotland's most sought-after business locations**. On-site amenities will create a lively neighbourhood centre for the national park for business, with a crèche, a gym and convenience shopping serving the growing daytime population as well as local residents. Building on the presence of Chivas Bros, Aggreko, BBC Scotland and other key companies, the national park for business will be recognised as a prime location for inward investment, business expansion and relocation, and an incubator for new enterprise, helping to bring West Dunbartonshire back into the heart of the Scottish economy.
- 4.8 Lomondgate Services and a hub facility in Lomondgate Business Park will provide essential amenities for the park's many business visitors. For tourists and day visitors, Lomondgate Services will be a popular place for an overnight stay or as a stop-off point on the way to and from Loch Lomond and the Highlands. These will be **destination services**, providing tourist information and orientation as well as commercial leisure attractions for tourists and day visitors.
- 4.9 So this is not just a conventional business park. Lomondgate will be home to Scotland's national park for business, but it will also be **a new place**, which will change the face of West Dunbartonshire, create thousands of jobs, attract investment, improve the quality of life and generate a sense of pride, optimism and

confidence in the local community. The park will generate economic benefits for Dumbarton and the Vale of Leven towns.

- 4.10 The exceptional landscape setting will be a **public park** for the whole community – residents, visitors and workers – and it will form part of a wider green network. Mature woodlands, formal gardens, wetland areas and wildflower meadows will be linked together by a network of footpaths, cycle tracks and bridleways. There will be fitness trails and an adventure playground for children. Work will be underway on the canal linking Loch Lomond to the river Clyde, which will become one of Scotland’s top attractions in the 2020s. The creation of the park will offer work and training opportunities for local people; it will provide a valuable resource for local schools, and promote health, wellbeing and biodiversity in some of Scotland’s most disadvantaged communities.
- 4.11 Our green credentials will be unrivalled. Within the national park for business, Lomondgate will be **Scotland’s most sustainable business location**. New buildings will conform to the highest energy efficiency standards, and the sustainable drainage system will be the most extensive in Scotland. A green travel plan will reduce car dependency, and establish bus links to and from local towns and railway stations. The park will be connected to the wider paths network, including the footbridge to Renton station, encouraging more people to walk or cycle to work.
- 4.12 An outstanding landscape setting and our commitment to sustainability will demand the highest standards of **stewardship**. The park’s business community will work together to establish a governance regime for the entire estate, creating a clean, safe site that businesses, workers and local people can be proud of.

5. Making it happen

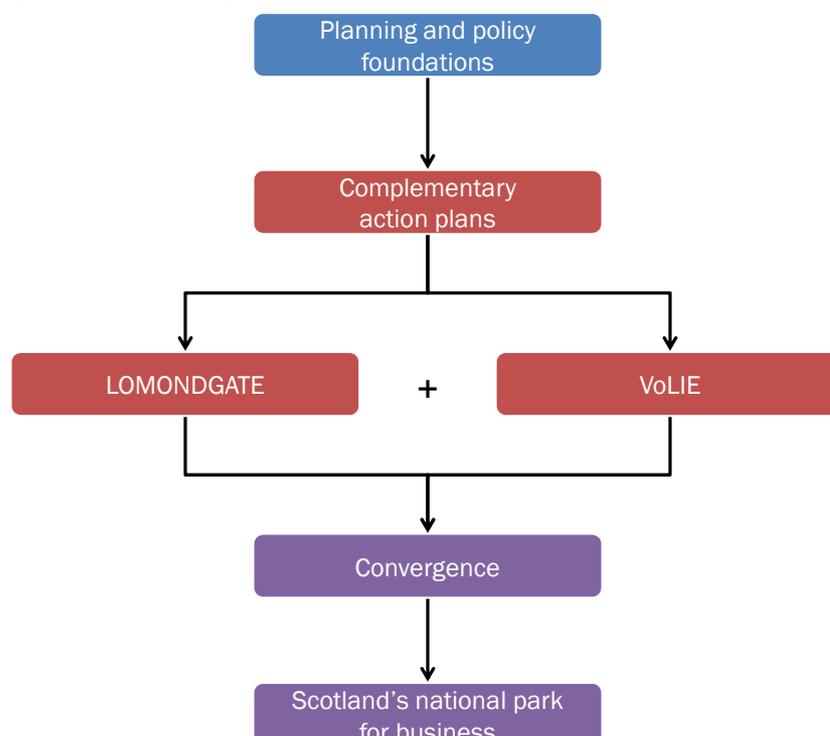
- 5.1 This is a **bold and challenging vision**, but we believe that it is realistic and achievable. We have done the groundwork at Lomondgate, and the progress we have already made – despite an exceptionally difficult economic climate – gives us the confidence that this is an outstanding location for business, that there is demand waiting to be unlocked, and that the proposition we have outlined will attract businesses, developers and investors. Our business-driven approach is in sharp contrast to traditional, public sector-led, supply-side interventions. Niche marketing, using market intelligence and targeting prospective occupiers will continue to be vital to our future success.
- 5.2 Our experience also gives us the confidence to hold to our **guiding principles** – the enlightened pragmatism that has already served us well. Progress is only possible if the private sector is prepared to invest in creating the national park for business: the public sector will have a contribution to make, but it cannot lead. But we have learned that, by working closely with our Lomondgate partner, prospective occupiers and the Council, it is possible to hold the line on quality and to deliver development without compromising our vision and principles. In this way, Scotland’s national park for business can help to lift West Dunbartonshire out of its

long economic decline, by raising aspirations and signalling confidence in a better future.

5.3 We anticipate that our vision for Lomondgate + VoLIE will unfold in **three key stages** over the next 8-10 years (see diagram below):

- in the next 12 months the partners will lay the foundations for the coordinated planning, development and promotion of Lomondgate + VoLIE by:
 - making the case for including the vision of Scotland's national park for business in the new Local Development Plan
 - pressing for the boundaries of the Strategic Employment Investment Location (SEIL) to include Lomondgate + VoLIE
 - SRC, WDC and SE working together to promote the regeneration and development of VoLIE in line with the vision and the emerging WDC masterplan, and resisting low quality developments which would accelerate decline
 - encouraging and supporting businesses to bring forward a BID proposal as a vehicle for the stewardship and improvement of VoLIE
 - SE undertaking site investigations to establish the net developable area of its land at VoLIE and examining the case for transferring non-developable land
 - exploring JESSICA and other development funding opportunities, including the Central Scotland Green Network development fund
 - development of an action plan for VoLIE which will build on this vision

Figure 5-1: Achieving the vision – key stages



- years 1-3 will focus on the delivery of complementary action plans for Lomondgate + VoLIE:
 - adoption of the West Dunbartonshire Local Development Plan, reflecting the vision of the national park for business and defining the Lomondgate SEIL
 - at Lomondgate, the immediate priorities are to attract occupiers to the business park, continue with residential development, attract a petrol filling station and other commercially viable visitor services to Lomondgate Services, deliver the business park hub facility and a first phase of business space
 - at VoLIE, the immediate priorities are to establish a regime for stewardship of the estate; to implement a pragmatic action plan based on identified demand, including small workshops/industrial units; and to secure a first phase of new, private sector-funded development
 - by year 3, Lomondgate and VoLIE should be on converging and complementary paths: at this stage, work will begin on an integrated masterplan and implementation plan for the wider area, together with a marketing proposition and a branding strategy.

- by year 4 the partners will be ready to launch Scotland's national park for business, and to start work on a five year programme which will bring the key elements of the vision to fruition.