

HARNESSING BIKE PACKING FOR SUSTAINABLE TOURISM GROWTH

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DEPT. FASHION, MARKETING, TOURISM & EVENTS, GCU

4TH SEPTEMBER 2025

cycling & society annual symposium

GCU Glasgow Caledonian University
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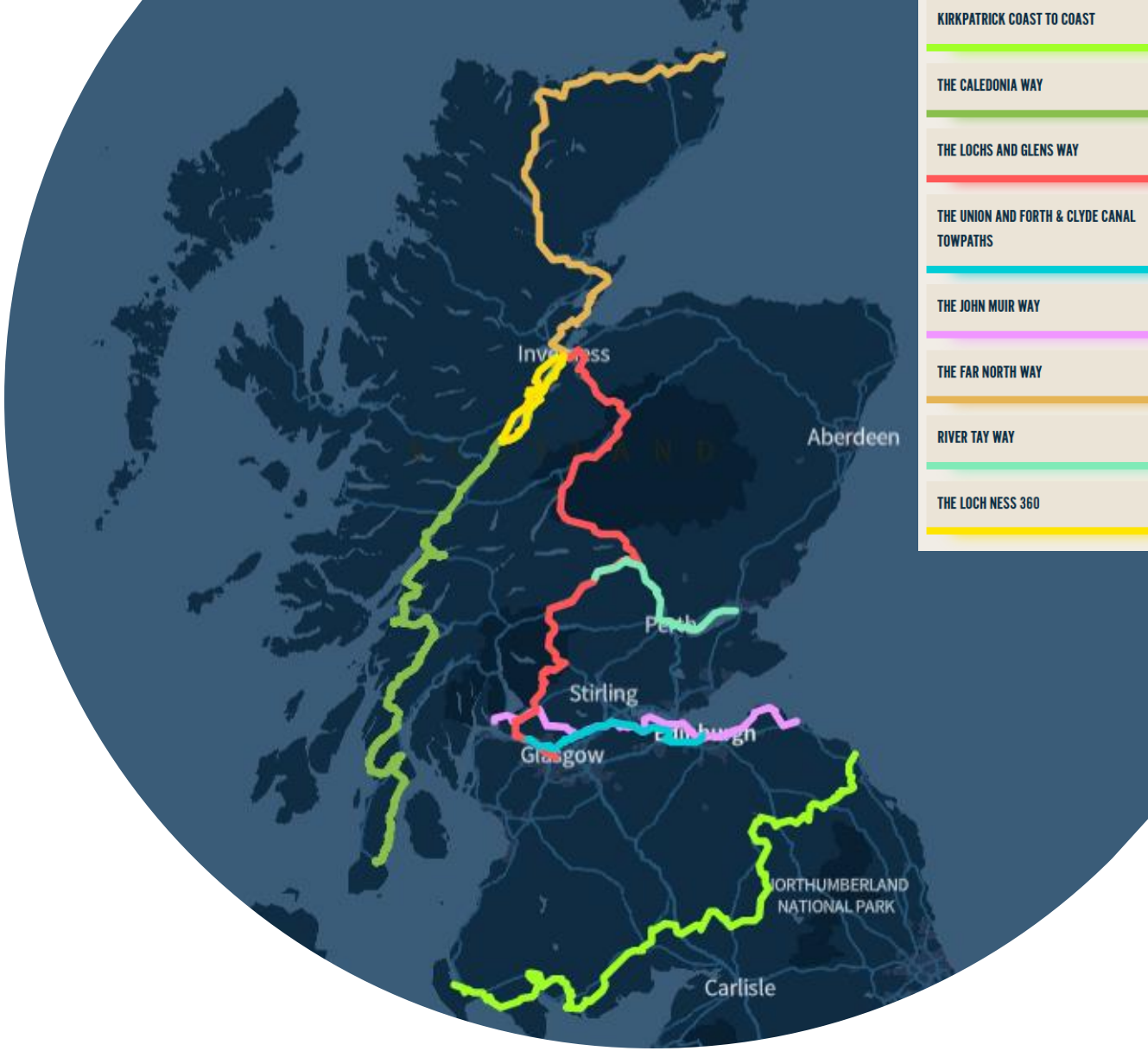
WHY BIKE PACKING MATTERS

- Rapid growth in cycle tourism, in Scotland and elsewhere
- Adventure seekers value off-grid, multi-day trips
- Aligns with sustainability goals: low carbon, local spend, healthy populations
- Builds rural economies through dispersed demand, enabling SMEs and better connectivity



SCOTLANDS BIKE PACKING LANDSCAPE

- 130,000 domestic mountain-bike trips annually, £35 million spend, 4.5-night average stay [1]
- Approximately 1,620 miles of National Cycle Network routes in Scotland. These include 695 miles of traffic-free routes [2]
- Iconic routes: Badger Divide, The Central Belter
- Emerging trends: gravel bikepacking, e-assist routes
- Infrastructure snapshot: trails, way-marking, campsites



Source:
[1] Great Britain Tourism Survey, 2023
[2] Sustrans

BIKE PACKING ROUTE TYPES AND EXAMPLES

Route Type	Example	Notes
Loop	Highland Trail 550	Remote, self-contained
Point-to-Point (Linear)	John Muir Way	Requires transport planning
Stage-Based	Cateran Ecomuseum Trails	Daily legs, local services
Island-Hopping	Argyll Islands Circuit	Ferry-linked, cultural experiences

DELIVERING FOR SCOTTISH TOURISM

- Scottish Tourism aims to grow the value and positively enhance the benefits of tourism across Scotland by delivering the very best for our visitors, our businesses, our people, our communities, and our environment.
    - Environmental stewardship: trail maintenance, leave-no-trace
    - Community engagement: local hire, cultural experiences
    - Economic resilience: off-peak season offerings



SUPPLY SIDE IMPACT AND OPPORTUNITIES

- Accommodation
  - Bike-friendly lodges, wild-camp support
  - Secure Gear storage, repair services
  - Early Breakfasts, Drying Rooms
- Transport & logistics
  - Bike hire, shuttle networks, e-bike charging
  - Ferry coordination for island circuits, space on trains and buses
- Tour operators & guides
  - Pre-planned itineraries vs. self-guided packages
  - Equipment rental bundles, Route Planning
  - Local food and experience bundles



STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR DEVELOPERS

- What is the current Bike Packing Landscape?
- Who are the principal actors in delivery and development?
- How is Bike Packing evolving and contributing to Scottish tourism?
- Where are the regions with the greatest opportunity for growth?

Case Studies in Scotland

Case Study	Focus	Outcome
Highland Trail 550	Long-distance loop	Rural spend, model for infrastructure
Cairngorms Loop	Park-led gravel route	Bike-friendly business network
Argyll Islands Circuit	Ferry-linked cultural route	Bundled tourism products
Climate-Friendly Bikepacking Event	Behaviour change via workshops	Increased staycation intent

PRODUCT OWNER AND PROVIDER IMPACTS

- Route planning
  - Collaborate with landowners for access
  - Integrate waypoints for services
- Service design
  - Flexible booking, gear bundles
  - Local food and cultural stops
- Marketing
  - Best Practice, Global examples, branding
  - Showcase sustainability credentials
  - Leverage user-generated content

Stakeholder	Role	Key Actions
Destination managers	Enable infrastructure	Fund trail upgrades, map bikepacking loops
Accommodation owners	Enhance guest experience	Offer bike-wash, menu of local produce
Tour operators	Package design	Create modular itineraries for varied skill levels
Local businesses	Support services	Bike repairs, shuttle services, guided rides

RESEARCH ROADMAP AND NEXT STEPS

Next Steps

- Identify pilot regions
- Build partnerships across sectors
- Apply for funding and support schemes

Invitation

- Collaborate on route design
- Share data and insights
- Test new service models

Key Metrics

- Trip volume and spend
- Length of stay
- Trail condition reports
- Community satisfaction surveys

Tools

- Booking data
- Visitor feedback
- Local business reporting
- Stakeholder engagement with attractions and accommodation providers



THANK YOU!

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