

Thomas Telford Corpach Marina: First Phases on track for Summer 2021 Opening

The first phases of Thomas Telford Corpach Marina - owned by the community through the Caol Regeneration Company, and run as a community enterprise company - are on track to open later this year. When fully complete, the marina will provide a west coast sanctuary for visitors to the area, sheltered from south westerly winds, and with arguably one of the best views of both the Caledonian Canal and Ben Nevis. It will be the only facility of comparable scale and quality in the 100 sea miles between Inverness and Oban.

The project has been making continuous progress, with Phase 1 construction complete and Phase 2 construction advancing well. Phase 1 was completed in December 2020 and comprised of the civil engineering works, public slipway and dredging. Phase 2, for the construction of the marina facilities building and café, being built by local company GCF Joiners & Contractors, is advancing well and due for completion early Summer 2021. The new facilities building will be fitted with the latest state of the art marina equipment and technology as well as accessible onshore facilities.

In reaching this point and overcoming many hurdles, the project has seen phenomenal support from the local community, local organisations, local schools, West Highland College UHI, and local Councillors. The project has received £2.3million from organisations including Scottish Government, Highland Council, Highland and Islands Enterprise (HIE), the EU Leader fund and SSE's Sustainable Communities Fund.

Covid permitting, we hope to reach the exciting milestone of opening the Café and Public Slipway in Summer 2021 and welcoming the very first visitors.

The third and final phase of the project comprises the construction of the breakwaters, pontoons and linkspans currently in preferred bidder status with Highland firm, Gael Force Marine. To achieve this the project has to assemble a further £1.2m, and active discussions are ongoing with Highland Council Coastal Communities Fund, HIE, Crown Estate Scotland, Scottish Government's Rural Tourism Infrastructure Fund and Scottish Government's proposed Tourism Recovery package.

When complete the project will deliver a high quality, sheltered and sustainable all-year round marina facility at the Western gateway to the Caledonian Canal, including: 40 yacht berths, small boat berths, comprehensive marina services and facilities such as waste disposal, laundry, toilets and showers, a public slipway, 40 car and trailer parking spaces, and a café/shop/visitor centre.

The aims of the project are to stimulate regeneration within the communities of Caol and Corpach, neighbouring Fort William, and the wider Lochaber area by delivering significant economic and social benefits. The project will encourage healthy lifestyles, with easy access to the water, and in turn encourage tourists to come and enjoy the incredible sights and hospitality the area has to offer. And as we enter a period in which Covid-19 recovery is key, this project is capable of speedily generating vital economic benefits.

Thomas Telford Corpach Marina Chairman Andy Mckenna comments, “I am delighted to see the car park and public slipway in place, and our fabulous marina facilities building nearing completion. With a final push on funding to construct the breakwater and berthing, we can realise this long-standing project for the benefit of all, and play our part in re-energising the local economy after Covid”.

Local Councillor Allan Henderson comments, “While exactly one year ago no one had heard of Covid, or a Covid Recovery Plan, this project is an excellent antidote. The combined elements of regeneration and recreation are exactly what is needed to ease out of the pandemic. With the added benefits of sea access and employment this shore base and café has the potential to become very popular with walkers, as well as sailors. This is all thanks to an extremely dedicated group of volunteers seeking the best facilities for the community.”

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