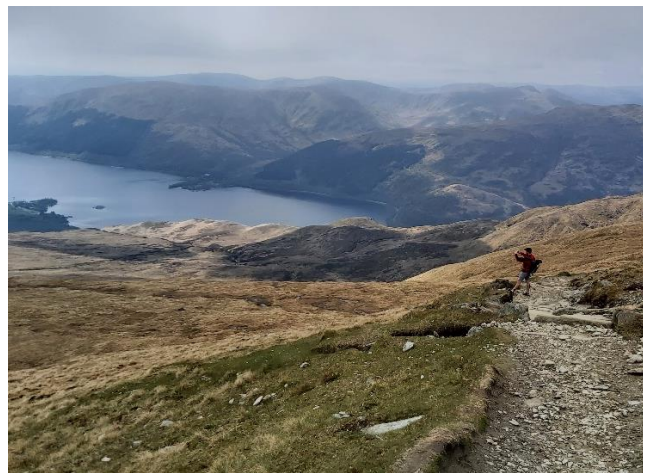


Social Values Assessment Report: Ben Lomond

Elizabeth Robson and Siân Jones



Cite this text as:

Robson, Elizabeth and Jones, Siân. 2026. *Social Values Assessment Report: Ben Lomond*. University of Stirling, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34722/pgw0-w997>.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.34722/pgw0-w997>.

Social Values Assessment Report: Ben Lomond © 2026 by Elizabeth Robson and Siân Jones is licensed under [CC BY-NC 4.0](#).

Any third-party material in this article is not included in the CC BY 4.0 licence, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. Please direct any permissions enquiries to the original rightsholder.

Photographs © Siân Jones and Elizabeth Robson.

This research was funded by the National Trust for Scotland and the University of Stirling. It was undertaken as part of a three-year project titled, *Social Values of National Trust for Scotland Heritage Places: Towards an Organisational Approach*.

For details see: <https://embeddingsocialvalue.stir.ac.uk/>.

Ethical approval for this research was granted by the University of Stirling General University Ethics Panel under reference number GUEP 2024 15639 13066.

Full acknowledgement and grateful thanks are given to all the individuals who participated and made this research possible.

Cover images

Top left: view to Ben Lomond from the hills to the West of the Loch (photo credit: Siân Jones). Top right: signage and interpretation along the driveway to the Bunkhouse from the West Highland Way (photo credit: Elizabeth Robson). Bottom left: oak woodlands on Ben Lomond's lower slopes (photo credit: Elizabeth Robson). Bottom right: a walker taking a photo from the main footpath on Ben Lomond looking towards Loch Lomond (photo credit: Elizabeth Robson).

Contents

Key Findings	4
Context	5
The property	5
The wider area	5
Management arrangements.....	6
On-going projects	6
Assessment Process	6
Research approach	6
Recruitment and selection of participants	7
Research methods	7
Ethical considerations.....	8
Findings: Communities.....	9
Findings: Social Values.....	9
Implications.....	14
Gaps/Future Assessments	15
Annex I: Property Description	16
Annex II: Maps.....	20
Annex III: Participants	22
Annex IV: Structured Interview.....	23
Annex V: Statement of Social Values.....	24
1. Place-based identities	24
2. Sense of place.....	25
3. Wild and natural	27
4. Experiences and memories	28
5. Sporting heritage	30
6. Care and protection.....	32
7. Constant yet changing.....	33
Annex VI: References and Comparators	35

Key Findings

The purpose of this social values assessment was **to understand the meanings, memories, stories, experiences, and feelings associated with Ben Lomond by people today**, and the ways in which these contribute to people's sense of identity, belonging, and place.

Key findings include:

- Ben Lomond is a significant physical and cultural landmark. It is valued as a **constant feature**, familiar throughout people's lives and across the generations.
- The mountain is considered part of the East side of Loch Lomond's **distinctive identity** and, for those who live 'under the hill', is associated with feelings of **belonging and homecoming**.
- People from a much wider area connect with the mountain **from a distance**, linking it to their place identities and geographic orientations, e.g. as Glasgow's 'local mountain'.
- People's sense of place **varies across the property's diverse landscape** - the 'coziness' and 'intimacy' of the Bunkhouse and woods contrasting with the openness of the peatbogs and craggy rocks of the uplands - and is influenced by the weather and seasons.
- For many people, Ben Lomond is associated with a sense of **'wildness'**, linked in some cases to a lack of obvious management interventions in the upland areas. However, for others, the social values of the property are connected to it being *"a living landscape"* (FG2_002) that is **actively worked** as part of the wider area's tradition of hill farming.
- Sense of place is often linked to memories or experiences that establish Ben Lomond as a **special** place. The mountain is somewhere people go to **escape** from the everyday and is associated with feelings of peace and calm.
- Ben Lomond's prominence as significant landmark and the sense of place combine to make the hillside a focus for **ceremonial and commemorative** activities, e.g. marking rites of passage or significant events, including at times of grief or crisis.
- The property is also valued for its **sporting heritage**, in particular the pioneering role the Ben Lomond Hill Race played in the development of hill running. Knowing the history and stories associated with the race supports community connections and feelings of belonging. This legacy informs attitudes and approaches towards present-day racing.
- More broadly, Ben Lomond is a place where **activity-based identities** are formed and reaffirmed, being associated with feelings of personal challenge, fun and adventure.
- People engaging with the property in various ways talk about their activities in terms of **taking care** - drawing on intimate place-based knowledge and authority derived from long-standing familiarity with the landscape. The **communal and co-operative** nature of many of these care practices is itself generative of social values and feelings of **custodianship**.
- Relatedly, Ben Lomond is a focal point for social networks and shared experiences for a wide range of communities and groups. Multiple forms of attachment and varied practices co-exist and there is a sense of the mountain as a shared, **'public space'**.
- However, this diversity of interests and activities also has the potential to cause tensions. People expressed **a range of views on what Ben Lomond is, and what is important about it**, underpinned by their different values, knowledge and experiences.
- There is also widespread concern about future **sustainability** and the continuance of current uses and practices. Given the diversity of connections, any **changes** (to the physical environment, to activities, or to how the Trust engages) are likely to impact on a range of communities and their social values.

Context

The property

Ben Lomond is situated on the East shore of Loch Lomond, which is located to the North of Glasgow (see Map 1 in Annex II). The property is around 7 miles outside the village of Balmaha and is accessed via a single lane road up the East side of the Loch from Balmaha to Rowardennan. The main footpath up Ben Lomond starts at the Loch-side carpark in Rowardennan and passes through Forestry and Land Scotland woodlands before entering the property.

The property was acquired by the Trust in 1984 and extends to 2189.7 ha (see Map 2 in Annex II), including the summits of Ben Lomond and Ptarmigan to the north and Beinn Uird to the south. Approximately two thirds of the property is included within the Ben Lomond Site of Special Scientific Interest, which is designated for the nationally significant upland assemblage of plants, vascular plants, and the presence of rare and scarce invertebrate species. The oak woodlands are part of a Special Area of Conservation.

Buildings on the property include the Ben Lomond Bunkhouse at Rowardennan and the Blairvockie Farm complex, which includes several B-listed buildings, including 18th- and 19th-century farmhouses and a 19th-century sheep-dipping shed. Archaeological investigations have identified remains of post-medieval settlement on the lower levels of the hillside and the Ardess Hidden History Trail links several different archaeological features to tell the story of past human activity in the landscape. Beside the Bunkhouse there is a reconstruction of a cruck-framed building.

At 3,149 ft, Ben Lomond is the most Southerly of Scotland's 282 Munros (mountains over 3,000 ft). It is a significant physical landmark that has been celebrated for centuries in paintings, prose, and verse, including in the famous Scottish folksong *The Bonnie Banks o' Loch Lomond*. It has given its name to mountains in Australia, New Zealand, and Canada and to other places in all those countries, as well as in Trinidad and Tobago, and the USA. Several ships have also been named the Ben Lomond while the Ben Lomond Herd of Galloway cattle (raised on Blairvockie Farm) are internationally renowned as examples of their breed.

The wider area

The property is fully encompassed within the Ben Lomond National Memorial Landscape, a National Scenic Area, and the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park. A long-distance walking route, the West Highland Way, runs along the East side of the Loch, intersecting with the property at the end of the driveway to the Bunkhouse.

The property falls under the Stirling Council and Buchanan Community Council areas. Census data from 2011 (Stirling Council 2011: 3-4) shows 481 people living in the Buchanan Community Council area at that time. Over 90% of residents were born in the UK (73.6% in Scotland) and most (99.2%) identified as white. According to the Scottish Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), the area encompassing Ben Lomond and the scattered settlements along the East side of the Loch has an overall ranking in decile 7, ranked 7 or above on all indicators except geographic access, which is ranked at 1. To the south of the Loch is the area known as the Vale of Leven (including Balloch and Alexandria), which falls under West Dunbartonshire Council and encompasses areas that are ranked in deciles 2 and 1 overall, being among the 20% and 10% most deprived areas nationally.

Management arrangements

An estimated 50,000 people visit Ben Lomond each year. The property is open all year and free to access at all times. The Bunkhouse offers youth hostel-style accommodation for up to 10 paying guests, many of whom are walking the West Highland Way, and also hosts Trust volunteers, staff, and contractors. The majority of the area in the Trust's care is used for hill grazing (cattle and sheep) and is let to a tenant, based at Blairvockie Farm.

At the time of the assessment, there was a small staff team of a Manager, two Rangers (one seasonal), and two part time staff who support the operation of the Bunkhouse. The team deliver a programme of conservation and maintenance, lead residential and one day volunteer activities, and run or contribute to public events throughout the year (e.g. a mountain safety day). Management of the property has sought to balance natural and cultural heritage, socio-economic, and visitor interests. The Trust also works in partnership with other bodies, such as the Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park and NatureScot.

On-going projects

That Trust has a number of on-going projects at the property, many of which are supported by volunteers, including:

- Footpaths: over 300 person-days each year are spent working to prevent landscape erosion through maintenance and repair of the paths. This work is supported by the national Footpaths team and takes into consideration the Trust's approaches to Wild Land (see National Trust for Scotland's Wild Land Policy, 2021).
- Natural woodland restoration: planting saplings within exclosures on areas of the lower hillside currently dominated by bracken.
- Rethatching the cruck-framed building with bracken – this multi-season project, involving staff, volunteers, and an experienced thatcher, was begun during the assessment period.
- Peatland restoration: a rolling programme of activities and maintenance.

There are also independently organised events, which the Trust has a role in co-ordinating but not organising, such as charity walks and mountain skills training. The Ben Lomond Hill Race takes place annually in May and attracts around 150 entrants per year.

Assessment Process

Research approach

This was a rapid assessment, in that the total amount of time spent on research activities was approximately **14 days**. It was conducted over an extended period of 16 months, although activities were mainly concentrated in three blocks: August/September 2024, April/May 2025 and September/October 2025. The extended duration was due partly to the practical limitations of organising on-site activities during the winter months and commitments with concurrent assessments at other properties. However, the longer duration also meant it was possible to co-ordinate the research activities with several public/volunteer events that were organised by the Trust (individually and in collaboration with other organisations), which were useful opportunities for participant observation. With the researcher being based at Stirling, which is around an hour's drive

from Ben Lomond, activities for this assessment could be conducted on day visits, rather than extended fieldwork trips with overnight stays.

Recruitment and selection of participants

Emphasis was on identifying people who are familiar with the mountain, either through spending time at the property or engaging from a distance, rather than transient visitors. Outreach to community groups (based on locality and leisure interests), was followed by snowball and purposeful sampling, with targeted requests to key individuals. This was complemented by direct approaches to people who were present at the property during research visits.

This assessment involved **42 people** as direct participants. This includes people who engaged in short discussions about their interest in or connection to Ben Lomond during participant observation at Trust events but not other attendees at these events. A breakdown of participants by activity is given in the next section. Some people participated in more than one activity, where this is the case, it is noted in Annex III: Participants.

Despite the strong social networks of several Trust staff members, it was difficult to secure participation from local residents. A group discussion was included in one community-led meeting, but it was not possible to work with local organisations on the East side to arrange any other activities. This was partly due to this assessment coinciding with the development of a Local Place Plan for the area and other community priority projects, meaning people's time to participate was limited. Attempts were made to connect with community groups on the West side of the Loch, but requests met with no response (also see Gaps/Future Assessments).

Research methods

This assessment utilised a range of in-person and online research methods, with an emphasis on semi-structured interviews, on-site participant observation, and off-site group discussions.

The research methods implemented and number of participants are as follows:

- In-depth semi-structured (including walking) interviews – 9 people;
- Short, structured interviews (all on main footpath) – 9 people;
- Group discussions (2) – 14 people;
- Participant observation (5 dates) – 13 people;
- Monitoring online platforms;
- Review of existing materials.

The **semi-structured interviews** provided a depth of understanding of how people experience and relate to Ben Lomond. Interviews took place either at the property, with some including walking in the landscape, or online over MS Teams. People were asked about how they first came to know the property, how regularly they visit and the activities that take place when they are there. They were also asked about any memories, feelings, experiences, or stories they associate with the mountain. Finally, people were asked about their experiences engaging with different communities around the property and what they think is important to preserve or change for the future. The discussions were free-flowing, exploratory, and responsive to the contributions of the participants.

The two **group discussions**, one with local residents at a regular community-led meeting (6 people) and the other a research-focused meeting with hill runners (8 people), also generated rich insights.

Both meetings were held in off-site locations proposed by the groups and were structured according to the participants' availability and preferences. Topics discussed were similar to those explored through the semi-structured interviews. With the hill runners, activities included a participatory keywords exercise (with words written on sticky-notes and placed on a poster, followed by group discussion) and participants sharing their own materials related to the hill race.

Structured interviews on footpaths at the property (see Annex IV for design) captured a diversity of respondents and their direct experiences, but most participants were transient visitors, who were not familiar with the mountain (6/9 were first-time visitors). As this was not a priority participant group for this assessment, the focus shifted from structured interviews on the paths to short discussions during **participant observation** at Trust activities and events, including footpath maintenance with the Trust team, a mountain safety day (organised in collaboration with other organisations), a volunteer residential, and a living history day. In person observation was complemented by **monitoring online platforms**, principally the NTS Ben Lomond Facebook page and reviewing the websites of organisations or individuals with an interest in the property.

The review of **existing materials** included a sample of 12-months' worth of comments from the Bunkhouse guest book (98 entries), which provided an overview of feedback from people staying pre- and post-Covid lockdown (Apr-June 2019, Jan-Mar 2020, Aug-Oct 2020, and Jun-Aug 2023). Also considered were contributions to the locally-produced book, *Buchanan Remembered* (Taggart 2007), which "records the personal memories of forty folk, from 8 to 98 years, who have lived and worked on the east side of Loch Lomond" (back cover).

A **thematic analysis** of the material resulting from all the activities informed the preliminary interpretation and synthesis of findings, prior to discussions with Trust staff. The time required for the analysis, interpretation and reporting amounts to **approximately 14 days**.

Ethical considerations

Participation in this assessment is voluntary and based on the principle of informed consent. People were advised before participating about the purpose of the research, what participation would involve (time and activities) and how any data they shared would be used, stored and disposed of. Participants involved in interviews and research-focused group discussions were given written information to keep and asked to sign a consent form and/or give verbal consent to participate. Participants engaged during participant observation or community-led meetings were given information and confirmed consent verbally. Participants could withdraw at any stage from the process and consent was regularly reconfirmed with people involved in more than one activity.

Another key principle is that of protecting participants and causing no harm, both during the activities or in the sharing and handling of resulting material. This assessment does not directly address sensitive topics, but any subject matter introduced by participants that appeared to be emotionally charged or distressing was treated with sensitivity during activities. Participation was kept confidential and all contributions have been anonymised in this report. Careful consideration has been given to issues of identifiability and content when using direct quotes and to how potentially conflicting values and views are presented.

Personal and research data has been kept secure and not shared beyond the research team. The methods and approaches adopted in this assessment were reviewed and approved by the University of Stirling General University Ethics Panel prior to commencing activities.

Findings: Communities

The assessment identified a number of overlapping communities or groups for whom the property has social values. These may be based on identity, location and/or interest and include people regularly present at the property, as well as more dispersed individuals who maintain an attachment from a distance. They are not all communities in the formal sense but include looser groups of people with shared interests, who may or may not be associated through joint activities or organisations. They include:

- Residents of Rowardennan or the East side of the Loch.
- People who live or have lived/grown up within sight of Ben Lomond.
- People who have volunteered, trained or worked on Ben Lomond (past and present – including Thistle Camp co-ordinators, rangers, archaeologists and footpath professionals, mountain rescue teams).
- Hill farmers (on the Ben and in the wider area).
- Friends and relatives of those people commemorated at Ben Lomond.
- Leisure users – including hill walkers, dog walkers, hill runners.

Individuals may identify with more than one of these groups simultaneously or move between them over time. The frequency with which they spend time at the property varies from regularly (daily or weekly) to possibly never (for people who engage with it from a distance). Where they spend time also differs, with limited overlap between those staying at the Bunkhouse and those whose focus is on walking or running on the hill. It was noted from participant contributions and the Bunkhouse guestbook entries that most of the people staying at the Bunkhouse are walking the West Highland Way, rather than visiting other parts of the property, but it also hosts volunteer groups and staff.

Within many communities there are older or more experienced members whose knowledge is recognised and referred to by others. In this case, the knowledge of people who visit the mountain regularly, have decades of experience, or have special training (e.g. as part of mountain rescue) was acknowledged, deferred to, and used as validation by those with less experience. The knowledge of those individuals also confers a moral authority that in some contexts is asserted to challenge external initiatives and the views of people who are unfamiliar with the mountain or whose expertise depends on a different type of knowledge.

Findings: Social Values

What follows is a summary of the values identified and the activities and experiences that generate and sustain them (see Annex IV: Statement of Social Values for a more detailed discussion).

This assessment encompassed all aspects of the property – the uplands, the wooded lower slopes, the Bunkhouse, and farm – and engaged a wide range of groups. As might be anticipated, not all of the areas of the property were equally prominent when people were discussing or expressing social values. There was a focus on the areas of the mountain accessible by paths, rather than more remote areas, and those surrounding the Bunkhouse. While most participants in this study had not regularly interacted with the farm buildings, participants were aware that the landscape is part of a working farm, as they encounter livestock on the hillside. The upper part of the mountain, with its distinctive outline, is also the part of the property that is visible over the greatest distance.

References in popular culture have led to Ben Lomond having, what one participant described as, a place in “*people’s psyche*” (INT_003) or **cultural memory**. A participant who grew up abroad recalled knowing about Ben Lomond through postcards and stories from their grandparents, years before they moved to Scotland and were able to go to the mountain themselves. Some participants contrasted idealised depictions with **seeing and experiencing the landscape**: “*You need to see it to appreciate it, not like the pictures*” (SUR_007).

The **sense of place** associated with Ben Lomond is often underpinned by memories or experiences that establish it as somewhere **special**. One regular runner explained, “*[I’ve] been up many, many times. It doesn’t matter how many times you’ve visited that hill, there’s something really special about what’s up there*” (INT_002). Several participants mentioned special memories or evocative experiences associated with being at the property for sunrise, sunset and at night. The **weather and seasonality** also contribute to the sense of place and, including for those in a wider area, the mountain is part of marking the seasons, from autumn foliage to winter snows: “*the first snow, that’s always a special, snow on the Ben, like there’s snow on the Ben*” (INT_009).

Spending time at the property is associated with feelings of **peace and calm** and, relatedly, that the mountain provides an **escape** from the everyday. One person saying that one of the things they enjoy about visiting is that there is “*no phone signal, can get away from phone, switch off time*” (SUR_001). There was also mention of how going to the mountain provides people with a **sanctuary** or respite in difficult times, both as time away and through encounters with the environment. A participant described one such moment: “*just as you come down, just as I was thinking, ‘shit, I have to get back in the car and face things’, and this big stag came out and stared at me and I stared at it [...] and you just go [deep exhale] ‘wow’*” (FG1_001).

The mountain’s prominence as a physical and cultural landmark and the sense of place combine to make Ben Lomond a focus for **ceremonial and commemorative** activities, such as rites of passage (birthdays, proposals, recovery from an operation), key events (New Year’s Day), or in times of grief or crisis. One participant recalled meeting a young man for whom “*this was like his yearly thing for his birthday was coming up with his pals to have a Buckfast at the summit*” (INT_002). Another noted that “*[you] do get people leaving memorials on the mountain [...] other people ask to scatter ashes*” (INT_006). The mountain is part of a National Memorial Park, but the activities described are informal and focused on the hillside rather than the war memorial by the loch.

People’s sense of place and attachment **varies across the property’s diverse landscapes**. For example, one participant said: “*[I] definitely have a fondness for the Ptarmigan side. Like lots of people. It’s just got so much more character than the main path. You know, you’re going up through craggy rocks and all these like mountain plants instead of just through the big, wide open peat bogs and stuff the other way*” (INT_009). Located away from the main carpark and footpath and surrounded by woods, the Bunkhouse is associated with feelings of coziness, as captured in this feedback: “*This place was the best shelter I could have imagined, so quiet, so intimate*” (Bunkhouse guestbook 16/07/23).

The **woods** that shelter the Bunkhouse and screen it from the surrounding work areas and paths also encompass streams and waterfalls, heard before they are seen, creating feelings of being immersed in the environment. One visitor described the woods as like a “*jungle*” (SUR_002). The character of the woods is valued by some participants, but others contrasted it negatively with the more open feel of the upper areas of the hillside: “*People want to be able to see the view, now when*

climbing up all the lower area you are in trees. When was it last a wooded landscape? Rewilding is all the rage but no good if it is destroying something else" (INT_005).

For many people, Ben Lomond is associated with a sense of **'wildness'**. Several participants described memorable encounters with wildlife at the property, from seeing a ptarmigan on Ptarmigan Ridge, to spotting pine martens outside the Bunkhouse. One participant described how, when it is busy on the Ben, *"you kinda feel annoyed that there's a lot of people up there, because, like no, we want it to be... you want that... wildness still"* (FG1_003). As this indicates, feelings of wildness can depend on how people encounter the landscape. Wildness is also linked in some cases to a lack of obvious **management interventions** (such as fences). However, for other participants, the social values of the property are connected to the mountain as *"a living landscape"* (FG2_002) that is **actively worked** as part of the wider practice of hill farming in the area. One participant noted, *"you might think 'oh, here is a nice quiet secluded glen', but on the other hand this has been a worked landscape for hundreds or thousands of years"* (INT_006).

For leisure users, Ben Lomond is associated with feelings of **fun and adventure**. An association with *"family time"* (SUR_005) and having a fun day out was mentioned by participants with children or sharing their childhood memories, but the idea of the mountain as a 'playground' was also raised by walkers and runners. Some people are motivated by **personal challenge**, with comments such as *"getting to the summit, [it's] good exercise"* (SUR_006), and the *"sense of accomplishment"* (SUR_003). Other participants remembered their first ascent, many mentioning that Ben Lomond was their first Munro and somewhere they return to; one person recalling, *"I could see Ben Lomond from the housing scheme that I grew up on, it's probably one of the first Munros I ever hiked up"* (INT_007).

Ben Lomond is valued in part for its **sporting heritage**, in particular its role in the pioneering development of hill running. The Ben Lomond Hill Race is one of the oldest formal hill races, dating back until at least the 1960s. In the past, the Hill Race attracted large fields of competitors and, in 1983, two of *"the very best hill runners ever, battling on Ben Lomond"* (FG1_006) resulted in one of the longest standing hill run course records. This legacy informs attitudes and approaches to the present-day race. The social values associated with the Hill Race are expressed and reinforced through retelling **stories** about past races and individual runners, many of which reflect a **character or ethos** of down-to-earth 'men of the hills'. Knowing the history and stories of the race creates a sense of **belonging**, supported by familiarity with the mountain as somewhere the runners go frequently. These social networks and sense of community also contribute to the atmosphere associated with the race: *"It has a nice feel to it [...] definitely a favourite, I would say"* (INT_002).

The Hill Race **route** and where the start/finish line is has been changed over the years. However, key features that are associated with the race remain, including Ptarmigan Ridge and a point known to the runners as Bad Step, which is a particularly difficult part of the run. Compared to other races, Ben Lomond offers a **mixture of terrain**: *"Going up the shoulder, you've got that bouldery section at the bottom, then it starts to open out and then you can do a bit of fast-paced, then you've got again the slight technical on the zigzags and then you've got the option of going down Ptarmigan which is, yeah, it remains, just a lot of fun because you can go fast"* (INT_001).

More broadly, Ben Lomond is a place where **activity-based identities** are formed and reaffirmed. Various participants described themselves using terms such as 'outdoorsy', 'hill people', and 'proper walkers'. For example, *"I've been an active outdoors person for forever. So yeah, [I've] known about Ben Lomond for a long time"* (INT_001). These terms are expressions of familiarity and a particular

competence or orientation towards being in the environment. Distinctions are made between types of users, but there is the sense that Ben Lomond is a **shared space** and somewhere like-minded people, or “*kindred spirits*” (FG1_002), can come together.

Ben Lomond is a focus for **social networks and shared experiences** for a range of communities and groups, including those living in the area, people who regularly walk/run at the property, attendees at volunteer camps, Trust rangers, and farmers. Several participants mentioned **inter-generational connections** as part of their experiences and memories – for example, families who have lived locally for several generations (see also Taggart 2007), people who first came to the mountain with older relatives, and learning about the mountain from older or more experienced individuals. For example, one visitor explained: “*my wife is from Balloch, [this place has] childhood memories for her, and now for our children*” (SUR_005).

Various communities and groups express a sense of **moral ownership** over the mountain. The land coming into Trust care is a relatively recent development (being within living memory) and there is a sense of the mountain as ‘**public space**’ that transcends legal landownership: “*When the Duke of Montrose owned it, it would have felt like everyone owned it, because this was Rob Roy MacGregor’s land around here, he owned Ardess [...] that sense of it being your land even though you didn’t own it, goes back a long way*” (INT_003). A sense of ownership and authority was also expressed by users, one runner observing that, for members of the Westerlands Cross Country Club, “*it’s like the home hill, so to speak*” (INT_001).

That Ben Lomond is valued and seen as deserving of care and protection is reflected in the **caring behaviours** people described, such as picking up litter seen while out walking, or applying “*your own conscience about erosion*” when running (FG1_001). People involved with the property in various capacities talked about their activities in terms of **taking care** – although this similarity in language does not necessarily indicate agreement over what should be preserved or how. The **communal and co-operative** nature of many of these care practices was generative of social values and a sense of custodianship over the work achieved. People also described forms of **reciprocity**, for example, a hill runner said, “*you know we’re not just taking from the hills where we’re doing our best to put something back in as well*” (INT_002).

There was a sense from many participants in a variety of contexts that Ben Lomond is a **constant feature**, familiar throughout people’s lives and across the generations. Particularly for local residents, who are not necessarily spending time on the hillside, the mountain is a backdrop to day-to-day life rather than something that requires regular attention: “*locals just learn to live with it really*” (FG2_001). However, the mountain is also associated with **uses and practices**, the continuance of which are much less certain, as this comment implies: “*most people who go up Ben Lomond want it to still be there for their kids*” (INT_003).

A key concern for many people is the **sustainability** of current access and visitor numbers and, relatedly, how any changes (to patterns of visitation or the environment) might impact on current users and the viability of the activities that take place at the property. Longer-term perspectives, place knowledge and experiences are drawn on by local residents when discussing the viability of proposed changes or externally-driven initiatives. For example, on the proposal to introduce a shuttle bus, one participant felt, “*[it] has been suggested before, [but it] doesn’t match people’s behaviour or needs*” (FG2_006). At the same time there is recognition that poor public transport links are a barrier to wider access. Another participant reflected: “*a lot of those kids [from the Vale of Leven],*

they don't get out of the housing estate that they live in very easily. So even though the Ben's their background, actually giving them access to it was a big opportunity" (INT_009).

Implications

Ben Lomond is known of and experienced in ways that transcend its physical boundaries and status as a Trust property. Its distinctive form is associated with feelings of belonging by residents on the East side of the Loch and by people from further afield, who connect with the mountain from a distance. ***Not all of those with an interest or attachment to Ben Lomond are regularly present at the property***, which is a challenge for community identification and engagement processes. Based on experiences in this assessment, complementary activities in other locations (including potentially online) and collaboration with existing community groups is likely to be beneficial when seeking to engage both local residents and more dispersed communities.

At Ben Lomond, as observed at other landscape properties (see for example the Isle of Iona assessment, referenced in Annex VI), multiple forms of attachment and varied practices co-exist within and span across the Trust's property boundaries. The diverse environment supports conservation activities, varied leisure pursuits, and agricultural practices. The social values associated with Ben Lomond are underpinned by the types of knowledge and experiences that these different interactions bring, generating a range of views on what Ben Lomond is and what is important about it. ***The diversity of interests intersecting in the same space has the potential to cause tensions and means that any changes (to the physical environment or to activities) are likely to impact on a range of communities and their social values.***

During this assessment, multiple groups expressed a sense of moral ownership, feelings of care/custodianship, and/or concerns about future sustainability. For example, when discussing the varied uses of the mountain uplands, a complex range of concerns were expressed, including land stability/erosion, protecting rare species, and the extent of open/fenced areas. In proposing potential actions, people drew on intimate place-based knowledge and authority derived from long-standing familiarity with the landscape. However, not all solutions are mutually compatible. For example, requirements that hill runners stick to footpaths has safety implications and impacts on the sporting experience: *"With hill running you pick your line and you go for it, so the restrictions spoil that"* (FG1_001). ***Acknowledging different forms of expertise and involving people in future management and planning processes*** (for example, as proposed in the 2015 Scottish Land Reform Act) ***could play an important role in mitigating potential tensions, addressing sustainability issues, and managing change.***

One of the sustainability issues raised was the impact of visitor numbers on the environment and people's experience of the property. While some people visit in larger groups and for events, such as the annual Hill Race, ***for many participants the social values associated with Ben Lomond are derived from largely unmediated encounters with the landscape*** and the sense of 'wildness' and escape that brings. The Trust works with other agencies to make people aware of the risks associated with Ben Lomond and to help people to manage them appropriately (for example, the mountain safety day) but part of what people value about the property is the personal challenge of traversing the mountain environment. These understandings could be useful when considering visitor management and promoting the diversity of routes and experiences available at the property.

The desire for unmediated encounters also has implications for how physical management interventions (e.g. footpaths and fences) and interpretation are experienced and their potential to

impact on the sense of place. The current approach, in keeping with the Trust's Wild Land Policy, is to keep interventions in the uplands to a minimum, with interpretation located along the lower-level Heritage Trail and at the Bunkhouse. These areas have significantly lower footfall than the main upland paths. As a result, some aspects of the property and the Trust's management actions are foregrounded in people's awareness and values, while others are largely unknown. Any measures to increase awareness of the Trust's work (e.g. among those accessing the property from the main car park and not walking along to the Bunkhouse) will need to carefully consider **where, when, and how interpretation or communication takes place** – for example, possibly exploring alternative (non-intrusive) approaches on-site alongside off-site activities.

The Heritage Trail illustrates the history of Rowardennan as a peopled place. Ben Lomond continues to be associated with those who have lived and worked there, know it well, or achieved notable feats. This assessment has identified some of **the networks of intangible connections between people and landscape that are central to how Ben Lomond is experienced, remembered, and valued**. In most cases, such connections are not immediately obvious from the physical environment, meaning that they are vulnerable to loss due to changes in activities or disruption of the community networks through which the stories and knowledge associated with the social history of the mountain are transmitted. Sharing of community stories and contemporary cultural attachments (such as Ben Lomond being people's first Munro), for example through interpretation or engagement activities, could help sustain existing connections and create new ones, enabling people to link their personal experiences and values to the wider significance and sustainability of the property.

Gaps/Future Assessments

In terms of addressing recognised limitations in representation and scope, complementary research could be conducted with:

- **People living and working on the East side of the Loch**, including those farming in the area – additional research would extend understandings of the social values associated with the mountain by local residents who are not regularly present at the property. It may be most productive to connect further assessment activities with community-led events.
- **West side communities** – it would be interesting to explore if residents living in villages along the West side of the Loch also associated the Ben with the character of the East side and how they connect with the mountain (both on the ground and from a distance). Although located across the water, Ben Lomond is relatively close and until recently there was a ferry across the Loch to Rowardennan.
- **Loch users** (e.g. fishing, sailing, cruise boat crews) – attempts were made to contact people who experience the Ben mainly from on the water, but it was not possible to secure their participation in this assessment. Further research is needed to understand how the mountain contributes to the sense of place of loch users and the interactions between land- and water-based activities.
- **Clan societies** – mention was made during this assessment to historic Clan affiliations to the land and several Clans are associated with the Loch Lomond area. Further research, perhaps using online methods, could be useful in revealing the connections of dispersed Clan society members to Ben Lomond.

Annex I: Property Description

Location:

Loch Lomond, which is located to the North of Glasgow (see Map 1 in Annex II), straddles the Highland Boundary Fault between the Highlands and the Lowlands. Ben Lomond is situated on the East shore of the Loch, around 7 miles outside the village of Balmaha and 10 miles from the larger village of Drymen. There is a single lane road from Balmaha to Rowardennan, the small settlement at the base of the mountain.

The main footpath up Ben Lomond begins at the Loch-side car park at Rowardennan, which is on Forestry and Land Scotland land (parking charges apply) and passes through their woodlands before a deer gate marks the entrance onto the Trust property.

The West Highland Way runs along the East side of the Loch, intersecting with the property at the end of the driveway to the Bunkhouse. Established in 1980 as Scotland's first officially designated long-distance walking path (96 miles long), the West Highland Way carries over 100,000 people per year (<https://westhighlandway.com/>).

Socio-economic profile of surrounding areas:

The property falls within the Stirling Council and Buchanan Community Council areas (the Community Council was not active during the assessment period). The area is also covered by the East Loch Lomond Community Trust.

Census data from 2011 (Stirling Council 2011: 3-4) shows 481 people living in the Buchanan Community Council area at that time. Over 90% of residents were born in the UK (73.6% in Scotland) and most (99.2%) identified as white. According to the Scottish Government's Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), the area encompassing Ben Lomond (data zone S01013118 Highland (part)) has an overall ranking in decile 7.¹ The scattered settlements are ranked 7 or above on all indicators except geographic access, which is at 1. The area including Balmaha (data zone S01013001 - Blane Valley (part)) has an overall ranking in decile 8, and Drymen (data zone S01013010) is in decile 9, both also score of 1 for geographic access.

The West shore of the Loch is in Argyll and Bute Council area. There are two active community councils covering the area broadly opposite Ben Lomond (Luss & Arden and Three Villages: Arrochar, Tarbet and Ardlui). This area (data zone S01007404 Lomond Shore (part)) scores slightly less well in all areas of the SIMD and has a crime ranking of 2, with an overall ranking of 6.

To the south of the Loch is the area known as the Vale of Leven (including Balloch and Alexandria), which falls under West Dunbartonshire Council and encompasses SIMD data zones that are ranked in deciles 2 and 1 overall, being among the 20%, 10% and 5% most deprived areas nationally.

Property (including formal heritage designations):

Ben Lomond is the most Southerly of Scotland's 282 Munros (mountains over 3,000ft), rising to 960m (3,149ft). The property was acquired by the Trust in 1984 and extends to 2189.7 ha (see Map 2 in Annex II), including the summits of Ben Lomond and Ptarmigan to the north and Beinn Uird to the south, the Ben Lomond Bunkhouse at Rowardennan, and the Blairvockie Farm complex.

¹ The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation is a relative measure across 6,976 small areas (called data zones). It ranks all the data zones and divides them into ten equally sized segments: the first decile (ranked 1) are the 10% most deprived areas, and the tenth decile (ranked 10) are the 10% least deprived areas.

Blairvockie Farm (located towards the Southern boundary of the property) includes several B-listed buildings: Blairvockie Farmhouse (circa 1851), the 18th-century house it replaced, now known as Christmas Cottage, together with flanking outbuildings, and the steading (all covered by designation: <https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB50452>), and a 19th-century sheep-dipping shed and enclosure walls (covered by designation: <https://www.trove.scot/designation/LB50453>).

Archaeological investigations at the property have identified remains including evidence of shielings on the hill and post-medieval structures. Recent excavations have included the site of a potential illicit whisky still and a bloomery mound (associated with iron smelting). A survey and limited excavation of archaeological features close to the Ptarmigan path below Sput Ban waterfall was co-ordinated with footpath repairs. The Ardess Hidden History Trail is a low level, 1.5km walk through the lower woodlands behind the Bunkhouse, which links several different archaeological features to tell the story of past human activity in the landscape. Beside the Bunkhouse there is a reconstruction of a cruck-framed building (built with the support of volunteers between 2012 and 2015), which staff and volunteers had begun rethatching with bracken during this assessment period.

Approximately two thirds of the property, except Beinn Uird to the South, is included within the Ben Lomond Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), which is designated for the nationally significant upland assemblage of plants, vascular plants, and the presence of rare and scarce invertebrate species (see: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/186>). The oak woodlands are also part of a wider Special Area of Conservation (see: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8298>).

The property is fully encompassed within the Ben Lomond National Memorial Landscape (NML), which was established in 1995 and dedicated to all those who have fallen in conflict. The NML is managed in partnership with Forestry and Land Scotland and the Scottish Government. An annual Remembrance Day service is held at the loch-side monument.

The property also falls within a National Scenic Area, which covers the Loch and immediately surrounding areas (see: <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/9135>) and the larger Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park (see: <https://www.lochlomond-trossachs.org/>).

Management arrangements:

Around 50,000 people visit Ben Lomond each year, with footfall in the peak summer months (May - August) being 6-8 times greater than in the winter months (November - February).² The property is free to access at all times, except for the Bunkhouse and buildings on Blairvockie Farm. The majority of the area in Trust care is used for hill grazing (cattle and sheep) and is let to the Trust's tenant, based at Blairvockie Farm.

At the time of the assessment, there was a small staff team consisting of a Property Manager, two Rangers (one permanent, focused on footpath maintenance, and one seasonal, focused on reforestation), and two part time staff who support the operation of the Bunkhouse. The team deliver a programme of conservation and maintenance (including footpath improvement, erosion control, peatland restoration, species monitoring, and reforestation), lead residential and one day volunteer work teams, and run or contribute to public events throughout the year (e.g. a mountain safety day). There are also independently organised events, such as the annual Ben Lomond Hill Race and charity walks, which the Trust has a role in co-ordinating but not running.

² Data from Trust footpath counters (monthly breakdown for period March 2024 – Feb 2025).

The Bunkhouse is open year-round and offers youth hostel-style accommodation for up to 10 paying guests, many of whom are walking the West Highland Way, as well as Trust volunteers and contractors. It also contains the property office and other spaces used by staff. The Bunkhouse was originally used by the Trust as accommodation for the Property Manager and, at the start of this assessment, provided accommodation for one of the rangers.

Management of the property has sought to balance natural and cultural heritage, socio-economic, and visitor interests. The Trust also works in partnership with other bodies, such as the National Park and NatureScot. Emergencies on the mountain are attended by the Lomond Mountain Rescue Team (<https://www.scottishmountainrescue.org/teams/>) and emergency services. Improvements to access have taken into consideration the Trust's approaches to Wild Land.

In 2014, Scottish Natural Heritage (now NatureScot) identified 42 Wild Land Areas. While Ben Lomond is not included in one of these Areas, the National Trust for Scotland's own Wild Land Policy (2021) recognises that *"Smaller areas, often close to urban centres, which exhibit a high degree of wildness are not covered by this term but are often still highly valued locally in terms of their landscape and wildlife and as accessible areas where 'wildness' can be experienced"* (2021: 2).

The Policy goes on to say that *"wildness is not simply a scenic attribute, it is often more subjective and could be largely due to certain characteristics of the land provoking certain perceptual responses"* and, quoting from NatureScot's 'Assessing Impacts on Wild Land Areas: Technical guidance', it identifies these as:

- *"a sense of sanctuary or solitude;*
- *risk or, for some visitors, a sense of awe or anxiety;*
- *perceptions that the landscape has arresting or inspiring qualities; and*
- *fulfilment from the physical challenge required to penetrate into these places"* (2021: 2).

Annexed to the Wild Land Policy are the 1937 'Unna Principles' (2021: 9-10). Danish-born mountaineer and philanthropist Percy Unna was President of the Scottish Mountaineering Club and helped raise funds by subscription for the acquisition of several areas of mountainous country in Scotland, *"to be held for the use of the nation, so that the public may have unrestricted access at all times"* (2021: 9). In a 1937 letter to the Trust, Unna outlined ten principles for how these wild mountain areas could be managed and enjoyed. The principles *"aimed to balance access with conservation. It remains a delicate balance to strike, but one that the Trust takes seriously, maintaining footpaths and repairing erosion [...] while keeping other intervention in the landscape to a minimum"* (<https://www.nts.org.uk/stories/explore-our-remarkable-mountain-landscapes>).

Popular culture:

Ben Lomond is a significant physical landmark that has been celebrated in paintings, prose, and verse. Picturesque and Romantic depictions of the Scottish landscape in the 18th and 19th centuries established Ben Lomond's iconic status and drove tourism to the area (see Ingram 2011 for a discussion of 18th century travel writing; and Young 2021 for discussion of John Knox's panoramic paintings of the view from Ben Lomond).

In his 18th-century travel guide, James Denholm from Glasgow writes, *"the lofty mountain of Ben Lomond, the most western of the Grampians, which of itself, without any concurring object, is sufficiently picturesque and interesting. Aided, however, by the lake and surrounding scenery, we will venture to say that few views anywhere to be met with can compete with that from the Point of Firkin [which is on the West shore of the Loch]"* (1798: 228). Denholm also records a poem, scratched

into the glass of an inn in Tarbet, directed to those whose *“taste for grandeur, and the dread sublime, Prompt the BEN LOMOND’s fearful hight to climb”* (1798: 229).

A century later, Angus MacLellan was working at Rowardennan Hotel (from late spring 1895 to the end of November 1897) and recalls in his biography a member of the Hotel staff taking visitors up Ben Lomond on a pony (MacLellan 1997). The late 19th century also saw the establishment of Scotland’s first mountaineering clubs (in 1889) and publication in 1891 of Hugh Munro’s tables of Scottish mountains over 3000ft, which have become known as Munros.

The Bonnie Banks o’ Loch Lomond is a Scottish folksong associated with the Jacobite rebellion (Ingram 2011: 123). It has been performed and recorded many times, popularised most recently by Scottish Celtic rock band Runrig, who released it as a single in 1982. A location on Ben Lomond is mentioned in verse 3:

'Twas there that we parted, in yon shady glen,
On the steep, steep side o’ Ben Lomond,
Where in soft purple hue, the highland hills we view,
And the moon coming out in the gloaming.

The Ben Lomond Hill Race (organised by Westerlands Cross Country Club, which is based in Glasgow) takes place annually in May (<https://westerlandsccl.co.uk/club-races/ben-lomond-hill-race-2/>). The race currently attracts around 150 entrants per year (a number capped by the Trust). The course record for men was set by John Wild in 1983 and stands at 1 hour 2 minutes and 16 second for the return trip from the then starting point at the Hotel to the summit and back. The women’s record was set by Beverley Redfern in 1990 at 1 hour 11 minutes and 57 seconds.

There are mountains named after Ben Lomond in:

- Australia (within Ben Lomond National Park in Tasmania)
- New Zealand
- Canada

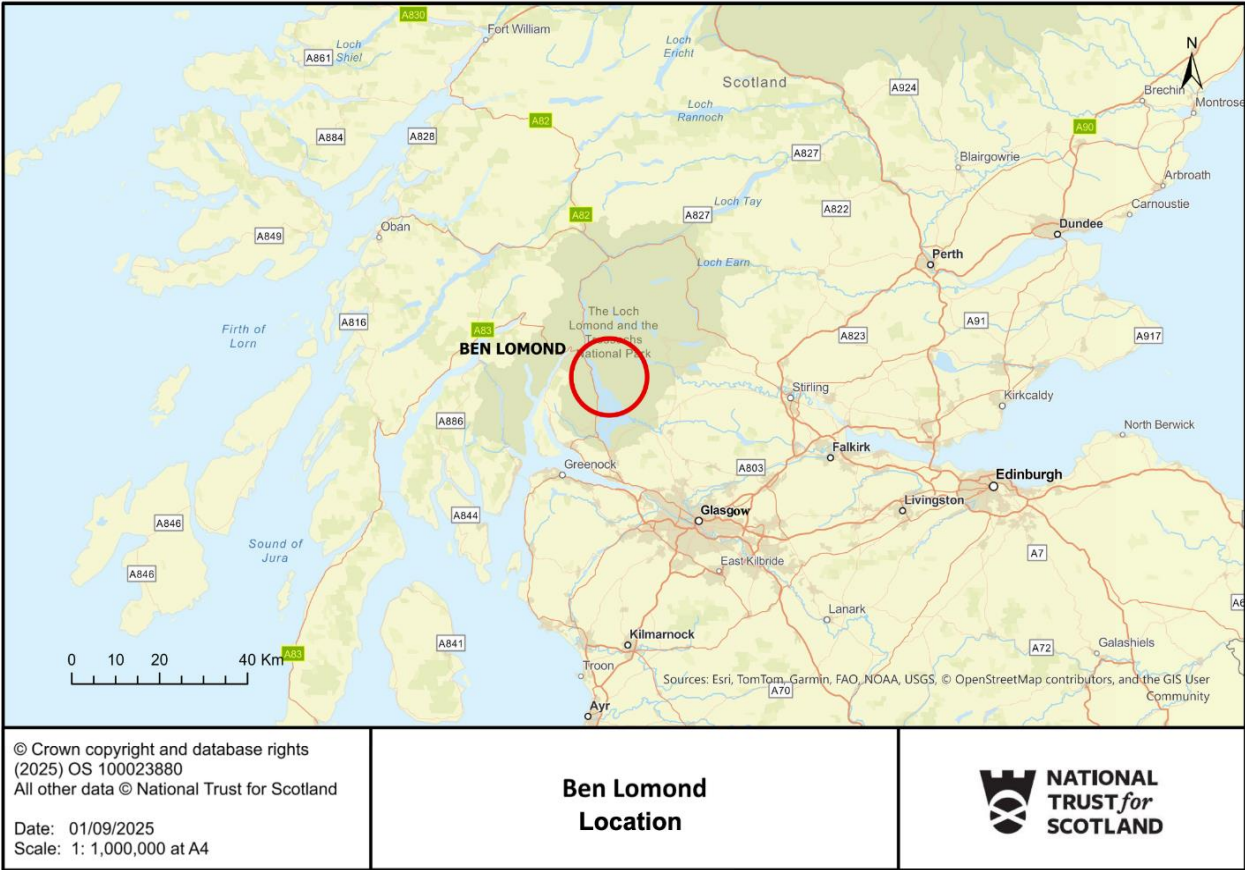
There are also other places named after Ben Lomond in all the above countries, in Trinidad and Tobago, and in the USA. Several ships have also been named the Ben Lomond.

The Ben Lomond Herd of Galloway cattle raised on Blairvockie Farm and in the surrounding area are well known and internationally renowned as examples of their breed (Taylor 2019).

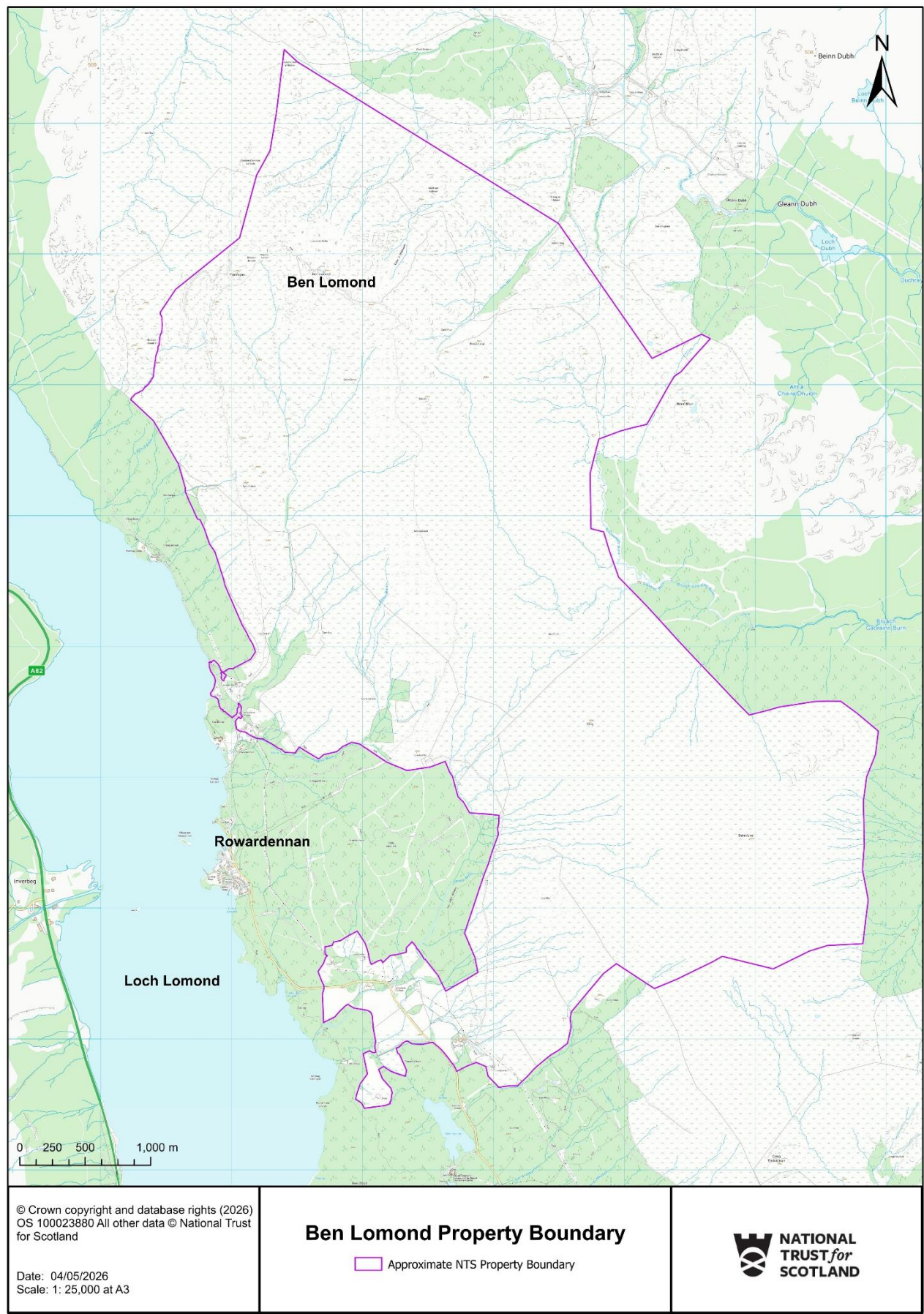
Annex II: Maps

Maps are based on an Ordnance Survey data © Crown Copyright, licence no. 100023880. All other data © National Trust for Scotland. Not to be reproduced without permission.

Map 1: Property location



Map 2: Property boundary, annotated to highlight key features



Annex III: Participants

Date	Method	Primary affiliation/reason contacted
11/06/2024	Semi-structured Interview	NTS staff member
11/06/2024	Semi-structured Interview	NTS staff member
11/06/2024	Semi-structured Interview	NTS staff member
26/08/2024	Semi-structured Interview	Regular user (Glasgow)
26/08/2024	Semi-structured Interview	Regular user (Glasgow)
29/08/2024	Semi-structured Interview	Local resident
09/09/2024	Group discussion	Local resident
09/09/2024	Group discussion	Local resident
09/09/2024	Group discussion	Local resident
09/09/2024	Group discussion	Local resident
09/09/2024	Group discussion	Local resident
09/09/2024	Group discussion	Local resident
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user [also interviewed]
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user [also interviewed]
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user
12/09/2024	Group discussion	Regular user
25/05/2025	Public event	Regular user
25/05/2025	Public event	Regular user [also in Group discussion]
02/06/2025	Volunteer event	Existing volunteer (Glasgow)
02/06/2025	Volunteer event	New volunteer (England)
02/06/2025	Volunteer event	New volunteer (England)
02/06/2025	Volunteer event	New volunteer (Scotland)
04/09/2025	Walking Interview	Local resident
04/09/2025	Walking Interview	Local resident
03/10/2025	Semi-structured Interview	Previously local resident
11/10/2025	Public event	Existing volunteer (England)
11/10/2025	Public event	Existing volunteer (England)
11/10/2025	Public event	Existing volunteer (England)
11/10/2025	Public event	Existing volunteer (Scotland)
11/10/2025	Public event	Existing volunteer (Scotland)
11/10/2025	Public event	Existing volunteer (Scotland)
11/10/2025	Public event	Existing volunteer (Scotland)

Structured interviews

All structured interviews (9) were completed in person/verbally at locations along the main path on the mountain. Everyone encountered was asked to participate in the order that they arrived, unless another discussion was already in progress. For questions see Annex IV.

Date	Age	Gender identity	Main residence	Visited before	NTS member
24/04	41-50	Man	Paisley	Once	No
24/05	18-30	Man	Nottingham	No - first visit	No

24/05	41-50	Man	Glasgow	No - first visit	No
24/05	18-30	Man	Newcastle	No - first visit	No
24/05	41-50	Woman	Renfrewshire	Once	No
24/05	31-40	Man	Edinburgh	No - first visit	No
24/05	18-30	Woman	Paisley/Partick	Few times	No
24/05	60+	Man	Newcastle	No - first visit	Yes
24/05	41-50	Man	Dalgety Bay	No - first visit	No

Annex IV: Structured Interview

Questions

Question 1: Where did you come from today?

Question 2: What brings you here? Do you normally come together/with others/alone?

Question 3: Is this your first visit? If no, how often do you visit? [multiple choice] First visit; once before; 3-6 times/year; 1-3 times/month; weekly; more than once a week

Question 4: What do you enjoy about this place (for this activity or more generally)?

Question 5: Is there anything you don't like about it or would like to see change in future?

Question 6: Are there other places you go for this activity? How does it compare?

Question 7: Are there other things you come here for? Who with?

Question 8: Does this place have any special significance or meanings for you (could be related to or beyond this particular activity)?

Question 9: How would you describe this place - are there three key words that sum this place up for you?

Question 10: Is there anything else you would like to add?

Participants were also asked to provide some basic demographic information (all questions optional) and answer three questions related to the Trust [multiple choice]: Yes; No; Prefer not to say

- Ben Lomond is cared for by the National Trust for Scotland, were you aware of that before today?
- Are you currently a member of the National Trust for Scotland?
- Have you ever worked or volunteered for the National Trust for Scotland (here or elsewhere)?

Annex V: Statement of Social Values

This Statement is based on a limited number of inputs from individuals who do not claim to speak for or represent the views of their entire community. Multiple values may be present concurrently and competing or seemingly contradictory values can co-exist between and within communities or groups. Valuing is a dynamic process, and values are liable to change over time. This Statement should therefore be considered as indicative of the diversity of values associated with the property by people with a range of interests and attachments, rather than comprehensive or definitive.

1. Place-based identities

- 1.1 The mountain is valued as part of the East side of the Loch's **distinctive identity**. This was expressed very directly by one resident, who said, *"I think Ben Lomond gives people a sense of identity that live here"* (INT_003). Another participant, who grew up locally, explained:

"I would always refer to the Ben as my mountain and [my friend] told me about how Maori people, when they tell their life story, they say what's their mountain, what's their river, what's their canoe. It's like their way of describing where they come from, and I guess I was sort of doing that too, without realising" (INT_009).

The testimonials of local residents in the book *Buchanan Remembered* (Taggart 2007) also give the sense of a distinct community identity among people living in the scattered settlements along the East side. Although Ben Lomond is not mentioned often in the book, the hill farms of the area, including Ben Lomond and Blairvockie, and memories of time spent on the hills do feature (see e.g. 2007: 78-79 and 135-137).

- 1.2 The mountain is associated with feelings of **belonging and homecoming**. For those who have lived at the property, it has literally been their home (see also section 2). More broadly, people spoke of a sense of feeling at home or knowing they were home when they could see the mountain or were 'under the hill'. For example: *"I have a friend who says 'I always know I'm home when I can see Ben Lomond'"* (INT_003); and *"I had it as the background view when I was a child. [...] I'd see the curve of the hill against the sky and think, oh, I'm nearly home because I'm under this"* (INT_009). Participants who have known Ben Lomond in different ways or at different stages in their lives described positive feelings of *"coming full circle"* (INT_005) when they returned.
- 1.3 The mountain is valued as a place for outdoor pursuits (see also sections 4 and 5) and where related **identities are formed and reaffirmed**. Various participants mentioned and aligned themselves with activity-based identities using terms such as 'outdoorsy', 'hill people', and 'proper walkers'. For example, *"I've been an active outdoors person for forever. So yeah, [I've] known about Ben Lomond for a long time"* (INT_001). These terms are expressions of familiarity and a particular competence or orientation towards being in the environment. Ben Lomond is described as somewhere like-minded people, or *"kindred spirits"* (FG1_002), can come together.
- 1.4 Distinctions are made between types of visitors and users, for example: *"you've got proper walkers going up the hill and then you've got people going up in flipflops"* (INT_003); and advising runners *"please be wary of walkers [when racing], remember they don't realise*

how quick you're moving" (FG1_006). However, expressions of identity connected with the mountain are rarely exclusionary statements, much more common was the sense that it is a **shared space**: *"I think there is room for everyone"* (INT_003) and *"Yeah, it can be my mountain and still be lots of other people's mountain. That's OK"* (INT_009).

- 1.5 People who regularly spend time or live and work at the property develop a depth of knowledge rooted in their experiences. They become intimately familiar with the environment and express feelings of **place attachment**, from anticipating seasonal changes, such as house martins returning to nest at the Bunkhouse, to having favourite places around the property, such as the waterfalls in the woods or the white boulders near the top of the mountain. For example, one participant's favourite place was a spot from which you *"can see the Ben and the Loch"* (SVNTS_CS2_INT_004).
- 1.6 Attachment and belonging are also supported by **place knowledge**, including colloquial or Gaelic place names, and familiarity with local folklore, e.g. the stories associated with the fairy mound. One participant described how: *"everyone knows the Bonnie Bonnie Banks song, but the shady glen that's mentioned in there is a real place, because it's the glen the other side of Ben Lomond"* (INT_009).
- 1.7 **Maintaining the connections and identities** associated with Ben Lomond is not necessarily dependent on regularly visiting the property or summitting the mountain. For people living in the area, *"it's one of those things, the locals may never come up and go up Ben Lomond but, see, if you touched it, you'd know about it"* (INT_003). A regular volunteer explained that they have worked at the property on multiple occasions and all over the hillside but have never been to the trig point at the top.
- 1.8 Outside the immediate vicinity, people from a wide area connect with Ben Lomond **from a distance**. A participant who lives in Glasgow said, *"from just around the corner from the house you can see Ben Lomond. So, you can tell, if you can see Ben Lomond, you know it's going to be a good day because it's clear"* (INT_001). Various people reflected on how residents of Glasgow value Ben Lomond as their '**local mountain**', connecting to a long history of working-class people getting out of the city at the weekend on bikes or by train and accessing the Loch Lomond area to walk or climb (also see section 4.3). One visitor from Paisley described it as, *"on the doorstep"* (SUR_001) and another who had visited several times commented, *"they call it the Highlands but it's not, it's part of the West Coast"* (SUR_007), firmly linking the mountain to their specific geographic orientation and identity.

2. Sense of place

- 2.1 People value the **atmosphere** they feel at Ben Lomond, which is often associated with memories or experiences that establish it as a **special** place. Comments mostly related to the upper parts of the mountain. One participant explained, *"[I've] been up many, many times. It doesn't matter how many times you've visited that hill, there's something really special about what's up there"*, adding shortly afterwards, *"it's just got a lovely, lovely feel to it [...] It's somewhere you just constantly go back to"* (INT_002). Another described how *"[it has a] special significance to everyone who stays up here, not mystical, but air of regality"* (SUR_007).

- 2.2 If this last comment implies an unknowable quality, for others, the feelings are more **intimate**. One participant described their experiences at Ben Lomond as giving them a feeling for “*mountains as living breathing places*” (INT_006), and another recalled,

“I was kind of wandering around all these cliffs [...and] ravens would circle down to see what you're up to, and there'd be stonechats perching nearby, and I always just like... it felt, like companionable, you know, [...] it was me and the wildlife spending time together. That's a really strong memory” (INT_009).

- 2.3 The mountainside is, for many people, a place of **peace and calm**. This was reflected in how people like to experience Ben Lomond and in the behaviours they described as less desirable. For example, one participant mentioned how some walkers are “*very loud and swear*” (INT_008), which for them was inappropriate and spoiled the experience for others. Several participants mentioned enjoying having the mountain to themselves or being away from other people (see also section 3) and feeling it was “*a bit more special*” (INT_009) when they got to go to places or at times that most visitors tend not to go.

- 2.4 The sense of peacefulness is also related to feelings that the mountain provides an **escape**. One resident reflected, “*What are people coming for? [...] They're coming to get away [from day-to-day life]*” (INT_003). A visitor echoed this sentiment, saying one of the things that they enjoy is “*no phone signal, can get away from phone, switch off time*” (SUR_001). There was also mention of how going to the mountain provides people with **sanctuary** or respite in difficult times, both as space and time away and through the meaningful encounters they have with others and with the environment. A participant described one such moment: “*just as you come down, just as I was thinking, ‘shit, I have to get back in the car and face things’, and this big stag came out and stared at me and I stared at it [...] and you just go [deep exhale] ‘wow’*” (FG1_001).

- 2.5 Several participants mentioned special memories or particularly evocative experiences associated with being on the hillside at **sunrise, sunset and at night**, which are also mostly quieter times. For example, one participant shared a photograph taken from the summit, saying, “*the sunset was just great. It was so atmospheric*” (INT_001). Other people talked about going in the evening (after work) or staying on the hill overnight as special times and memories.

- 2.6 The **weather and seasonality** also contribute to the sense of place. One visitor commented, “*when the sun is shining [the scenery is] spectacular*” (SUR_008). However, changeable or adverse weather (for example, going from rain at the lochside to snow at the summit) also contributes to people’s experiences, memories and feelings. One participant recalled, “*[the first time] I walked it and there was cloud at the top, there was no views, but I got up there and was like, I'm coming back for more. Maybe because I couldn't see the views, but I just had a special feel to it*” (INT_001). The changing seasons and colours, in particular the heather in spring and the trees and grasses in autumn, were mentioned by regular users and residents, and “*the first snow, that's always a special, snow on the Ben, like there's snow on the Ben*” (INT_009).

- 2.7 The sense of place **varies within the diverse landscapes** of the property. For example, one participant said: “*[I] definitely have a fondness for the Ptarmigan side. Like lots of people. It's just got so much more character than the main path. You know, you're going up*

through craggy rocks and all these like mountain plants instead of just through the big, wide open peat bogs and stuff the other way” (INT_009).

- 2.8 Located away from the main carpark and footpath, the Bunkhouse is associated with feelings of **homeliness** by guests and has also been a home for Trust staff. People comment in the guestbook on the hospitality, welcome, and cozy, peaceful feel of the place. For example: *“This place was the best shelter I could have imagined, so quiet, so intimate”* (Bunkhouse guestbook 16/07/23). Many of the Bunkhouse guests are walking the West Highland Way (WHW) and do not venture further onto the property; although some guests do walk up the mountain: *“Ben Lomond today in the sun sleet and snow meant we arrived here very tired and very happy to see such a clean and lovely stay”* (Bunkhouse guestbook 01/05/2021); and *“This morning we changed our plan: instead of walking further on our WHW trail, we decided to go up Ben Lomond, by recommendation from the Rangers. The view was lovely from up there”* (Bunkhouse guestbook 05/06/2023).
- 2.9 The feeling of coziness at the Bunkhouse is connected to the **surrounding woods**, which shelter the house and screen it from surrounding work areas and paths. One visitor described the wooded areas as like a *“jungle”* (SUR_002). Within the woods are streams and waterfalls, heard before they are seen, creating feelings of being immersed in the environment. Another participant recalled *“I used to go and sit by it [the big waterfall in the woods] in the dark sometimes. Like when it had been really rainy and just all this white water in the dark. I used to love doing that”* (INT_009). People staying at the Bunkhouse also mentioned evening walks in the woods.
- 2.10 Being surrounded by trees enhanced the sense of place for some participants but was contrasted with more open views by others: *“People want to be able to see the view, now when climbing up all the lower area you are in trees. When was it last a wooded landscape? Rewilding is all the rage but no good if it is destroying something else”* (INT_005).

3. Wild and natural

- 3.1 For many people, Ben Lomond is associated with a sense of **‘wildness’**. One resident explained, *“this side of the Loch is wilder [... visitors] can go off the beaten track and they really can be on their own, if they want to be, so I think that’s a big appeal of it for a lot of people”* (INT_003). As this suggests, experiencing feelings of wildness can depend on who else is around and **being alone** in the environment. Another participant described how, when it is busy on the mountain, *“you kinda feel annoyed that there’s a lot of people up there, because, like no, we want it to be... you want that... wildness still”* (FG1_003). The experience of walking on the hillside was contrasted with areas nearby, such as the lochside, which are seen as more *“touristy”* (SUR_002).
- 3.2 Several participants described memorable encounters with wildlife at the property, from seeing a ptarmigan on Ptarmigan Ridge, to hearing the red deer stags roaring or black grouse lekking. The **environment, ‘nature’, and natural sounds** also feature in the keywords associated with the property by participants (see Figure 1 in Findings: Social Values), which include birdsong, bluebells, woods, and midges. Not all wildlife encounters are in the more remote areas of the mountain. One young guest at the Bunkhouse recorded *“I saw a pine marten walk past the hostel while I was hiding [during a game]”* (Bunkhouse

Guestbook entry, 23/12/2019), and deer, skylarks and an adder were all observed when walking the main paths during this assessment.

- 3.3 Wildness is linked in some cases to a lack of obvious **management interventions** and an environment that has not been 'health and safetyfied' or "*made easier or safer to climb*" (Unna Principles point 4, cited in National Trust for Scotland 2021: 10). As the property includes a working hill farm, knowledge and awareness of the potential risks includes being around livestock. One participant recalled inadvertently getting caught between a cow and calf the first time they walked up and the cow running towards them. Although this gave them quite a scare at the time, they went on to say, "*that's quite nice, that you've got that sort of just happening on the hill. It's not fenced in, you know, rightly so*" (INT_002). In this case the absence of fences is equated with a sense of minimal intervention.
- 3.4 For other participants, social values are associated with the mountain as "*a living landscape*" (FG2_002) that is **actively worked** as part of the wider practice of hill farming in the area (see also section 6). One of the other hill farms in the area (not on Trust land) had recently become untenanted and participants commented on how that had changed their feelings towards the area, one saying they "*don't like going up that way now*" (SUR_010) and another adding that they found it strange "*not to see lights on*" (SUR_011). Another participant noted, "*you might think 'oh, here is a nice quiet secluded glen', but on the other hand this has been a worked landscape for hundreds or thousands of years*" (INT_006). Similarly, in the book, *Buchann Remembered*, Chrissie Bannerman who lived at The Old Manse and farmed sheep comments that, "*without our work and our efforts [i.e. that of farmers], this place could very easily become a wilderness and that we certainly do not want*" (Taggart 2007: 9).

4. Experiences and memories

- 4.1 Ben Lomond offers a relatively accessible venue for walkers and runners living in the surrounding areas. A local resident, reflecting on the motivations of visitors, said, "*with Ben Lomond, I would say that's more either a challenge, or people coming up it because, what's that lovely quote? 'Because it's there'*" (INT_003). This aspect of **personal challenge** is reflected in participant responses. When asked what they enjoyed about Ben Lomond, visitors mentioned "*getting to the summit, [it's] good exercise*" (SUR_006) and their "*sense of accomplishment*" (SUR_003).
- 4.2 A related set of experiences and feelings are with Ben Lomond as a place of **fun and adventure**. An association with "*family time*" (SUR_005) and having a fun day out was mentioned by participants visiting with children and sharing childhood memories, but the idea of the mountain as a 'playground' was also raised by walkers and runners.
- 4.3 Historically, Loch Lomond has provided an important route into the Highlands from Glasgow and Ben Lomond is still valued in part for offering that **entry point** – geographically and as an initial experience of hill walking. Participants remembered their first ascent, many mentioning that Ben Lomond was their first Munro and somewhere they return to (see also section 5). One participant recalled, "*I could see Ben Lomond from the housing scheme that I grew up on, it's probably one of the first Munros I ever hiked up*" (INT_007). Another participant reflected, "*to me, it's like the gateway to the Highlands. [...] So, I think that's part*

of it as well, it's sort of just like easy to start exploration [...] That's what I like about it" (INT_001).

- 4.4 Feelings of fun sit alongside concerns expressed by residents about safety (i.e. people getting stuck or being injured and requiring rescue). Even for those familiar with the mountain, it remains dynamic and changeable with an element of **danger**: *"I would rather go up the Ridge and come down [the main path], even though sometimes it can be a bit scary, especially a bit slippy, because you're on the stones"* (INT_002).
- 4.5 Ben Lomond provides a focus for **social networks and shared experiences** for a range of communities and groups, including regular walkers/runners, attendees at volunteer/Thistle camps, Trust rangers, farmers, and those living in or growing up visiting the area. The camaraderie associated with group activities is prominent in the memories of people who have worked or stayed at the property, including shared experiences, sharing skills, and time spent together at the Bunkhouse (see also section 6). A regular runner said, *"what's also nice about the Ben is like the club will do it, with people who know and really love that hill. At certain times of year, you'll say, 'right, let's go really early and get off so we see the sunrise', or 'let's go in the evening to watch the sunset'"* (INT_002).
- 4.6 Several participants mentioned **inter-generational connections** as part of their experiences and memories – for example, families who have lived locally for several generations (see also Taggart 2007), people who first came to know the mountain through their parents or older relatives and are now bring their children, or those who recall learning about the mountain from older or more experienced individuals. For example, one visitor explained: *"my wife is from Balloch, [this place has] childhood memories for her, and now for our children"* (SUR_005).
- 4.7 The landscape has inspired art works, songs, poems and literature. Images of the mountain have travelled widely as paintings, photographs, and postcards. References in popular culture have led to the mountain having, what one participant described as, a place in *"people's psyche"* (INT_003) or **cultural memory**. A participant who grew up abroad recalled knowing about Ben Lomond through postcards and stories from their grandparents, years before they moved to Scotland and were able to go to the mountain for themselves. This renown is reflected in a comment by a visitor from England, who said, *"You have to do it [walk up Ben Lomond], even if you don't walk, this would be on your list"* (SUR_008).
- 4.8 Some participants contrasted depictions of Ben Lomond, particularly idealised or Romantic works from the 18th and 19th centuries, with **seeing and experiencing the landscape** (also see Prentice & Guerin 1998). One visitor said, *"You need to see it to appreciate it, not like the pictures"* (SUR_007).
- 4.9 The mountain's prominence as a physical and cultural landmark, personal memories and experiences, and the sense of place combine to make Ben Lomond a focus for **ceremonial and commemorative** activities. People visit to mark key life events and significant moments, such as birthdays, proposals, New Year's Day, and recovery from an operation. A participant recalled meeting a young man in his 20s for whom *"this was like his yearly thing for his birthday was coming up with his pals to have a Buckfast at the summit"* (INT_002). Others come to the mountain in times of grief or crisis or visit as a personal pilgrimage. Another participant noted that *"[you] do get people leaving memorials on the*

mountain [...] other people ask to scatter ashes" (INT_006). The mountain is part of a National Memorial Park, but the activities described are informal and focused on the hillside rather than the war memorial by the loch.

5. Sporting heritage

5.1 Ben Lomond is valued in part for its sporting heritage and specifically its role in the pioneering **development of hill running**. Hill runs were originally part of highland games before becoming discrete races. It is a relatively young sport, but the Ben Lomond hill race is one of the oldest formal races, dating back until at least the 1960s, when it was organised by The Scottish Youth Hostels Association with the start/finish at the Rowardennan Youth Hostel. Following suspension in 1977 (due to *"the presence of ladies in the event"* according to a letter from the English Fell Runners Association to R. Paton), the race was revived by members of Dumbarton Amateur Athletic (DAA) Club, with sponsorship from Polaroid and hosted by the Rowardennan Hotel. It continued to run in that form, with the odd hiatus and with the support of other running clubs until 1995, when the race folded. Westerlands Cross Country Club (Westies) took over the organisation later that year and continue to run the race to the present with the odd cancellation, e.g. due to Covid-19 restrictions.

5.2 Already well established prior to the formation of the official Scottish Hill Runners Association in 1983, The Ben Lomond Hill Race is therefore seen as important in the history of the sport. Runners expressed an attachment to the race in part because of this **legacy**. It was observed that races 'come and go' but that it was important to keep the Ben Lomond race. One hill runner said, *"I wasn't wanting this one to just fall by the wayside. Yeah, I was going to make sure it was continued"* (INT_001). Another runner said, with reference to the race, *"we want to make Ben Lomond quite memorable and quite special or more special than it already is"* (INT_002).

5.3 As a race, Ben Lomond is valued for the **mixture of terrain** it offers. One runner reflecting that *"When comparing it to the other races that do that's I mean half the height, and on an easier, more just like a track, there's not much difference in the terrain between them"* (INT_001). By comparison, Ben Lomond has:

"a mix of terrain, so no matter how you're feeling, you can take it a bit easier or have a really good time and go really fast. Going up the shoulder, you've got that the bouldery section at the bottom, then it starts to open out and then you can do a bit of fast-paced, then you've got again the slight technical on the zigzags and then you've got the option of going down Ptarmigan which is, yeah, it remains, just a lot of fun because you can go fast. And you get, yeah, just opens up a few opportunities. Then you get to jump in the loch afterwards to cool down. [...] Yeah. It's just that mixed terrain that I like about it and just being on Loch Lomond as well" (INT_001).

5.4 The race **route** and where the finish is has been changed over the years. However, key features that are associated with the race remain, including Ptarmigan Ridge (mentioned in the previous quote) and a point known to the runners as Bad Step, which is a particularly difficult part of the run. Reference was also made to routes around the base, used for long distance and peaks race training: *"there's a fantastic route that takes you right over to the*

North side, the back side, involving river crossings and steep climbs [...] just fantastic, about 24 miles round the base” (FG1_001).

5.5 The social values associated with the race are expressed and reinforced through **stories** about past races and individual runners. Some of these are captured in books and personal archives of materials, but many more stories are told and retold among runners. For example, one participant, recalling a particularly close finish to a race, said *“and we’re watching, well in fact no, I wasn’t watching because I was in the race, but my wife told me this story”* (FG1_006). Individuals who have now retired from racing or who have passed away are also remembered through these stories. The social networks and sense of community contribute to the ‘feel’ of the race: *“It has a nice feel to it [...] definitely a favourite, I would say”* (INT_002).

5.6 The men’s **course record** was set in 1983, making it one of the oldest and longest standing hill race records. One runner explained the story behind the record and, at the same time, expressed the significance of the Ben Lomond race:

“the record on this was set in 1983, and it was because it was a round of the British championship, and there were two guys that year, two brilliant, amazing, two legends in fell running, one was John Wild and the other guy, comes from the Lakes... Kenny Stuart, and all year, there’s like four or five rounds, they battled each other every race, and at Ben Lomond the exact same thing happened. So, you’ve got the very best hill runners ever, battling on Ben Lomond, and there’s never been a race like that at Ben Lomond since and so that record has stood since 1983” (FG1_006).

5.7 Many of the stories of individuals who achieved extraordinary things and/or were key characters in the history of the community reflect a **character or ethos** of down-to-earth ‘men of the hills’ (most of the stories and books relate to men, only an estimated 10-20% of hill runners are women, who were excluded from the race until recent decades). A specific point of distinction is made between hill runners and road runners, with much amusement expressed in the group discussion at road runners and joggers finding hill running very messy and difficult. There is a connection and some similarity in values between hill runners and Glasgow’s history of climbers (see e.g. Hale et al 2017: 380).

5.8 Knowing the history and stories associated with the race creates a sense of **belonging and moral ownership**. One runner observing, *“Apparently DAA still consider it to be ‘their race’, but they don’t do hills”* (FG1_008). Another runner said, for members of the Westies, *“it’s like the home hill, so to speak”* (INT_001). As this suggests, runners’ feelings of attachment and ownership are supported by familiarity with the mountain as somewhere they go more frequently than the annual race. One runner explained that they can leave work at 5pm and be on the top at 7pm, reflecting *“how lucky am I to have this on my doorstep?”* (FG1_001).

5.9 A sense of ownership and authority was also reflected in comments about how the race is managed, in particular the **restrictions** on the number of runners and the requirements to stick to footpaths. Several runners expressed the view that the impact of 150 racers (a number capped by the Trust) is nothing compared to the thousands of other walkers on the mountain, while remembering that *“back in the Polaroid days they were getting huge numbers”* (FG1_006).

- 5.10 Being asked to stay on **paths** also prompted mixed reactions. Finding your own route down the hill was felt to be part of the hill running experience: *“With hill running you pick your line and you go for it, so the restrictions spoil that”* (FG1_001). Outwith a race context, a local resident was rather incensed that *“My son was running up there the other day and got shouted at for not staying on the path”* (FG2_004). In some cases, running on the paths has safety implications (for example, falling on hard surfaces rather than into boggy areas): *“There’s a bit above the treeline where it’s a dangerous path to run down. If you fall, you’re really going to hurt yourself”* (FG1_002). However, it was also noted that, *“[the Trust have] made a few improvements to the path in the last couple of years and I was like, ‘oh, this is going to be good’, because I was looking at from a runner’s point of view [...] There’s sometimes been paths when you go, ‘why did they put this path in?’ But yeah, this one made sense. And yeah, they did a good job”* (001).

6. Care and protection

- 6.1 The land coming into Trust care is a relatively recent development (being within living memory) and there is a sense of the mountain as **‘public space’** that transcends legal landownership: *“When the Duke of Montrose owned it, it would have felt like everyone owned it, because this was Rob Roy MacGregor’s land around here, he owned Ardess [...] that sense of it being your land even though you didn’t own it, goes back a long way”* (INT_003). Various communities and groups express a sense of **moral ownership** (as already described in section 5 with regard to the hill race), which can result in people feeling *“quite protective”* towards the mountain (INT_003).
- 6.2 That Ben Lomond is valued and somewhere deserving of care and protection is reflected in the **caring behaviours** people described, such as picking up litter seen while out walking or applying *“your own conscience about erosion”* when running (FG1_001). Litter and parking were also talked about as examples of how visitors are not respecting the environment, local residents, and other users. One participant reflected sadly that *“there’s such a huge volume of people that still are not getting the message of how to enjoy this place without wrecking it”* (INT_009).
- 6.3 People also described various forms of reciprocity or **‘giving back to the hill’**. For example, a hill runner said, *“you know we’re not just taking from the hills where we’re doing our best to put something back in as well”* (INT_002), including making donations to the Trust and mountain rescue, and a guest at the Bunkhouse wrote, *“it’s nice to know that staying here contributes to the conservation and maintenance of the lovely Ben Lomond”* (Bunkhouse guestbook 28/09/2020). In addition to the formal volunteering opportunities, it was observed that many walkers will assist the Trust by carrying materials up the hill when asked, if they are able.
- 6.4 People working on the property in multiple capacities talked about their activities in terms of **taking care**, although this similarity in language does not necessarily indicate agreement over what should be conserved or how. The feelings expressed by participants, that care is both rewarding and a responsibility shared with others, are mirrored by Chrissie Bannerman in one of the contributions to the book *Buchann Remembered*. She writes:

“we are fortunate to live and work in one of the most beautiful landscapes in Scotland [...] we are conscious that we have a duty to conserve this beauty for future generations as our forefathers did before us, [...] We want to share it with all who want to enjoy it but only if they also accept responsibility for its care and its preservation” (Taggart 2007: 9).

- 6.5 The **communal and co-operative** nature of many of these care practices is generative of social values and a sense of **custodianship** over the work achieved. One of the volunteers at the open day described working alongside others on the hill to collect bracken as more ‘authentic’, people working together as they would have done in the past. This is also reflected in contributions to *Buchanan Remembered*, in terms of gathering sheep and other communal activities (see Taggart 2007: 3-4 and 6-7). The skills shared and intergenerational exchanges that these activities enable was a source of pride and connection. Commenting on a Trust Facebook post about the re-thatching of the cruck-framed building, one person said, *“Great work all! I have very fond memories of making some pegs on a thistle camp”*, which prompted the reply, *“Aye its a wee hoose held together wi wooden pegs and full o fond memories”* (NTS Facebook post 06 October 2025).
- 6.6 There was a general feeling among participants familiar with the Trust’s role that the organisation is responsible for **‘protecting’** the Ben. One hill runner commented: *“you always get someone saying, why have we got to pay them [the Trust]? So, you think well, just stop and think about it for a minute. You know, they’ve got to look after the hill. They need to look after the land. Why should they just let us, you know, hold a race?”* (INT_002). Among visitors participating in structured interviews, most of whom were not previously familiar with the property, two thirds (6/9) were aware of the Trust’s involvement in caring for Ben Lomond before their visit. Some of the most visible forms of Trust care are maintaining the footpaths and tree planting, both of which are delivered with the support of volunteers. Other activities and those related to less public aspects of the property, such as the listed buildings at the farm, are less visible or widely known.

7. Constant yet changing

- 7.1 There was a sense from many participants in a variety of contexts that Ben Lomond is a **constant feature**, familiar throughout people’s lives and across the generations. Particularly for local residents, who are not necessarily spending time on the hillside, the mountain is a backdrop to day-to-day life rather than something that requires regular attention: *“locals just learn to live with it really”* (FG2_001). In the book, *Buchanan Remembered* (Taggart 2007), there are relatively few mentions of being on the mountain, unless working, as compared to being on the water, fishing, visiting islands etc.
- 7.2 On one level Ben Lomond is a physical presence in the landscape. One resident described it as *“a big lump of rock, it’s not going anywhere, it’ll be there long after we’re gone”* (FG2_002). However, the mountain is also associated with **uses and practices**, the continuance of which are much less certain, as this comment from another resident implies: *“most people who go up Ben Lomond want it to still be there for their kids”* (INT_003).
- 7.3 There was recognition among participants that **the landscape and how it is used has changed over time**. For example, *“all the oak woods were planted for bark tanning, you know, leather tanning. They used the bark. So, what looks really natural are actually*

plantations, kind of. That's easy to forget about because I guess they've become rewilded as they weren't being harvested anymore" (INT_009). Other people mentioned the footpath work and containing the erosion, or changes to farming practices. The book, *Buchanan Remembered*, is described as an attempt to capture how the area is changing and ways of life that are falling out of living memory. In her contribution, Betty Twaddle writes, *"Creation of the National Park has raised awareness of our proximity to civilisation and of the special qualities of the area"* (Taggart 2007: 165).

- 7.4 The area's proximity and accessibility for large numbers of people can bring challenges, such as when 'all of Glasgow' come through on a hot summer's day. A key concern for many people is the **sustainability** of current access and visitor numbers and, relatedly, how any changes (to patterns of visitation or the environment) might impact on current users and the viability of the activities that take place at the property.
- 7.5 The numbers of people coming to the mountain, particularly **access by car** and associated issues with parking, was a concern for many local residents and regular users. One local resident felt the road is *"not fit for all the people who want to use it"* (FG2_004) and other residents observed that local people are the ones 'on the frontline' taking care of visitors, e.g. pulling people's cars out of ditches and volunteering for the mountain rescue. Practical measures, like using a shuttle bus to get hill runners from a Forestry car park further down the road to the race start, helps relieve the pressure around that event, but there remained anxiety that, given the scale of the issue, things might need to change further in future.
- 7.6 At the same time there is recognition that **public transport** links to/from Rowardennan are limited, presenting a barrier to wider access. One participant reflected: *"a lot of those kids [from the Vale of Leven], they don't get out of the housing estate that they live in very easily. So even though the Ben's their background, actually giving them access to it was a big opportunity"* (INT_009).
- 7.7 Longer-term perspectives, place knowledge and experience are drawn on by local residents as a source of **authority** when discussing the viability of proposed changes or externally-driven initiatives. For example: *"The Trust say the new fences are to protect a lichen, but the lichen has been there hundreds of years and so have the sheep"* (FG2_002). On the proposal to introduce a shuttle bus, one participant felt, *"[it] has been suggested before, doesn't match people's behaviour or needs. People want to put their boots on and go up the hill and when it's raining and they come back down they want to get back in the car and go"* (FG2_006). Another member of the group followed up on this by observing that *"it is a question of changing people's behaviour and that takes time"* (FG2_001).

Annex VI: References and Comparators

References:

- Denholm, J. (1798) *The history of the City of Glasgow and Suburbs: compiled from authentic records and other respectable authorities. To which is added, a sketch of a tour to Loch Lomond and the Falls of the Clyde. Forming a complete guide for the use of strangers.* Glasgow: R Chapman and Stewart and Meikle.
- Hale, A., Fisher, A., Hutchinson, J., Jeffrey, S., Jones, S., Maxwell, M., & Stewart Watson, J. (2017). Disrupting the heritage of place: practising counter-archaeologies at Dumby, Scotland. *World Archaeology*, 49(3), 372–387.
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00438243.2017.1333923>
- Ingram, A. (2011) Taking the High Road: The Form, Perception and Memory of Loch Lomond in Guibert, P. (ed) *Reflective Landscapes of the Anglophone Countries*, pp119-131. Amsterdam: Rodopi.
- MacLellan, A. (1997) *The Furrow behind Me: An autobiography of a Hebridean crofter*, trans. J.L. Campbell, Edinburgh: Birlinn.
- National Trust for Scotland (2021) Wild Land Policy: <https://www.nts.org.uk/what-we-do/advocacy/wild-land>
- Paton, R. *Ben Lomond 974 metres* (Out and About in Scotland website):
<http://outandaboutinscotland.co.uk.websitebuilder.prositehosting.co.uk/walking/ben-lomond>
- Prentice, R. and Guerin, S. (1998) The romantic walker? A case study of users of iconic Scottish landscape, *Scottish Geographical Magazine*, 114 (3): 180-191. DOI:
<https://doi.org/10.1080/00369229818737049>
- Stirling Council (2011) Buchanan Community Council Area Profile:
<https://www.stirling.gov.uk/media/4iiq45iq/buchanan-cc-area-profile.pdf>
- Taggart, J. ed. (2007). *Buchanan Remembered*. Buchanan Community Council: Balmaha.
- Taylor, C. (2019) Hardy Belties prove their worth on Loch Lomond hillside. *The Scottish Farmer*:
https://www.thescottishfarmer.co.uk/livestock/livestock_features/17976092.hardy-belties-prove-worth-loch-lomond-hillside/
- Young, C. (2021). The Panoramic World of John Knox. unpublished essay: University of Glasgow.
<https://powertotransform.gla.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/The-Panoramic-World-of-John-Knox-Jan.-2020.pdf>

Background to the methods and approach:

- Jones, S. and S. Leech. (2015). *Valuing the Historic Environment: a critical review of existing approaches to social value*. AHRC Cultural Value Report.
<https://www.escholar.manchester.ac.uk/uk-ac-man-scw:281849>
- Jones, S. (2017). 'Wrestling with the Social Value of Heritage: Problems, Dilemmas and Opportunities', *Journal of Community Archaeology & Heritage*, 4:1, 21-37
<https://doi.org/10.1080/20518196.2016.1193996>
- Jones S, Bonacchi C, Robson E, Broccoli E, Hiscock A, Biondi A, Nucciotti M, Guttormsen TS, Fouseki K & Díaz-Andreu M (2024). Assessing the dynamic social values of the 'deep city': an integrated methodology combining online and offline approaches. *Progress in Planning*, 187, Art. No.: 100852. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.progress.2024.100852>
- Robson, E. (2021). Social Value Toolkit. <https://socialvalue.stir.ac.uk/>
- Robson, E. (2025). *Assessing the Social Values of Heritage: Methods in Theory and Practice*. Routledge. www.routledge.com/9781032805269

Comparator Trust properties with social values assessments:

- **Isle of Iona** (<https://doi.org/10.34722/63q3-jk21>) – a landscape-scale property with worked farming/crofting tenancies alongside rare species and habitats. The assessment explores the social values associated with crofting/farming heritage, the island's diverse environment, and the relationships built up through repeat visiting. Iona is a nationally and internationally renowned island, embedded in diverse place narratives, some of which are in tension with resident islander identities and values. It attracts large numbers of visitors in the summer, with concerns around sustainability.