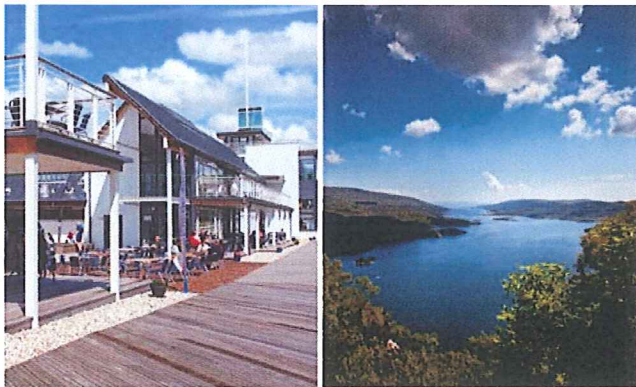


Wild ambition on Scotland's west coast

Kintyre's wild charms are being boosted by two developments designed to bring visitors back to a neglected stretch of coast

Fiona MacLeod
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Portavadie Marina and the Kyles of Bute, Argyll, Scotland

The peninsulas of Kintyre and Cowal in Argyll on the west coast of [Scotland](#) are renowned for their dramatic beauty. Apart from the wild sea and landscapes, there are castles, gardens and important prehistoric remains to visit, while a ferry network gives easy access to the nearby islands of Bute, Arran, Islay, Jura and Gigha.

Now, two development projects, on a scale quite unprecedented for the area, are providing a different angle to exploring the location.

At Portavadie, a remote promontory at the mouth of Loch Fyne, a £45m glass-fronted marina and leisure development is being built by the Bulloch family, a Scottish whisky dynasty. The promontory itself was acquired by the government in the 1970s as a site for building oil rigs. The project was later abandoned, but not before the blasting of an enormous artificial lagoon with sea access.

In a couple of years this scrappy former industrial site has been transformed into a sophisticated boat haven with an eye-catching, modernist building. There is a glass-fronted restaurant and apartments above. A permanent marquee offers an alternative party venue.

Architect Brian Stewart worked with Carol Jagielko, who is a Bulloch by birth and represented the family. "The sailing is excellent and the scenery beautiful," he said, "but unless we provided an infrastructure and something special for people to come to, they would take their boats elsewhere."

In the first phase there were four luxury apartments and five cottages for let. Wood, glass, stone floors and white walls are the backdrop for modern oak furniture and sleek leather sofas.

June saw the opening of The Lodge, designed for those on smaller budgets. "It started out as a bunkhouse project. Since we are on the Cowal Way walking trail, it was to appeal to backpackers," explains Stewart, "but the rooms have ended up with a similar feel to the apartments, just fitted out with less expensive materials."

Ultimately, the master plan includes indoor and outdoor swimming pools with spa facilities, and a huge combined heat and power (CHP) plant using wood pellets from the surrounding family-owned woodland.

The other ambitious development in the area is about 35 miles away, at Machrihanish on the west coast of Kintyre.

In Edwardian times, Machrihanish would have been bustling with holidaymakers escaping industrial Glasgow in summer, arriving at nearby Campbeltown on one of the many steamers that serviced the area. The destination hotels of that era have suffered from the rise of foreign travel and a fall in the local population. In its heyday Campbeltown had more than 30 whisky distilleries. Now it has just two, Springbank and Glen Scotia. Today's visitors are mainly golfers heading for the renowned Machrihanish links course, surfers and walkers.



Ugadale golf cottages,

Argyll, Scotland

Now an American company, Southworth Development, is restoring two once-loved hotels, the Ugadale at Machrihanish and the Royal in Campbeltown.

"It would have been cheaper to start building from scratch," says Roland Henkel, general manager of the Machrihanish Dunes project, "but we have talked to a lot of people in the community and found there was such affection and nostalgia for these old buildings that we wanted to keep a valuable aspect of the area's history."

The first stage of the £14m project to be completed is a new links golf course – the first to be built on a site of special scientific interest. Hebridean sheep graze freely on the Machrihanish Dunes course, serving as natural lawnmowers, and the rough is studded with purple pyramid, frog and marsh orchids.

The Machrihanish Golf Club's old clubhouse, which had been converted into a pub in the 1970s, has been refurbished and renamed the Old Clubhouse Pub, and eight two-bedroom cottages have been built right by the shore on Machrihanish Bay. The Ugadale golf cottages are designed in a traditional style – plaid carpets and bed throws, leather chairs and dark polished furniture – with power showers and flatscreen TVs, and can be rented by the night or the week.

The sublime and rugged landscape is part of Kintyre's charm but in these remote spots it is important to have the option of good food and fine shelter. Investment in remote areas where the trade is often seasonal is a risky business and developments of this quality are to be celebrated.

• *Portavadie Marina* (01700 811075, portavadiemarina.com) has dorm rooms from £18pp a night; studios from £65; and apartments from £115; all including breakfast. *Ugadale Golf Cottages* (0800 151 3701, machrihanishdunes.com) cost from £149 per night. *Caledonian MacBrayne ferries* (0800 066 5000, calmac.co.uk) link the islands

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