

# Board 1

## Project Background

Orkney's tourism economy is founded on the remarkable history and landscape of the islands. At the core of the offer is the Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site, a globally important and utterly remarkable collection of ancient monuments and settlements, including the world famous settlement of Skara Brae and the outstanding Ring of Brodgar, Stones of Stenness and Maeshowe chambered tomb. Every first-time visitor to Orkney makes the pilgrimage to these sites and their experience of them can shape their entire experience of Orkney, Scotland and even the UK.

### A Case for Change

Despite its remarkable significance and beauty, visitors (tourists and local communities) to the Brodgar and Stenness part of the World Heritage Site are not currently well served and the site itself is subject to a degree of harm. Key factors driving this include:

- A largely unmanaged, poorly guided visitor experience. This typically leads to visitor confusion, and to short visits involving limited engagement with the landscape and heritage of the sites.
- Few footpaths or cycle routes in and around the World Heritage Site, forcing visitors and residents to rely on their cars, infrequent public transport, or risk walking along A-road verges.
- Physical threats to the conservation of the sites themselves, including path erosion and environmental damage.
- Most visitors to Orkney focus only on the major heritage sites, limiting the broader, positive impact that tourism can have across the islands. While the Ring of Brodgar, the Stones of Stenness, and Maeshowe are undoubtedly major attractions for first-time visitors, they should also serve to promote the rest of the islands' heritage at the same time.
- Traffic congestion and parking issues, especially at peak-times in summer, causing tension and risking injury and damage to the surrounding landscape. This is exacerbated by the unrestricted number of coaches that can arrive in the WHS at present.
- The desire to encourage a wider range of people to visit Orkney, and the ambition for them to stay longer, to spend more, and to be more engaged with the islands' stories and people.

This case for change has been recognised by the project partners, and the Scottish and UK Governments, who have allocated £6.5m in principle from the £335m Islands Growth Deal.

### Project Objectives

The objectives of the Gateway project are to:

- Raise the standard of the visitor offer and experience across the islands and the World Heritage site, to reflect Orkney's strategic move towards 'slow tourism'.
- Safeguard the WHS addressing critical conservation issues and meet UNESCO obligations.
- Establish an international benchmark for high quality, low impact tourism, demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and a net zero world and supporting Orkney's transition to carbon neutrality by 2030.
- Provide appropriately sized, flexible, scalable, and adaptable facilities that ensure a financially sustainable business model capable of withstanding economic volatility.
- Support the post Covid recovery of Orkney's tourism industry.
- Re-connect local communities to their history and landscape in a sustainable manner that improves health and well-being.
- Encourage, facilitate and promote the dispersal of tourists across the islands to spread tourism benefits more widely.
- Release the historic Tormiston Mill for new uses to support tourism and safeguard the building for the future.

### Project Partners

The project is being delivered through a formal partnership between Orkney Islands Council, Historic Environment Scotland, and Highlands and Islands Enterprise.



**The information that follows outlines several Shortlisted Options for intervention that have been developed with project partners. Each Option will be supported by the Active Travel Network (Board 2), and a variety of other supporting interventions (Boards 3 & 4). Options for Visitor Orientation Facilities appear on Boards 5, 6 & 7. Rejected Options can be found on Board 7.**

All proposals are subject to planning consent, land ownership and land access.

### Have your say

We'd warmly welcome your comments on the proposals. Your thoughts will help us to shape this important project to meet the needs of Orkney's residents for the future.

Responses can be emailed to [worldheritage@orkney.gov.uk](mailto:worldheritage@orkney.gov.uk). For further information, please go to [Orkney.com](http://Orkney.com), or speak with the Project Team at one of the consultation events.





# Board 2

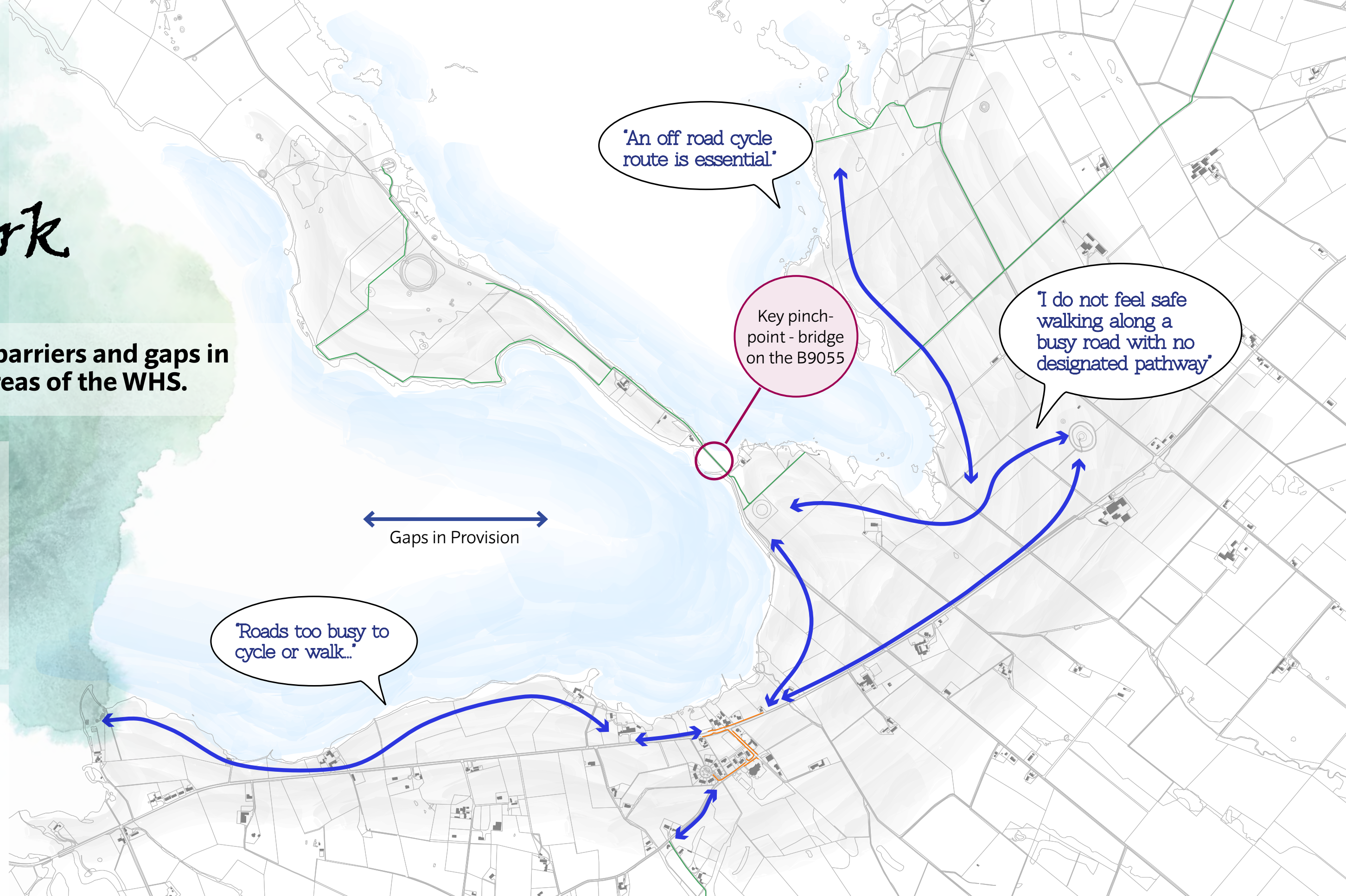
## Active Travel Network

The May 2019 Active Travel Plan (ATP) identified key barriers and gaps in provision for local community access to the various areas of the WHS.

Delivering active travel upgrades and infrastructure would transform the visitor and community experience of the WHS and would contribute to the 2030 net zero target for Orkney. It would connect the site to local residents, providing health and well-being benefits for communities. The connection would also potentially deliver economic benefits for Stenness.

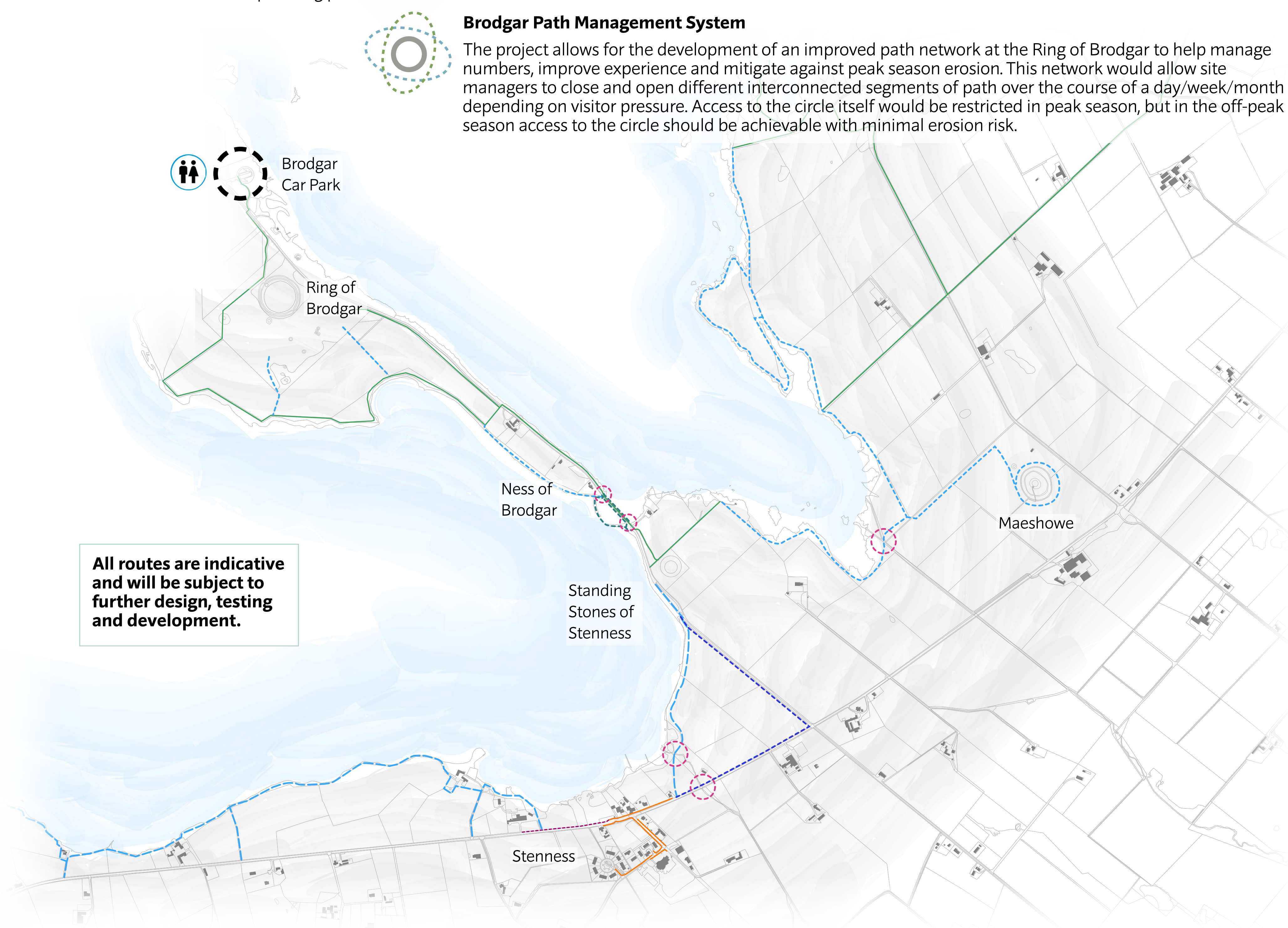
### New footbridge

A new footbridge over the breakwater to the south of the B9055 road bridge creating a safe and desirable route for pedestrians away from the traffic. The bridge would be of high architectural quality and interpretation would be provided at its widened midpoint to encourage visitors to use it. The exact location and design for the footbridge would be determined later in the planning process.



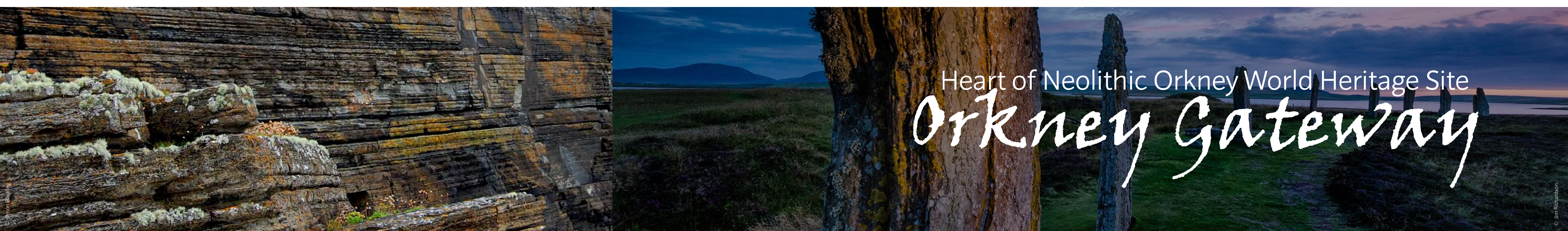
### Brodgar Path Management System

The project allows for the development of an improved path network at the Ring of Brodgar to help manage numbers, improve experience and mitigate against peak season erosion. This network would allow site managers to close and open different interconnected segments of path over the course of a day/week/month depending on visitor pressure. Access to the circle itself would be restricted in peak season, but in the off-peak season access to the circle should be achievable with minimal erosion risk.



All routes are indicative and will be subject to further design, testing and development.

- Proposed footpath/cycleway
- Proposed footpath
- Proposed segregated multi-user route
- Proposed roadside footpath
- Proposed bridge (3 options)
- Proposed crossing point/bridge
- Existing roadside footpath
- Existing core path network
- Existing Parking





# Board 3

## Core Project Components

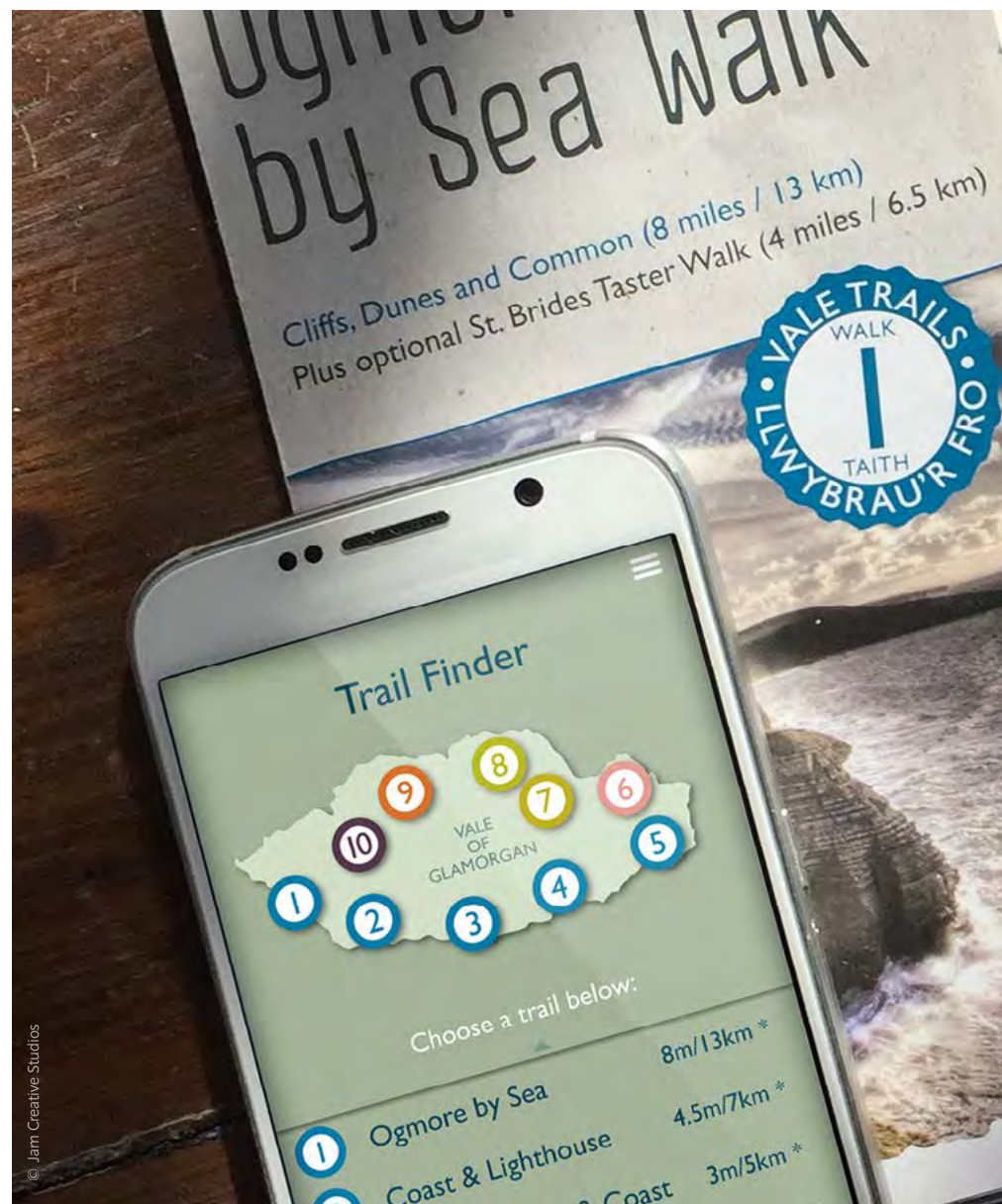
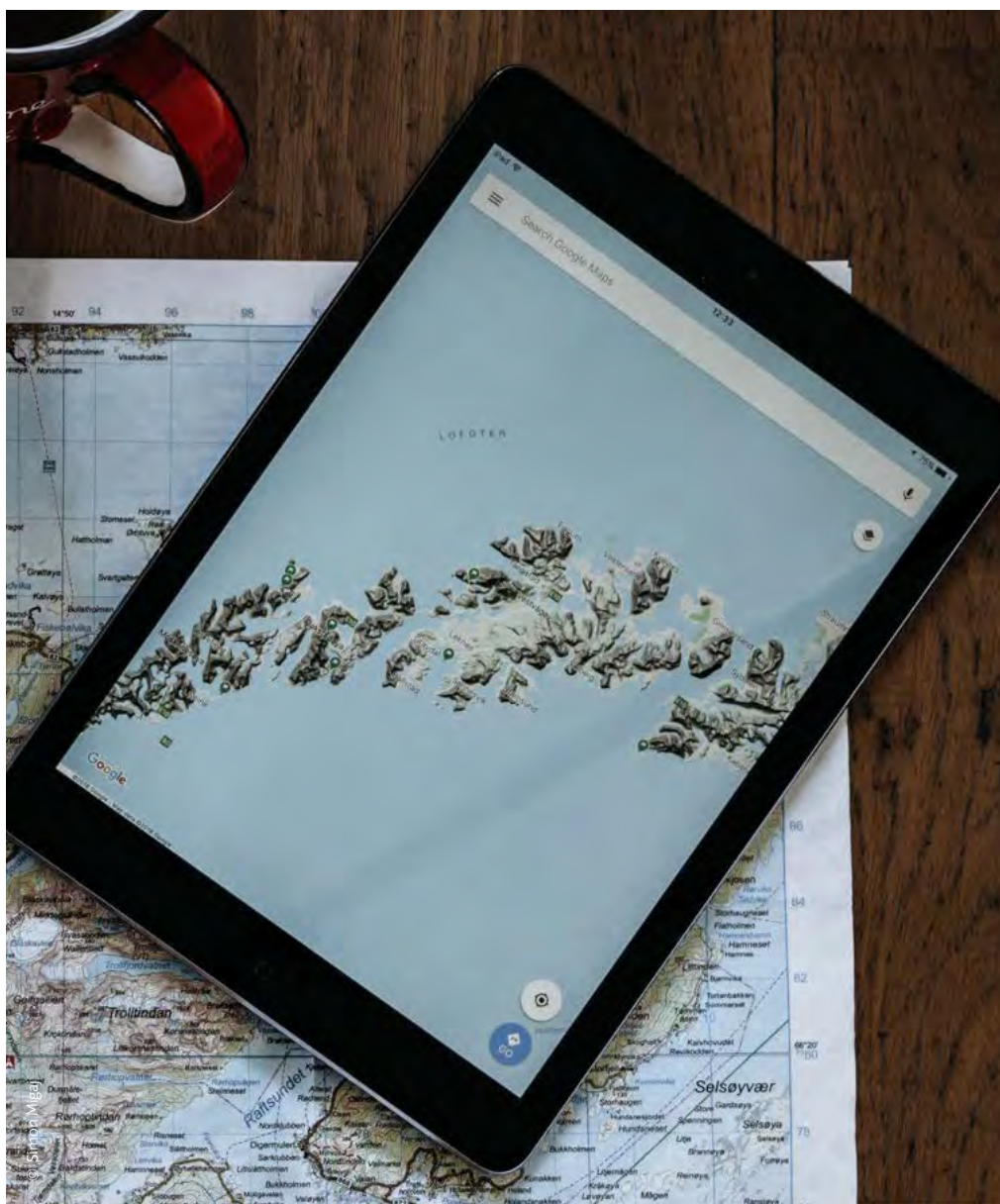
The project includes several fundamental elements which are presented over the next two boards.

It should be noted that these elements are not included in Option 1: Do Minimum (Board 4).

### Visitor information and management app

A key element of the project allows for the development of a visitor management app to monitor activity at the sites and to provide visitors with information on the relative busyness of different locations across the Islands and suggest alternatives based on their preferences. Uses a combination of “big data” (e.g. google analytics) and onsite real-time measurements and predictions.

This would reduce peak-time loading at the WHS and encourage dispersal across the islands particularly at peak periods. The introduction of the app would support active and sustainable travel providing an outdoor experience connected to the wider area and islands.



### Coach management infrastructure

To manage coach visitors, a timed permit-based system would limit the use of overuse of the coach bays and the subsequent crowding at the sites. Individual coach tours would purchase or be provided with a timed permit for the use of parking bays. The registration number would be picked up by number plate recognition cameras at the entrance to the car park would then record coaches arriving. Coaches without permits could then be subject to a fine.



### Brodgar Destination Management Hub

Option includes a refresh of the car park at Brodgar to create a Destination Management Hub, including the installation of a suite of new permanent facilities including toilets and a welcome point.

The welcome point would provide a covered space in which interpretive and orientation material would be provided, including access to hi-speed wi-fi to download digital content. This would not be a “building” but some form of structure – perhaps built into the existing bund.

The refresh would also include electric bike charging points and cycle racks. The disabled parking bays at Brodgar would also be refreshed and improved.

### Car Parking and Shuttle Service

All parts of the World Heritage Site (except Skara Brae and the Maeshowe chambered tomb, which are already ticketed) will remain free to access.

However, to help raise additional revenue for the ongoing care and maintenance of the site, as well as to encourage use of sustainable methods of transport around the Islands, we are proposing to introduce a charge to use the car parks at Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness. This would likely involve a daily charge for visitors choosing to drive and park at the site, with suitable exemptions for local residents who would be able to obtain an annual resident's pass or similar.

Income could help fund a “hop-on, hop-off” visitor shuttle. This shuttle would move visitors to and from the various parts of the area, limiting traffic movement along the A965, and particularly along the restricted B9055 to Brodgar. The vehicles involved would be environmentally sustainable, in line with Orkney's Net Zero aspirations.



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# Board 4

## Core Project Components

### Interpretation and Orientation

#### Physical

All physical orientation, wayfinding and interpretation interventions would be developed and installed based on the following guidelines.

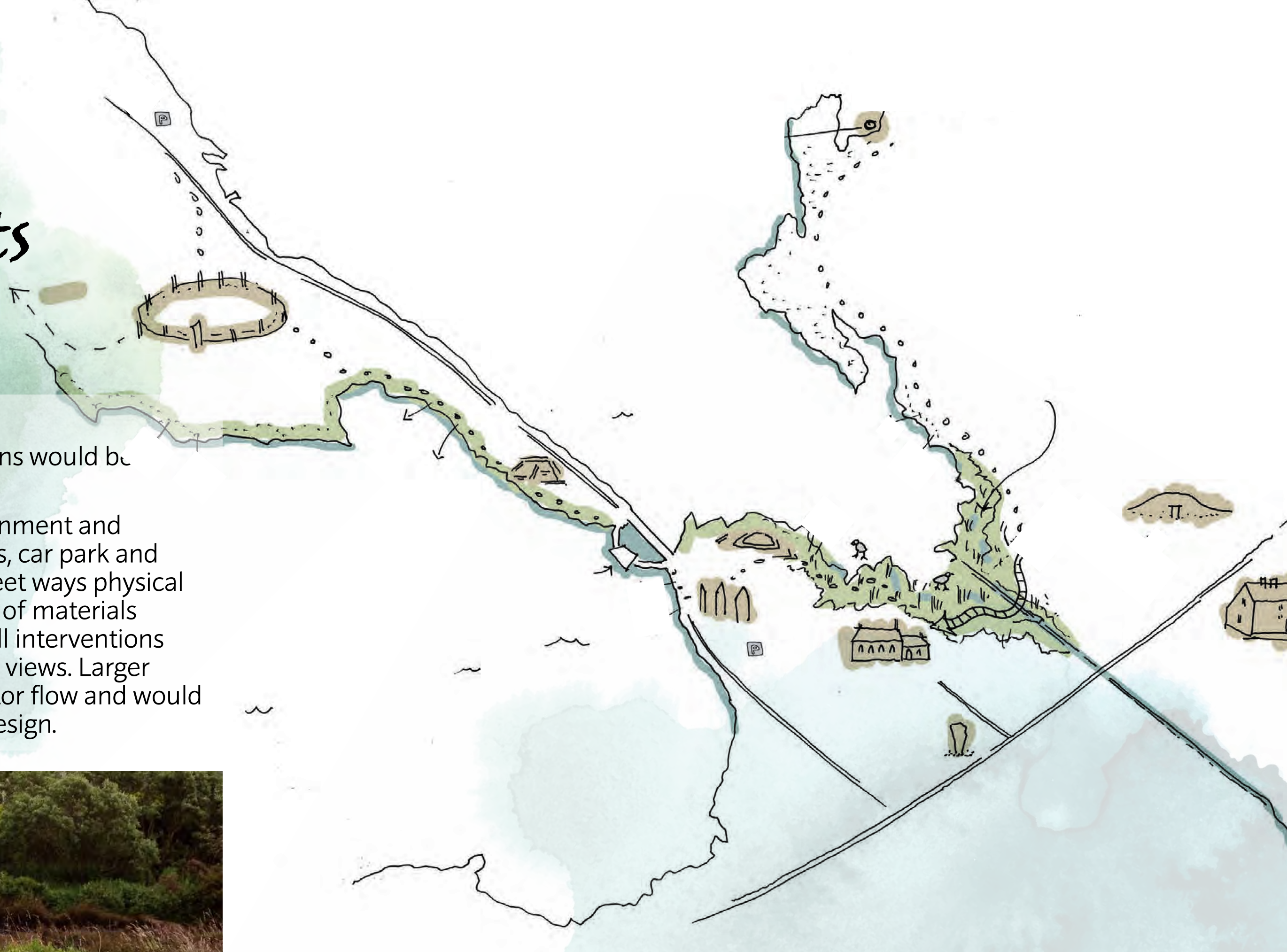
**Integrated** - all interventions would be integrated into the environment and limited to key points, hubs, and gateways (i.e. paths and cycleways, car park and drop-offs, and limited at the monument sites). Presented in discreet ways physical interventions would blend in with the landscape and be made up of materials such as carved stone/wood and where possible, local materials. All interventions would be low level minimising interruptions to the landscape and views. Larger seating and shelter would be placed strategically to influence visitor flow and would incorporate wayfinding and interpretation material within their design.



**Exploration** – Interventions would encourage exploration of the wider landscape, not just the key monuments. Any physical interventions would present material that introduces the landscape as the focus, aiming to increase awareness of the site and its nature to encouraging safe and respectful exploration.



**Support digital** – physical interventions would be fairly limited in their content, as to not intrude on the nature of the site. They would act as anchors for visitor flow, and support much more detailed digital content, including essential information such as location, mapping, route lengths, as well as limited information about what a visitor is viewing. Physical material would include a link to digital content in the form of a QR code. These can be highly stylised and designed to become part of the overall design rather than a stand-alone element, perhaps made of carved stone, mosaic tiles, engraved/embossed/cut out metal, or 3d printed.



#### Digital

Long before visitors arrive, they should be inspired and informed through rich website and downloadable content such as site maps, routes, and leaflets. This needs to be supported by ongoing marketing purposes, social media activity and the generation of new content e.g. video interviews with archaeologists and artists; vlogs or even inspirational introductory films capturing the essence of the place. Public portals such as Wikipedia should also be updated – these are often a first port of call.

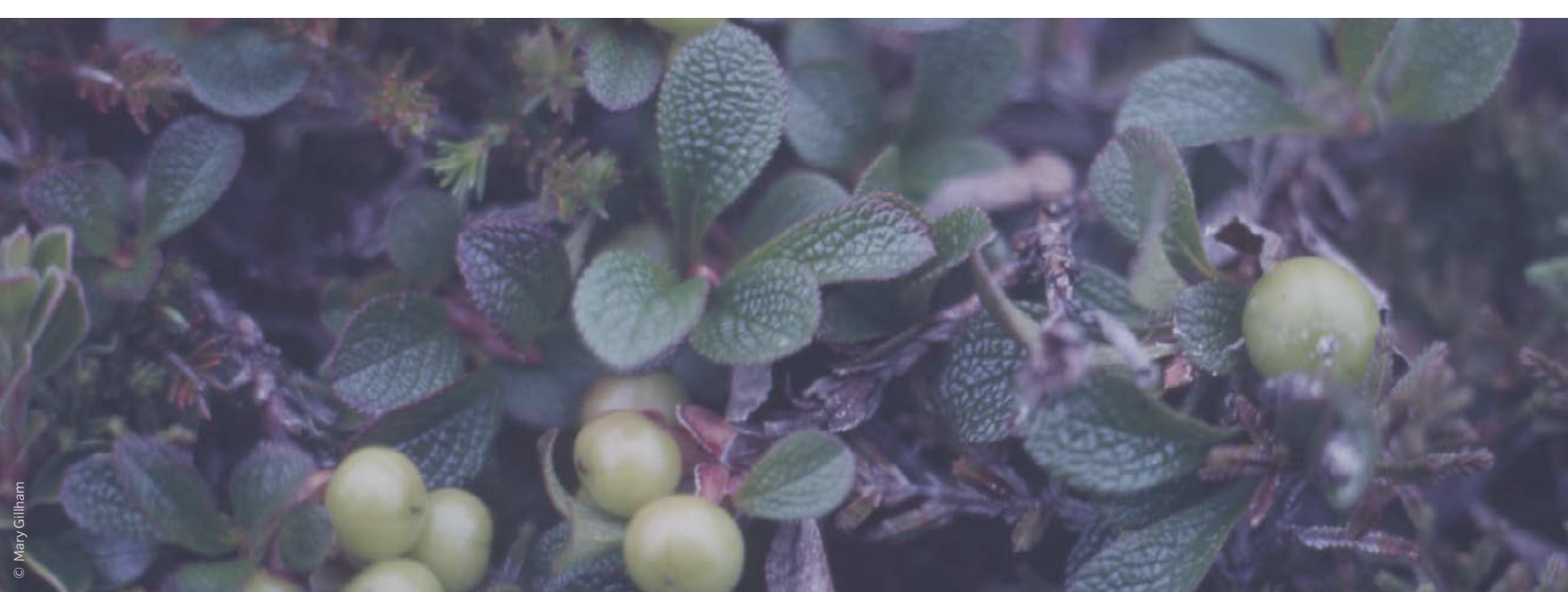
Digital media access whilst onsite (and off site) would include essential wayfinding information such as location, mapping, routes, and route distances, as well as more detailed interpretation not available through physical material on site. Material would be accessed by scanning the QR codes onsite such as route markers, shelters and pause points.

There is potential to include sophisticated AR for both wayfinding and interpretation. This may include the display of overlaid map routes/navigation arrows and destination points through a smartphone camera and/or the display of augmented scene at key interpretation points across the site. There would potentially be the option to download an app prior to the visit so as to not solely relying on mobile data signal.



#### Remote Access

The approach would allow remote visitors to experience the site from afar through the same digital content available on site being accessed online. It would increase the reach to wider audiences, encourage future visits and excite interest in Orkney.



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# Board 5

## Visitor Orientation Facilities

### Option 1: Do Minimum

This option includes a minor upgrade and refresh of existing facilities and network. There are limited active travel upgrades and some focused additional interpretation. The current centre continues to operate with no significant operational changes. No additional parking is proposed as current patterns of visitation and limited dwell times are assumed to continue. Limited decrease in conservation management costs due to improvements at Brodgar.

#### Key Components

- Local path upgrades, no new connection to Stenness. Brodgar path management scheme
- Visitor Centre Refresh (limited). Fixed Interpretation
- Cycle signage, car park refresh at Brodgar
- Parking charges introduced. Stenness Car Park upgraded (outside of scope of Project)
- No change to operational approach

**It should be noted that this Option does not include any of the Core Project Components shown on Boards 3 & 4, or the Active Travel Network shown on Board 2.**

### Option 2: Digital and Infrastructure

Significant local infrastructure upgrades supported by full digital orientation and interpretation. Supports local communities through extensive active travel connectivity.

There would be no visitor centre. Instead, transit hubs, drop-offs, cycleways, and paths would act as gateways and orientation points for guests. Some physical orientation, wayfinding and interpretation would be installed across the site to act as anchors for a wider digital experience. This would include Welcome Points at the key parking areas. These would comprise simple open sided shelters / covered areas with fixed and digital interpretation inside to orientate guests.

We are not prescribing a single journey for visitors. Different visitors will map and connect the journey to suit their own needs, giving them the time, confidence, and ability to explore the monuments and landscape; in a manner that manages erosion at and around key monuments.

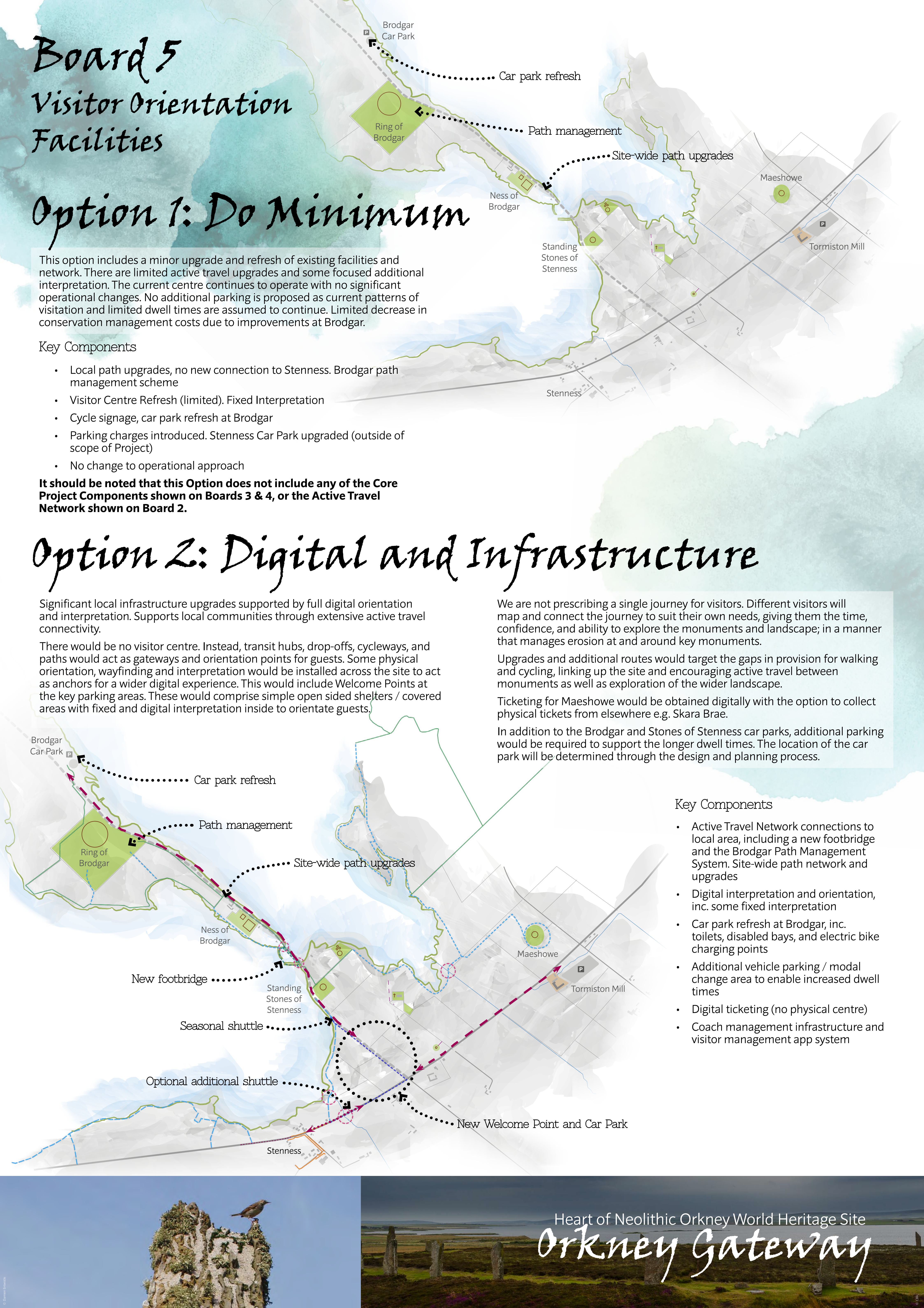
Upgrades and additional routes would target the gaps in provision for walking and cycling, linking up the site and encouraging active travel between monuments as well as exploration of the wider landscape.

Ticketing for Maeshowe would be obtained digitally with the option to collect physical tickets from elsewhere e.g. Skara Brae.

In addition to the Brodgar and Stones of Stenness car parks, additional parking would be required to support the longer dwell times. The location of the car park will be determined through the design and planning process.

#### Key Components

- Active Travel Network connections to local area, including a new footbridge and the Brodgar Path Management System. Site-wide path network and upgrades
- Digital interpretation and orientation, inc. some fixed interpretation
- Car park refresh at Brodgar, inc. toilets, disabled bays, and electric bike charging points
- Additional vehicle parking / modal change area to enable increased dwell times
- Digital ticketing (no physical centre)
- Coach management infrastructure and visitor management app system



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# Board 6

## Visitor Orientation Facilities

### Option 3: Local Hub Stenness Village

New / refreshed centre in Stenness Village, forming hub for new visitor experience with local connectivity improvements and connections. The centre would provide a hub for the delivery of a high-quality visitor experience that encourages active exploration of the monuments and wider landscape on foot and cycle. Its scale would mean that it would be subservient and complementary to Skara Brae in terms of acting as a hub for the interpretation of the WHS.

Facility would be small scale and could potentially be sited in the existing building or using another space in the village. The facility would be connected to the WHS by a seasonal shuttle (off season guest would take their own vehicle to the site), plus the active travel network cycle ways and private vehicles. Car parking at the centre and on the site would be charged, to provide income to support the shuttle, maintain paths and improve visitor experience.



#### The Centre

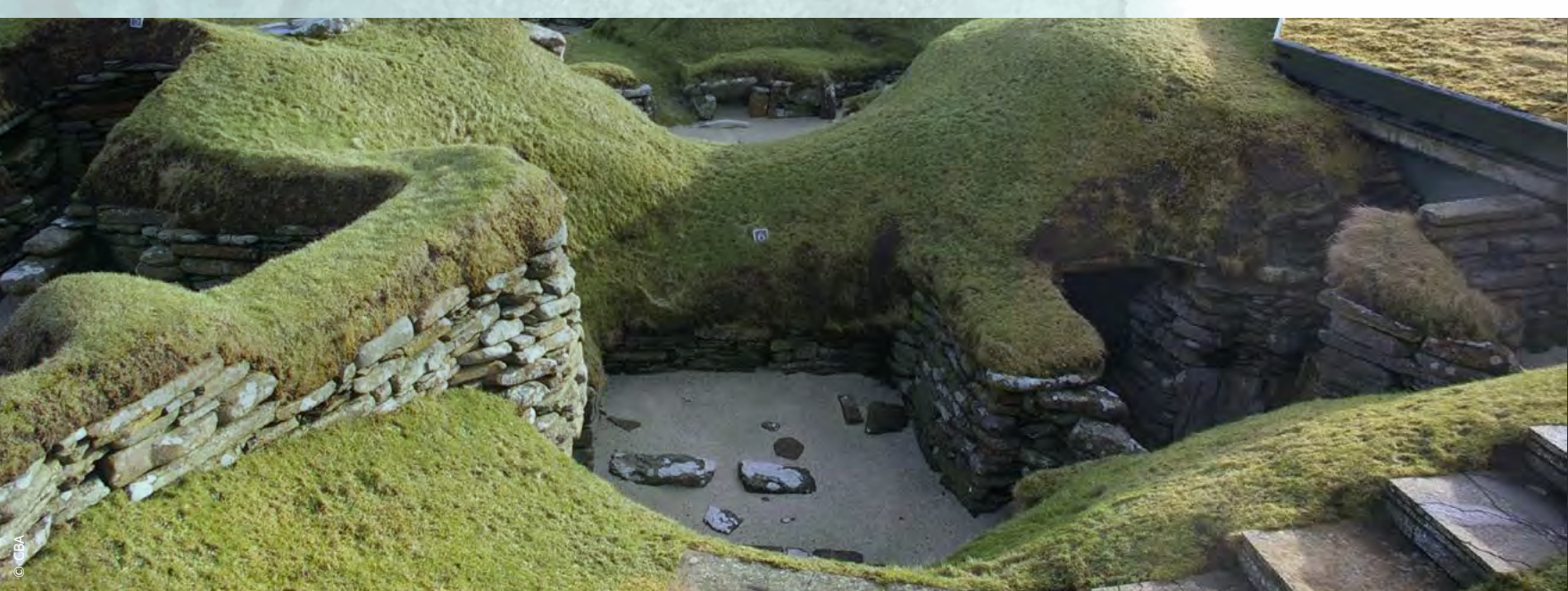
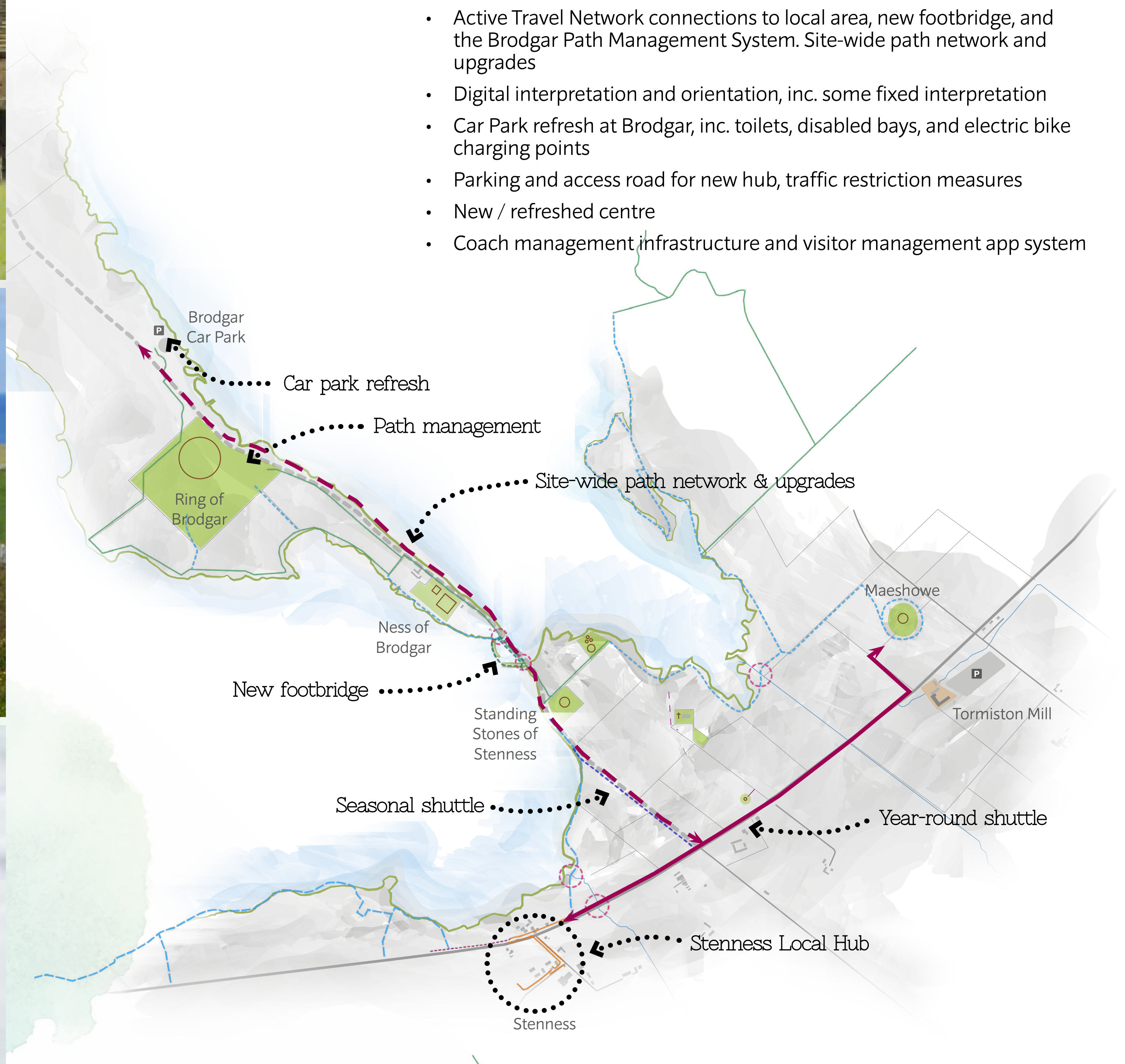
A small-scale centre would provide core facilities with orientation, ticketing and some interpretation, and possible small-scale refreshment offer. The centre would provide the following:

- Key visitor facilities including toilets, refreshments, and information.
- General interpretation and orientation material
- Information on options for visitors in terms of their dwell times and types of visits
- Ticketing facilities for Maeshowe
- Vehicle parking, bicycle parking and charge points

Visitors would be encouraged to explore the WHS on foot, cycle or using the new shuttle.

#### Key Components

- Active Travel Network connections to local area, new footbridge, and the Brodgar Path Management System. Site-wide path network and upgrades
- Digital interpretation and orientation, inc. some fixed interpretation
- Car Park refresh at Brodgar, inc. toilets, disabled bays, and electric bike charging points
- Parking and access road for new hub, traffic restriction measures
- New / refreshed centre
- Coach management infrastructure and visitor management app system



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# Board 7

## Visitor Orientation Facilities

### Option 4: Adjacent Centre

New centre close to WHS forming accessible heart to new visitor experience with local connectivity improvements. This orientation facility would be situated on a possible greenfield site along the B9055.

Onsite improvements in terms of paths, interpretation, and sustainable transport are same as other options. The facility would be small scale, and would offer orientation, ticketing for Maeshowe, access to different transport modes and some retail. Refreshments would probably be seasonal and external. Toilets would be provided in a separate block as these can service guests even when centre is closed.

As with other options, the facility would be connected to the WHS by the active travel network of routes, local bus services, cycle ways and private vehicles.

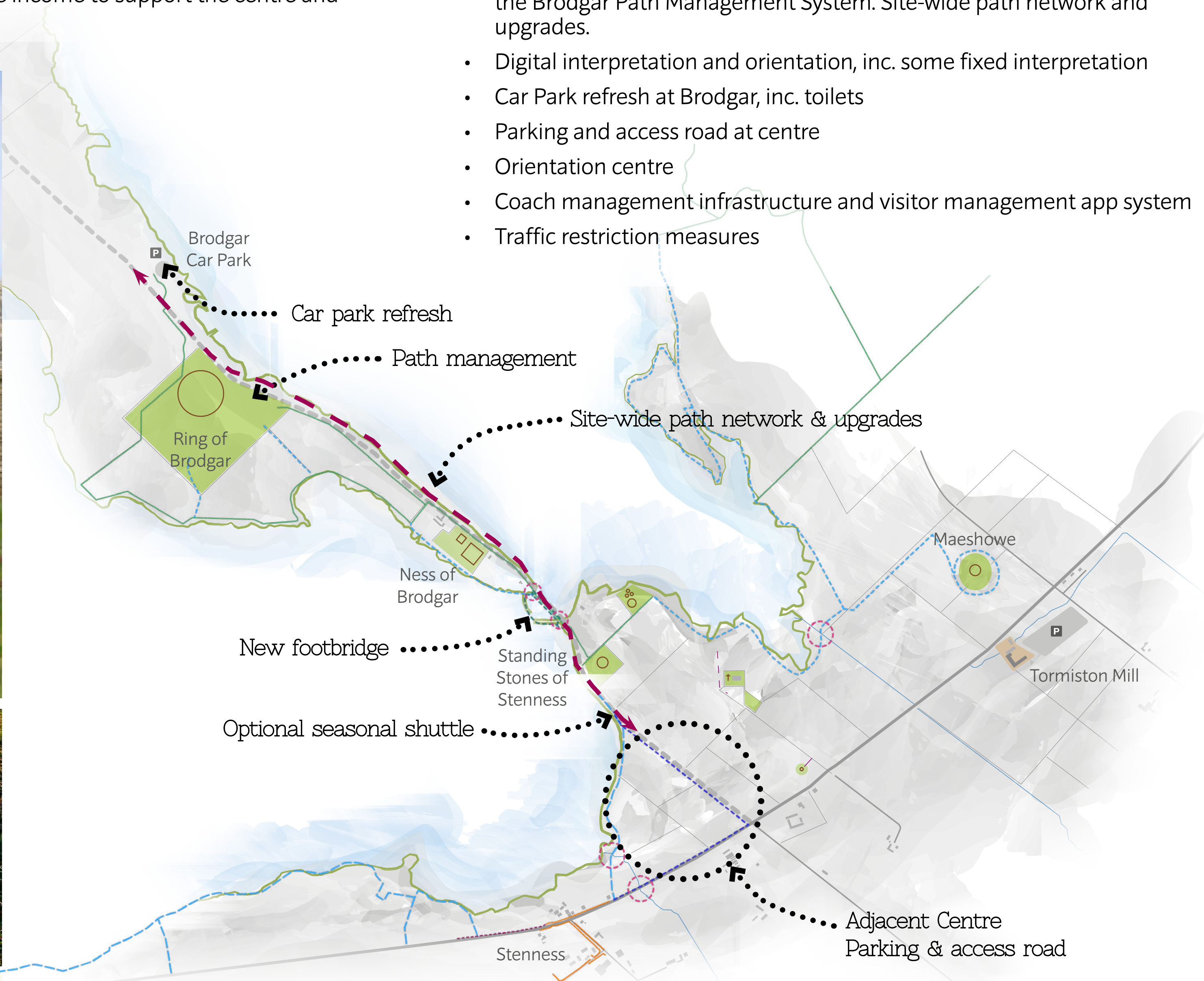
Due to the proximity of the Adjacent Centre to the monuments, a shuttle service would not technically be required, however it has been assumed that a seasonal service between the centre, Brodgar, and Maeshowe would operate to encourage exploration by providing an easy return route; would also help encourage people to not take their private vehicle to Brodgar and the Stones of Stenness. As with other options all car parks would be charged to provide income to support the centre and operate the shuttle.

Given its location, the design of any building close to the core of the WHS is critical to deliverability. Based on design guidance from OIC a vernacular style reflecting local farmhouses / barns etc, is preferred to reduce perceived prominence on the landscape. The car park would be behind the building facing away from the WHS and would be masked when viewed from WHS. Centre would provide bespoke facilities and in an accessible location and would also accommodate coaches, if needed.

The centre would be ideally located within walking distance from Stones of Stenness, Barnhouse Village and Maeshowe, possibly Brodgar. A seasonal shuttle would serve the centre, local bus stops, Maeshowe and Brodgar. Coach based visitors would generally bypass the centre and access the site directly.

#### Key Components

- Active Travel Network connections to local area, new footbridge, and the Brodgar Path Management System. Site-wide path network and upgrades.
- Digital interpretation and orientation, inc. some fixed interpretation
- Car Park refresh at Brodgar, inc. toilets
- Parking and access road at centre
- Orientation centre
- Coach management infrastructure and visitor management app system
- Traffic restriction measures



### Rejected Options

In the course of the work, it has been agreed by the Project Partners that several options be discarded:

- Do Nothing – not a tenable option due to the project's strong case for change
- Major or large scale development – rejected on viability and environmental grounds
- Out of area centre – rejected due to risk of visitor bypass, and limited impact on visitor behaviour and engagement
- Development on the Brodgar peninsula – rejected due to environmental and archaeological sensitivities
- Development at the Orphir and Stenness Church – rejected due to potential conflict between actively used community asset and tourism uses
- Development at Tormiston – rejected due to significant highways and road safety constraints; and potential viability issues

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