

Highland LEADER Programme 2007-2013

LOCAL COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT PLAN

for

Dingwall and Seaforth

prepared by

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This Development Plan has been prepared to support a bid by the Dingwall and Seaforth Development Partnership to the Highland LEADER Action Group (Highland LAG) to deliver the Highland LEADER Programme 2007-2013 locally.
- 1.2 Highland LEADER, part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), will deliver a Highland-wide development strategy, but much of its operation is to be devolved to local groups. The Dingwall and Seaforth Development Partnership wishes to be the local delivery mechanism in the Dingwall and Seaforth multi-member ward area, and this Development Plan illustrates how the Highland strategy would be delivered in the area.
- 1.3 The Dingwall and Seaforth Development Plan interprets the themes and priorities identified for Highland as a whole in the local context and identifies the issues with particular local significance. Following the wide consultation summarised in Section 6, the types of project that local groups wish to take forward to implement the Development Plan are illustrated in Section 7, with summary detail of specific projects already identified given in Section 8.
- 1.4 Although the process was stimulated by LEADER, the Dingwall and Seaforth Development Partnership has taken account of the full range of needs and opportunities in the area in producing this Development Plan. The Plan is therefore not restricted to the types of project that might be supported through LEADER but relates more widely to community aspirations. The Plan shows how LEADER will complement other development initiatives and funding streams.
- 1.5 The LEADER process presents an opportunity to assess, agree and plan for actions to meet the needs of communities in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward and ensure that the capacity to address them is developed. The Programme will bring new funding to the area, but that funding will be finite and cannot by itself meet all community aspirations. Funding will be drawn from a variety of sources (i) to match EU funding for LEADER projects, (ii) to take forward projects piloted or investigated through LEADER, and (iii) to meet the cost of projects that are outwith the scope of LEADER.
- 1.6 The Dingwall and Seaforth Development Partnership will regularly review progress on this Development Plan, updating it to reflect changing needs and to take into account new opportunities that arise through the period to 2013.
- 1.7 Sections 7 and 8 provide the core of this Plan. However the earlier sections provide the context for the priorities, opportunities and projects which are identified for Dingwall and Seaforth and show how the Programme will be implemented.

Section 2 summarises the objectives and target groups of the Highland LEADER Programme as a whole;

Section 3 summarises the composition of the Dingwall and Seaforth Development Partnership and its LEADER responsibilities;

Section 4 provides a socio-economic analysis of the local area, identifying the main

needs that will be addressed by the Plan;

Section 5 outlines the broader strategic context that the Plan addresses, summarising relevant Scottish Government policies and objectives, the relevant policies of Highland Council and Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), and the relevant aspects of more local plans such as the Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan and the Ross and Cromarty (East) Biodiversity Action Plan. Also, the other strands of the SRDP which could provide funding to businesses and groups in the Dingwall and Seaforth ward are noted, and the links to other European Programmes.

Section 6 summarises the consultation processes which have informed the production of this Plan.

2. THE HIGHLAND LEADER PROGRAMME

- 2.1 LEADER (Liaison Entre Actions de Développement Économique Rurale or Links between actions for the development of rural communities) is part of the EU-funded Scottish Rural Development Programme 2007-2013 (SRDP), which promotes economic and community development in rural areas. LEADER supersedes the Leader+ Programme which ran from 2000 to 2006, and encourages new and experimental approaches to rural development. LEADER is a bottom-up method of delivering support for rural development through a local rural development strategy. Support is aimed primarily at small-scale, community driven projects that try out approaches that might subsequently be applied more widely.
- 2.2 The distinctive aims of LEADER are to increase the capacity of local rural community and business networks through providing knowledge and skills, and to encourage innovation and co-operation in order to tackle local development objectives. Within Scotland as a whole, LEADER accounts for 5% of the total SRDP allocation (around £38.5m), while a further £19.2m is being provided to the Highlands and Islands through Convergence Funds.
- 2.3 The Highland LAG, under the aegis of the Wellbeing Alliance, submitted a successful development strategy and business plan, and has been awarded £6.76 million of LEADER funding by the Scottish Government. An additional allocation of £7.5 million Convergence funding has also been awarded in recognition of the Highlands previous status as a disadvantaged and remote area, bringing the total available to the area to £14.26 million. The Highland LEADER Programme covers the whole of the Highland Council area except for the city of Inverness and the Cairngorms National Park (which is operating a separate Programme).
- 2.4 The Highland LEADER Programme complements the wider programmes for the 2007-13 period under the EU's Structural Funds, the other SRDP strands, and other rural initiatives. It is built on the two themes of *Revitalising Communities* and *Progressive Rural Economy*, and its overall aim is:

'To enable people in the Highlands to realise their ambitions to live in communities where they can fulfil their personal, social and economic potential'

- 2.5 The main objectives of the Highland LEADER Programme are:
- to stabilise and grow population levels and improve the balance between age groups, particularly focusing on the retention and attraction of young adults
 - to increase the benefits that communities can derive from their natural, built and cultural heritage
 - to maximise the benefits from community assets
 - to improve access to services in the community, particularly focusing on the needs of young people and those over 65
 - to assist communities to create, update and implement their own local development plans
 - to increase the scope and range of training and learning opportunities available locally

- to support the development of social enterprise and micro-businesses.

2.6 Specific target groups identified in the Highland Strategy are:

Young People

The needs and aspirations of young people in the 14 to 25 age range were an important priority of the previous North Highland Leader+ Programme, and progress was made in involving young people and addressing particular issues. The new Programme will build on this progress, tackling rural disadvantage among young people across a wider geographical area and ensuring that links are established with other programmes which target vulnerable young people or those who need specialised support.

Women

Women in rural areas will be able to take advantage of the higher level of economic activity, in both the commercial and the voluntary sector that the Programme will stimulate. Training activities within the Programme will be designed to be accessible to women with family obligations.

The Under-employed

Many people living in the Highland LAG area are under-employed (i.e. they are in work but either not working full-time or not to their capacity). Some of these people will benefit from the actions to improve opportunities for young people and women in the Highland LAG area as well as from the stimulus to social enterprises and micro-businesses. The Programme will also provide opportunities to crofters, address new approaches to the development of rural skills, and encourage volunteering at the local level. There should also be new opportunities for people to use their skills to supplement their earnings.

Young Adults (aged up to 34)

Retaining and attracting young adults to the Highland LAG area is a Programme priority. This will be achieved through making the area a more attractive place in which to live and bring up children, as well as bringing forward projects which offer better access to training and stimulate commercial activity and employment opportunities. Fresh opportunities should also be created for younger adults to set up in business in their home area.

Older People (over 65)

Older people can suffer disproportionately from rural deprivation, especially through poverty and isolation. They will benefit from actions to improve local facilities and access to services. Opportunities to use and develop their skills through training and volunteer programmes will also be created.

Micro-businesses

Most Highland businesses come into this category, including small farms, crofts, creative industries and social economy enterprises. Micro-businesses will benefit in particular from new opportunities based on natural and cultural heritage, music, IT and crafts, a better alignment between economic development and sustainability, and new commercial activity in the creative sector.

Migrant Workers

In areas where there are concentrated populations, projects will be developed to meet the needs of migrant workers.

3. DINGWALL AND SEAFORTH DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP

3.1 The Highland LEADER Programme is to be delivered through the Highland LEADER Local Action Group (LAG), which consists of a strategic LAG and a number of local area partnerships (LAPs). The strategic LAG, which is responsible to the Highland Community Planning Partnership, manages and administers the overall Programme and will take responsibility for approving projects which are transnational or transregional, and projects that span more than one LAP area. However, a significant share of the project budget is to be delegated to LAPs, and this will provide a strong local focus for the new LEADER Programme.

3.2 LAPs are expected to:

- Co-ordinate the preparation of a Local Development Plan for their area which meets the aims of the Highland LEADER Business Plan, and implement this local plan
- Work with local groups to take advantage of opportunities offered through LEADER and other funding streams
- Work closely with and support the relevant central LEADER Development Officer
- Meet on a regular basis (at least 4 times per year)
- Promote the Programme across the local area
- Assist in developing local project proposals/plans
- Once the local development plan is approved, consider and make recommendations on applications seeking grant assistance
- Ensure wide community involvement in line with the National Standards of Community Engagement
- Comment to the strategic LAG on projects which will have an impact locally but cover a wider area

3.3 For the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward, the nominated LAP is the Dingwall and Seaforth Development Partnership – a new group. A Steering LAP, formed as a sub-group of the Ward Forum, was formed to guide the drafting of this development plan and its submission to the strategic LAG. The Dingwall and Seaforth Development Partnership will cover the Conon Bridge, Dingwall, Maryburgh and Muir of Ord Community Council areas and part of the Ferintosh Community Council area.

3.4 Membership of a LAP must reflect public, private and voluntary sector interests in its area. Reflecting the overall requirements for LEADER groups, a maximum of 50% of a LAP's members can be from public organisations and agencies. It has also been seen as important to ensure a geographic spread of members across the communities in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward.

3.5 The proposed initial membership of the Dingwall and Seaforth Development Group is:

<i>Public</i>		<i>Private/Voluntary</i>	
Peter Cairns	<i>Highland Council (Councillor)</i>	Angus Christie	<i>Maryburgh Amenities</i>
David Chisholm	<i>Highland Council (Councillor)</i>	George Muirden	<i>Dingwall (& Seaforth) Initiative</i>
Angela MacLean	<i>Highland Council (Councillor)</i>	Tom Davis	<i>Business sector (Muir of Ord)</i>
Margaret Paterson	<i>Highland Council (Councillor)</i>	David Macdonald	<i>Dingwall History Society</i>
Liz Cowie	<i>Highland Council (Ward Manager)</i>	Alister MacKinnon	<i>Business sector (Conon Bridge)</i>
Colin Craig	<i>Ferintosh Community Council</i>	Representative	<i>Youth Voice</i>
		Representative	<i>Youth Voice</i>

3.6 This membership reflects the make up of the Steering Development Partnership which has worked to prepare this development plan. However, it is proposed to review the membership of the group at an early stage (and within the first 6 months of operation) to better reflect the agreed priorities of the plan. The review of membership will follow the following principles in addition to the overall requirement for a maximum of 50% membership from public bodies:

- 2 of the 4 Highland Councillors from the Ward will be members of the group
- involvement of representatives from other public bodies (eg, SNH, HIE, Forestry Commission) as appropriate
- at least one member (public, private or voluntary) from each of the 5 Community Council areas in the Ward
- private or voluntary sector vacancies on the Partnership will be filled by representatives of groups nominated by the appropriate Community Council to ensure geographic spread
- additional, non-voting, members may attend and advise on appropriate applications
- members of the Development Partnership may nominate an alternate member to serve in their place should they be unable to attend any meetings.

3.7 The LAP will appoint a Chairperson and a Vice-Chairperson. At all meetings of the LAP, the Chairperson, or in their absence the Vice-Chairperson, shall preside over the meeting. If both are absent, partners will choose a member to preside. The Chair and Vice chair will be appointed at the first meeting in each calendar year. At any meeting of the LAP at least 50% of partners must be present, and at least 50% of those must be private or voluntary partners. If a quorum is not present, at the Chairperson's/Vice-Chairperson's discretion, the meeting will proceed and any decisions taken will be homologated at the next meeting or by written procedure if appropriate (including the use of email). Similar written procedures may be used regarding urgent applications between scheduled meetings.

3.8 Where an interest has been declared from a group member as a project applicant, they must withdraw from the meeting while the item is discussed. Where an interest is declared from a group member directly involved with project delivery, that interest should be declared and they will withdraw from the meeting while the item is discussed. For clarification, match funders, if they are not the applicant, will be

eligible to participate and vote on the discussions relating to the application. Where a LAP member organisation shares Board Members, Directors or other Senior Officials with an applicant organisation, and the LAP representative of that member is aware or made aware of such a connection, that representative should declare the connection as an interest. Where it is felt that this would not unfairly favour or prejudice the application, the remaining members present at the meeting may decide that the organisation declaring the interest need not abstain from the discussion of, and decision on, the relevant item. Declarations of interest will be formally recorded in the minute of the meeting. Where a member declares a financial or personal interest over and above that stated, the LAP will decide if this would unfairly favour or prejudice the application and if required they will be asked to withdraw from the meeting while the item is discussed.

3.9 In addition to a Programme Manager and administrative staff, the strategic LAG has appointed three area based Development Officers. The Dingwall and Seaforth Development Group will be supported by one of these Development Officers who will have responsibility for:

- Assessing and appraising projects
- Informing the strategic Local Action Group of their recommendations
- Reporting on local allocation – commitment and progress on projects
- Tracking and monitoring local projects
- Taking advice from the Development Partnership to give an informed view to the strategic LAG on projects in which there is a Dingwall and Seaforth interest but which will be decided centrally
- Reporting to the strategic LAG on LEADER activities within the Dingwall and Seaforth area.

3.10 The Development Officers would not have a role in assisting groups in Dingwall and Seaforth to develop their plans and projects, however. The Dingwall and Seaforth Partnership would need to develop mechanisms for this, for example through funding development officers and community support workers (probably through LEADER projects).

LAP Funding

3.11 A total of £7 million has been allocated to the 11 LAPs for an initial 3 year period. LAPs which reach full commitment and 50% spend will be able to bid for additional funding for the final years of the programme. If some LAPs experience difficulty committing and spending their initial allocation then funds may be moved to areas with greater demand.

3.12 The initial 3 year allocation for Dingwall and Seaforth is £393,378. Projects of a strategic rather than local nature will be funded from a centrally held allocation of £3 million. Similarly, a central allocation has been reserved for trans-regional and trans-national projects.

3.13 LEADER can provide only a proportion of project costs. For the first year the

maximum grant rate available will be 40%, or 45% if this is matched by 45% from other public sources (such as, for example, the Highland Council, SNH or the National Lottery).

3.14 A wide range of projects will be eligible for support in implementing the LAP's development plan. However, the LAP must operate within the general eligibility rules of the overall LEADER Programme. For example, the following costs are currently seen as ineligible for LEADER funding (although some are still under discussion and subject to further clarification):

- Existing core staff costs
- Continuation of existing services
- Sports facilities primarily for local use
- Repairs to existing buildings or facilities
- Statutory service provision
- Financial / bank charges
- Fixtures & fittings unrelated to delivery of LEADER project
- CCTV and civic art projects
- Prize money
- Recoverable VAT.

4. SOCIO-ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

- 4.1 Dingwall and Seaforth is a relatively compact Highland Council multi-member ward with an area of 94 square kilometres in the south east of Ross and Cromarty, between the Cromarty and Beaully Firths. The area's population density in 2007 of 129.9 people per sq km is approximately double the Scottish average (66) and much higher than the Highland average of 8.2. The main population centres are: Dingwall, Maryburgh, Conon Bridge and Muir of Ord.
- 4.2 The overall Ward population is estimated by the General Register Office for Scotland (GROS) as 12,200 as at mid 2007. This is a 4.1% increase on the 2001 Census figure. Population estimates are built from the best fit of the Ward boundary with the boundaries of the data zones (the core geography for population statistics) within it. A map of the data zones within the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward, and the breakdown of the mid 2007 population figures, is shown in Appendix 2.
- 4.3 The *Dingwall* settlement zone had a population of 5,521 at the time of the 2001 census. Dingwall is the administrative centre for the Highland Council in Ross and Cromarty and has a range of services and facilities serving both the Ward and the wider area. The Local Plan allows for development of 470 to 590 new houses by 2017.
- 4.4 The *Maryburgh* settlement zone had a population of 1,299 in 2001. It is located to the south of Dingwall on the A862, at the junction with the A835 road to Ullapool and the west coast. The village is largely residential, and the Local Plan anticipates a need for 75 to 100 additional houses in the next 15 years.
- 4.5 *Conon Bridge* (2001 settlement zone population of 1,805) neighbours Maryburgh to the south. Also primarily residential, the village has expanded greatly in recent years, and the Local Plan envisages a need for a further 260 homes by 2017.
- 4.6 *Muir of Ord* had a settlement zone population of 2,898 in 2001. It has a substantial industrial estate and is the venue for the annual Black Isle Show. The Local Plan suggests a requirement for 300 to 360 houses over the next 10-15 years.
- 4.7 Overall, the Local Plan identifies a requirement for up to 1,310 new homes in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward area over the next 10-15 years. This would increase the current number of households in the Ward by almost 30%. Some of this development has already happened and 469 housing completions are reported in the main settlements over the years 2001 to (October) 2008 as follows:

Settlement	Housing completions
Conon Bridge	88
Dingwall	156
Maryburgh	33
Muir of Ord	192
Total	469

Source: Highland Council

- 4.8 The timing of further developments will depend on a wide number of factors, including investment in infrastructure, demand for houses, the activities of Housing Associations, and access to finance to buy or rent houses. However, taking into account a current

review of Council policy on housing in the countryside which is likely to lead to an increase in new housing outside the main settlements, it seems likely that the overall Ward population will continue to grow and pressure on services and facilities will increase.

- 4.9 Commuting to Inverness is a key feature of all of the communities in the Ward, and the attractions of the Dingwall and Seaforth as a base for commuters is a key driver for the current and anticipated growth. The 2001 Census showed that over 21% of those in the Ward area were travelling between 10 and 20 kilometres to work or study (excluding those not currently working or studying). This is the fourth highest figure of the 22 Highland Council Wards and compares with a Highland average of 10.7% travelling that distance. At the same time creating more employment opportunities locally would save residents the time and cost of commuting, reduce fuel use and environmental impacts, and make journeys to work quicker for those who would continue to commute.

Population Structure and Projections

- 4.10 The total population of the area in 2007 was 12,200 (GROS 2007 mid year estimate) in 4,565 households (2001 Census).
- 4.11 The current age profile of the Ward's population is broadly similar to that of both Highland as a whole and Scotland:

Age	Ward (%)	Highland (%)	Scotland (%)	Ward (No.)	Highland (No.)	Scotland (No.)
0-15	18.0	18.0	17.8	2,195	39,221	916,951
16-49	43.5	42.4	46.8	5,303	92,089	2,406,262
50-64	21.0	21.8	19.0	2,567	47,303	975,374
65-74	9.4	9.8	8.9	1,141	21,249	457,376
75-84	6.1	6.1	5.6	741	13,168	289,967
85+	2.1	2.0	1.9	253	4,410	98,270
Source: GRO(S) 2007 mid-year estimates						

- 4.12 The Highland Council produces future population projections based on figures supplied by GROS. Birth and death rates and migration profiles are available for Ross and Cromarty as a whole, but it is difficult to project population change at a Ward level where this will be dependent on local factors such as housing growth, employment trends and changes in migration. Population projections for Wards were produced by Highland Council assuming in effect that migration is evenly spread throughout the area. Population projections for Wards are therefore indicative estimates. The population of the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward is expected to grow over the period of the LEADER Programme and beyond, reflecting the significant housing development anticipated in the Local Plan. As well as inward migration from other Highland areas and from elsewhere in the UK, 100 migrant workers moved into the Ward between 2002 and 2006. Assuming that the trends continue as when the projections were made, the pattern of population growth in the Ward (derived from Highland Council figures) is projected as:

Age	2006	2008	2013	2021	2031	2006 (%)	2031 (%)
0-15	2,223	2,182	2,140	2,057	1,976	18.3	14.6
16-49	5,310	5,320	5,171	4,849	4,764	43.7	35.3
50-64	2,523	2,593	2,710	2,769	2,430	20.8	18.0
65-74	1,148	1,232	1,519	1,835	1,956	9.4	14.5
75-84	720	758	859	1,176	1,571	5.9	11.6
85+	231	253	320	467	798	1.9	5.9
Total	12,155	12,337	12,720	13,152	13,495		

4.13 As can be seen, along with the expected population growth there is a strong trend towards an ageing population in Dingwall and Seaforth. Current trends would mean that the percentage of the population aged up to 15 will fall from 18.3% in 2006 to 14.6% in 2031, while those aged 75 and over will rise from 7.8% in 2006 to 17.5%.

4.14 Projected changes in the Highland LEADER target groups in Dingwall and Seaforth would be as follows:

Age	2006	2008	2013	Change 2006-2013	2021	2031	Change 2006-2031
14-25	1,707	1,743	1,813	+6.2%	1,649	1,584	-7.2%
20-34	1,901	1,876	2,018	+6.2%	2,045	1,894	-0.4%
65+	2,099	2,243	2,699	+28.6%	3,477	4,325	+106.1%

4.15 Assuming no action that will influence age structure, the trend suggests that population growth will lead to more younger people in the 14 to 34 age group in Dingwall in Seaforth by the end of the LEADER Programme in 2013 before numbers reduce in the following years. The numbers of people over 65 are projected to grow strongly to 2013 and will continue to grow more strongly for the foreseeable future, becoming a third of the total population of the Ward by 2031.

Education Projections and Indicators

4.16 Highland Council also produces forecasts of school rolls, which, being dependent on assumptions on the speed of development, are indicative. The area's secondary school, Dingwall Academy, serves an area wider than the Ward. It recently moved into a new building with a slightly smaller capacity than the building it replaced. The current roll of 965 is projected to rise to 1,153 by 2013/14, continuing to grow to 1,277 by 2021. St Clements School in Dingwall is a special school which currently has a roll of 38 pupils over the ages of 5 to 19. Of the associated primary schools in the Ward, the current and projected rolls are as follows:

	Current roll	Projected 2013/14 roll
Conon Bridge	146	184
Dingwall	477	438

Maryburgh	98	78
Mulbuie	71	67
Tarradale (Muir of Ord)	231	248

4.17 The average educational attainment (calculated by allocating a score to each level of qualification and award) of Dingwall Academy school S4 pupils in 2006 was 166, which compares with 181 in Highland and 171 across Scotland.

4.18 An annual survey of school leavers' destinations is carried out by SDS Careers Scotland. The latest figures for Dingwall Academy 2006/07 leavers show:

Destination	Dingwall Academy %	Highland %	Scotland %
Full time Higher Education	27.3	29.4	29.2
Full time Further Education	19.1	18.2	23.5
Training	1.4	2.0	5.3
Employment	39.5	39.4	28.0
Unemployed and seeking employment or training	5.9	7.4	11.1
Unemployed and not seeking employment or training	2.7	1.7	1.6
Unknown	4.1	2.0	1.4

4.19 In common with the general pattern in Highland, a higher proportion of Dingwall's school leavers went into employment than the Scottish average. Fewer than in Highland generally or in Scotland went into training or were unemployed and seeking training or employment. This reflects a strong job market in the Travel to Work area of the Ward, but the longer term career prospects of those who go straight from school into employment without training can be lower than of those who opt for Higher Education, Further Education or other training.

4.20 Qualifications across the under-75 adult population in 2001 are illustrated in the table below. This shows that the Ward had a relative high percentage of people with no qualifications or Standard Grade (or equivalent) only and a lower proportion with degree level qualifications.

	Ward	Highland	Scotland
Percentage of 16-74 Year Olds Whose Highest Qualification in 2001 was:			
Group 1:	27.6	26.1	24.7
Group 2:	15.1	15.3	15.7
Group 3:	6.6	6.4	7.0
Group 4:	16.5	19.6	19.5
No Qualifications	34.2	32.6	33.2

Source: Highland Council Ward Profile / Census 2001

Group 1: 'O'Grade, Standard Grade, Intermediate 1 or 2, City & Guilds Craft, SVQ Level 1 or 2 or equivalent

Group 2: Higher Grade, CSYS, ONC, OND, City & Guilds Advanced Craft, RSA Advanced Diploma, SVQ Level 3 or equivalent

Group 3: HND, HNC RSA Higher Diploma, SVQ Level 4 or 5 equivalent

Group 4: First Degree, Higher Degree, Professional Qualification

Economic Indicators

4.21 There were 6,000 people in employment in the Ward in 2006 according to the Annual Business Inquiry. The area's structure of employment is shown below (excluding the self employed).

Employment by Sector	Ward %	Highland %	Scotland %
Agriculture & Fishing	1.1	3.6	1.5
Energy & Water	1.0	0.7	1.6
Manufacturing	9.6	8.9	9.4
Construction	8.4	6.5	5.8
Distribution, Hotels and Restaurants	22.1	26.7	22.4
Transport and Communications	1.6	4.5	5.1
Banking, Finance & Insurance, etc	10.4	11.3	18.3
Public Admin, Education & Health	38.6	32.8	30.4
Other Services	4.8	4.9	5.4

Source: Annual Business Inquiry 2006

4.22 The public sector is a particularly important source of employment, with central Council offices for Ross and Cromarty, a secondary school and hospital in Dingwall. Although agriculture represents only a relatively small source of reported employment, the new auction mart in Dingwall and the range of employment opportunities it generates ensures that the Ward has important agricultural connections.

4.23 In 4.9 above the level of commuting by residents of the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward is mentioned. It must be remembered that there is also commuting into the Ward and that a substantial number of the jobs in the Ward will be filled by people resident in other Council areas.

4.24 The Ward's rate of economic activity in 2001 was similar to that of Highland, with a higher proportion in employment and a lower proportion self-employed.

Economic Activity Percentage of 16-74 year olds	Ward %	Highland %	Scotland %
Economically active	68.5	68.1	65.0
Full-time employees	41.2	38.9	40.3
Part-time employees	13.3	12.9	11.1
Self-employed	7.9	10.2	6.6
Full-time student	1.9	1.8	3.0
Unemployed	4.3	4.3	4.0
	7,977	152,675	3,731,079

Source: Census 2001

Economically active people are defined as those aged 16 to 74 who are working, actively looking for work or full-time students.

4.25 The Ward's unemployment rate in June 2008, as measured by the percentage of the resident working age population claiming Job Seekers Allowance, was very low at 1.4%, compared with a rate for Highland of 1.6% and a Scottish rate of 2.3%.

- 4.26 7.4% of the Ward's residential working age population in November 2007 were claiming Incapacity Benefit / Severe Disability Allowance, compared with 7.9% in Highland as a whole and 9.6% in Scotland. 18.7% of the working age population in 2004 were claiming Council Tax benefit, compared with 17.0% in Highland and 21.8% in Scotland.
- 4.27 Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics provide a range of other indicators for the Ward that can be compared with Highland and Scotland, although some are of dubious validity due to small samples.

The Economic Recession

- 4.28 The current UK recession will impact on the Highland economy, and Dingwall and Seaforth is likely to experience increased unemployment, business failures and reduced private sector investment over the next 1-2 years. New house building has been seriously affected already throughout Scotland and short term population growth in Dingwall and Seaforth may be slower than had been expected.

5. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

- 5.1 This development plan does not exist in isolation. The priorities identified and the projects put forward must reflect a wide range of national, regional and local programmes, strategies and activities. This section identifies some of the most relevant for Dingwall and Seaforth.

National and Regional Strategies

- 5.2 There was a change of government in Scotland in 2007. The new administration has indicated that the overarching purpose of the Scottish Government is:

“to create a more successful country, with opportunities for all of Scotland to flourish, through increasing sustainable economic growth.”

- 5.3 Sustainable economic growth is the central aim. The Government’s Strategic Objectives are to make Scotland wealthier and fairer, smarter, healthier, safer and stronger, and greener. The Government’s Economic Strategy sets the direction for Scotland’s public sector – the Scottish Government, local government, the enterprise networks and other key agencies – to work collaboratively with the private, academic and third sectors, in pursuit of increasing sustainable economic growth.

- 5.4 The Economic Strategy identifies five priorities critical to economic growth:

- Learning, skills and well-being
- A supportive business environment
- Infrastructure development
- Effective government
- Equity

- 5.5 The way that many of these issues are being addressed has changed. Rather than developing national initiatives, the Scottish Government is channelling more money for local delivery through Local Authorities which will require the Local Authorities to work with other partners, including the voluntary sector. For example, Scottish Ministers expect voluntary youth organisations to concentrate on building links with Local Authorities and to provide evidence of delivering outcomes for young people.

- 5.6 The following 15 National Outcomes describe what the Government wants to achieve over the next ten years through this approach:

- We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.
- We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.
- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, and renowned for our research and innovation.

- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens
 - Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed.
 - We live longer, healthier lives.
 - We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.
 - We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
 - We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
 - We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
 - We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
 - We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect it and enhance it for future generations.
 - We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.
 - We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.
 - Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.
- 5.7 The Highland Council's Single Outcome Agreement with the Scottish Government specifies the Highland outcomes which will contribute to the National Outcomes. Formally launched in August 2008, the Agreement represents the commitment of Highland Council and community planning partners that include NHS Highland, Highlands and Islands Enterprise, Skills Development Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage. The agreed local outcomes relating to each of the 15 National Outcomes are shown in Appendix 3.
- 5.8 The Highland Single Outcome Agreement reflects *Strengthening the Highlands*, the Programme of the Highland Council, which was revised in August 2008 following a change in its administration. *Strengthening the Highlands* sets out a programme of action for the years 2009-2011, making commitments across 5 main themes:
- What we will do for children and families
 - What we will do for communities and older people
 - What we will do for the economy
 - What we will do for our environment
 - What we will do to make the Council more effective and efficient.
- 5.9 The Government has also recently published *Changing Scotland's relationship with alcohol: a discussion paper on our strategic approach*. A key point is that preventing young people from misusing alcohol will enable them to make positive choices and

help to address the effects of alcohol misuse within families. The discussion paper highlights that:

- 40% of 15 year olds and 15% of 13 year olds drank alcohol in the previous week.
- 1 in 6 of those 15 year olds who have drunk alcohol reported trying drugs, and 1 in 7 reported having unprotected sex as a consequence of alcohol consumption.
- 65,000 Scottish children are estimated to live with a parent whose drinking is problematic.
- A quarter of children on the Child Protection Register are estimated to be there due to parental alcohol or drug misuse.
- One in three divorces cite excessive drinking by a partner as a contributory factor.

5.10 A number of youth projects from different parts of Scotland which offer an alternative to alcohol are commended in the Government report. These include projects offering access to sports and arts activities at weekends and evenings outside the normal opening hours of facilities.

5.11 A recent report to Highland Council by the Highland Drug and Alcohol Action Team highlighted that substance misuse affects all communities in Highland. The report presented the key findings from the 2006 Scottish Schools Adolescent Lifestyle and Substance Use Survey (SALSUS), which included responses from 1,366 pupils in Highland.

5.12 The survey results showed that:

- In Highland, 61% of 13 year olds and 88% of 15 year olds reported that they had had an alcoholic drink.
- In the last week, 38% of 15 year olds and 17% of 13 year olds had drunk alcohol.
- There was no significant difference in the proportion of boys and girls in Highland who had had an alcoholic drink in the last week (28% - boys: 28% - girls).
- Pupils aged 13 who drank in the last 7 days in Highland had on average consumed 10 units of alcohol.
- Pupils aged 15 who drank in the last 7 days in Highland had on average consumed 14 units of alcohol.
- Boys had consumed 13 units and girls had consumed 12 units.
- 10% of 13 year olds and 16% of 15 year olds said they had been really drunk between 4 and 10 times.
- 8% of 13 year olds and 17% of 15 year olds said they had been really drunk more than 10 times.
- In Highland, 21% of 13 year olds and 45% of 15 year olds had been offered drugs.
- There was no significant difference in the proportion of boys and girls in Highland who had been offered drugs (34% boys : 33% girls).

- In Highland, 0% of 13year olds and 3% of 15 year olds reported that they usually took drugs at least once a week.
 - 3% of 13 year olds and 9% of 15 year olds reported taking drugs in the last month.
 - The most commonly used drug reported by 13 and 15 year olds is cannabis.
- 5.13 The former Scottish Government produced a number of policies and strategies relevant to Highland LEADER’s target groups and services in rural areas. These included:
- More Choices, More Chances* – a strategy to reduce the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training in Scotland.
- Moving Forward: A Strategy for Improving Young People's Chances Through Youth Work* – which will set out a long term vision for youth work with 2 main elements: that all young people in Scotland will be able to benefit from youth work opportunities which make a real difference to their lives; and that there will be a youth work sector equipped and empowered to achieve positive outcomes for young people now and in the future.
- Let’s Make Scotland More Active* – a strategy to improve health and wellbeing by encouraging physical activity.
- Closing the Opportunity Gap* – which aimed to address poverty and inequalities of opportunity, with objectives including improving access to high quality services for the most disadvantaged groups and individuals in rural communities, and improving the confidence and skills of the most disadvantaged children and young people.
- 5.14 HIE’s Operating Plan for 2008-2011 reflects the Scottish Government’s Economic Strategy and is focussed on building sustainable economic growth across the area. Its 2008-11 Operating Plan aims to achieve this through:
- Supporting high growth businesses and sectors, so raising growth rates across the area.
 - Creating the infrastructure and conditions to improve regional competitiveness.
 - Strengthening communities, especially in the fragile parts of the area.
- 5.15 In areas such as Dingwall and Seaforth, which are not designated as fragile, support for community development will focus on social enterprise including community based renewable energy initiatives. HIE’s priorities through its strengthening communities remit are:
- Social enterprise
 - Community assets (with the potential to generate income)
 - Community capacity building.
- 5.16 The effect of this focusing by HIE (together with its reduced budget) will be that a narrower range of LEADER projects will be eligible for grant assistance than under the LEADER+ Programme and the CED Programme that operated in parts of Ross and Cromarty.

The Local Plan

5.17 The Ross & Cromarty East Local Plan, which includes the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward, reached deposit draft stage in 2005 and was adopted in February 2007. The Local Plan co-ordinates planning for the detailed development and use of land in the area, following policies set out in the Structure Plan and designed to deliver an overall vision:

“of a growing population, a robust and expanding economy, improved communications and services coupled with strong safeguards for the environment.”

5.18 The Local Plan identifies a number of key issues. These relate to the wider Local Plan area and are not all as relevant to Dingwall and Seaforth as to the area as a whole. The issues include:

- Population change
- Impact of expansion of Inverness
- Access to services
- Skills
- Employment prospects
- New technology
- Renewable energy
- Natural heritage
- Built and archaeological heritage
- Tourism.

5.19 The Local Plan aims for:

A Network of Strong and Distinct Local Communities, less dependent upon Inverness, with quality living environments, a range of facilities, housing opportunities and improved public transport links.

A More Competitive Place, with the Cromarty Firth as the focal point for North Sea oil service repair and maintenance, cruise ship berthing and rail and sea freight facilities. Rapid transport links will connect the settlements of the development corridor, Inverness and its airport. There will be thriving business and industrial estates in a variety of locations with a range of knowledge based and food processing businesses. Regenerated town centres, including the enhancement of Dingwall as a major centre in its own right, complementary but not competitive with Inverness, will be the focal point of other commercial, community and social activities.

A Sustainable Place, with increased tourist activity, based upon interpretation of archaeological features, historic towns and villages, outstanding scenery and marine habitats, supported by Core Path Network improvements and gateway facilities to the western mountains and coast.

- 5.20 These are ambitious aims given the competition from other parts of the Moray Firth area (particularly the Inverness to Nairn corridor), and it will be important for the development effort to be sharply focused and for the area to build on its strengths.
- 5.21 Following on from the Local Plan, Highland Council is issuing a development brief for the redevelopment of land in the centre of Dingwall, which will examine the potential of a substantial area of land along both sides of the canal. The land has potential for residential, commercial, community and leisure use. The Council has also committed to environmental improvements in Dingwall High Street and has submitted an outline application for Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme funding to Historic Scotland for the Dingwall Conservation area.
- 5.22 As mentioned in Section 4 above, the Local Plan makes provision for a substantial number of new housing developments in all of the main communities in the Dingwall and Seaforth area. A Development Framework has been produced for a large area of new housing at Dingwall North (up to 550 new houses). Other specific issues and priorities identified in the Local Plan include:
- The need to protect, improve and enhance amenity areas
 - Enhancement of Muir of Ord village centre environment
 - Improved transport links
 - Encouraging use of the Mannsfield (Black Isle) Showground as a year round venue.
- 5.23 The anticipated levels of development will increase the pressure on existing transport routes, especially at peak times. The main route through the Ward, the A862, is the main alternative road to Inverness, despite ongoing issues such as the railway bridge at Muir of Ord. The importance of integrated transport will rise as commuter pressure increases, and this highlights the value of developments such as the reopening of Conon Bridge railway station.
- 5.24 Also subsequent to the adoption of the Local Plan the Council is reviewing its development plan guidance on housing in the countryside. The Local Plan has a general presumption against housing in the open countryside in the hinterland around towns, but even so in the last few years some 80 houses have been developed. The review sees an emphasis placed on the need to increase housing supply and to focus attention on the quality of housing being provided. This is likely to further increase the number of planning applications for housing outside the main settlements. This in itself has an implication both for increased pressure on the network of single track roads in the Ward and on transport and service availability for those living in the countryside.

Biodiversity

- 5.24 The Ross and Cromarty (East) Biodiversity Action Plan was approved in July 2004. Its objectives are:
- To improve access to information about important habitats and species, and their management requirements.
 - To raise awareness of biodiversity and pressures upon it.

- To identify local opportunities to improve biodiversity and promote positive attitudes from an early age.
- To safeguard the biodiversity of existing habitats.
- To ensure all future developments take account of local biodiversity.
- To encourage a holistic approach to the management of land and natural resources that takes account of local biodiversity.
- To maximise the sustainable economic benefit from biodiversity.
- To establish a mechanism to help deliver the Ross and Cromarty (East) Biodiversity Action Plan.

5.25 A number of actions specified in the Action Plan relate to the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward. Some, such as improvements at Dunglass Island on the River Conon to improve spawning habitat for salmon and restore biodiversity in an old river channel, have been achieved, but other projects and related actions have still to be taken forward.

Core Paths

5.26 Under the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003, Highland Council, as the Access Authority, has a statutory requirement to produce a Core Path Network Plan. Core paths are important in outdoor access provision, aimed at meeting the basic path needs of local people and visitors for recreation and getting about. They also provide links to the wider path systems within an area. The Plan brings together existing paths with some new paths to form an overall paths network. The Ross and Cromarty Plan, compiled after wide consultation, includes extensive proposals in the Dingwall and Seaforth area. Some of the paths identified are in good condition while others require improvement.

Other EU-supported Programmes

5.27 As mentioned in Section 2, the LEADER Programme is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). The SRDP is a £1.6 billion programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland and help deliver the Government's strategic objectives over the next six years.

5.28 LEADER is only one of the measures through which the SRDP is delivered. The other measures are:

- Crofting Counties Agricultural Grant Scheme
- Food Processing, Marketing and Co-operation Grant Scheme
- Forestry Commission Challenge Funds
- Less Favoured Area Support Scheme
- Rural Development Contracts - Land Management Contracts and Rural Priorities
- Skills Development Scheme

- 5.29 Certain businesses and groups in Dingwall and Seaforth will have access to funding through one or more of these various schemes. In particular, Rural Priorities are delivered through a Regional Proposal Assessment Committee (RPAC), which has set the priorities for Highland under the following nine themes:

Business Viability and Competitiveness

These priorities focus on improving business practices, including production, distribution, meeting standards, market expansion, education/training and quality. There are also options relating specifically to New Entrants and Organics.

Biodiversity

These priorities focus on halting the loss of biodiversity and reversing previous losses through management, conservation and enhancement. Protection of rare/endangered species, reducing threats from non-native/invasive species, achieving 'favourable condition' on SSSIs, and increasing the area of connected natural habitats are all encouraged.

Landscape

These priorities focus on enhancements of the rural landscape which will have a positive impact on people's environment. The importance of Scotland's woods and forests is also highlighted.

Built & Cultural Heritage

These priorities focus on the conservation and enhancement of the historic environment by increasing the number and range of vernacular rural buildings and sites of archaeological or historic interest that are protected, enhanced and actively managed.

Water and Soils

These priorities focus on the improvement of habitats/water quality through various means. Reduction of diffuse pollution, flood protection, protection against risk of erosion and actions within Nitrate Vulnerable Zones, Bathing Water Catchments, shellfish growing areas and Drinking Water Protected Areas are all identified.

Adaptations to Mitigate Climate Change

These priorities focus on reducing emissions of greenhouse gasses, improving efficiency of practices and better management of current climate change actions.

Public Access

These priorities focus on creating, improving and promoting public access provision.

Diversification of Rural Enterprise

These priorities focus on the improvement of rural enterprise through diversification. Innovation, strengthened links between primary producers and other sectors, improved environmental performance, career development opportunities and maximisation of tourism are all highlighted.

Thriving Rural Communities

These priorities focus on empowering and encouraging rural communities to take a positive role in addressing the issues which affect them. Support for community led initiatives, improvement of skills, knowledge and capacity as well as access to sustainable rural buildings, are all highlighted.

- 5.30 There is close co-ordination between the Highland LAG and the Highland RPAC to ensure that projects supported are complementary and to avoid duplication. The Highland LEADER Development Officer acts as the link between the Dingwall and

Seaforth Development Partnership and the strategic LAG to extend this co-ordination to the local level.

- 5.31 Highland also benefits from European Funding through the Highlands and Islands Convergence Programme 2007 to 2013, which is delivered through a combination of Challenge Funding and Commissioning. The Challenge Funding is open to competitive application. Commissioning will largely be through Intermediate Delivery Bodies (IDBs). Two IDBs have already been identified for the Highlands and Islands: Highlands and Islands Enterprise and the UHI. Community Planning Partnerships will also have a role in delivering community based projects.
- 5.32 Implementation of the new Structural Fund Programmes will reflect the priorities of the Scottish Government's Economic Strategy given at 5.4 above.

6. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- 6.1 The communities in the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward have been consulted on a number of issues and occasions in recent years. Examples of consultation processes that have taken place include the following:
- The Ross and Cromarty East Local Plan;
 - The Core Paths Plan;
 - Environmental improvements to Dingwall Town Centre;
 - Muir Matters - establishing development priorities for Muir of Ord;
 - Proposals regarding local schools;
 - The need for out of school provision in Muir of Ord;
 - Environmental priorities in Dingwall.
- 6.2 The content and findings of these consultations have been taken into account in preparing this Development Plan.
- 6.3 In preparing the plan, discussions have been held with various stakeholders, including the relevant Highland Councillors, representatives of the four Community Councils in the Ward, appropriate Council officers and representatives of other agencies.
- 6.4 A survey was also carried out asking for views on priorities, issues to be addressed in the Plan and examples of projects that might be brought forward for support. Over 60 questionnaires were distributed to community groups and other stakeholders. In addition community activity venues were asked to distribute survey forms to their user groups.
- 6.5 Survey returns were supplemented by telephone and email follow up to explain the development planning process, encourage participation and ensure that as many views as possible were obtained. By encouraging involvement in these ways, over 30 local organisations have taken part in developing the draft plan.
- 6.6 The draft plan was made available to groups, organisations and individuals in the Ward area. The draft was available online (through Highland Council's website), copies were made available at Highland Council Service Points in the Ward, and each Community Council received a copy. Local groups who were contacted in the planning process (especially those who responded to the survey) and other stakeholders, agencies and potential match funders were directed to the draft or sent a copy. Comments received have been taken account of in developing the final version of this development plan.

7. NEEDS AND OPPORTUNITIES IN DINGWALL AND SEAFORTH

7.1 The Highland LEADER Local Development Strategy and Business Plan produced in 2007 as a bid for LEADER funding identified aims and objectives, themes and priorities for Highland as a whole. These are discussed below and modified to fit the needs of Dingwall and Seaforth and the issues that have arisen through the development planning process.

7.2 The overall aim of this Development Plan is:

To enable people in Dingwall and Seaforth to live in communities where they can fulfil their personal, social and economic potential

7.3 The Plan's main objectives which relate to the Highland LEADER strategy are:

- To improve the age balance in the area as the population grows, particularly focusing on retaining and attracting young adults.
- To increase the benefits that the area derives from its natural, built and cultural heritage.
- To maximise the benefits from the area's community assets and to enhance provision where priorities are identified.
- To improve access to services by the local population, particularly focusing on young people and those over 65.
- To assist community groups to create, update and implement their own development plans.
- To increase the scope and range of training and learning opportunities available locally.
- To support the development of social enterprise and micro-businesses.

7.4 These objectives relate to the needs that emerged from the socio-economic analysis in Section 4 of this plan, the strategic analysis in Section 5 and local consultation. The objectives will be addressed through the following priority themes:

(1) Development Planning and Community Capacity Building

7.5 Involving communities in defining their own needs and priorities is integral to the Highland LEADER Programme. As there was no pre-existing local community planning structure for the Dingwall and Seaforth Ward, preparing this Local Development Plan to give a firm foundation for the local LEADER Programme was an early priority. The Plan also provides a strategic framework for projects that might be taken forward through other funding routes.

7.6 Dingwall and Seaforth has had little involvement in previous rural funding initiatives, and the planning process has shown that community groups will need help over a period both to become better established and to identify how they might translate their needs into project opportunities. LEADER will support capacity building and assist communities and groups to understand the potential of the Programme and to plan and implement robust and sustainable projects. Given the Programme's relatively short lifespan and the limited funding available, a degree of priority will be given to projects

that can demonstrate a future development path that will not be dependent on continuing EU support.

7.7 Following agreement of this Dingwall and Seaforth Plan, the following types of project are expected to be brought forward for support:

- Feasibility studies for new and improved community facilities.
- Support to stimulate the development of sustainable community groups which address specific needs.
- Support for community and local sectoral groups to prepare their own development plans.
- Support to help inexperienced groups develop individual projects.
- Collaborative projects between community groups – within a local community, across the area's communities or with communities from other areas.

7.8 Funding for community groups to buy in short term support for the development of projects and plans has often been important to the success of previous LEADER programmes in other areas. Longer term development officer support has also been successful in building capacity and empowering community groups to set their own priorities for development. It is clear that community groups in Dingwall and Seaforth need such support to become established and to engage in the development process but cost-effectiveness is also important – i.e. too high a proportion of available funding should not be spent on development officer fees and associated costs. The Dingwall Initiative, which has operated successfully in the past, could have a key role here and has indicated its willingness to consider extending its remit across the Ward.

7.9 Particular projects that are prioritised through the development plans of local groups or identified as viable and worthwhile through feasibility studies will often be taken forward through support programmes other than LEADER, especially where their scale would require too much LEADER funding or where other Programmes' criteria are a closer match to their objectives.

(2) Culture and Heritage

7.10 The Dingwall and Seaforth Ward has a rich cultural heritage. Dingwall itself was an important Norse administrative centre, having been designated as a royal burgh in 1226/1227 and having had an important royal stronghold in Dingwall Castle, which became the seat of the powerful Earls of Ross. The medieval layout can still be seen in plans of the town centre, which is a conservation area with large areas deemed archaeologically significant. In later years, Dingwall continued to be an important market town, strengthened by its position as a road crossroads and rail junction. Thomas Telford canalised the River Peffery to bring ships into the town centre. Muir of Ord was an important meeting point on the drove roads from the north and west, and is the home of the Black Isle Show, founded in 1836 and still very much the premier Highland agricultural event. Maryburgh and Conon Bridge are later developments along the road to Dingwall following the opening of Telford's bridge over the Conon in 1809. Maryburgh is closely linked to the Brahan Estate.

7.11 Much of this heritage is relatively invisible to all but the most interested. Dingwall and Brahan Castles no longer exist, Telford's bridge has been replaced and the canal

became silted and had fallen out of use by the mid 19th century. Dingwall's livestock market has recently moved to a new site out of the centre of the town and a large supermarket now occupies its former site. Nevertheless, there are a range of groups involved with the heritage of the area, including Dingwall Museum and a new facility at the mart celebrating the droving heritage. The LEADER Programme will encourage existing and new heritage groups to promote awareness of the past, to strengthen facilities and to involve the community – young and old – in learning about and celebrating their cultural heritage. Whether or not Highland Council's application for funding through Historic Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme for Dingwall is successful, there is scope for LEADER to support projects related to the application.

- 7.12 Culture and heritage are important reasons for tourists to visit the Highlands, and a memorable part of their trip. Dingwall is the administrative base for Feis Rois, which, as well as its three residential fèisean (which take place outside the Ward), organises classes at various locations, including Mulbuie and Dingwall. With LEADER support, more could be done to provide opportunities to attend and participate in traditional and other arts locally. Although there are occasional local performances, there are no regular arts venues in the Ward, and residents and visitors must usually travel to Inverness or Strathpeffer, or to community venues in Fortrose, Cromarty, Ardross or Resolis.
- 7.13 There are a variety of arts and cultural related activities which LEADER could help to develop. For example, Dingwall Community Centre is home to a number of arts and crafts groups and classes.
- 7.14 The types of project likely to come forward under this priority are expected to include:
- An improved range of arts opportunities available locally.
 - Greater use of community facilities for performing arts.
 - Craft based activity.
 - Improved access to opportunities to acquire arts and crafts skills and perform or exhibit.
 - Opportunities to acquire or use the Gaelic language.
 - Heritage interpretation.
 - Community based heritage projects.
- 7.15 Projects will be favoured which include young people as participants or trainees, and which promote affordable access as audiences to young (and older) people who do not currently enjoy local provision. This will require, in some cases, transport arrangements for those without access to suitable public transport (see (4) below).
- 7.16 This youth involvement will be achieved through encouraging young people to set up groups to access funding for projects that they will have identified for themselves (with support), and through encouraging other groups to involve or consult young people in drawing up their projects. Further development of the "Youthbank" concept will be encouraged. New training and learning opportunities (see (3) below) will play a part in

interesting young people in culture and heritage, and will provide a pathway for some to a rewarding career.

(3) Training and Learning Opportunities

- 7.17 Training will be an essential component of many of the projects that will come forward for LEADER assistance, whether related to community capacity building, culture, the environment or renewables. It is also important that training opportunities should be accessible to women with family responsibilities. The Ward has a number of local learning centres, and they will be encouraged to work with local communities and local employers to ensure that they are fully aware of local training needs and to ensure that appropriate training opportunities are available. The local learning centres include Highland Theological College, based in Dingwall, which is an Academic Partner in the UHI Millennium Institute. The college was established to provide opportunities to study the Christian faith, full-time, part-time or through open learning, but it is also the local access point for UHI in Ross and Cromarty and can facilitate other educational opportunities.
- 7.18 Improved access to training that provides qualifications would help to redress the relatively low number of people in the Ward with formal qualifications.
- 7.19 Training for volunteers will be a high priority, both to enable them to maximise their contribution to local voluntary projects and to help them to pass their skills on to others. Some volunteers will be semi-retired or close to retirement age and new skills would also help them to find suitable paid employment within their local area. Volunteers will have a key role in encouraging groups of young people to bring forward projects and involving young people in a range of projects. Training in ways of engaging with and working with young people will thus be a theme.
- 7.20 As a significant number of migrants live and work in the area, this Highland LEADER target group will be catered for in a range of projects – both aimed specifically at their needs and through making efforts to involve them in local activities.
- 7.21 Links will be made with learning centres in neighbouring areas and other rural areas with comparable needs to Dingwall and Seaforth, and collaborative projects will be devised to provide economies of scale and promote sustainable delivery. It is anticipated that some capacity building and support, eg for constitutional and governance matters, will be provided for over a wider area than the Ward, for example through SCVO or the CVS network. If this does not happen, there will be a need to address such issues within the Ward.
- 7.22 The opportunities and types of project likely to come forward under this priority are expected to include:
- A training needs analysis of communities and sectors in Dingwall and Seaforth.
 - Projects which extend the range of learning opportunities available in the area to meet local needs.
 - Projects which develop volunteering opportunities through which people can use and extend their skills.

- Projects which address the learning needs of migrant workers, and which help to assimilate them into local communities.
- Projects which will encourage young people to stay and make a productive contribution in the area, with training to develop their skills and widen their horizons.

(4) Improved Access to Activities, Facilities and Services

- 7.23 Improved access to services and facilities was consistently rated a high priority in consultation responses. The area requires accessible local services and facilities to counter isolation and deprivation. The rising elderly population needs opportunities to socialise and remain active, and support to remain in their own homes; young people need local activities to engage with that encourage healthy life choices; young adults and families will take local services and facilities into account in deciding whether to remain in or move to Dingwall and Seaforth. Services such as childcare and daycare can be important in the choice of where to live as well as in helping the underemployed.
- 7.24 The East Ross Local Plan has identified making the key settlements in the Plan area more self sufficient as a priority, and local access to services and facilities will be essential in this. With the projected housing development and growth in population, the area's existing infrastructure will come under increasing pressure and it will be important to ensure that access to facilities and services keeps pace with the growth. The new Dingwall Academy building includes community facilities but there is, as yet, little information on how these will be accessed or managed. Dingwall Leisure Centre is heavily used by the school and the community, and key facilities such as Dingwall Town Hall, Dingwall Community Centre, Muir of Ord Village Hall, Mulbuie Hall and Maryburgh Hall need investment. The Muir of Ord community has made a strong case for its own leisure facility, and whilst a major capital development of this type is likely to be outside the scope of LEADER, it is important to recognise the aspiration. The development of community facilities in Maryburgh and Conon Bridge will be dependent on decisions about the future of the primary schools in the two villages. Whether the two schools are retained or amalgamated, investment in facilities will be required to maximise the benefits to the two communities from the schools and their associated community facilities.
- 7.25 Another opportunity to develop community facilities and services over the life of the LEADER Programme will arise through the outcome from the development brief recently let by the Council for land in the centre of Dingwall, including the Riverside area, the canal and the Old Academy buildings. This is an important opportunity to improve a key part of Dingwall and, in due course, related projects may well come forward for LEADER support.
- 7.26 Especially as communities in the area expand and develop, the pressure for community facilities at a local level to complement town and village centre provision will increase. For example, at Tulloch Wood a need has been identified for play facilities and a hall or similar facility that could meet the needs of young people and the elderly. Activities that will engage young people and divert them from potential anti-social behaviour are seen as a high priority throughout the area. Successful projects such as the alcohol free Blue Light discos can be further developed. Projects that will provide more such opportunities are likely to include the improvement of outdoor facilities such as sports pitches, multi use games areas and play parks, as well as indoor activities and

improving access to existing facilities. Street based youth workers will also be important – engaging with young people, organising activities in their local community and between communities and ensuring that activity for young people is synchronised with available transport.

7.27 Community groups organise a wide range of activities and services using existing facilities. These complement activities organised through the statutory bodies such as Highland Council, and projects that build partnerships will be encouraged. It will be important to build on the work undertaken by Healthways in the area and improve access to advice and information, especially on benefits. If insufficient projects along these lines come forward covering a wider area, projects for Dingwall and Seaforth will be encouraged.

7.28 The types of project expected to come forward are likely to include:

- Improvements to community venues.
- New activities that widen the range available for all age groups, especially young people and older people.
- Childcare associated activities.
- Community transport linked to participation in activities.
- Improved access to recycling facilities.

7.29 Affordability and inclusiveness will be important criteria in selecting projects for LEADER support, and a spread of projects across the Ward will be sought.

(5) Land, Environment and Access to the Countryside

7.30 The land and environment are central to the Highland way of life and its economy and taking forward projects in this area will directly address the protection and enhancement of the built and national heritage. Although Dingwall and Seaforth is a relatively compact and urbanised area, it has a strong rural and agricultural heritage. The area includes farming land and large estates, and the work of farmers and other land managers creates the natural environment which gives the area its special ambiance for residents and visitors. Projects which enhance the landscape in Dingwall and Seaforth and improve access to and understanding of the importance of agriculture and the local environment will be supported through LEADER. LEADER also provides an opportunity to encourage communities in the management or enjoyment of open spaces, the setting up of Local Nature Reserves or undertaking projects that develop and manage green space within the settlement areas. The Core Paths Plan for the area, drawn up after local consultation, identifies routes of particular importance. Developing the area's network of paths, both the core paths and other local and recreational paths, is important. Cycle paths, building on developments for main routes, will also improve the area. Projects that take forward the Ross and Cromarty East Biodiversity Action Plan (see Section 5) will also be supported.

7.31 The Highland Historic Environment Record (HER) lists all known archaeological and historical sites in Highland. It has 383 entries in Dingwall Parish, 292 in Fodderty Parish, 222 in Urquhart and Logie Wester Parish and 286 in Urray Parish. Projects will be supported which improve access to important sites, especially if combined with

interpretation or activities which increase understanding of the importance of these sites. There are also a number of sites designated for their natural heritage value and these present an opportunity in terms of access and interpretation.

7.32 LEADER also provides an opportunity to improve town and village centre environments, building on initiatives such as the Highland Council's improvements to Dingwall High Street. Changes in the road system in Dingwall in particular have given a prominence to service areas, side and rear facades which were never intended for public view and there is the opportunity to improve these, along with the vennels which link parking areas to the High Street. The Council's application for funding through Historic Scotland's Conservation Area Regeneration Scheme for Dingwall will also open up opportunities. Communities outside Dingwall will also be able to benefit from such improvements – for example, the Local Plan draws attention to the need for enhancing Muir of Ord village centre's environment, and LEADER provides an opportunity to take this aspiration forward.

7.33 The types of project likely to come forward through this priority are expected to include:

- Improved town centre environs
- Improved service areas and facades which have been opened up through changes in traffic systems
- Improved access to key sites, e.g. Dingwall Canal and Muir of Ord Lochans, and enhancements to their environments
- Establishment of Local Nature Reserves
- Management/development of derelict sites
- Management/enjoyment of open spaces
- Development and management of green spaces within settlements
- Networks of well signposted paths with associated interpretation
- Wildlife interpretation
- Biodiversity-related projects
- Projects which provide opportunities to learn about agriculture and farming
- Community archaeology projects – investigations, interpretation, recording and displays
- Environmental interpretation and education
- Waste awareness and waste minimisation projects.

7.34 Projects in which LEADER priority groups, especially young people and older people, are involved in drawing up and carrying out improvements will be given priority. An environmental group has recently been established in the Ward and it has consulted extensively on perceived local priorities. As the group reaches maturity a range of projects will be developed to meet these priorities.

7.35 Intensive involvement in projects will encourage some people to develop related careers, and training and work experience opportunities will be provided for those who are particularly keen.

(6) Renewables

7.36 Highland already produces a significant amount of energy from renewable sources such as hydro, and new renewables can deliver significant benefits to communities by producing cheaper energy locally, creating new revenue channels through surpluses generated, and providing opportunities for local employment.

7.37 Maryburgh Community Council is currently investigating the feasibility of power generation using the outflow from Loch Ussie, and similar schemes are likely to be possible elsewhere in the area that will require support at the feasibility and (possibly) implementation stage. Should any community woodland schemes be progressed in the area, LEADER could support, for example, investigation of the production of woodchips or biomass fuels.

7.38 There is also potential to support small scale schemes that serve community buildings, for example producing renewable heat from ground source heat pumps, Wind-2-heat and solar hot water systems, and biomass boilers. Such projects could improve the viability and sustainability of facilities such as halls and community centres through reducing their running costs, as well as reducing greenhouse gas emissions. The Partnership will ensure that community groups are aware of the possibilities and have the capacity to investigate and implement suitable renewable solutions

7.39 The types of project likely to come forward in this field will include:

- Awareness raising sessions for local groups
- Audits of local renewable opportunities
- Renewable energy installations related to community facilities
- Projects which support communities to develop micro-renewable generation, and assist them to overcome barriers and challenges in becoming more energy self-sufficient
- Training and support in using biomass (growing plants such as quick-rotation coppice) for energy production

7.40 Involvement in community energy projects will tend to open up career opportunities for participants.

(7) Tourism

7.41 Tourism is an important part of the Highland economy and accounts for over 13% of employment. The importance is less pronounced in the east of Ross and Cromarty than in Wester Ross, however – there is around half as much visitor accommodation in the east, except in hotels where bedspaces are almost equal, and the value of tourism spend is only slightly above half of the Wester Ross total. Tourism accommodation in Dingwall and Seaforth is fairly limited.

- 7.42 Nevertheless, a high proportion of tourists driving to the west coast will pass through the Ward, and Dingwall and Seaforth is also a tourist destination with its own attractions, while having easy access to Inverness, the Black Isle, the west and the north. There is potential to attract more visitors to stop and stay in the area, to increase visitor spend and to increase the economic benefits. There is also potential to grow the number of day visitors from within the Highlands.
- 7.43 Many of the cultural and heritage and access projects that will be assisted through other local LEADER priorities will have a tourism dimension. However, there is also a need to make visitors more aware of what is available locally, to improve access to and signing of tourism attractions, to ensure that there is adequate information and interpretation, to participate in marketing initiatives and to create events and activities geared to visitor markets. Dingwall is a market (and mart) town and projects will be encouraged which build on its reputation as a day visit destination which offers a quality retail experience. A local marketing group, either confined to the Ward or covering a wider area (perhaps including Strathpeffer), could bring tourism providers together to take this forward.
- 7.44 The types of tourism project expected to come forward for support are likely to include:
- Establishment of a local tourism group
 - Production of marketing material
 - Improved signing of tourism attractions
 - Packaging of tourism products
 - New events at different times of the year, ideally related to other LEADER priorities.

Social Enterprise and Micro-businesses

- 7.45 A micro-business employs fewer than 10 people and has an annual turnover below 2 million Euros. HIE suggests, in its Economic Profile of Dingwall 2007, that there were some 300 workplaces in the town. 62% of these employed 1-4 people and a further 15% employed between 5 and 10. This is a lower proportion of micro-businesses than elsewhere in the Highlands and Islands or Scotland, but it is still substantial. These figures exclude the self employed, which will increase the small business sector.
- 7.46 Only one local organisation, Ross-shire Voluntary Action, is registered as a social enterprise with HISEZ, the Highlands and Islands umbrella body. Others would be likely to qualify for the designation, however, depending on the definition used. The previous Scottish Government's Social Enterprise Strategy suggested that social enterprises are "businesses with primarily social objectives whose surpluses are principally re-invested for that purpose in the business or the community, rather than driven by the need to maximise profits for shareholders or owners." Much of HIE's support for strengthening communities will now be targeted on stimulating social enterprises, helping them to increase their turnover.
- 7.47 Commercial businesses can apply direct for LEADER funding, but only if the project is supported financially by a public body, and there is a wider community benefit. For

that reason, business related projects are often taken forward through partnerships, and are designed to stimulate a sector or encourage business development rather than benefiting a single employer.

7.48 The types of project likely to come forward in this field will include:

- Support for investigating social enterprise opportunities and establishing new social enterprises
- Support for small scale retail initiatives
- Support for street markets that provide an outlet for social enterprise and micro-businesses
- Training in direct marketing and use of the internet for marketing
- Projects which encourage self employment and the establishment of micro-businesses, especially by young people
- Projects which promote diversification of and efficiency in the local economy.

7.49 Social enterprises whose first LEADER supported project proves successful are likely to put forward further projects during the Programme period to 2013, and the Partnership will encourage capacity building within local communities that will strengthen community enterprises, directly involve encourage and entrepreneurship in young people, and give them eventual prospects of self-sufficiency with further development potential.

7.50 New small business starts will be particularly important to encourage if job losses through the recession are substantial.

8. ACTION PLAN

- 8.1 The following Action Plan is not intended to provide a complete list of the projects that might come forward from Dingwall and Seaforth for LEADER (or other) funding. Further projects are expected to come forward as groups benefit from capacity building support and as decisions are made, for example, on the school/community provision in Conon Bridge and Maryburgh, the conservation area in Dingwall and the development prospects for the Old Academy buildings and Riverside Field area in Dingwall. Inclusion in this list does not suggest that the projects listed will be approved for funding from LEADER or any other source - potential applicants will still have to complete the application process. Rather, it is illustrative of the projects being actively pursued by various groups and organisations in the Ward and provides an indication of the “readiness” of projects in the Local Partnership Area. A large number of additional projects are under consideration and will be brought forward as they are developed. As mentioned in 3.13 above, LEADER can provide a maximum of 40% (45% in some circumstances) of gross project costs and all projects coming forward will need to indicate the source (or intended source) of the balance of funding required.

<i>Development Planning and Community Capacity Building</i>				
Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Development Planning for the Dingwall and Seaforth Local Area Partnership	Ongoing	£5-£10,000	Ward Manager Council Offices, Dingwall.	Necessary to provide framework for development and secure local LEADER Programme
Development Officer (3 year project)	Match funding to be sourced	£70,000	Dingwall (& Seaforth) Initiative	To stimulate community development across the Ward.
Project/plan development support scheme	Match funding to be sourced	£20,000	Dingwall (& Seaforth) Initiative	To provide short term support for groups to develop projects (up to 10 awards of £2,000).

<i>Culture and Heritage</i>				
Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Highland Drover Project - Phase 3, public sculpture	Significant match funding already achieved	£80,000	Highland Livestock Heritage Society	This is the final stage of the project, complementing the archive and visitor centre already established. It will create an iconic public sculpture celebrating the droving heritage.

Digitisation project	Match funding to be sourced	£9,000	Dingwall Museum	To marry images with text
Equipment	Match funding to be sourced	£2,000	Dingwall Museum	To improve display and presentation internally and externally
Film and music performances	Some match funding in place.	£6,000	Dingwall Arts Promoters	Will establish regular film shows at the new Dingwall Academy, working with the young people to programme.

Training and Learning Opportunities

Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Training needs analysis	Match funding to be sourced	£10,000	Highland Council	The Council would take the lead in working with the learning centres in the Ward to identify training needs and create a plan to meet those needs co-operatively.

Access to activities, facilities and services

Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Purchase of equipment		£10,000	Highland Alternative Music	Music recording/making facility aimed at young people
Extended hours and activity at Dingwall Youth Café (3 year project)	Match funding to be sourced.	£24,000	Dingwall Youth Café	
Street based youth workers (3 year project)	Would cover the 4 main settlements in the Ward.	£30,000	Youth Services Partnership	This would be taken forward for the Partnership by one of its members.
Weekend evening access/activities at Leisure Centre (3 year funding)	Would include transport from the main settlements.	£42,000	Youth Services Partnership	This would be taken forward for the Partnership by one of its members.
Come and try sessions for older people at Leisure Centre	Would include transport from the main settlements.	£20,000	Highland Council	

Improvements to Dingwall Town Hall		£100,000	Highland Council	
Events programme related to waste awareness and recycling (3 year programme)	Match funding substantially in place.	£30,000	Ross-shire Waste Action Network (ROWAN)	
Activities programme (3 year programme)	Match funding applied for.	£10,000	Ordkidz	Cultural activities aimed at 0-6 age group and their parents
Widening access and increasing participation	Match funding to be sourced	£10,000	Muir of Ord Skateboard Group	
Extension to skateboard park	Match funding to be sourced	£80,000	Muir of Ord Skateboard Group	

Land, environment and access to the countryside

Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Paths Network improvements - Craig Wood, Dingwall	Match funding to be sourced	£75,000	Mid Ross Footpath Volunteers	Fits with Core Paths Plan
Paths Network improvements - Knockfarrel	Match funding to be sourced	£50,000	Mid Ross Footpath Volunteers	Fits with Core Paths Plan
Paths Network improvements - Tulloch Castle	Match funding to be sourced	£80,000	Mid Ross Footpath Volunteers	Fits with Core Paths Plan

Renewables

Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Loch Ussie Power Station		£150,000	Maryburgh Community Council	A new company may be formed to take this project forward.

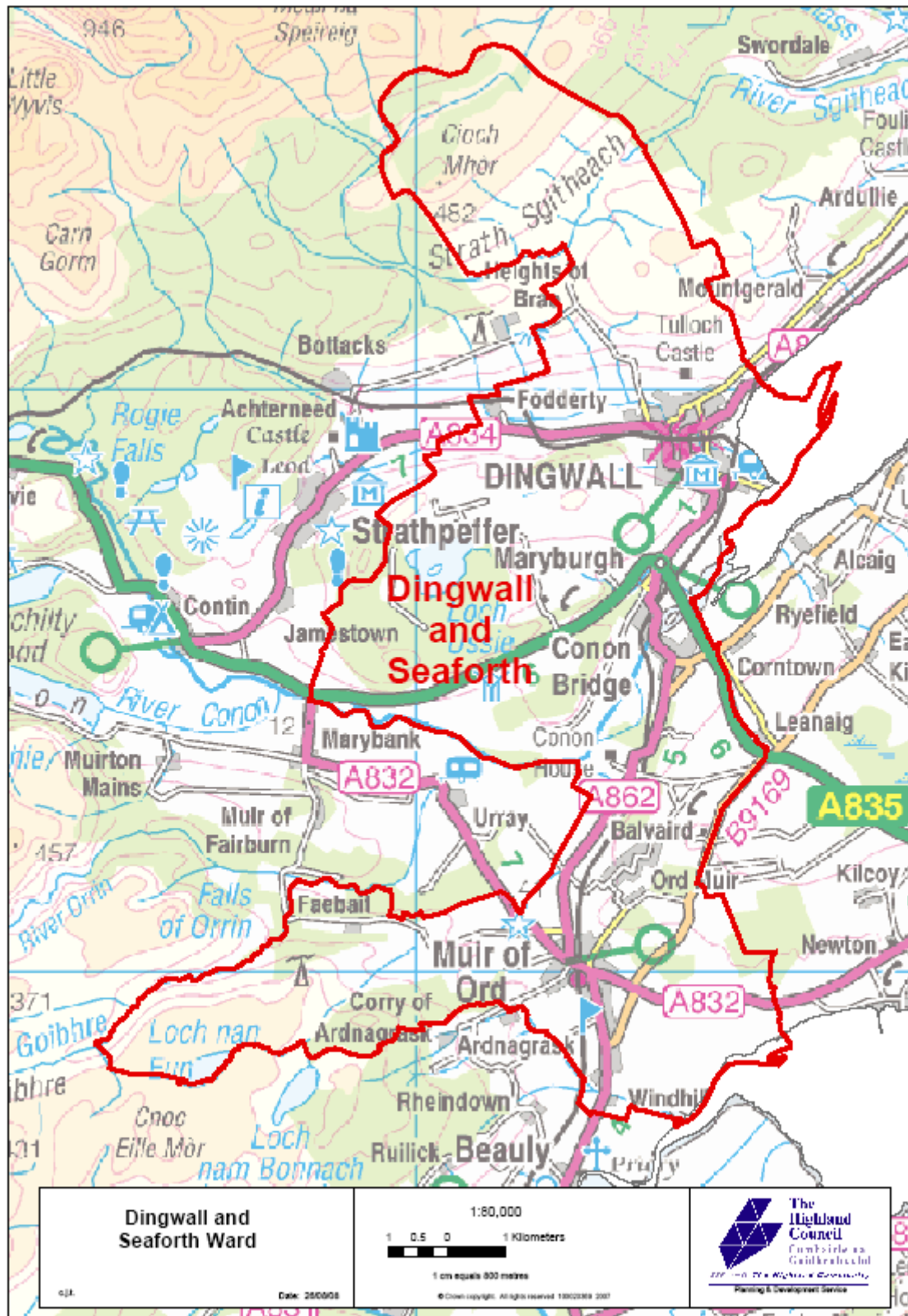
Tourism

Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Paths Network improvements -	Match funding to be	£40,000	Mid Ross Footpath	Complementary to Core Paths

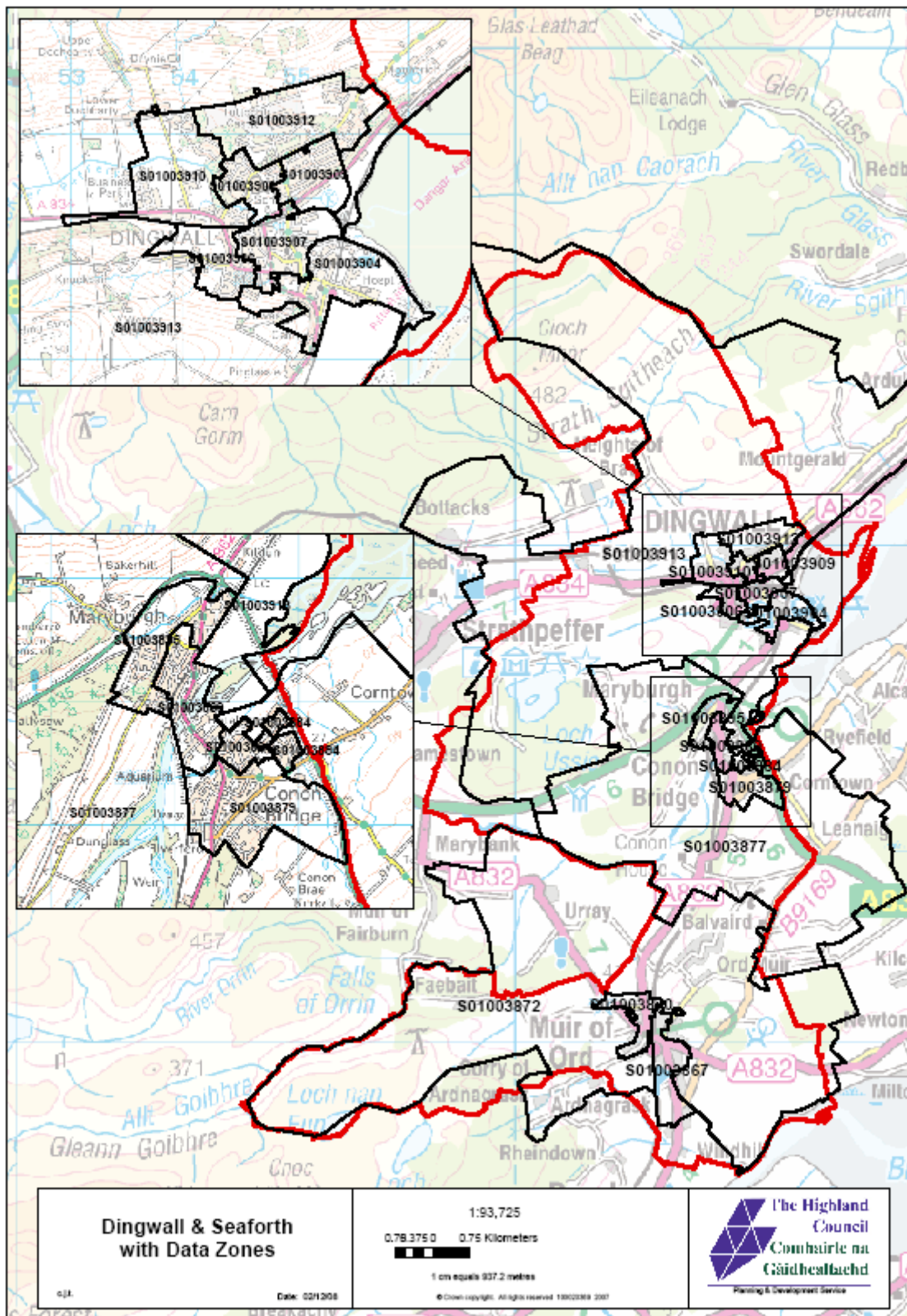
associated interpretation, promotion and signage	sourced		Volunteers	Plan.
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<i>Social enterprise and micro-businesses</i>				
Project	Area of benefit/Status	Estimated Gross Cost	Organisation	Comment
Waste exchange	Match funding substantially available.	£5,000	ROWAN	A scheme to match the waste products and needs of businesses in the area.

Dingwall and Seaforth Ward



Datazones in Dingwall and Seaforth Ward



Datzone populations

Data Zone Number	Datazone Name	Population 2001	Population 2007	Change 2001-2007
S01003867	Muir of Ord South East	1,001	1,067	6.59
S01003870	Muir of Ord North West	801	917	14.48
S01003872	Muir of Ord Rural	843	902	7.00
S01003877	Conon Rural	567	616	8.64
S01003879	Conon South	632	783	23.89
S01003884	Conon North	753	748	-0.66
S01003889	Conon Bridge	594	578	-2.69
S01003895	Maryburgh North West	686	718	4.66
S01003904	Dingwall South East	709	783	10.44
S01003906	Dingwall South West	718	726	1.11
S01003907	Dingwall Central	775	767	-1.03
S01003908	Dingwall Academy	821	683	-16.81
S01003909	Dingwall North	679	617	-9.13
S01003910	Dingwall West	705	651	-7.66
S01003912	Dingwall Tulloch	684	809	18.27
S01003913	Dingwall Rural	752	835	11.04
	Ward Total	11,720	12,200	4.10

National outcomes/Highland outcomes

We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place to do business in Europe

- To grow more local businesses, including social enterprise
- Increased productivity in businesses with growth potential in the key sectors of: tourism; food and drink; financial services; energy; life sciences; and creative industries
- Balanced population growth across the Highlands

We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people

- High levels of economic activity are sustained
- Median earnings increase in Highland
- More balanced economic growth across the Highlands (to target transformation to areas of lowest or falling levels of economic activity)

We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation

- Increase the proportion of school leavers in positive and sustained destinations
- Increase the number of young people in training and apprenticeships
- More people able to access opportunities for learning and employment in their communities
- Improved workforce development and workforce planning
- Research and development supported to deliver business growth in the Highlands

Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens

- Continue to increase the proportion of pupils at all stages achieving or exceeding the appropriate levels relevant to their stage in reading, writing and maths
- More young people are confident and contribute effectively to their communities
- More young people are supported to take responsibility in their life choices

Our children have the best start in life and are ready to succeed

- Early years services deliver improvement across all developmental indicators
- Effective education services for early years

We live longer, healthier lives

- Increase proportions of older people receiving appropriate care in the appropriate setting to maintain or improve their independence
- Reduce the % of the adult population who smoke
- Reduce obesity in the population
- People affected by mental ill health receive appropriate care for their needs

We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society

- Reducing poverty by supporting more people into sustained employment
- Reducing financial hardship by ensuring more people access services and benefits they are entitled to
- Reducing homelessness and providing responsive services to homeless people
- Reducing health inequalities
- Tackling discrimination, promoting equality, participation and good relations

We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk

- Children are safe
- Children at risk are Looked After well
- Reduce bureaucracy and number of meetings by using GIRFEC processes and systems

We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger

- Reduced crime and fear of crime
- Reduced problematic alcohol misuse
- Reduced problematic drug misuse
- Reduced reconviction rates and levels of repeat victimisation
- Improved levels of safe driving.

We live in well designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.

- New development and growth is planned and designed for sustainability
- Increase the supply of housing
- Invest in the infrastructure for rural communities
- Limit the impact of distance from services in rural and remote communities

We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others

- A well supported voluntary sector with sustained high levels of volunteering in the Highlands
- More communities own, manage or have a stake in local assets
- Improved quality of life through community led action and more people feeling connected to their communities

We value and enjoy our built environment and protect and enhance it for future generations

- Recognition and awareness of the outstanding natural heritage of the Highlands
- Limit pressures on species and habitats
- Improved environmental awareness and action
- Improve the quality of housing

We take pride in a strong fair and inclusive national identity

- Development of the Gaelic language and culture
- Growth in Arts, Literary, Drama and Music Festivals and local involvement in them and which celebrate the diverse heritage and interpretation of the Highlands

We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production

- Reduce greenhouse gas emissions from regional public sector operations
- Promote renewable energy and improve municipal waste management
- Adapt public services to deal with the impact of global warming

Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs

- Best Value and continuous improvement are demonstrated
- Improved access to public services with customers' views taken into account
- Efficiency demonstrated
- A workforce which is the right size, skilled, supported and rewarded