Agenda Item	4
Report No	WRSL/02/25

THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Committee: **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Committee**

Date: **20 January 2025**

Report Title: **Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan**

Report By: **Assistant Chief Executive – Place**

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 This report invites Members to consider and adopt the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan.

1.2 In November 2021, Highland Council and the Highland Community Planning Board agreed to develop a Place Based Framework across each Committee area within Highland, including the development of an Area Place Plan (APP) for each area. The aim was to consolidate local priorities already within existing plans and draw together community aspirations with priority issues and outcomes for local development and community planning to secure a clear, accepted way forward for each area.

In November the process means understanding communities and delivering a shared vision by targeting resources, investment and action, achieved by working and collaborating together and provides a method to track and promote the impact of both spending and project delivery.

1.3 The Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan clearly notes the aspirations expressed by the communities within its boundaries, many of which link across to proposed or potential actions contained as part of wider Highland plans such as the Highland Investment Plan, Highland Local Development Plan, Highland Outcome Improvement Plan and the Strategic Housing Investment Plan. The APP highlights the urgent need for suitable and affordable housing; managing tourism in a way that puts community needs first; improved digital connectivity; better provision of public transport; and addressing the increasing age gap in the population, taking into consideration the needs of those both young and older; and a desire for improved health and wellbeing services and facilities including both care and mental health.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

   i.   Consider and adopt the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan
   ii. Support and promote the APP where possible in terms of its consideration within other plans and strategies across or impacting the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area
   iii. Note that to progress the work and aspirations set out in the Plan future steps will include creation of detailed action plans.

3. Implications

3.1 **Resource -** Although no additional resource is requested at this time, there are potential future resource implications to deliver the plan priorities. There are opportunities to align local funding streams to deliver plan priorities but also every attempt will be made to maximise use of external funding where projects are led by the Council.

Ongoing involvement in Place Planning activity requires input and commitment from services across the Council and its Partnerships to ensure Place Plans provide the framework to support targeting resources, service delivery and provide a clear vision for attracting external investment. The Area Place Plans will help the Highland Council, partners and communities secure funding by evidencing the impact of every pound spent and the actions associated will provide clarity and help to manage expectation around how and where resources are prioritised.

3.2 **Legal -** No legal implications identified at this time arising from the adoption of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan, which is a commitment to support the vision for regenerative and sustainable development and equity across the region.

3.3 **Risk -** The Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan will help coordinate future activity and investment in the area but requires clear communication and coordination of resources across partners and sectors. Developing a place-based approach is encouraged through the Scottish Government's Place Principle, the Christie Commission recommendations and is required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for community planning.

Should the APP not be utilised by services, plans and organisations, there is a risk that being viewed as disregarding community wishes reflected in the APP could lead to disengagement by communities.

3.4 **Gaelic –** The Gaelic culture is a valued aspect of life in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh. Gaelic is still spoken by some residents and efforts to preserve and promote it as a vital part of the region's identity through local schools, festivals, and community events are to be supported.

4. Impacts

4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children's Rights and

Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.

4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.

4.3 **Integrated Impact Assessment – Summary:**

An Integrated Impact Assessment screening has been undertaken. The conclusions have been subject to the relevant Manager Review and Approval.

The Screening process has concluded that the Plan has a positive impact on promoting equality, addressing inequality (including socio-economic) and targeting the priorities of the people of Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh and therefore a full impact assessment is not required.

Members are asked to consider the summary below and detailed in appendix 1 to support the decision-making process.

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening / Full Assessment
Equality	Positive impact
Socio-economic	Positive impact
Human Rights	No impact
Children's Rights and Wellbeing	Positive impact
Island and Mainland Rural	Positive impact
Climate Change	Positive impact
Data Rights	No impact

5. **Background**

5.1 **What is an Area Place Plan (APP)?**
In November 2021, Highland Council and the Highland Community Planning Board agreed to develop a Place Based Framework across each Committee area within Highland, including the development of an Area Place Plan (APP) for each area. The aim was to consolidate local priorities already within existing plans and draw together community aspirations with priority issues and outcomes for local development and community planning to secure a clear, accepted way forward for each area.

This is in line with place-based approaches to planning for the future of each Committee area. During 2024/2025, the Area Place Plans are being produced as a clear statement of shared priorities for development and investment, service delivery and community action, meeting that 2021 commitment.

5.2 **The Place Principle / Place-based Approach:**
The Place Principle is a Scottish Government initiative to encourage better collaboration and community involvement. It is about understanding the issues, opportunities and relationships in a Place, to allow partners to work effectively together to improve the quality of life for our communities. Knowing how a community is structured and how it works helps enable better decision making on investment, service delivery and how to coordinate change.

This does not only relate to Area Place Plans - but the place principle also links the APP to other major strategies, such as the Highland Investment Plan, the Highland Local Development Plan and the Highland Outcome Improvement Plan as well as others, tying into previous and existing workstreams such as the Place Standard work carried out in early 2024.

6. Production of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan

6.1 **Development:**
The process of developing the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan meant understanding communities and delivering a shared vision by targeting resources, investment and action, achieved by working and collaborating together, and provides a method to track and publicise the impact of both spending and project delivery. This has been led by the Wester Ross Biosphere.

6.2 The APP reflects engagement and involvement of communities within the area during 2024, with the identification of key issues being mainly community led – both in terms of utilising the outcomes of existing consultations and the checking of these with communities themselves, minimising gaps in information, resulting in prioritisation of outcomes as well as investment, service planning and delivery within the area, promoting an inclusive and accessible approach. It aims to be transparent and honest (about resources as well as need), striving towards clear communication and sharing of information and intelligence. It is designed to be useful for all stakeholders, whether public or private sector, community group or developer, within the local and wider contexts.

6.3 The Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh APP was developed in conjunction with the Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross Community Partnership, and updates were reported at regular meetings. Elected Members from across the Ward area were consulted and updated through regular contact and meetings where required. All are thanked for their input to the Area Place Plan.

Specific mechanisms for wider engagement included:
- Advertised online surveys and ideas boards – https://engagehighland.co.uk/hub-page/wester-ross-strathpeffer-and-lochalsh
- Public drop in sessions
- Focused stakeholder workshops
- Focused youth workshops
- Hard to reach communities were offered information and support should they wish to enable them to participate, and stakeholders themselves promoted not only the events but also the views and thoughts of those they worked with and the views of their particular groups and members.

6.4 The Plan sets out the aspirations and ambitions of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh communities to:
- Articulate long term shared strategic and linked outcomes for the whole area
- Support informed local, regional and national decision making about public services, budgeting, planning policy and other policy areas.
- Support community action and provide partners with evidence for funding bids
- Build on the good work already happening across and within Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh and make the most of opportunities and new investment.

6.5   **Vision for the Future:**
The Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh APP highlights the collective vision for the future – for vibrant communities, where people want to be. A place where support flows between individuals, communities and services, where relationships are strong, and the area is as sustainable and resilient as it can be. Health, wellbeing and opportunities should be available to everyone, as should having access to facilities, services and homes which are affordable, accessible and fit for purpose now and for the future.

6.6   **Community Aspirations and Priorities**:
The APP reflects where communities in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh would like to be, and possible routes / suggestions made to assist in getting there. Many of the aspirations span various priorities and pieces of work, linking in with existing as well as developing plans and strategies, whether regional, local or service based.

These have been categorised against the overarching priority headings of People, Place and Prosperity, which are shared across Highland Council and the Highland Community Planning Partnership. This allows them to be easily read and transferred across the actions and workstreams of the wider plans and strategies.

6.7   The key areas under each heading are listed below, and further explained within the APP and its appendices.

6.7.1   **People:** Focusses on supporting community well-being and addressing essential needs for sustainable growth and inclusion.
- Affordable and suitable housing for all
- Vocational training
- Rural connectivity
- Accessible health care
- Celebration of culture
- Childcare provision
- Intergenerational collaboration
- Digital connectivity
- Mental health support

6.7.2   **Place:** maintaining, improving, and sustainably developing shared spaces for the benefit of all.

- Infrastructure
- Safeguarding the environment
- Sustainable travel
- Looking after public spaces
- Local food
- Climate resilience
- Waste and recycling

6.7.3   **Prosperity:** reflects local opportunities in terms of finance, work, community wealth building and principles.

- Business development
- Local businesses and tourism
- Local renewable energy projects
- Training

> ➢ Diversification

6.7.4 Essentially, the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh APP aligns understanding of community aspirations with the aim of informing and influencing other plans, strategies and frameworks to the betterment of all who live, work, study and visit the area, helping communities to grow and thrive.

7.   How the Plan could be used

7.1   The Plan has been written for the local community, community organisations, businesses and Highland Community Planning Partners. To achieve the aspirations and outcomes set out in the plan, it will require all partners - community, public, third and private sector - to work together.

7.2   The APP should be used as it is intended – as a tool to bring people together to inform decision making, to collaborate on and achieve better outcomes for the community and those within it.

7.3   The Plan is an ambitious evidence-based statement of community aspirations, based on community engagement. It therefore provides all who are responsible for delivering services, looking after assets or with a vested interest in the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area with a tool to inform decision making about service design, delivery and investment.

7.4   It requires collaboration based around two key principles – **resetting the relationship** between the public sector and local communities and **thinking differently** about funding and resources. It should foster greater opportunity to:

- Support and enable the community to influence and understand their future
- Empower the local community as an active partner
- Create more trust and collaboration between communities, authorities and public bodies; and
- Enable equitable and smoother delivery of services and investment.

7.5   To support this in practice, public sector partners and funders are asked to utilise the Plan to inform discussion and decision making on service design, delivery and budget allocation. The Plan should help influence how budgets are allocated, how services could be delivered, provide evidence for decision making, inform policy and support communities to acquire and develop their own income-generating assets and funding sources.

7.6   This can be achieved by the Council, statutory and community partners considering the plan in various forums, e.g.
- Highland Council meetings
- Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross & Mid Ross Community Partnerships
- Local Housing Development Forums

8.   Next Steps: Action Planning, Governance and Delivery

8.1   At the time of writing, discussions around next steps including action planning, governance and delivery of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan are ongoing and require input and engagement from all Stakeholders involved with the APP.

8.2   As it moves from development to delivery, the APP can continue to act as a vehicle to bring different interest groups together to collaborate on the shared vision for the future.

8.3   In conclusion, the anticipated benefits and impact of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan are that it will:

- Consolidate local priorities from across a variety of plans and strategies – local, regional and national
- Develop shared understanding of community priorities, aspirations and opportunities for the future
- Re-set relationships by strengthening collaborative working and trust between communities, public and third sectors
- Provide a framework for delivering a shared vision, aspirations, outcomes and actions in a way reflective of the needs of the Area
- Target resources, investment and action in line with local priorities
- Improve communication providing greater certainty to communities on how partners will support change moving forward
- Track the impact of spending and project delivery against local aspirations and priorities.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 20 December 2024

Author: Jennifer Bruce, Area Place Plans Manager

Appendices:

Appendix 1   Integrated Impact Assessment – Screening Summary

Appendix 2   Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan

Integrated Impact Assessment Summary

Equality, Socio-economic and Human Rights

Equality - Positive
The WRSL APP identifies aspirations and potential improvements to services and options available within the Area. It mentions intergenerational impact as well as having considered specific needs of young people and the elderly in its development. The APP also covers accessibility issues. No negative effects have been identified towards any protected characteristics.

Socio-economic - Positive
Positive impacts – the APP covers employability and access to opportunities and services, including the particular difficulties encountered from a remote and rural perspective as well as the additional costs of living in such environments. It mentions the issues around housing availability and affordability as well as the difficulties related to lack of public transport options and the essential nature and costs of car ownership / access.

Children's Rights and Wellbeing - Positive
The APP can positively affect children and young people specifically mentioning childcare provision, access to education and employability prospects for young people. It notes the desire for youth hubs and appropriate, safe public transport routes to both these and other activities. Children and young people were consulted as part of the engagement process, including sessions in schools. They were also welcome to complete the online survey. The APP promotes development of proposals which would benefit these groups as well as others.

Island and Rural - Positive
Transport issues, connectivity, potential isolation, mental health and access to services are all key within rural communities, particularly in WRSL given the vast geography and distances involved, as well as little public transport provision. These are all highlighted within the APP and improvement would lead to positive impact.

Climate Change – Positive
Resilience issues particularly with respect to flooding and adverse weather are included within the Plan, as are sustainable tourism (and the associated protection of the landscape / environment), reducing the impacts of tourism, renewable energy and sustainable land use practices (i.e. crofting). Any potential climate impacts which have been identified are anticipated to be positive and potentially reduce current negative impacts.

Wester Ross Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Area Place Plan

DRAFT

DECEMBER 2024

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Introduction

Ward 5, comprised of Wester Ross, Strathpeffer, and Lochalsh, has the largest geographic area of any Highland Council ward. It covers 4,948km^2 and nearly reaches from coast to coast across Scotland.

It is a region of outstanding natural beauty and rich cultural heritage. Spanning a diverse landscape that includes rugged mountains, tranquil lochs, and scenic coastlines, it is home to close-knit communities who value place and traditions. However, with just over 12,000 permanent residents its population is sparse and to a large degree dispersed. Only 5% of the land area is easy to develop due to physical, servicing and heritage constraints and therefore settlement is largely concentrated on the coast and/or where marginally more productive agricultural land is available.

The economy is driven by a combination of tourism, small scale agriculture, fishing, and renewable energy, while its cultural fabric is underpinned by Gaelic heritage and crofting traditions.

This Area Place Plan has been created with the communities and aims to outline **a vision for regenerative and sustainable development**, addressing strategic priorities like infrastructure, housing, heritage, and economic growth, while ensuring that the unique identity and environmental integrity of the region are preserved for future generations.

Local Government Boundary Commission for Scotland
Fifth Review of Electoral Arrangements
Final Recommendations
The Highland Council area
Ward 5 (Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh)

Map 1: Ward 5 boundary map

Ward 5 at a glance

Ward 5 is one of the largest and most **geographically diverse** wards within the Highland Council region, covering a vast swath of the western Highlands. It contains 20 Community Council areas,[1] from Coigach in the north to Glenelg & Arnisdale in the south and Strathpeffer in the east. It is an area defined by its **remote and rural character**, with much of its population concentrated in **small villages and dispersed communities.**

Principal settlements (as defined within the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 and West Highland & Islands Local Development Plan) include **Ullapool**, the largest town, is a vital **ferry port** to the Outer Hebrides and a central **tourist hub** with cultural and recreational activities; **Strathpeffer**, known for its **Victorian spa heritage**, serves as a cultural centre for the surrounding rural areas; **Kyle of Lochalsh** which is a critical **transport link** to the Isle of Skye, connecting the mainland with Skye's economy and tourism through the Skye Bridge; and **Poolewe** known for its Second World War Arctic Convoy heritage and natural attractions like Inverewe Garden.

It has a **rich and distinctive culture** rooted in **Gaelic** heritage. The Gaelic language is still spoken by some residents, and efforts to preserve and promote it as a vital part of the region's identity continue through local schools, festivals, and community events.

Photo 1: Ullapool

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[1] Applecross, Aultbea, Coigach, Contin, Dornie and District, Gairloch, Garve and District, Glenelg and Arnisdale, Kyle, Lochalsh, Lochbroom, Lochcarron, Lochduich, Marybank, Scatwell and Strathconon, Plockton, Shieldaig, Strathpeffer, Stromeferry, Torridon and Kinlochewe, Wester Loch Ewe

There are **12,196 full-time residents** (Census 2022) in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh. However, **demographic trends across the communities reflect significant population decline and aging**. Many areas are experiencing a reduction in young people, particularly those aged 16 to 45, as they leave in search of better job opportunities and affordable housing elsewhere. This contributes to **a growing population gap**, where older residents make up a larger proportion of the community. There is increasing demand for age-associated healthcare, social services, and housing. Attracting younger families and working-age adults is a major focus, in effort to support sustainable growth while addressing the needs of their elderly residents.
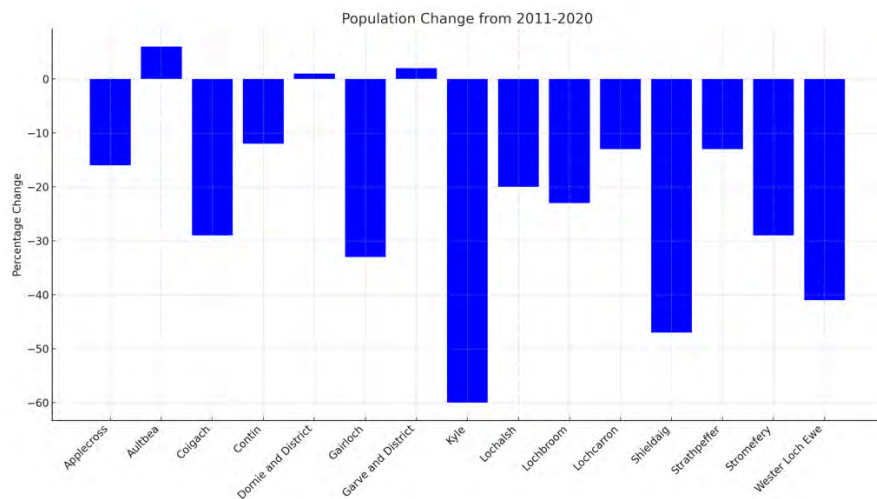

Figure 1: Population change 2011-2020

The **economy** is primarily comprised of **tourism, crofting, and public services**. Tourism dominates, but its seasonal nature leads to unstable employment and contributes to rising housing costs as properties are turned into holiday rentals. Crofting remains important but faces challenges from an aging workforce, lack of access to, and underutilisation of, land. **Fishing** also supports coastal communities, and while public services are significant employers, it can be a struggle to attract staff due to the area's remoteness and lack of housing options. **Renewable energy** projects, such as wind and hydro schemes, offer some opportunity for year-round employment and community revenue.

In terms of **transport and getting about**, the area is primarily connected to Inverness and Skye and the north via the **A835**, **A832**, and **A87** roads, which serve as essential lifelines for residents and visitors alike. However, **many roads are single-track** which can create difficulties, especially during peak tourist season, or severe weather, leading to congestion and delays. The **Kyle of Lochalsh railway line** offers scenic but limited train services to Inverness. Additionally, **ferry services** from Ullapool provide crucial links to the **Isle of Lewis** in the Outer Hebrides, further connecting the ward to the wider region. **Public transport** options, including buses, are limited and often infrequent, making it difficult for residents in more isolated areas to access essential services.

Photo 2: Primary pupil drawing "My House"

Housing is of a blend of private, council, and community-owned properties. Holiday lets and second homes are prevalent, causing significant frustration over the impact on property prices and limiting housing options for locals. Social housing, managed by community trusts and housing associations, provides essential affordable options.

There are four secondary **schools**: Ullapool, Gairloch, Plockton and Dingwall – the latter of which is located outside of the ward boundary – which are supported by primary schools in surrounding villages. However, **declining pupil numbers** and **difficulty attracting and retaining teachers** are major threats that have led to the mothballing of some primary schools (e.g. Badcaul, Torridon, Kinlochewe) in smaller villages. Access to higher education and vocational training is limited, often requiring young people to leave the area for further studies, facing difficult prospects to return.

Gaelic medium education (GME) is available in several primary and secondary schools. It plays a key role in preserving the Gaelic language and cultural heritage of the region, where it is part of the community identity. Many primary schools offer GME from an early age, while secondary schools often continue Gaelic studies, helping to maintain fluency and cultural connections through the curriculum.

Photo 3: Gairloch High School workshop

Key Policy Drivers + Strategic Fit

Ward 5 faces distinctive challenges common to rural and remote areas. Key policy drivers for the area must balance sustainable and regenerative economic growth with the preservation of its environment and community identity. From promoting more sustainable tourism and improving rural housing to developing transport links and protecting biodiversity, **a holistic approach is needed**. Ensuring access to healthcare, education, and digital connectivity will help sustain and strengthen these communities for future generations.

This plan aims to contribute to creating resilient, liveable, and productive places, in line with the planning policy objectives set out in **National Planning Framework 4 [2](NPF4, 2023)**. These include promoting active travel, enhancing community empowerment, achieving a balanced population, and nurturing a skilled, growing workforce.

Sustainable Tourism and Economic Development: The area's popularity with visitors has some communities viewing current tourism levels as unsustainable. Policies should focus on promoting sustainable and regenerative tourism practices, protecting natural landscapes, and encouraging local businesses that benefit from tourism while proactively minimising its negative impacts.

> *NPF4 Alignment - **Theme**: Climate Change; Natural Places / **Outcome**: A sustainable and inclusive economy (2); Resilient communities (3)*

Rural Housing and Affordable Living: Development of affordable and suitable housing that fits within the landscape and ensures local residents, especially younger generations, can continue living and working in the area.

> *NPF4 Alignment - **Theme** : Quality Homes / **Outcome**: Resilient communities (3); A sustainable and inclusive economy (2)*

Environmental Protection and Climate Resilience: Focus on preserving natural habitats, protecting marine ecosystems, and addressing climate change challenges such as flooding, coastal erosion, and wildfires.

> *NPF4 Alignment - **Theme** : Climate Change; Natural Places / **Outcome**: A wellbeing economy (1); A healthy environment (4)*

Transport and Connectivity: Due to the ward's remote location and dispersed villages, transportation and connectivity are key issues. Focus on improving road infrastructure, supporting public and community-run transport options, and enhancing digital connectivity (e.g., expanding high-speed internet access) to reduce isolation and foster economic growth.

> *NPF4 Alignment - **Theme** : Infrastructure and Connectivity / **Outcome**: Resilient communities (3); A connected and accessible Scotland (6)*

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[2] http://www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/

Community Health and Wellbeing: Improvement is needed for healthcare accessibility. Investments in mental health support, community wellbeing programmes, and upgraded access to fitness and leisure facilities can be of further benefit.

NPF4 Alignment – Theme: Health and Wellbeing; Liveable Places / Outcome: Health and wellbeing (5)

Heritage and Culture: Policies should support the preservation of cultural landmarks, promote Gaelic language and culture, and encourage local events that celebrate the area's unique heritage.

NPF4 Alignment – Theme: Liveable Places; Natural Places / Outcome: A sustainable and inclusive economy (2); Resilient communities (3)

Education and Skills Development: Access to education and training should be boosted, including vocational programmes related to local industries such as tourism, agriculture, and conservation.

NPF4 Alignment – Theme: Quality Places; Sustainable Growth / Outcome: A sustainable and inclusive economy (2); Resilient communities (3)

Renewable Energy and Green Development: With vast natural resources, the region is well-positioned to harness renewable energy (e.g., wind, hydro, and solar power), but this needs to be done in consideration of community values and with their input.

NPF4 Alignment – Theme: Climate Change; Energy / Outcome: Net-zero emissions (7); A sustainable and inclusive economy (2)

Social Equity and Rural Inclusion: All residents, including elderly and marginalised groups, need access to vital services. Policies should address rural isolation, promote inclusion, and ensure that development initiatives benefit the entire community, including smaller and more remote settlements.

NPF4 Alignment – Theme: Health and Wellbeing; Liveable Places / Outcome: Resilient communities (3); Health and wellbeing (5)

Land Use: With competing interests from tourism, crofting, conservation, and energy development, policies should establish conflict resolution frameworks that allow for stakeholder negotiations, particularly between private landowners and community or public interests.

NPF4 Alignment – Theme: Land Use and Planning; Climate Change / Outcome: Resilient communities (3); A healthy environment (4)

CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

This section explores the key issues and identifies potential solutions that can support the region's growth and resilience. Challenges such as planning boundaries, housing, an aging population, rural isolation, and climate vulnerability are balanced with opportunities for regenerative development, including renewable energy projects, diversified tourism offers, and community-led enterprises.

CHALLENGE: Identity and Planning

There are two Community Partnerships (CPs) operating in the ward: Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross along with Mid Ross. This can create challenges in aligning efforts, as the CPs must navigate multiple geographic and administrative boundaries. Each sub-region may have different priorities, resources, and service providers, making it difficult to create cohesive strategies across the whole ward.

For example, historical ties between **Skye and Lochalsh** are strong, but can add extra layers to regional planning efforts and development strategies.

Similarly, the Mid Ross CP must grapple with the inclusion of vastly different areas like the remote community of **Achnasheen** and the more developed **Black Isle**. Achnasheen, with its small population

and rural isolation, has distinct needs such as better access to basic services, transport, and digital connectivity. In contrast, the Black Isle focuses on housing, economic growth, and managing suburban development pressures, making it difficult to balance these contrasting priorities.

Resource allocation and service delivery with these kinds of overlaps can be problematic, as larger, more connected areas often receive more attention and funding, leaving smaller communities feeling overlooked. This can result in planning strategies that may not fully serve the needs of rural and isolated communities.

Photo 4: Skye Bridge overlooking Lochalsh

Map 2: Skye, Lochalsh and Wester Ross CP boundary

Map 3: Mid Ross CP boundary

CHALLENGE: Housing Affordability, Availability & Suitability

Housing is the primary challenge that must be addressed to ensure the success of this plan and strengthen community resilience. The demand for **housing**, particularly **affordable and suitable** (e.g. single occupancy, young families, older residents) options, has increased significantly, but much of the available stock is taken up by holiday homes and short-term lets, driving up property prices and limiting access for local residents. Younger people struggle to find suitable housing, leading to outmigration and a weakening of community resilience. Additionally, the area's remoteness presents challenges in building new homes that are affordable and sustainable.

Opportunity: Limiting the number of holiday homes and short-term lets - to free up more properties for long-term residents; firm application of tax measures on second homes; explore other options within existing powers to limit numbers
Opportunity: Repurposing vacant buildings - as land can be difficult to acquire, repurposing unused or underutilised buildings into residential units could provide new housing options while preserving local heritage.
Incentivising Long-Term Rentals - Offer financial incentives to holiday homeowners to switch their properties to long-term rentals; tax breaks or subsidies could encourage owners to make their homes available to local residents rather than tourists.
Support development of community-owned housing – to allow local residents to take control of their housing needs while ensuring affordability and sustainability

CHALLENGE: Transport

Many roads, including key routes such as the **A835, A832 and A87**, are susceptible to congestion, especially during the busy tourist season. Frequent severe weather can complicate travel, often causing road closures and damaging infrastructure. **Public transport**, including buses and trains, are infrequent, making it challenging for residents in more isolated areas to reach essential services or places of employment. While **ferry services** are crucial for connecting islands like the Isle of Lewis to the mainland, they are also vulnerable to disruptions from storms.

Opportunity: On-Demand Transport Services - such as community-run minibuses or ride-sharing platforms could provide flexible and efficient transport options for remote communities.
Opportunity: Active Travel Networks – between villages as well as key destinations. This could be paired with investments in safer pedestrian crossings, bike hire schemes, and cycle paths
Opportunity: Electric Car Sharing - Establish hubs in villages as part of a regional network. These could be supported by charging stations at strategic points
Opportunity: "Last mile" Shuttle Service - from train stations to more remote communities (e.g. Achnasheen to Gairloch); **multi-modal transport hubs** at train stations—where buses, trains, and bike-sharing schemes are all available.
Opportunity: Expand EV charging point locations with appropriate maintenance across the region

CHALLENGE: Tourism

Tourism is vital to the local economy, fuelled by iconic landscapes and the North Coast 500 (NC500) route. Despite its popularity, the region faces significant socio-economic challenges, including rural depopulation, limited access to services, and a lack of affordable housing. **Support for community-led tourism** and local enterprises to **expand outdoor activities** can further boost the economy. Ensuring income from the **proposed tourism visitor levy** is spent proportionately in local areas could help address these issues, including essential road upgrades.

Photo 6: Highland Council Access Ranger, 2021

Photo 5: Inaugural Lochcarron Tartan Week, 2024

Opportunity: Diversify Tourism Offerings - Highlight the region's Gaelic heritage and traditions like crofting; promote local food through festivals or agritourism to help boost the local economy; diversify offering with more outdoor activities

Opportunity: Community-Led Tourism Initiatives - Empower communities to manage tourism to help keep benefits local. Collaboration with local authorities and tourism organisations to help communities develop the skills and infrastructure needed to manage ventures like campsites or information centres effectively

Opportunity: Reinstate Access Rangers **-** To provide guidance on issues like informal camping, waste disposal, and respecting place and community

CHALLENGE: Land Use & Ownership

Challenges related to land ownership and use reflect broader trends across the Highlands. **Large private estates** dominate much of the land, often focusing on activities like forestry, game hunting, and renewable energy development. While these estates contribute to conservation efforts, there are also community concerns about local control and the distribution of economic benefits.

Crofting is an important tradition in the area, supporting sustainable land management and rural livelihoods, but an aging population and difficulty in attracting younger people are detrimental to its future.

Another challenge is balancing the growing movement toward **community land ownership** with the need for regenerative economic development. Community buyouts have given residents greater control over land management, but ensuring these initiatives are financially sustainable and benefit the entire community is an ongoing issue. **Public and conservation ownership** of land is focused on protecting natural habitats, yet this can sometimes constrain local development opportunities. **Renewable energy projects** are growing but must be managed to deliver long-term economic and environmental benefits, address fuel poverty, and balance land-use demands.

Opportunity: Collaborative Land Management – support for more Regional Land Use Partnerships that bring together private estate owners, local communities, conservation groups, energy companies (et al) to manage land in a way that meets multiple needs

Opportunity: Policy and Legislative Support to Strengthen Land Reform - giving communities more rights to buy land; simplify the process of acquisition and legal pathways for communities to take ownership of land that is mismanaged or underutilised; create a central inventory of Community Asset Transfer locations

Opportunity: Support for diversification and regenerative crofting - to enhance land productivity and resilience by improving soil health and carbon sequestration; boosts local food production, opens agritourism opportunities, and positions the region as a leader in sustainable agriculture

Opportunity: Empower communities in decision-making about major developments on land/sea.; address grid limits (restrictions on exporting surplus energy); establish a Natural Capital Community Fund to support equitable benefit sharing, aligning with NPF4's key policy goals for renewable energy

Photo 7: An Toll Bàn - Applecross community-owned housing

CHALLENGE: Climate Emergency

The region faces significant environmental challenges due to its geographic location and exposure to Atlantic weather systems, which are exacerbated by climate change. Heavy rainfall leads to river and surface water **flooding**, impacting roads, properties, and crofts, while vulnerable infrastructure like single-track roads and bridges face damage from **landslides and erosion**. Severe storms with high winds damage buildings and disrupt power and transport, while coastal areas are increasingly at risk from erosion, **sea-level rise**, and flooding, endangering both ecosystems and key infrastructure.

The effects of climate change are also altering seasonal patterns, with **warmer winters and hotter, drier summers** due to take place, affecting crofting practices and biodiversity. Prolonged dry spells increase the **threat of wildfires** in peatlands and forests, damaging fragile ecosystems and endangering local communities. Local authorities and communities in the ward have been working to mitigate the impact of these climate challenges through several strategies:

Opportunity: Invest in green infrastructure – continue to improve flood defences, restore peatlands, and protect coastal areas from erosion.
Opportunity: Community resilience - Develop emergency response plans and improving infrastructure to help communities better withstand extreme weather events.

Opportunity: Climate-resilient agriculture - encourage and support regenerative crofting to improve soil health and increase biodiversity
Opportunity: Community-led climate action: There is often difficulty in engaging communities about climate change as it can feel quite abstract and far from daily life. Focus on issues that the community is already experiencing, such as unpredictable weather, flooding, or coastal erosion.
Opportunity: Support for creation of community-owned renewable energy – as seen in success stories like Knoydart Applecross, Coigach, Lochbroom, where local power brings local benefit.

Photo 8: Broom Power, community-owned in Lochbroom

CHALLENGE: Economy

Economic challenges are driven by remoteness, reliance on tourism, and the shifting dynamics of traditional industries. The seasonal nature of tourism creates **fluctuating employment**, particularly affecting younger residents who often leave in search of more stable opportunities. The high demand for holiday lets has driven up housing prices, further contributing to outmigration and limiting the local workforce. Traditional sectors such as **crofting and fishing continue to face challenges** due to aging populations and the need for modernisation and diversification. Addressing these issues requires **wrap-around childcare**, including during summer holidays, and aligning with the **community wealth building** model to create sustainable local opportunities.

Opportunity: Diversify beyond "regular" tourism – support for local food production, agritourism and farm-to-table initiatives that would complement the present model of tourism, create a stronger local food economy, and reduce reliance on external supply chains.
Opportunity: Early years childcare provision – to allow parents of young children to enter or re-enter the workforce. This could be a cooperative model, where parents collectively manage and share childcare duties and use existing community spaces, to help keep costs affordable - making it more accessible for low-income families.
Opportunity: Cross-sectoral collaboration in upskilling: encourage public, private and third sectors to work together to expand access to vocational training and apprenticeships. Upskilling residents in technology, renewable energy, and green jobs can create opportunities for remote work and higher-value employment.
Opportunity: Value-Added Agricultural and Food Products – labelling scheme for local products, such as food, associated by-products (e.g. wool) and artisanal crafts.
Opportunity: Shared Workspaces - where entrepreneurs, freelancers, and small businesses can access shared office or production facilities. This reduces overhead costs for small businesses and nurtures collaboration. Village hall facilities could be an ideal place to start.

Photo 9: Strathpeffer Community Centre meeting facilities

CHALLENGE: Aging Population

Balancing the age demographic is a significant and urgent challenge. Many **young people leave** the area due to limited employment opportunities, affordable housing shortages, and access to higher education. Once they leave, it is often difficult for them to return. **Despite these challenges, young people in Ward 5 express a desire to remain connected to their communities.** Many have an appreciation for the unique lifestyle, natural beauty, and cultural heritage of the area. However, there is also **a lack of staff and resources for social and aging care**, further straining local communities. Without addressing the core issues of housing and employment, there is a risk of losing more young people, further deepening the population gap and weakening local economies and social structures.

Opportunity: Intergenerational programmes – where older residents share skills and mentor younger generations to strengthen community bonds. Additional support could be provided via early years childcare
Opportunity: Healthcare and assisted living services – is a fast-growing demand and presents an opportunity for economic growth. While the public sector is stretched, there could be an opportunity for upskilling local residents and community-owned facilities delivering care

Opportunity: Invest in digital infrastructure - creating year-round employment to attract young families; support remote work and digital industries and encourage entrepreneurship
Opportunity: Early years childcare provision – as noted above under "Economy" via a cooperative and intergenerational model of delivery
Opportunity: Involve young people in local decision-making – for advocacy in community councils and participatory budgeting

Photo 10: Mixed-age coastal rowing club

CHALLENGE: Retaining Culture and Identity

Sustaining **Gaelic language** and traditional practices like crofting is central to safeguarding cultural heritage and strengthening community identity. Over-reliance on tourism brings in competing outside interests, which can sometimes overshadow **local customs** and diminish **community identity**. There is a high demand for **Gaelic Medium Education (GME) teachers**, but persistent shortages make it difficult to provide young children with early exposure to the language. Maintaining local heritage is essential but resource-intensive, often requiring **external funding.**

Opportunity: Intergenerational Knowledge Sharing: develop programmes that encourage older residents to share traditional knowledge, such as crofting skills, stories, and local folklore, with younger generations
Opportunity: Digital Storytelling and Documentation: using digital tools to document and archive local traditions, stories, and language through digital storytelling projects
Opportunity: Pop-Up Culture Hubs: develop mobile pop-up cultural hubs that rotate through villages, offering Gaelic classes, craft workshops, music events, and cultural events
Opportunity: Celebrating Provenance: labelling scheme to identify the provenance of local crafts and products, guaranteeing consumers that they are supporting the local community while also creating a premium market for genuine products.

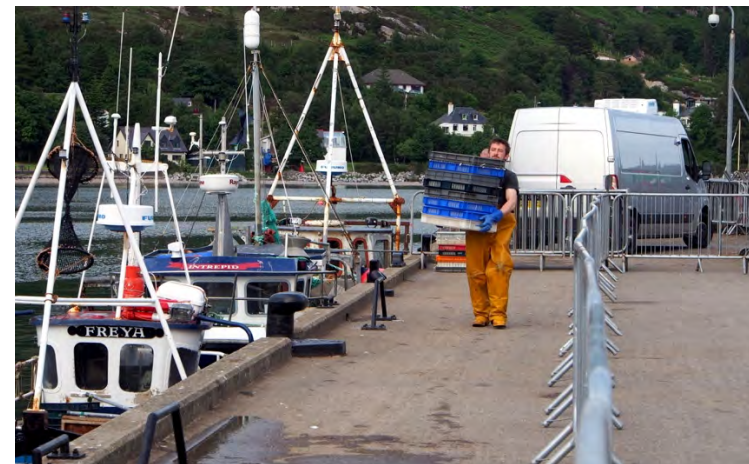*Photo 11: Drumbuie and Duirinish Crofts*

Photo 12: Local seafood

METHODOLOGY

A Place Based Framework for planning and investment in communities was agreed by The Highland Council in December 2021. This sets out a new way of working for partners, building on recognition that Place underpins and is the lens through which The Highland Council delivers their services, working together in partnership with their public sector and community partners.

Area Place Plans will support targeting of resources and service delivery and provide a clear vision for attracting external investment to realise local priorities. The Plans will help The Highland Council, partners, and communities to secure funding by evidencing the impact of every £ spent and the actions associated will provide clarity and manage expectation around how and where resources are prioritised.

WR Consulting, operating under the Wester Ross Biosphere Charity (WRB), was appointed by The Highland Council to develop a community-driven Area Place Plan (APP) for Ward 5 highlighting the region's future priorities.

We have incorporated insights from previous consultations and aligned with existing plans, strategies, and projects. To streamline consultation and reduce confusion, WR Consulting supported the development of Local Place Plans where requested, rather than duplicating efforts. This work was supported by surveys and 6 community workshops, including 2 dedicated to youth voices.

While the plan is primarily shaped by community ambitions and includes some actions to be taken by the community, it aims to also guide the investment, services, operations, and policies of various stakeholders.
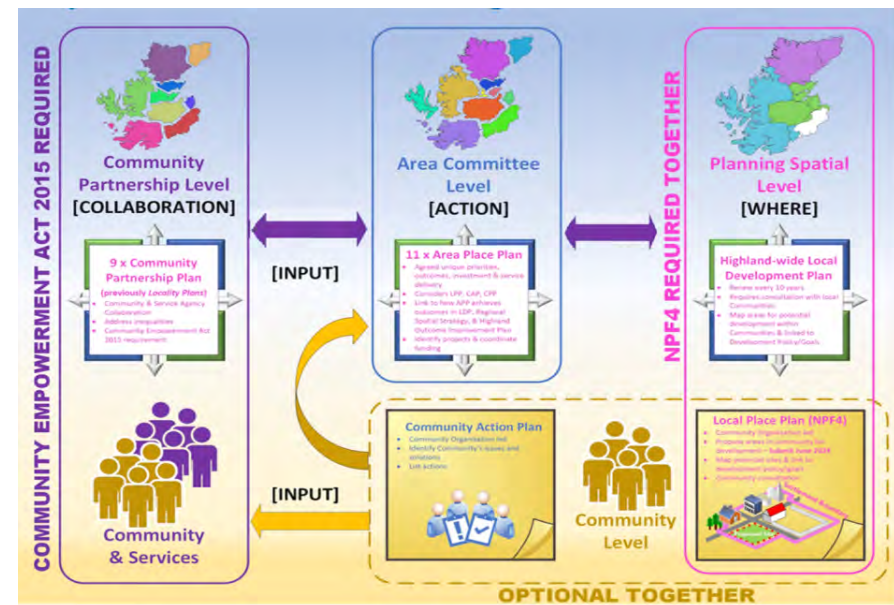

Figure 2: The Highland Council Place-Based Approach

AREA PLACE PLAN
ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

1. AREA OVERVIEW
JANUARY 2024
Review of reports and local plans to better understand existing priorities, identify gaps and opportunities

2. BRAINSTORM
FEBRUARY / MARCH 2024
Workshops with local stakeholders to sense check findings of area brief

3. DROP-IN SESSIONS
MARCH - MAY 2024
Drop-ins across region during afternoons/ evenings ensuring all community council areas are covered

4. ONLINE & REMOTE
MARCH - MAY 2024
Opportunities for input via digital and remote methods for those unable or unwilling to attend in person events.

5. DRAFT PLAN
SUMMER 2024
Draft the plan and sense check it with the community for comment. Accessible online, printed where requested.

6. REVIEW
SEPTEMBER 2024
Share draft with communities and local stakeholders for comments and revisions.

7. FINALISE & SUBMIT
OCTOBER 2024
Add finishing touches and submit to the Highland Council

1. Area Overview

This stage is preliminary to engagement. It will utilise desk-based research to establish which local place plans (LPP) or similar are already in existence within the defined area. Priorities within LPPs will be collated into a database to investigate for trends and other pertinent information such as opportunities and gaps in provision. This will be a starting point to explore draft themes, leaving room for discussion of the findings to further refine.

2. Brainstorm

This session will involve workshop inviting local and regional stakeholders to take part to sense check findings from desk-based research.

3 & 4: In person and remote engagement

Drop-in sessions and workshops across the region, paying particular attention to areas not already covered by development trusts and/or areas where no local or development plan currently exists. Online delivery platforms will be used to facilitate participation for those for those who unable or unwilling to attend in person events. We will work with local groups to identify communities where other remote options (i.e. printed information and surveys) would be appropriate. We will work to encourage conversations across communities to see where there are opportunities to increase capacity and the future sustainability of project development and delivery.

5 & 6: Draft Plan & Review

A draft plan will be completed during Summer 20204 following the engagement events. It will then be distributed to public sector stakeholders for comment prior to circulating to local stakeholders and communities for a final sense check.

7. Finalise plan and submit to The Highland Council

PRIORITY THEMES

This section contains **actions as expressed by local communities** during drop-in sessions, workshops, surveys and during the development of Local Place Plans across the ward. These priorities reflect the shared aspirations of residents and focus on enhancing quality of life (**People**), environment and infrastructure (**Place)**, and sustainable economic growth (**Prosperity**).
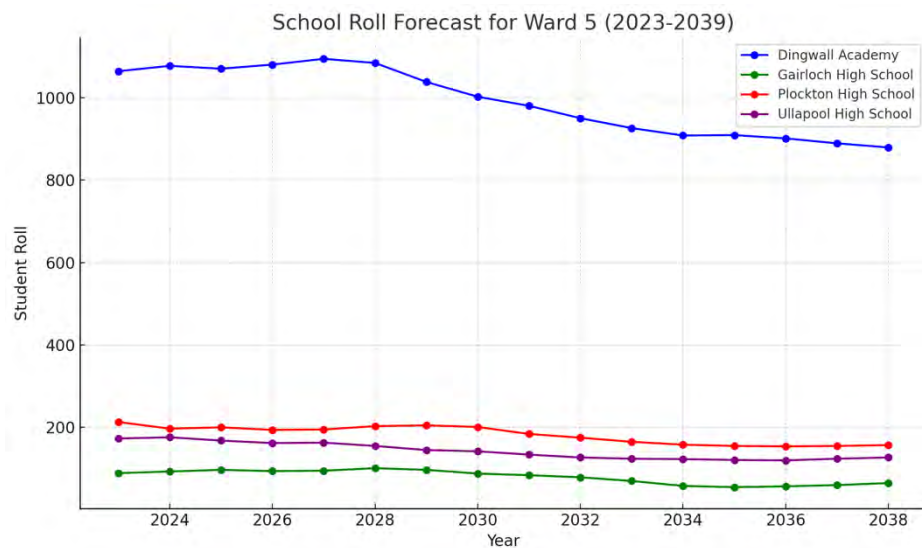
1. PEOPLE

This theme focuses on the well-being, education, and resilience of communities. Actions aim to enhance the quality of life by improving services such as healthcare, childcare, and education. They also strengthen and empower communities through training and social initiatives.

Figure 3: Population trends, extract from Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Area Profile

During 2010-2020 population decreased by 0.6%. This is against an overall Highland population increase of 2%. Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh 2016-2041 population projection is towards an increase of 8.7%, although this is against predicted decline in some other areas of Highland.

School Roll Forecast for Ward 5 (2023-2039)

Legend:
- Dingwall Academy
- Gairloch High School
- Plockton High School
- Ullapool High School

As of April 2024, the predicted rolls in the ward's four High Schools (Ullapool, Gairloch, Plockton and Dingwall) are worryingly in decline. They will potentially face a significant underutilisation of their capacities projected throughout the forecast period.

Key gaps in health and wellbeing service provision have been identified as access to **mental health services**, **dental care**, and **healthcare facilities**, especially for vulnerable groups such as the elderly and youth. Social and recreational opportunities are also seen as lacking, with limited access to leisure facilities and services.
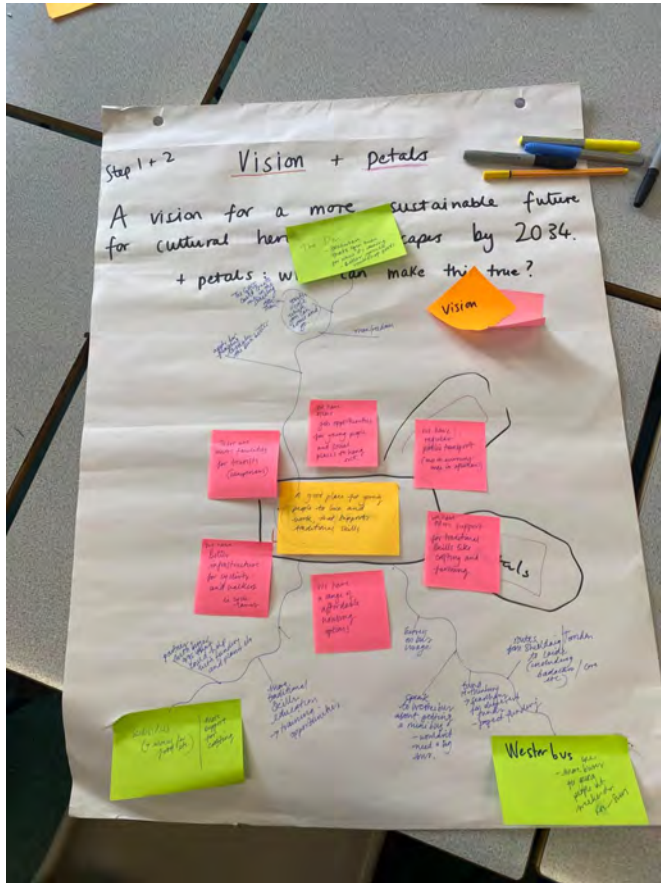
Average travel time to key services by both personal and public transport is almost double the Highland average. Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh comprises of 100% Remote Rural Areas classification. Remote Rural Areas are often coupled with higher living costs including transport, food, fuel, fewer employment opportunities, lower wages and social isolation. It has 68.1% super-fast broadband coverage, lower than the Highland average of 82.5%, and 5.9% ultra-fast coverage, lower than the Highland average of 23.7%.

ACCESS TO SERVICES

Mean Travel Time to Key Services

	Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh	Highland
Bus	29.2 mins	16.8 mins
Car	12.0 mins	6.5 mins

Urban – Rural Classification
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh

Remote Rural Areas 100%

Access to Broadband

		Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh	Highland
Super Fast		68.1%	82.5%
Ultra Fast		5.9%	23.7%

Figure 4: Access to Services, extract from Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Area Profile
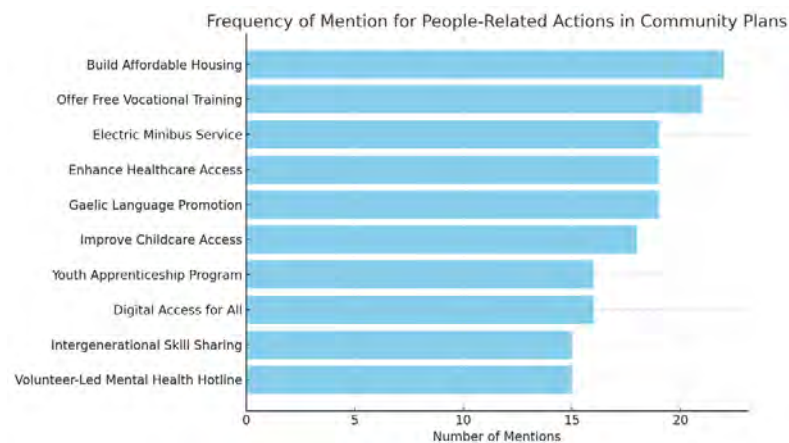
Young People

Young people struggle with limited stable jobs and high housing costs, often leading them to move elsewhere. The prevalence of second homes drives up prices, and while tourism offers seasonal work, it lacks the long-term stability many need. Although they value the area's environment and community, without affordable housing and career options, there is a risk of continued youth outmigration.

Two workshops were organised with pupils at Gairloch and Plockton High Schools. There was strong value placed on having **dedicated social spaces,** such as *The Den* in Gairloch, where they can gather informally, especially after school, and to create **better transportation options**, including regular bus services for socialising, college, and early employment opportunities. **Affordable housing** was a trending topic in both discussions, as many felt it would enable them to stay in the community long-term. Additionally, they **value cultural traditions**, especially through Gaelic education and local music, and seek more structured opportunities to **learn traditional skills like crofting.**

They stressed the **need for diverse job opportunities** beyond seasonal tourism, preferring career paths that align with sustainable living and environmental stewardship. Value was placed on **political involvement** as well, proposing increased youth representation on local councils and the use of participatory budgeting to ensure their perspectives influence regional growth and development.

Outcome: Thriving and sustainable communities
1.1 Build Suitable & Affordable Housing: essential for counteracting depopulation and supporting local employment with emphasis on single family, young people
1.2 Offer More Vocational Training: in sectors like renewable energy and tourism
1.3 Electric Minibus Service: to improve connectivity for rural areas, particularly for those without private vehicles
1.4 Enhance Healthcare Access: *NHS dental service is most requested*[3], but also mobile healthcare to reach remote populations
1.5 Gaelic Language Promotion: expand GME education and celebrate culture
1.6 Improve Childcare Access: expand early years childcare services, as well as after-school and holiday programs
1.7 Youth Apprenticeship Program: establish apprenticeships with local businesses to retain young people
1.8 Digital Access for All: improve broadband infrastructure and digital skills training
1.9 Intergenerational Skill Sharing: create opportunities for older generations to teach traditional skills to and mentor youth
1.10 Improved Mental Health Support: in conjunction with community-led initiatives, e.g. Lochbroom & Ullapool Community Health and Wellbeing Group

Figure 5: Drawing for community housing in Coigach by Catoe/Brown

Frequency of Mention for People-Related Actions in Community Plans

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[3] As of October 2024, there were no NHS dental services available within Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh

2. PLACE

"Place" focuses on improving the physical environment and infrastructure to enhance community wellbeing, protect natural assets, and **support development that is both regenerative and sustainable**. The related actions prioritise conservation of natural and cultural heritage, and the development of green infrastructure such as walking paths, cycling routes, and electric bus networks.

'Being active', 'feeling immersed' in nature, having 'cultural experiences' and 'watching wildlife' are valued aspects of living and visiting here. The natural environment in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh is a significant asset, contributing to the quality of life of local residents and attracting visitors to the area. However, there are worries about damage to nature, resources and community life from overtourism.

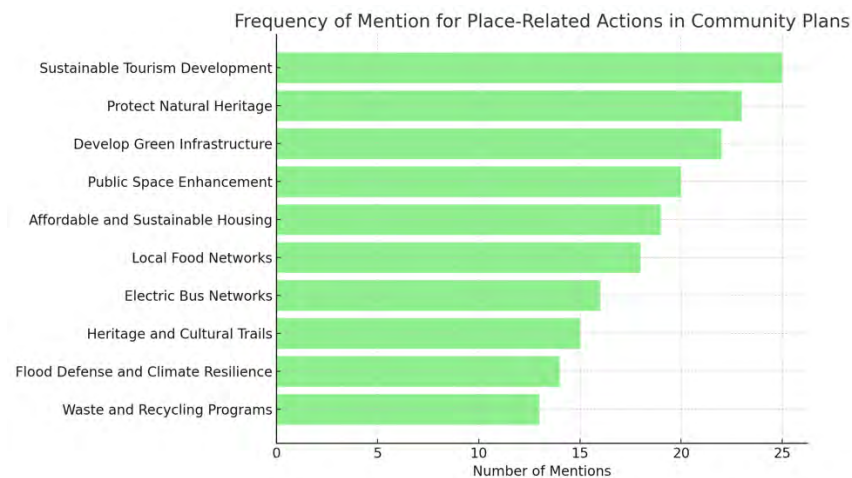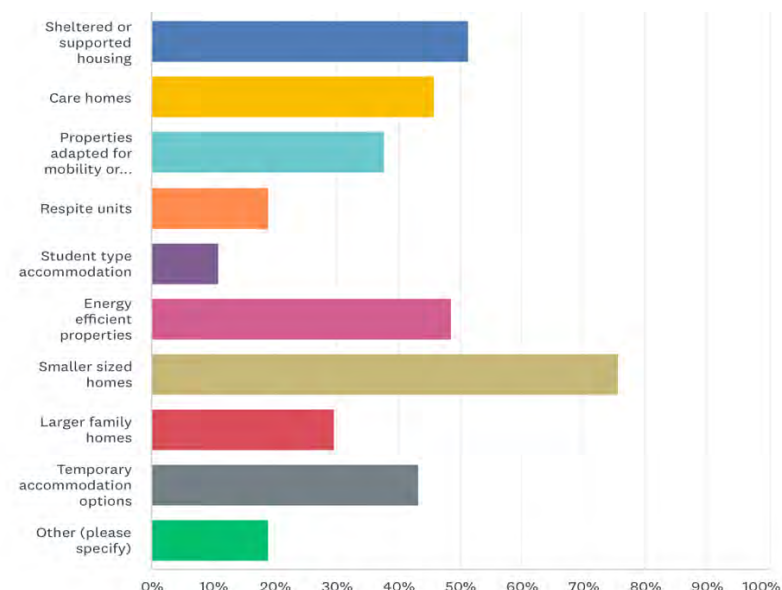Development pressure is directed to the 5% of developable land which can undermine the aim of preserving inbye croft land, safeguarding built heritage (for example within the conservation areas of Plockton, Shieldaig, Strathpeffer and Ullapool), and preventing sporadic housing development in the open countryside.

Figure 6: Environment, extract from Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Area Profile

Outcome: Strengthening and Sustaining Our Places
2.1 Infrastructure maintenance and services: like public toilets, parking, and tourism education
2.2 Protect Natural Heritage: reinstate the Access Ranger service to protect green spaces, forests, and coastlines from informal camping.
2.3 Greener Travel Options: focus on maintaining and expanding foot and cycle paths, especially to help connect communities.
2.4 Public Space Enhancement: renovation and improvement of community spaces like parks and village centres.
2.5 Affordable and Sustainable Housing: new housing should be warm, efficient and sustainable in the long term
2.6 Local Food Networks: support the growth of local initiatives like community allotments and farmers' markets
2.7 Electric Bus Networks: electric bus (especially community buses) routes to reduce reliance on cars and lower emissions
2.8 Cultural Heritage: develop heritage trails to highlight local history and culture.
2.9 Climate Resilience Projects: protect vulnerable areas from flooding and coastal erosion
2.10 Waste and Recycling: expand waste management and recycling facilities

Figure 7: Housing types in order of preference

Frequency of Mention for Place-Related Actions in Community Plans

3. PROSPERITY

Prosperity in our communities is driven by economic resilience and growth, achieved through diversification and futureproofing. Actions include supporting local businesses, creating year-round employment, promoting community renewable energy projects, and expanding tourism in ways that benefit both locals and visitors.

Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh has an older (less 0-15 & more over 65) percentage population and a similar working age percentage population to the Highland average. **The percentage of people experiencing in-work poverty or receiving out of work benefits is lower than the Highland average.**
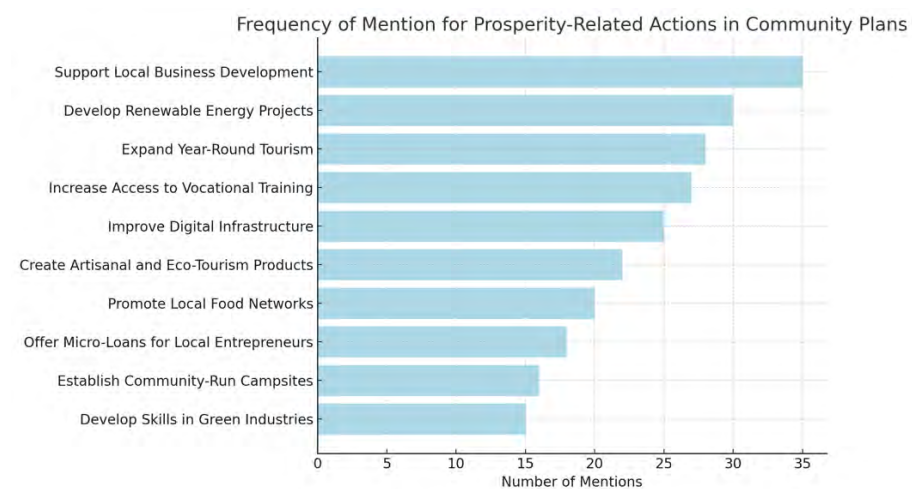

EMPLOYMENT

Age Profile

Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh		Highland
27.5%	65+	22.9%
59.0%	16 - 64	60.7%
13.4%	0 - 15	16.3%

Age Profile % Change 2010 - 2020
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh

65+ YEARS	+28.9%
16 - 64 YEARS	-5.1%
0 - 15 YEARS	-21.0%

% in Work Poverty

Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh	Highland
3.8%	5.3%

% out of Work Benefits

Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh	Highland
11.7%	13.5%

Figure 7: Employment, extract from Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Area Profile

Digital Connectivity – as of September 2024 only 4,478 premises in Highland had taken up ultrafast (FFTP or Broadband Voucher scheme for up to 1Gb/s via the R100 contract) broadband. Within the Area there are 8,868 premises 2,667 (30%) of which have the potential to access 1Gb/s speeds, 5,070 (57%) where it may be possible that a commercial provider will provide such speeds within the next 3 years and 1,131 (13%) premises where a public subsidy will be required, and that subsidy is currently not programmed.

Outcome: Support local business development
3.1 Nurture new local enterprises through shared workspaces and business hubs
3.2 Develop Renewable Energy Projects: expand community-owned wind and hydroelectric energy projects to generate income and create sustainable energy solutions
3.3 Year-Round Tourism: that is "slow" and responsible; improve visitor infrastructure to extend stays and enhance economic resilience
3.4 Increase Access to Vocational Training: to develop skills in industries such as land management, tourism and renewable energy
3.5 Improve Digital Infrastructure: improve digital connectivity to support remote work and local businesses
3.6 Create Artisanal Products: support local artisans and regenerative tourism through festivals and markets
3.7 Promote Local Food Networks: such as regular farmers' markets and supporting sustainable fishing and crofting
3.8 Offer Micro-Loans for Local Entrepreneurs: financial support through micro-loans for small, sustainable businesses
3.9 Establish Community-Run Tourism facilities: to retain tourism income locally
3.10 Develop Skills in Green Industries: training in renewable energy and sustainable practices to create new jobs

Photo 13: Community-owned toilets at Gairloch

Frequency of Mention for Prosperity-Related Actions in Community Plans

DELIVERING OUTCOMES

This Plan lays out the key actions needed to deliver our vision in the next 10 years. Some smaller-scale actions can be started immediately by the community. However, most actions will require collaboration between different organisations and adequate funding to ensure success.

To make this vision a reality, **two key principles are vital:**

- **Collaborative:** Coordinated action is also needed between communities, public sector, and external stakeholders. For example, increasing affordable housing will require input from agencies such as the **Scottish Government, Highland Council,** and housing associations. These partners will use the plan to prioritise resources, share expertise, and to ensure successful project delivery.

- **Connected:** Individual actions will only have a lasting impact if they are linked to broader strategies, such as infrastructure development.

Roles & responsibilities

The local community, such as:

- **Ward 5 Community Councils,** which represent local voices in planning matters.

- **Development Trusts** and **local and third sector organisations,** which provide essential services and support for projects ranging from tourism and economy to environmental conservation.

- **Estates and businesses,** which hold significant land and economic power and will play a role in local employment and investment.

Public Sector:

The **Highland Council** and other public-sector bodies will use this plan to prioritise existing resources, particularly those related to infrastructure, education, transport, healthcare, and housing, including:

- **Community Planning Partnerships**

- **Highlands and Islands Enterprise**

- **Highlife Highland**

- **NHS Highland**

- **Skills Development Scotland**

These bodies will work to ensure that local strategies align with regional and national priorities.

Other national and local organisations:

- **Transport Scotland** for transport infrastructure.

- **SEPA** for environmental planning and flood risk management.

- **Crown Estate Scotland** and the **Scottish Land Fund** to support community land acquisitions.

- **Communities Housing Trust** and other housing associations to address housing needs

APPENDICES

1. **Associated Documents:** There are a number of associated documents linked to the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Place Plan. These are listed hyperlinked in the table below for reference, although not included as part of this document for ease of printing.

Document	Location
Local Place Plan Register	https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/1043/local_place_plans/5
National Performance Framework 4	https://nationalperformance.gov.scot
Scotland's Environment Web	https://www.environment.gov.scot
Scotland's Census Data	https://www.scotlandscensus.gov.uk
Highland Council School Roll Forecasts – April 2024	https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/download/2378/school_roll_forecasts_april_2024
Highland Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-2027	https://highlandcpp.org.uk/about-us/highland-outcome-improvement-plan/
Whole Family Wellbeing Programme	https://highlandcpp.org.uk/whole-family-wellbeing-programme/
West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan	https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/582/west_highland_and_islands_local_development_plan
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Area Profile	https://engagehighland.co.uk/31695/widgets/91660/documents/57365
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh Government Statistics	https://statistics.gov.scot/atlas/resource?uri=http%3A%2F%2Fstatistics.gov.scot%2Fid%2Fstatistical-geography%2FS13002994

Applecross Community Action Plan 2020-2025	https://www.applecrosscommunitycompany.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/ACC_5YearPlan2019_draftRemoved_digital.pdf
Applecross Community Land Use Plan 2019	https://www.applecrosscommunitycompany.org/company-projects/plan-it-applecross/
GALE Community Action Plan	https://galeactionforum.co.uk/projects/community-action-plan/
GALE Combined Surveys Housing Needs Survey Report Dec 2023	https://galeactionforum.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/Combined-GALE-Report-Dec-Final.pdf
Garve & District Community Development Plan 2019-2024	https://garve.org/development-plan-themes
Lochalsh Community Action Plan	https://www.lochalsh.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/Community-Action-Plan-FINAL.pdf
Lochbroom & Ullapool Community Trust Community Survey 2021	https://www.ullapoolcommunity.org/community-survey-2021
Lochbroom, Ullapool and the surrounding area: Action plan for Active Travel and Sustainable Transport January 2023	https://www.pas.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/SC_Lochbroom_Ullapool_Action-Plan_Bro_29pp_v2.pdf
Marybank, Scatwell and Strathconon Community Council Minutes	http://www.community-council.org.uk/marybankscatwellandstrathconon/
North West 2045 Vision	https://www.northwest2045.scot
Shieldaig Community Consultation 2024	https://www.shieldaig.info/consultations.asp
Strathpeffer Community Action Plan 2019	https://www.strathpeffer.org/community-action-plan/
Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Development Plan 2023-2028	https://www.tkcc.scot/communitydevelopmentplan

2. Summary of Engagement Infographic

Wester Ross Strathpeffer & Lochalsh Area Place Plan

7 workshops

2 high school sessions

Input from 28 community organisations

99 survey responses

127 participants at workshops and drop ins

15 local development and place plans incorporated

18 comments on draft plan