

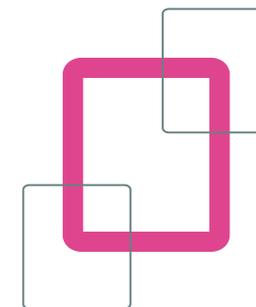
GAIRLOCH AND LOCH EWE Community Action Plan

Live | Work | Visit | Thrive

Our Place
Our People
Our Future

Carried out by Gairloch and Loch Ewe
Action Forum (GALE)

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Introduction

This Community Action Plan aims to capture the aspirations of the Gairloch and Loch Ewe community, seeking to discover what people want their community to be like in an achievable future, including ideas about what could be done and who might do it while considering the current needs, challenges and gaps in services and provision. Further collaboration will lead to specific plans of action including which ideas to take forward and how to undertake and resource these actions.

The following document will:

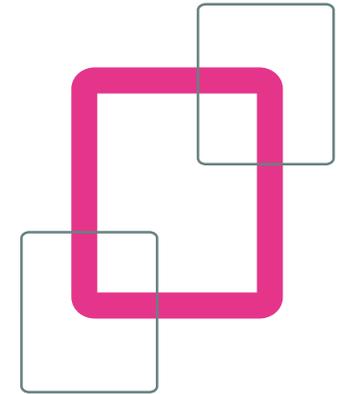
- act as a road map for implementing community led action and developing priority projects in line with the community's needs and ambitions in a joined up, cohesive way
- help local community groups to identify and prioritise resource requirements to

inform business planning and fundraising efforts

- help local community efforts to better link with regional and national plans and priorities by showing how their work fits into the broader context of our community's goals
- support our rural communities to work in partnership with each other as well as other organisations and service providers

This Community Action Plan is intended to be a living document with planned annual reviews, whereby GALE will facilitate our communities to come together to celebrate achievements, share best practice and update priorities. Some actions are already in progress or completed and this highlights that this document represents a point in time, a guide for what we – as a community of

networked rural villages will aspire to make reality over the coming years. It requires ongoing updates and for community groups to work towards supporting each other to implement actions to improve our local place for the benefit of all to live, work, visit and thrive.



A scenic view of a calm body of water, likely a fjord or bay, with mountains in the background. A pier with a boat is visible on the right side. The water is still, reflecting the sky and the surrounding landscape. The sky is a clear, pale blue. The mountains are a mix of green and brown, suggesting a mix of vegetation and rocky terrain. The pier is a dark structure extending into the water, with a white boat docked at it. The overall atmosphere is peaceful and serene.

*‘[The pier] is a lifeline for
the island community’*

How the CAP was formed

The Community Action Plan came from a series of consultations with the community. There is a full methodology in the [appendix](#). As an organisation we are always learning the best way to consult with the community and gain a fully representative sample. Early drop in sessions had a disappointing turn out and therefore lacked full engagement. GALE conducted twenty-three drop in events across three council areas (Gairloch, Kinlochewe and Wester Loch Ewe) as well as a two week drop in event in Kinlochewe. Across these events 148 people attended with a total of 283 residents connected, including online votes and polls.

Due to the Covid pandemic some of the consultations were also delayed. We will keep striving to discover the best ways to consult with the community and ensure

that everyone's voices are heard and do our best to work together with other community organisations which are the key to the success of any project. This learning process culminated with around a 20% engagement rate of the Aultbea community which came from a combination of an online survey and a series of drop-in sessions which seventy people attended. Support from within the community through Community Councils with help from local organisations, is vital to achieving a good representation of views. The responsibility to move forward in a useful way lies with us all to encourage engagement and relay results.

Our Community



Location and snap shot of demographic, employment and facilities

Our remote, rural community, which this action plan covers, comprises a collection of traditional crofting and fishing settlements of Gairloch, Kinlochewe, Poolewe, Aultbea and Laide.

A landmass of 1120km², served by four community councils in mid-Wester Ross on the North-West coast of the Scottish Highlands.

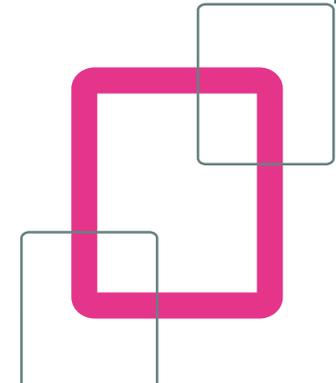
The dotted line on the accompanying map indicates GALE's area of benefit.

Wester Ross Community Councils



What it means to be Remote and Rural

The challenges in service provision for our remote rural location are summarised in the recent Have Your Say Highland report (2022) “Average travel time to key services by both personal transport and public transport is almost double the Highland average. Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh comprises of 100% Remote Rural Areas classification. Remote Rural Areas is often coupled with higher living costs including transport, food, fuel, fewer employment opportunities, lower wages and social isolation” [1]



Population and Demographic Trends

Collectively, Gairloch (1109), Aultbea (643), Kinlochewe (100) and Loch Ewe (437) have a population of 2289 [2]. Across the Highland, communities are ageing with a local average increase in residents aged over 65's of 30% between 2010-2020. During the same period the local population of 0–15-year-olds decreased by 21%.[3]

The resident population in and around Gairloch and Loch Ewe has slowly increased in the last ten years, but the school roll has experienced a general decline. This has resulted in the recent mothballing of two primary schools in 2022 (Kinlochewe and Badcaul). Torridon and Inverasdale Primary School have both been mothballed since June 2012. The exception is Bualnaluib Primary (Aultbea) which has bucked the trend and seen increasing numbers. The Gairloch High

School roll has fallen from 126 in 2017 to 106 currently with this number looking to remain fairly steady in the coming years. The relative increase in population is higher in the 55-75 age bracket comprising natural population ageing and inward migration of this age demographic.[4]

One of our biggest challenges is to retain young people in the community, attract more people of working age and families to relocate or return, reverse the brain drain.[5] Seasonal and frequently low paid jobs and an acute lack of housing are all part of the issue that needs to be addressed.



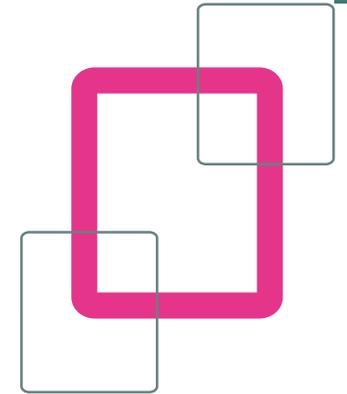
Local Economy

What do people do for work?

Historically crofting and fishing have shaped the settlement pattern with large infrastructure introduced in and around Loch Ewe for the war effort in the 1940's. Fishing and crofting are still popular roles, although they are often supported by other forms of employment. If crofting grants can be accessed, the income contribution is still much smaller compared to larger farms and estates. There is a long tradition of the area as a tourist destination and seasonal hospitality services, such as holiday accommodation, cafés, restaurants and tourist related businesses are among key local economic drivers in Gairloch particularly. The Highland Council (education, roads, support services), construction and utility companies

and the care and healthcare industry are significant employers. Other contributing industries include nature management and conservation through government agencies (NatureScot, Forestry and Land Scotland, National Trust for Scotland) and private estate management (approximately 15 individual estates.) [6] Self-employment is common especially in trade related skills and there is an increasing trend for remote working online. Reduced employment in commercial open sea fishing with static and mobile gear (following reduced fish stocks) [7] and aquaculture (fewer open sea pens, more onshore hatcheries).

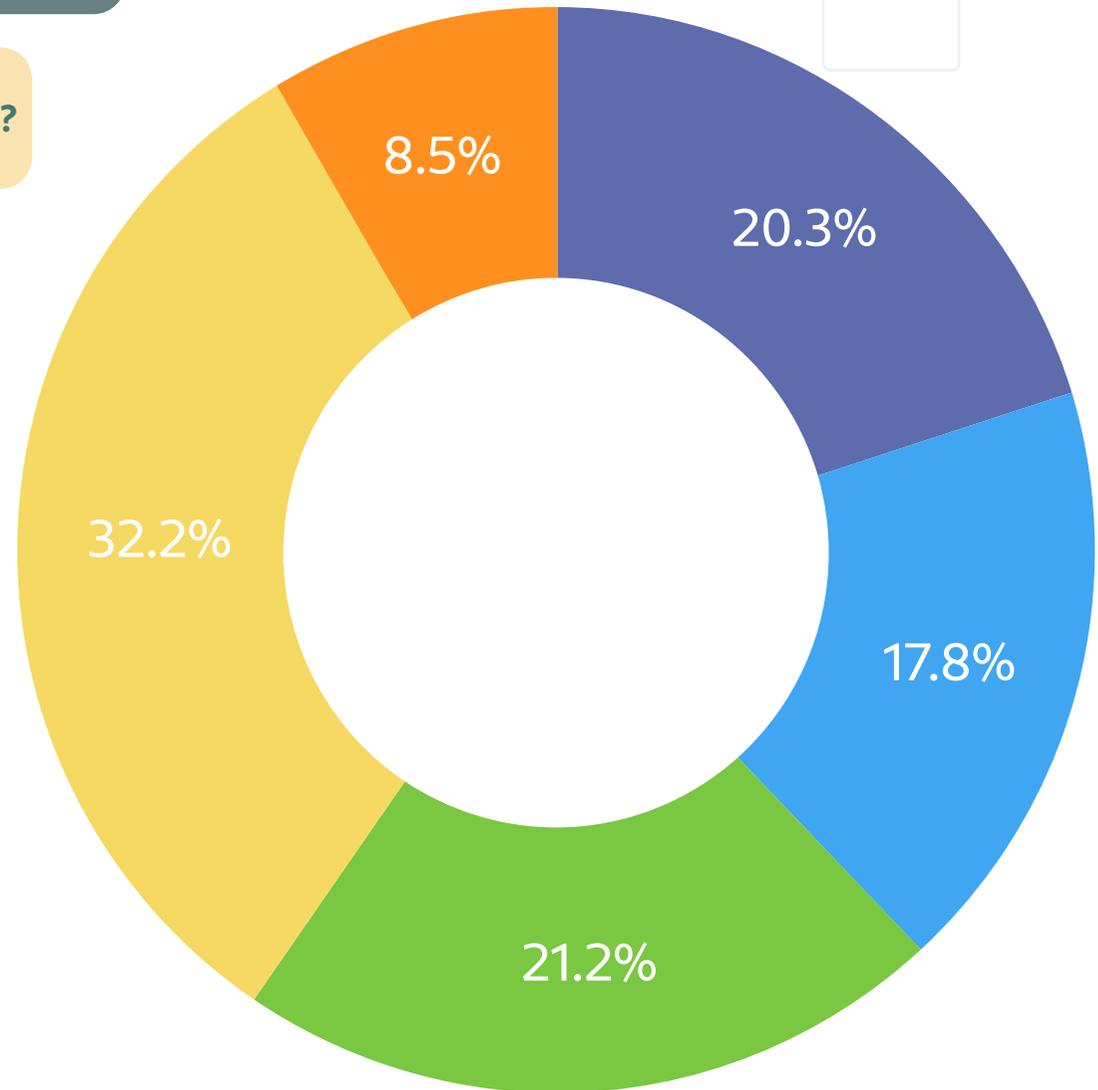
Using the latest Aultbea residents survey of 118 people the following chart provides an interesting snapshot of the employment status of the local population.[8]



Local Economy

How would you describe your employment status?

Choice	Totals
Full-time employed	24
Part-time employed	21
Self-employed	25
Retired	38
Prefer not to say	10



Responses 118

(Results from the Aultbea survey in January 2023)



Landscape and environment

Estate ownership and crofting shape the landscape. The latter plays a role in sustaining the rural population by connecting people to the land and sea. It provides a strong cultural and heritage anchor to the area giving a reason for the locally born to return and stay. The former covers large areas and remains outwith community control.



Tourism

Tourism contributes £1.4 billion to the Highlands economy, £144.2 million of that in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh much of which is included within the [Wester Ross Biosphere](#). Tourism also provides around 35% employment in Wester Ross.[9]

In Scotland's 2015 Economic Strategy, sustainable tourism was considered one of the seven growth industries in Scotland.[10]

Visitors to the area stay in various holiday accommodation and campsites, frequenting cafes and restaurants as well as taking part in outdoor activities such as boat trips and adventurous activities. There are also activities such as museums and exhibits, craft workshops and distillery tours. Despite the multitude of options for

visitors, tourism only provides a seasonal contribution to the economy. The NC500 has been widely promoted by VisitScotland and has changed the tourism landscape of Wester Ross. Although it may have increased the visitor numbers through the peak season, there have been drawbacks such as its environmental impact on the area and the change in tourist behaviours.

More recently there has been a campaign promoting slow travel. This encourages visitors to spend longer in destinations after it was believed that many were staying in an area for just one night and often using camper vans to stay in parking places rather than B&Bs and hotels. This habit of shorter stays has particularly affected holiday homes which often offer week rentals.



Broadband and Mobile Connectivity

With the post covid pandemic increase of people working from home and starting new businesses, reliable broadband and mobile phone coverage is essential. This has often been a problem in Wester Ross and other rural areas. Superfast broadband covers 83% of the Highlands and only 68% of the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh area. R100 (Reaching 100%) [11] is a UK wide policy aiming to deliver super-fast broadband to 100% of the UK which should continue to improve super-fast capabilities in the area.

The Highlands and Islands is also due to see a rise in mobile phone coverage of 42% [12] which is the largest increase in coverage in the UK. 4G coverage is expected to reach 91% of the region's landmass over the four main network providers. Currently EE offers

the most coverage to the local area based on data from Ofcom. [13]



Transport & Road Links

Our network of villages and settlements beyond the main trunk road are connected by a combination of double and single track roads. [Wester Bus](#), runs a return bus service in and out of the area six days a week. It runs to Inverness four days a week and both Dingwall and Ullapool once a week. This service is a lifeline but limited, offering very little flexibility for appointments. The buses do not allow bicycles (except folding or packaged bikes) or dogs.

There is no dedicated cycle infrastructure within or between our villages and a limited number of footpaths. However the area is both popular and rewarding for road cyclists offering fantastic views.

[Gairloch Community Car Scheme](#) offers local transport to over 16's, by arrangement

between settlements, for non-work journeys and to the hospital in Inverness.

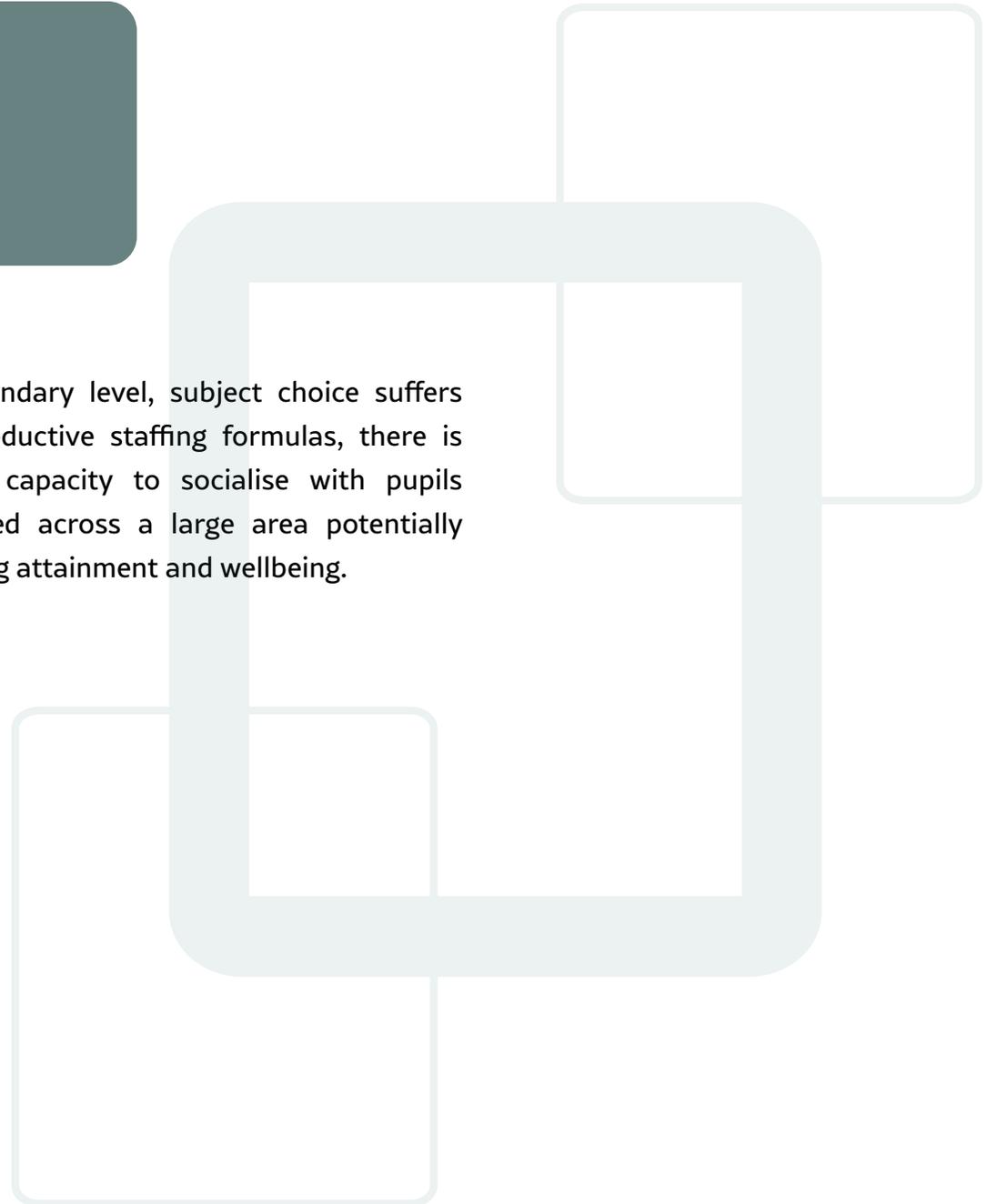
Parking during the winter months meets the needs of local residents but during the busy summer period it can become congested and lead to frustration. This is due to a combination of day parking in popular spots and overnight parking of larger vehicles which may often take up multiple spots.



Formal Education Provision

The Gairloch Associated Schools Group (ASG) comprises of one secondary (11-18) school in the centre of Gairloch and four feeder primary (5-12) schools across the area. In recent years there were seven feeder primary schools, but a decline in the local population has led to mothballing and closure of three primary schools. Small schools can be a great environment for education to thrive, however as the pupil numbers drop below critical levels they struggle to offer a complete package. In the worst case the school closes leaving large areas without local education provision and a prohibitively long bus journey with little hope of attracting families to the area again. There is an acute lack of childcare with The Toy Box children's centre as the only organised childcare service across the whole area.

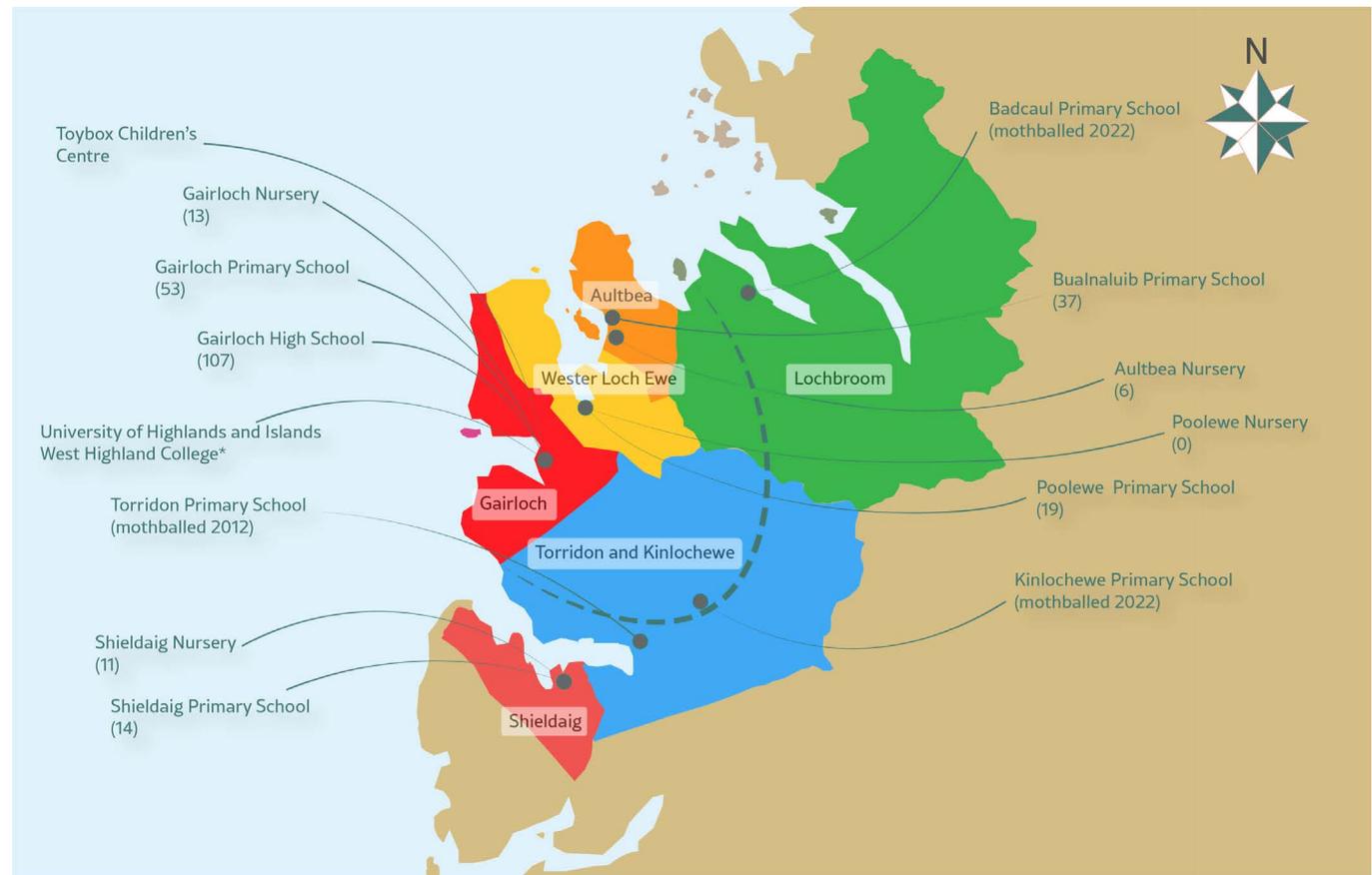
At secondary level, subject choice suffers from reductive staffing formulas, there is limited capacity to socialise with pupils dispersed across a large area potentially affecting attainment and wellbeing.



Formal Education continued

School Role Data (2022/2023)

Numbers in brackets denotes the school or nurseries current attendees

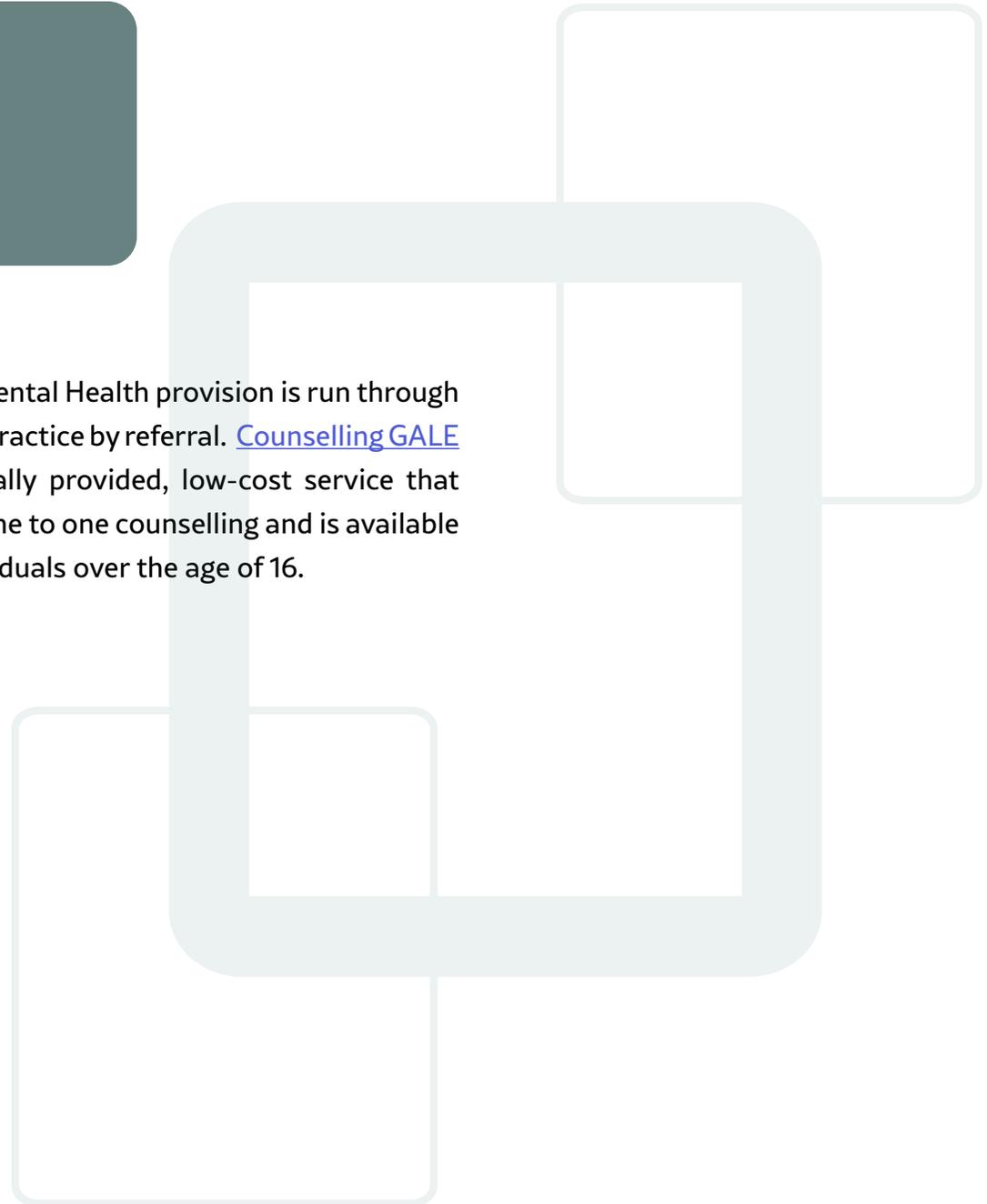


* University of Highland and Islands and West Highland College are both remote learning environments

Health and Care Provision

Services include the two medical centres, one in Gairloch and one in Aultbea. The Scottish regional Scottish Ambulance Service, pharmacy and private dental practice are all Gairloch based which can be a problem for those in the outlying areas. Raigmore Hospital in Inverness is around 80 miles for some residents. There are two care homes (one offering nursing care) located in Gairloch and Aultbea. Gairloch Aid and Mobility Support (GAMS) running a specially adapted bus service available to transport residents requiring additional assistance. [The Gairloch Community Car Scheme](#) is a service that can transport residents locally within a 25 mile radius of Gairloch and to Inverness for medical appointments. There is one NHS physiotherapist who works every second Thursday in the area and two private physiotherapists.

Adult Mental Health provision is run through the GP practice by referral. [Counselling GALE](#) is a locally provided, low-cost service that offers one to one counselling and is available to individuals over the age of 16.



‘I grew up here. It’s my home.’



Community & Recreational Facilities

Key leisure facilities include [The Gairloch Community Library](#), the [mobile library van](#) and the [Gairloch Leisure Centre](#) which has an astro pitch housed within the Gairloch High School grounds. Poolewe also has a small [public swimming pool](#). These are all run by Highland Highlife and operate on restricted days and hours.

[Kinlochewe](#), [Gairloch](#) & [Poolewe](#) each have a village hall where active community groups can host locally run events. Aultbea utilises two large churches for general community activities [Loch Ewe Community Church](#) (including recent acquisition through [Scottish Land Fund](#) monies bringing the church of Scotland into community ownership) and [Aultbea Hall](#) are both in the process of reopening the village hall. [Wester Loch Ewe Trust](#) has repurposed the

old Inverasdale school house as a cafe and visitor facility. Gairloch is also home to the [GALE Centre](#) a community owned café, gift shop and tourist information centre open all year round. A directory of local community organisations can be found here. If you wish to add your group please contact cap@galeteam.co.uk

There is a strong church community comprising many religious organisations and religious youth and holiday club activities and community support (cost of living support/ foodbank) for all ages of the religious and non-religious community.

There are several public play parks (Gairloch, Poolewe, Aultbea) maintained by the Highland Council and rough football fields in Gairloch, Poolewe and Aultbea. Aultbea

Community Council secured extra lottery funding to enhance the local playpark in 2016

Community & Recreational Facilities continued

[Laide and Aultbea Community Woodland](#) has undertaken an extensive native broadleaf planting scheme over recent years, currently dog walking and community fuel source predominate with potential for wider recreational and community education use and community growing.

Gairloch hosts a [9-hole golf course](#), first created in 1989. The course is available to both members and non-members

There are also public toilets in Aultbea, Poolewe and in Gairloch at the village hall and Gairloch pier which has a campervan waste disposal point. A new toilet block is currently being erected at Gairloch beach by Gairloch Area Development Ltd (GAD).





‘It’s hard when you have a small group to get anything organised as people don’t think it’s worth doing for just four kids’

Community Growing areas

There is a small community food forest at the Spinney in Aultbea as well as raised beds behind Gairloch High School and at the GALE Centre. Good for Ewe community polytunnels in Inverasdale are no longer productive and due for possible relocation. There has been some interest in community allotments in Gairloch but no firm plans in place to date.



Groceries and Provisions

There are locally owned shops in many of the villages, including a chain store in Gairloch which is open all week. There is also a local butcher based in Gairloch who delivers produce to the surrounding villages. Venison can be bought from some of the local estates and fresh fish is available for local delivery. Vegetable boxes are delivered which mostly come from outwith the local area. Local food provision, sustainability and security, are topics for community thought and discussion.



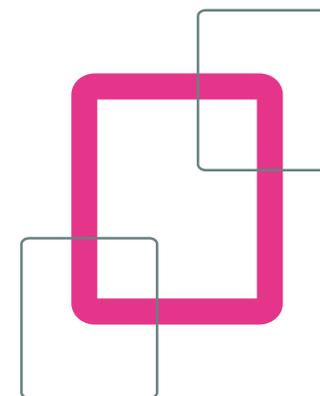
Community Action Plan

The passion within our community to navigate the current cost of living crisis following years of government austerity and harsh limits on public spending is evident in the number of grassroots volunteer led community organisations all seeking to improve the place for locals and visitors to enable the community to thrive. Upwards of twenty-five organisations (a list of which can be found [here](#)) are utilising public funds to reopen, refurbish, repurpose and reimagine tired mothballed and derelict buildings for community use. These uses include cafés, public conveniences, creative arts, music, culture, historic and sporting venues as well as regenerating outdoor green spaces to improve the wellbeing of people living in and traveling through our area.

The four Community Councils; [Gairloch](#),

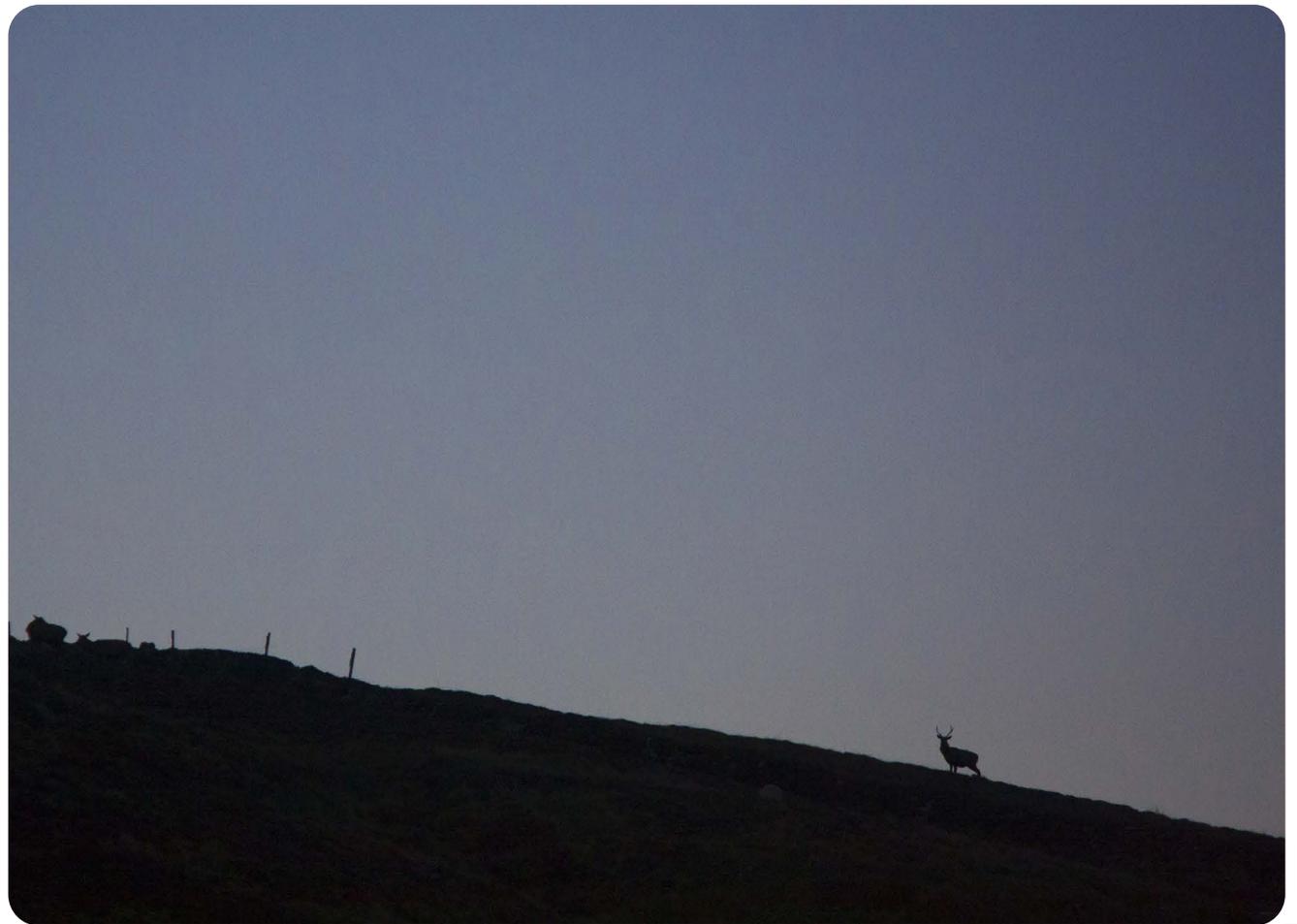
[Wester Loch Ewe, Aultbea and Torridon and Kinlochewe](#) are voluntary organisations set up by statute by the local authority and run by local residents to act on behalf of its area. They work with the Highland Council to highlight gaps in services and provision, applying for funding to improve the area, support vulnerable groups and share essential information. The task of these elected volunteer committees is vast.

A route map helping to support all these community groups to coexist is needed. How to prioritise projects and identify funding streams to help create a thriving community led by collaboration not competition is a challenge to work towards. Working with identified shared principles maybe a good starting point and collaboration to produce a [Local Place Plan](#) [15] will be essential.



Development Principles guiding our Community Action Plan

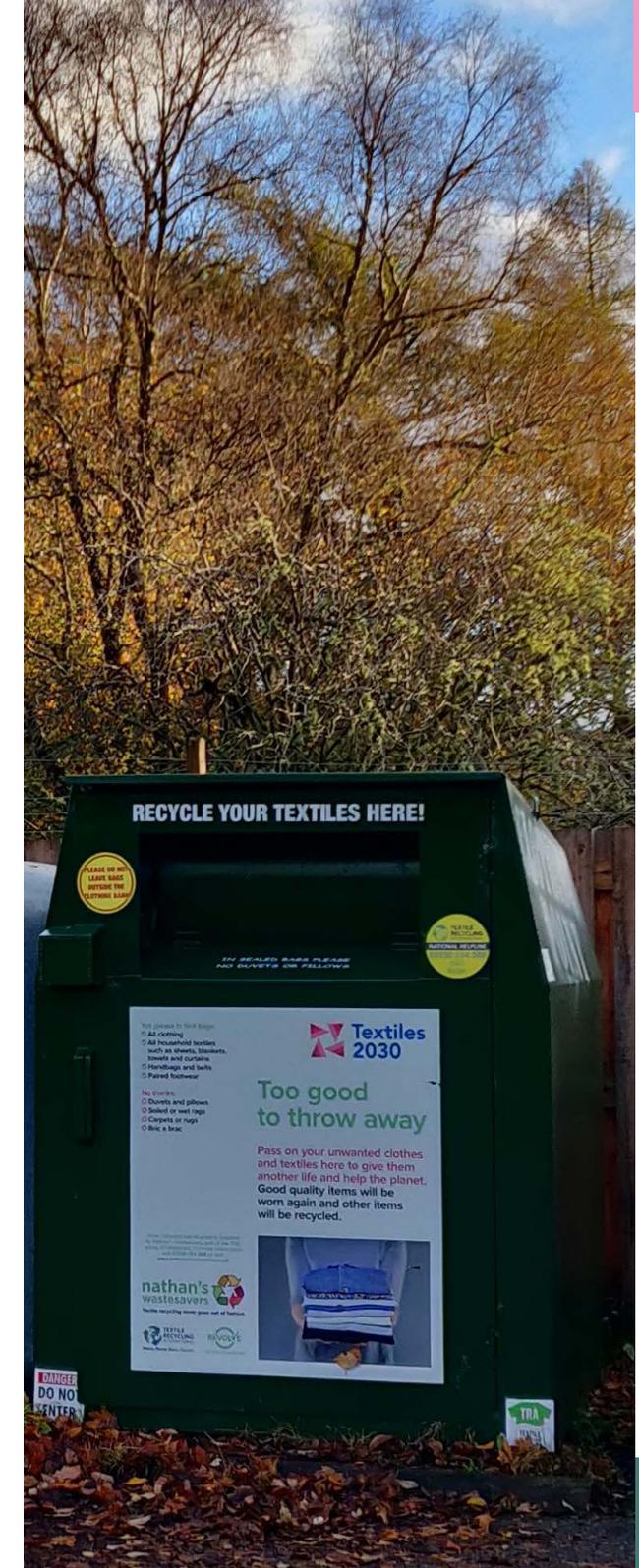
Sustainability, resilience and social connectivity are important development principles which all came out of the ongoing consultation. These principles will receive full consideration and underpin all future projects that emerge from this Community Action Plan.



Environmental Sustainability

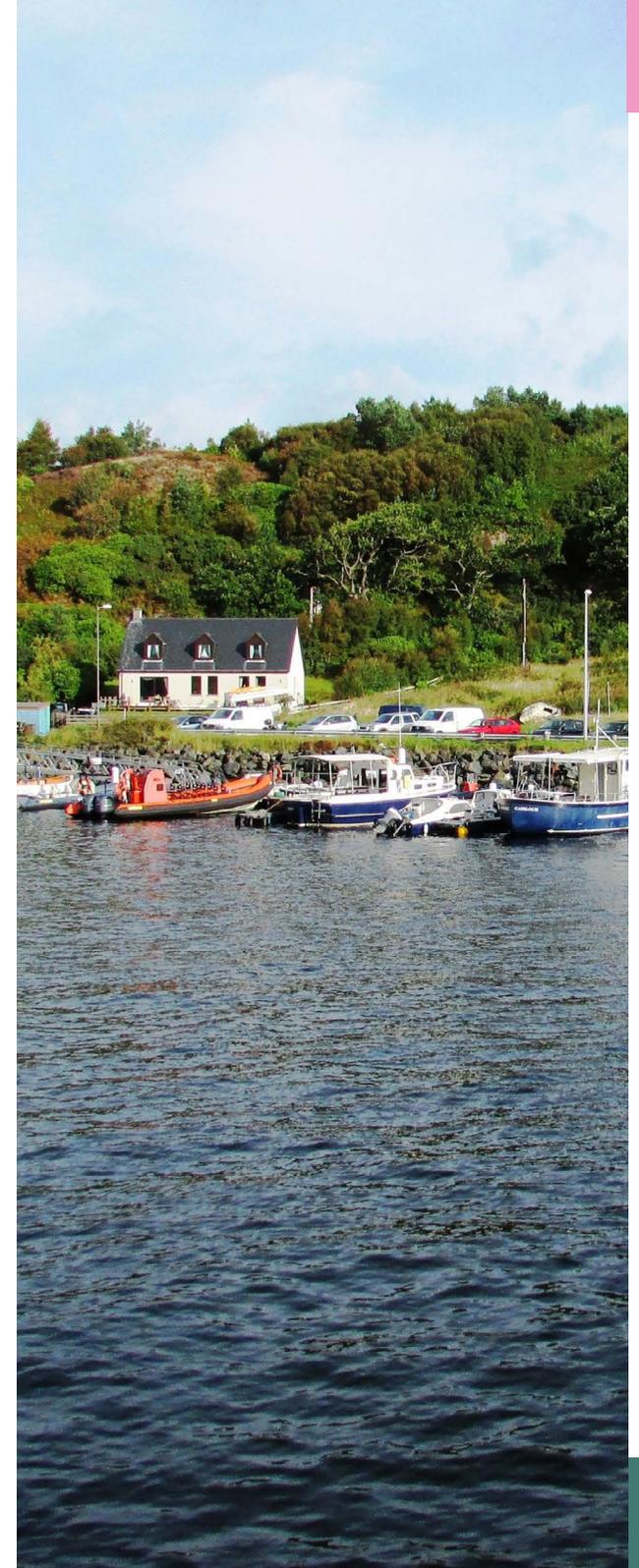
Environmental sustainability should be considered at every level of activity, project and decision. These decisions should align with the Scottish Government's 2019 pledge to become Net Zero by 2045 [16]. This pledge meant that the amount of greenhouse gas emissions put into the atmosphere are equally balanced by the amount that are able to be taken out. Our Community Action Plan will aspire to keep this pledge at the forefront of any future plans and actions. Many community umbrella organisations in Highland such as the [Highlands and Island Climate Hub](#), [Highland Adapts](#) and [Highland Good Food Partnership](#) are helping to guide community groups by signposting best practice and trialling creative ideas to help with decisions in the transition to NetZero, climate action and adaptation to our changing climate. Projects and actions must

tread lightly on our world, respecting our natural environment, scarcity of resources and impact on future generations.



Long Term Resilience

Projects need to be financially sustainable in the long term, not placing a burden on communities or government subsidies indefinitely. With financial sustainability comes the ability to plan for the future with care and confidence. Short term fixes and firefighting should make up the minority of solutions. Instead, projects, plans and activities will aim to take the long view, seeking to tackle the root of the problem, to bring about transformational and system change that makes life better now and for future generations to come.

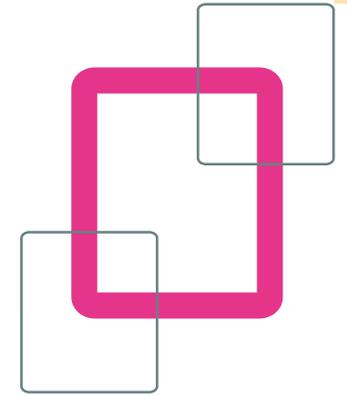


Social Connectivity

The Gairloch and Loch Ewe area is made up of a range of unique villages and townships, each with their own identity and individuality. They are interconnected and interdependent with shared challenges, opportunities and resources. Projects and activities will work proactively to build connections between villages and townships. Both physically, through transport and travel routes, as well as through facilitating and enabling collaboration, creating working relationships between community groups and strengthening community cohesion. As a result, nurturing a vision of a lively and well-connected network of villages and townships.



**What does this mean
in terms of our CAP?**



A Resilient Local Economy

Activities will seek to strengthen the local economy, building its resilience through the diversity of economic activities while employment opportunities and tackling seasonality. Plurality of ownership of the private sector will be encouraged including local and community ownership that anchors wealth in the community and reduces leakages. The five principles of Community Wealth Building [17] should be embedded in economic regeneration activities.

What will this look like?

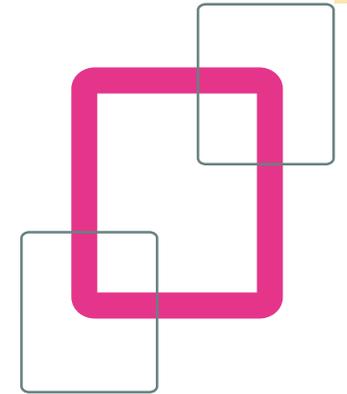


Participation and Active Citizenship

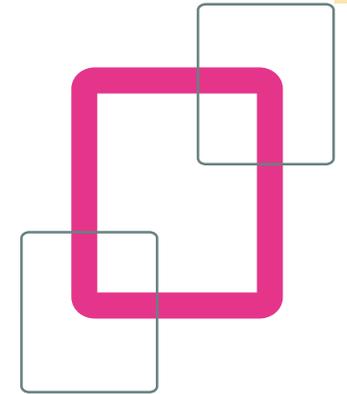
Our community will be proactive in helping itself, not waiting for others to make the change but improving our own lives and those of our neighbours through the promotion and practice of active citizenship. People who live in the Gairloch and Loch Ewe area will have a say over the things that matter to them. Everyone's voice will be considered and we will become practiced and adept at constructive discussion and debate as part of a healthy, collective decision making process. We will encourage a culture of participation, taking responsibility and working together to make things happen.



**Gairloch and Loch Ewe
a place to:
Live, Work, Visit, Thrive!**



We are striving for our community to Live, Work, Visit, Thrive!



What does that mean?

LIVE

We want the Gairloch and Loch Ewe area to be a place where a diverse range of people want and are able to make their permanent residence. Somewhere we are proud to call home.

WORK

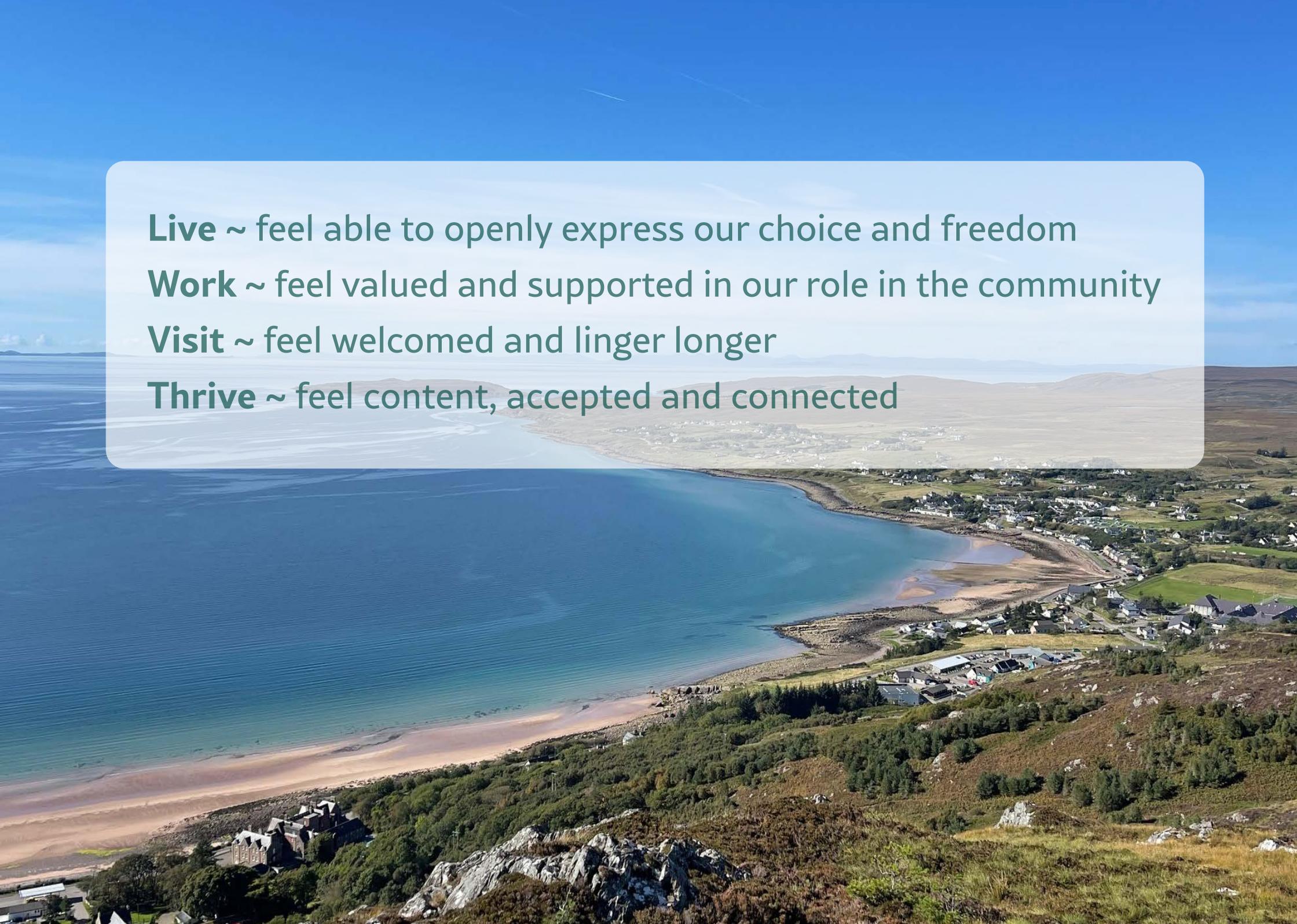
A place where we can earn a living through paid employment and income generating opportunities. Somewhere it's possible to develop a trade or profession that we can be paid for.

VISIT

A welcoming place where people can enjoy spending their holidays and leisure time. A place with stimulating and new experiences coupled with the familiar home away from home to relax and recharge.

THRIVE

A nurturing place which meets our physical and mental health needs, that enables us to connect and build meaningful relationships, allows us to grow, develop, experience new things and achieve our aspirations. Not somewhere that it is a struggle to survive but somewhere we can achieve much more, a place of individual and community wellbeing and vitality.

An aerial photograph of a coastal town and bay. The water is a deep blue, transitioning to a lighter turquoise near the shore. A sandy beach is visible in the foreground. The town consists of numerous small houses and buildings, some with dark roofs. The surrounding landscape is hilly and covered in green vegetation. In the background, there are more hills and a clear blue sky. A semi-transparent white text box is overlaid on the upper portion of the image.

Live ~ feel able to openly express our choice and freedom

Work ~ feel valued and supported in our role in the community

Visit ~ feel welcomed and linger longer

Thrive ~ feel content, accepted and connected

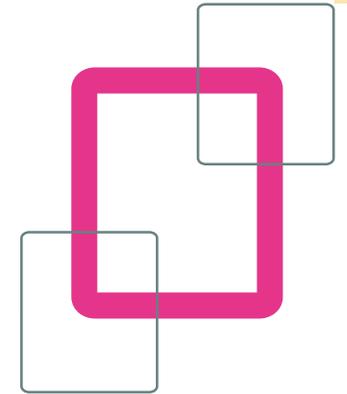
The BIGGER Picture

How does our CAP fit into the bigger picture?

There is currently no Community Action Plan that specifically covers the local area leaving a significant gap in the development process. This means that public bodies who would normally refer to a Community Action Plan to influence their decisions are left to draw their own conclusions on the needs of the area.

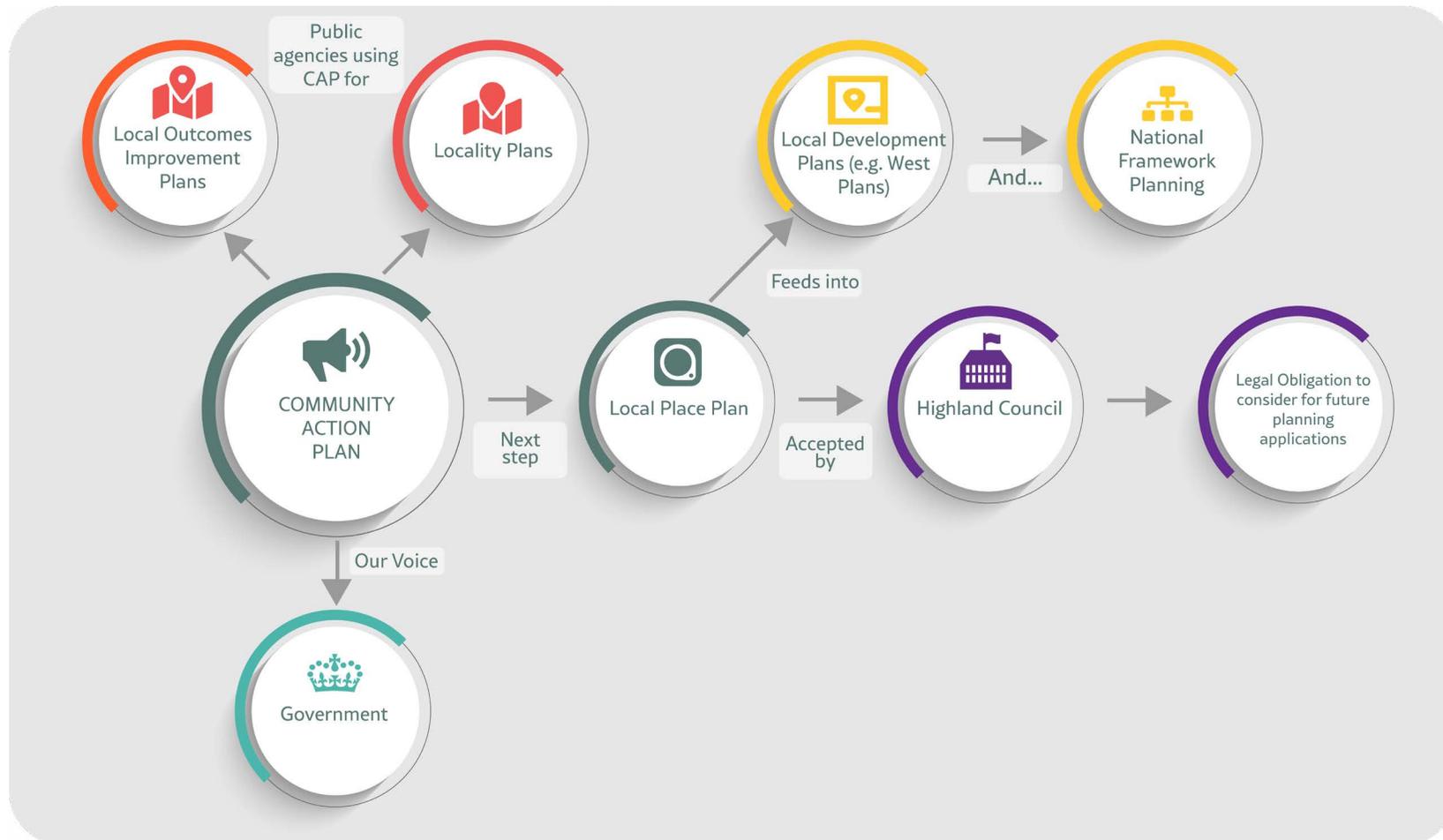
If a Local Place Plan, created from our CAP, was accepted by the Highland Council, there would be a legal obligation for the government to take this into account for all future planning applications and development proposals.

The CAP is a vehicle for local representation in decisions that are made elsewhere and affect the lives of everyone in the community.



Community Action Plan

Our Community Action Plan and the bigger picture?



Consultation Results



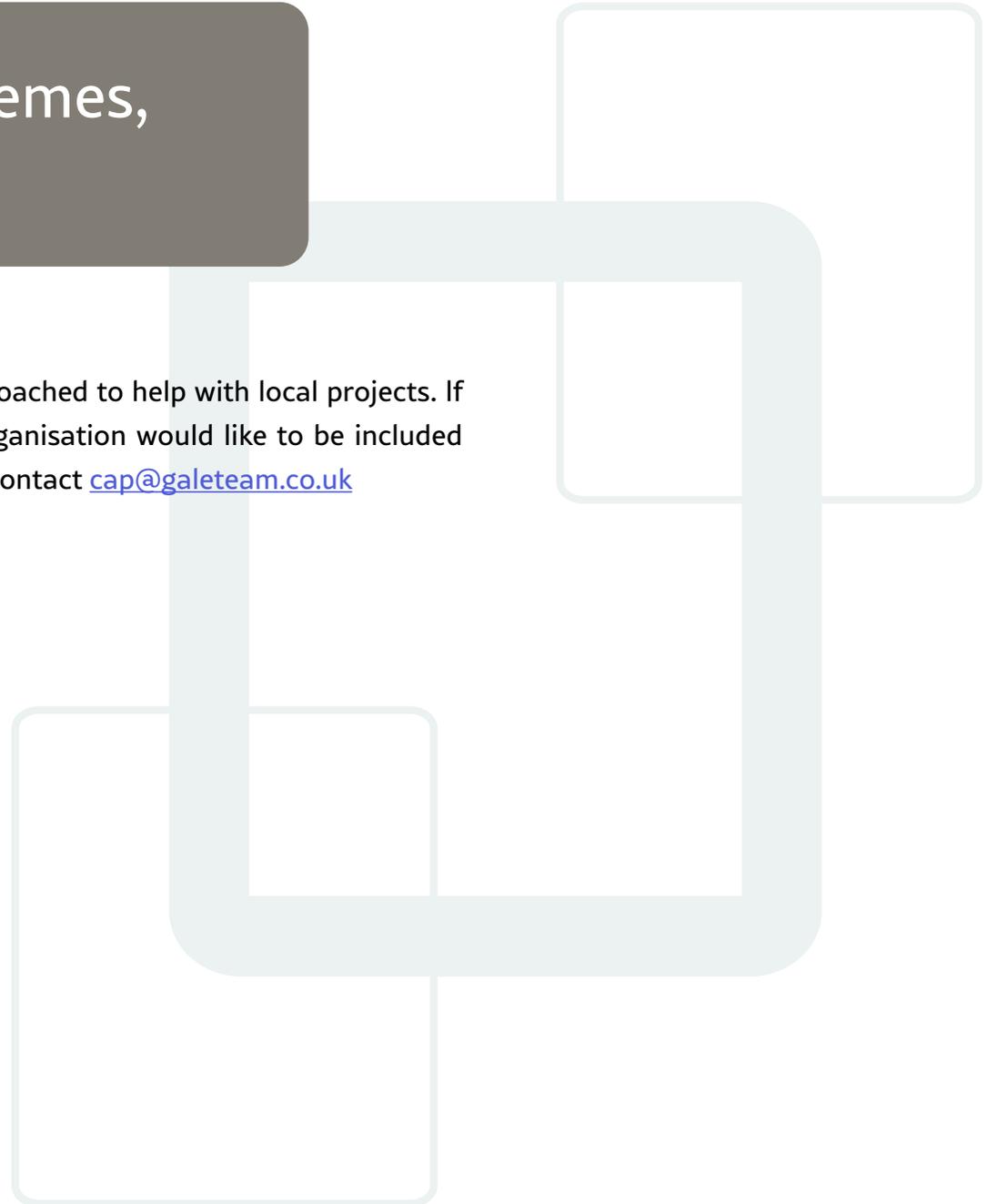
Our community – Main Themes, Actions and Priorities

The following ideas and actions were created and prioritised by the members of the local community who attended the numerous Planning for Real drop-in sessions, workshops and online surveys. These have been categorised into five key themes;

- housing
- local economy and employment
- community facilities
- environment
- transport and safety

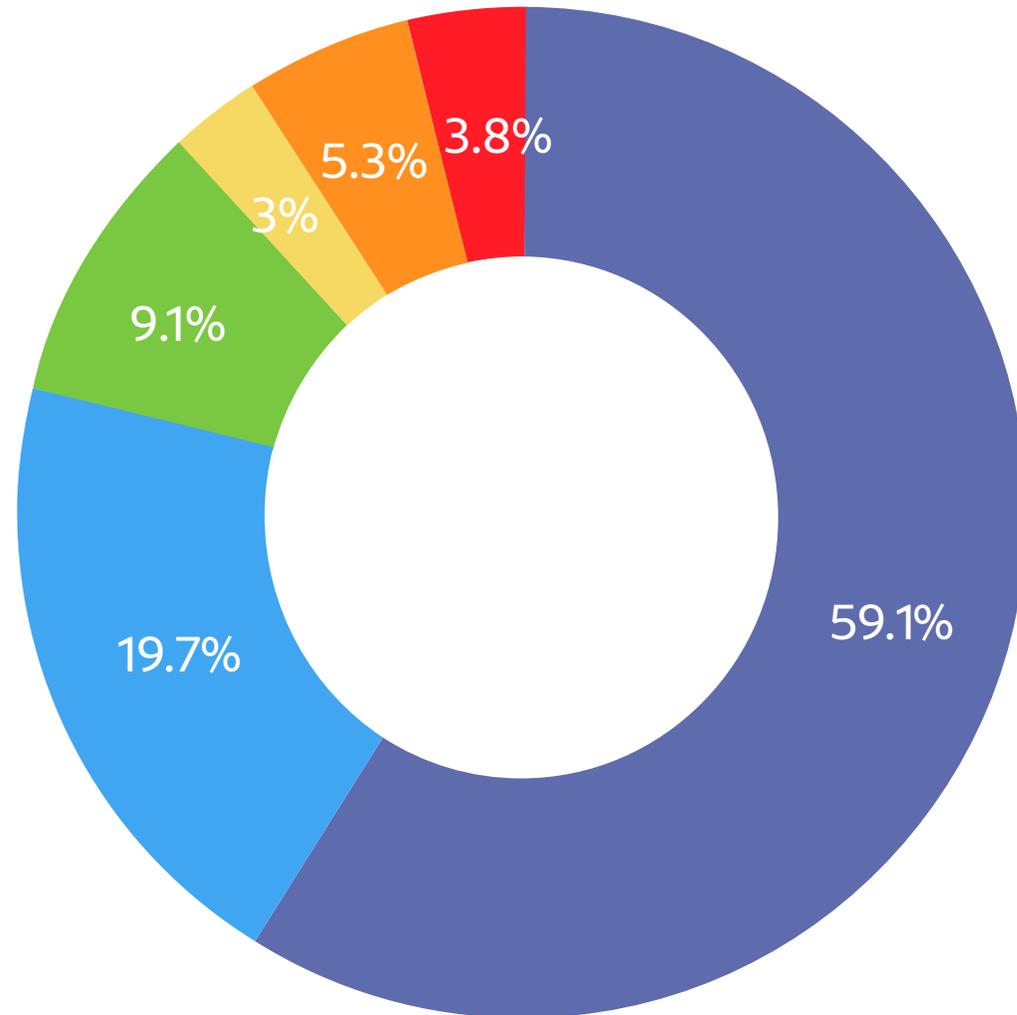
Shared themes and ideas from each Community Council area have been prioritised following community consultation and potential partners suggested with the results summarised in the following tables. The Community Organisations Directory is a list of community organisations who may

be approached to help with local projects. If your organisation would like to be included please contact cap@galeteam.co.uk



Do you feel as involved in community life as you would like to be?

Choice	Totals
I am happy with how involved I am in community life	78
I would like more opportunities to get involved in community life	26
I cannot get as involved in community life as I would like due to feelings of exclusion	12
I feel decisions that are made reflect my views	4
I would like to get more involved in decision making	7
Other	5



Responses 118

(Results from the Aultbea survey in January 2023)

Housing

Timeframe – Short <12mths, Medium 1-2years, Long >2years

Idea	Importance	Delivery Timeframe	Potential Partners
<p>Priority given to local people for existing social housing</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete a housing needs analysis for each community council area with an overview for the network of villages • Create a local accommodation wanted list to distribute property updates to • Send community letter to Albyn Housing regarding future allocations 	High	Short	Highland Council GALE Communities Housing Trust Albyn Housing
<p>Develop a strategic plan for new housing in villages and surrounding areas that is affordable for young people and residents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look for best practice in other areas (e.g. Applecross, Staffin) • Public request for land available to purchase for community owned housing • Form community wide team to develop feasible housing projects 	High	Medium	Communities Housing Trust GALE Hickman Trust Crofters Commission Landowners Small Housing Trust
<p>Management of the number of vacant second and holiday homes in communities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Look at best practice models from within/out with UK (e.g. Cumbria Community Foundation) • Work with Highland Council to review Council Tax models for unoccupied houses • Public request for land available to purchase for community owned housing • Work with Highland Council to review Local Development Plan and planning requirements for housing developments in rural areas 	High	Long	Highland Council Communities Housing Trust GALE Rural communities across Scotland



Housing continued

Timeframe – Short <12mths, Medium 1-2years, Long >2years

Absentee crofters <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Identify crofts in question and contact registered crofter to ask why not active• Identify alternative uses residents would like (use by community, expansion of resident crofters, application for new resident crofters only)• Crofting settlements to submit a joint submission to Crofting commission• Influence policy by raising awareness how absentee crofters contribute to fewer young people entering agriculture• Prioritise vacant crofts for young & local people wanting to enter crofting• Lobby relevant government agencies and farming institutions for policy change	High	Medium	Crofters & Grazing committees Crofting Commission National Farmers Union Scottish Agricultural College GALE
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Transport and Safety

Idea	Priority	Delivery Timeframe	Potential Partners
<p>Review village speed limits and traffic calming measures in all villages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Highland Council/Police to install speed monitoring at known danger points to collect data during peak tourist season • Work with Highland Council to systematically review speed limits and potential for traffic calming measures in all villages 30 to 20mph roll out 2023 	High	Short	Highland Council Police Community Councils GALE
<p>Regular, quality repairs and maintenance of road surfaces in community with priority to access roads to outlying settlements surrounding villages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • List recurring potholes not being fixed correctly • Send copies of car repair invoices to Highland Council • Coordinate community calls to Highland Council for repairs • Use https://www.fixmystreet.com/ or https://www.highland.gov.uk/report 	High	Medium	Community Councils Highland Council
<p>Create a footpath/cycle path network within all villages and between key locations with high traffic volumes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apply for funding to employ officer to write project brief • Map existing footpaths and cycle paths with their grade details • Identify sites and relevant information such as traffic risk, congestion, use volume • Identify and assess feasibility of small projects to upgrade/create new path corridors across all communities. • Create a public communication strategy for promotion of network 	High	Long	Wester Ross Biosphere Paths for All Highland Council



Transport and Safety continued

<p>Create a public/community transport network between villages, settlements with frequency & times to link to connecting services in Achnasheen and Inverness</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Options must provide for people with additional accessibility requirements Survey locals to establish demand Create matrix of existing services across all community council areas and complete a gap analysis Form a transport project group to solve unmet needs 	High	Medium	<p>Wester Bus South Wester Ross Community Car Scheme Gairloch Community Car Scheme Gairloch Aid and Mobility Support GALE (for coordination)</p>
<p>Annual programme of clearing roadside drains & ditches which is publicised</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initially residents to photograph sites overflowing Create prioritised maintenance list with Highland Council & agree timetables Alternatively – apply for Ward 5 funding to pay for digger & insurance to do independently 	High	Short	<p>Highland Council Community Councils</p>
<p>Education campaign for tourists on driving, motorhome etiquette, safe cycling</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Coordinate with other villages in NC500 to set up project team Decide key themes Apply for funding to deliver project & material costs Make own NC500 safety video & strategically place signage Decide on and design various platforms for message delivery (video, radio advertising, leaflets, posters etc...) 	High	Medium	<p>Residents (Kinlochewe) Wester Ross Biosphere NatureScot Highland Council North Highland Initiative</p>



Environment

Idea	Priority	Delivery Timeframe	Potential Partners
<p>Proactive management to minimise night lighting throughout villages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observe current night lighting to identify potential changes • Survey residents to find out which lighting they want on/where • Speak to Highland Council and businesses about managing street lighting • Investigate opportunity to join the International Dark Sky Places Programme 	High	Short	Residents Businesses Highland Council
<p>Deer Management to be coordinated and communicated around villages</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess extent of concern and – identify conflict hot spots • Create locally relevant groups to facilitate collaborative management approaches and communicate these to the community • Investigate potential for a Venison Club - local use of culled deer • Review role of existing cattle grids in deer management • Work to be coordinated with other local vegetation improvement ideas 	High	Medium	Deer Management Group National Trust for Scotland NatureScot Estates Wester Loch Ewe Community Council
<p>Community composting initiative</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Form a local compost committee • Look at examples of best practice (Inverewe, Black Isle, Cambridgeshire) • Work with Highland Council investigate feasibility of centralised community composting at the current waste recycling centre • Fund a project officer to deliver Compost at home programme 	Medium	Long	Residents Highland Council Highland Community Waste Partnership GALE Highland Council



Environment continued

<p>Improved facilities for collection and disposal of dog poo across the community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Form a group with representatives from each village• Review existing infrastructure and collect data on problem areas• Create a series of locally designed, humorous signs to highlight owners' responsibility and 'how to use' bins to be placed at key points• Develop project brief and apply for funding to purchase bins, stickers, signs and install in agreed locations• Put sticker signs on all public bins to indicate it can be used for dog poo• Coordinate with Highland Council to get additional bins collected	Medium	Short	Residents Highland Council GALE (as coordinator)
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Local Economy and Employment

Idea	Priority	Delivery Timeframe	Potential Partners
<p>Employ and develop opportunities for local jobs for local people</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Talk to local employers - understand skills and job profiles they need to fill • Agree a local network to advise of vacancies first with businesses/estates • Investigate vocational training for 13-16 yr olds for local jobs • Create local skills register 	High	Medium	Local Estates and Businesses Department of Work and Pensions Skills Development Scotland Job Centre GALE Developing Young Workforce Co-ordinator
<p>Provide better information to tourists on local facilities and their locations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up action group to take project forward • List of things that need better information for tourists • Survey tourists • Evaluate ways to communicate to target audience (posters, leaflets, digital) • Determine location of information sites • Speak to Highland Council to install signs on entrance into village 	High	Short	Community Out West GALE Wester Ross Biosphere Visit Wester Ross



Local Economy and Employment continued

<p>Fill our local employment needs while rebalancing the demographics of our rural communities by creating strong links, early, between local young people and local industry.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Feed into the Pathways to Rural Work Programme delivered by Countryside Learning Scotland• Work with Gairloch High School to match students/skills/positions			Countryside Learning Scotland Gairloch High School Community Primary Schools Estates and Businesses Slattadale SCIO
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Community Facilities

Idea	Priority	Delivery Timeframe	Potential Partners
<p>Create a community 'Library of things'</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate feasibility for a mobile 'Library of things' (e.g., Share Shed) verses smaller static locations • Set up committee of volunteers to run service • Survey community for suggested start-up items list • Agree borrowing guidelines and repair and maintenance process • Setup an online catalogue and reservation system 	Medium	Short	Residents Highland Council GALE
<p>Organised day trips / activities for all ages in and between each village</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up local group to generate ideas and schedule events that run across all villages • Establish transport options with framework for cost recovery to enable residents to attend from other villages. 	Medium	Short	Residents Community Car Schemes
<p>Local community seed swap group</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Link in with Scotland Seed Sovereignty • Advertise for interest across wider community to create networked local groups 	Low	Short	Kinlochewe Village Hall GALE Seed Savers



Community Facilities continued

<p>More places open during winter to provide the chance for locals to eat, drink and be social</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Locally owned businesses to collaborate to make sure opening times and services complement each other • Actively and jointly promote opening hours of businesses to residents throughout the winter • Create an infographic to educate locals of minimum business required to break even on winter opening hours 	High	Short	Residents Businesses GALE Community Councils
<p>Align fees and opening hours of Poolewe Swimming Pool and Gairloch Leisure Centre to enable residents from all villages to access recreation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Survey residents in all feeder community council areas for desired hours of operation and appropriate fee structure • Work with Highland Highlife and facility boards to write an operational plan that will meet residents needs and cover running costs 	Medium	Medium	Highland Council Highland Highlife Community Councils
<p>Improvements to Aultbea Pier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to consult with residents and pier users to form a masterplan • Establish what facilities are needed • Look at options of community purchase of land surrounding the pier in order to make necessary improvements • Continue to liaise with the Highland Council to make necessary short term improvements to the pier (such as the installation of anodes on the pier) 	High	Long	Pier Users Highland Council GALE Aultbea Community Council



Community Facilities continued

<p>Improvements to Gairloch Pier</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to consult with residents and pier users to form a masterplan • Establish what facilities are needed from the pier users • Create a feasibility study for the pier • Public Toilet facility currently being installed at Gairloch Beach 	Medium	Long	Pier Users Highland Council GALE Gairloch Community Council Gairloch Area Development
<p>Aultbea Public Toilets</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Investigate the cost to improve the facility to include disabled access, baby changing facilities 	Medium	Medium	GALE Highland Council Aultbea Community Council
<p>Aultbea Hall</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reopen the village hall in Aultbea 	High	Short/ Medium	Aultbea Hall Trustees
<p>Increase the community events catering for all ages</p>	Medium	Medium	

The actions and priorities tables above are themes that crossover the whole mid-Wester Ross area, in addition to this, area specific plans for each Community Council area have been produced and available as online working documents below;

[Aultbea](#)

[Gairloch](#)

[Wester Loch Ewe](#)

[Kinlochewe](#) (Torridon and Kinlochewe Community Council also have their own [Community Development Plan](#))

The shrinking school roll presents a bleak picture however the energy of the young people and the spirit of the schools to thrive as places for social and educational development should not be underestimated. We consulted with the students from Gairloch High School, as well as using the findings of a study from [Highland Cares](#). With help from staff, other organisations and grant funding, an active action plan is in progress to aid socialising and travel to activities outside of school hours.

On the 16th March 2023 two GALE staff members consulted with a total of fifty-three young people at Gairloch High School. The young people were split across groups based on their year group and were consulted in a series of fifty minute sessions.

The groups were asked to give their own opinions on the results of a previous survey carried out at the school and to add to them if they had additional ideas. Students put green stickers on ideas they liked and red stickers on ideas they didn't like.

The students were also given a series of Menti online polls to complete which asked them the following questions;

- What are you most looking forward to in the next ten years?
- What frustrates you most about living here?
- What are you most concerned about in the next ten years?
- Where do you see yourself living in ten years?
- What would you ask the people living locally if you were carrying out a survey?

- Are you proud to be from this area?
- What would you like to see GALE use the Shieling for?

The final question gave the students the opportunity to enter their own answers which were then voted on.

The students were most looking forward to 'Earning Money' and 'Exploring new places' and 'Learning new skills'.

The students were most frustrated by 'Transport', 'School' and 'Nothing to do'.

The students were most concerned about 'Climate Change' and 'money'.

Youth Voice continued

Involving Young People

Most students, in ten years, saw themselves 'Here'. After that was 'Abroad' as well as a few Scottish cities or further education.

GALE also asked 'What would you ask the people living locally if you were carrying out a survey?'. Many of the answers mimicked the questions GALE asked in the Aultbea survey such as 'What do you like or dislike about living here?' and 'I would ask older people what can we do to give young people more things to do in the surrounding area?'. 42% of students said they were proud to be from this area.

Finally students were asked what they would like to see GALE use The Shieling for. Popular answers included 'Good gym', 'Farm shop', 'Community Pub', 'Burger Bar', 'Ceilidhs' and 'Kids Pub'.

The results showed that the young people in Wester Ross take some pride in where they live. They want to stay in the area but seem to feel like there is a lack of facilities aimed at their needs, such as opportunities to socialise and participation in sports and other activities. Improved transport links such as bus services and cycle lanes would give them more independence as well as increase the opportunities to attend social events and activities. They are also aware of wider issues that would ordinarily affect adults such as the cost of living crisis. There is also a concern about the heritage of the area and the awareness that certain traditional practices, such as crofting, are under threat but that there are solutions such as improving the availability of locally sourced meat and vegetables.



Youth Voice continued

What are you most concerned about in the next ten years?



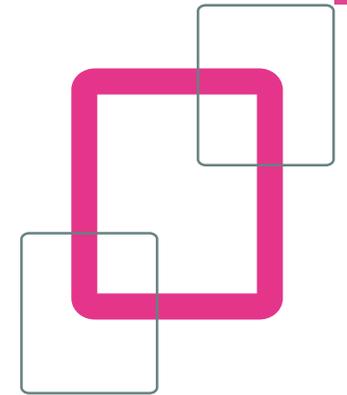
The larger text indicates more popular responses

(Taken from a Menti Poll during the GALE High School Consultation in March, 2023)



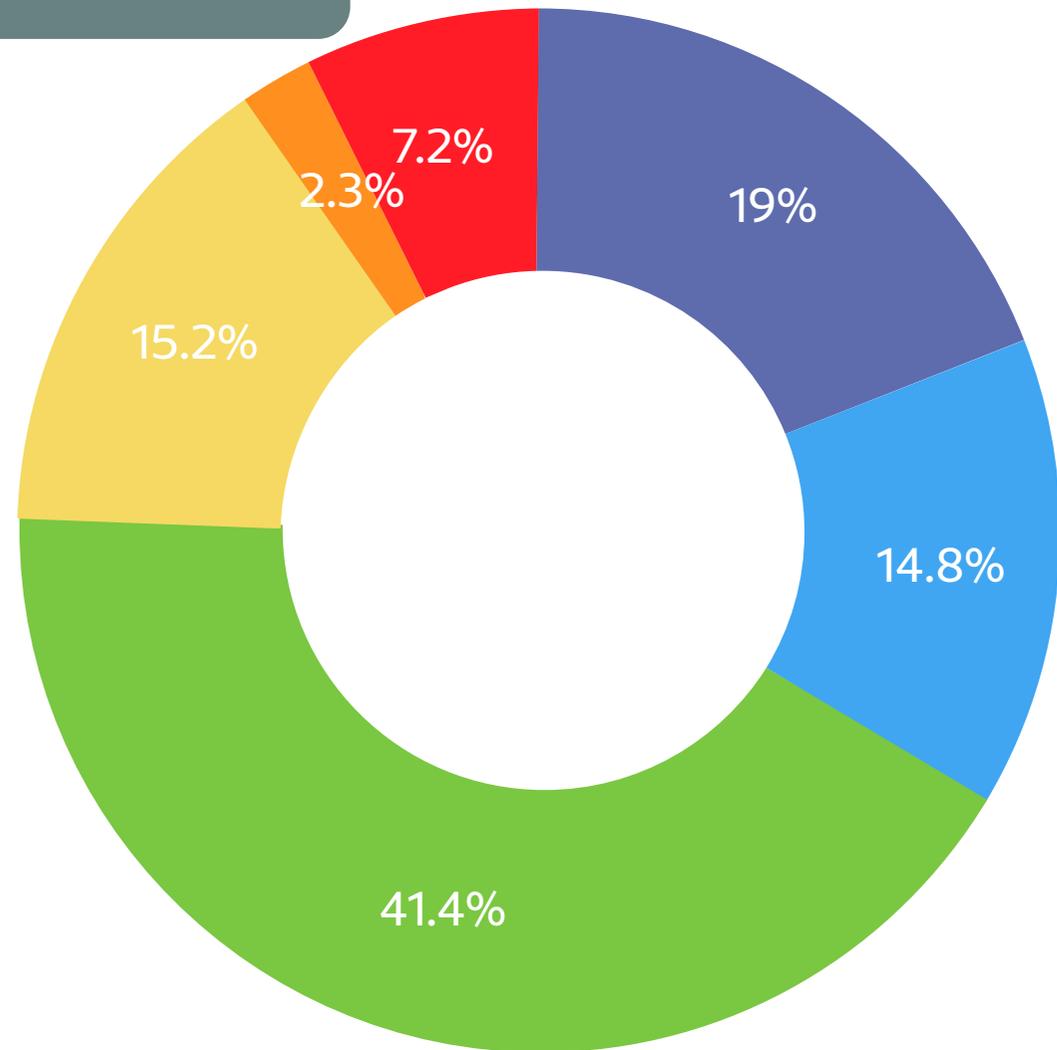
Looking forward to the future

Opportunities and challenges



What do you like about where you live?

Choice	Totals
Strong Community	50
I have a lot of friends here	39
Scenery and Landscape	109
Welcome	40
Good Facilities	6
Other	19



Responses 118

(Results from the Aultbea survey in January 2023)



Gairloch and Loch Ewe has many opportunities:

Gairloch and Loch Ewe has many opportunities:

- rich heritage and culture
- a remarkable pool of community talent
- outstanding natural spaces including unique habitats and plenty of nature recreation options
- a good range of holiday accommodations and services
- marine protected area with incredible natural resources
- space to develop green energy sites and utilise the potential of carbon credits

Together these are strong foundations to shape our network of rural villages to build a sustainable economy and vibrant community life.

Like all areas Gairloch and Loch Ewe also face challenges:

- attracting and maintaining families and young people to populate the schools and reverse the brain drain
- providing a range of good quality accommodation for residents including
- a choice of suitable types and tenures of housing
- community factions pulling in different directions
- the seasonal nature of Wester Ross's tourism and resulting summer population expansion and winter contraction offers particular challenges
- maintaining local community facilities and activities in the setting of continued reduction in public expenditure (including piers and roads infrastructure)

- attracting and maintaining a balance of non-tourist dependant business, innovative investment and diversity of population to achieve a structure that secures the sustainability of our rural communities into the future

Challenges to focus on

The challenges we face with higher living costs including transport, food and fuel, fewer employment opportunities, lower wages and social isolation are complex. While access to general healthcare is good, access to specialised healthcare is limited. Schools are closing with limited subject choice, there is an acute lack of childcare as well as affordable housing and broadband coverage is patchy. There are increasing numbers of older people who need more support and help with social inclusion and increased health and home care provision. How we face these challenges and devise creative solutions that work towards a goal of a thriving community will partly depend on our collective community response.

Successful delivery of the ideas and actions in this plan will require the coordinated effort

of the local community and its community organisations with the support of a wide range of external partners. There is a full list of community groups along with their contact details in the appendix. Key to this is our community's ability to develop ways to work positively and flexibly together, focusing on win-win solutions that deliver the best outcomes for the broader community without wasting resources.



Monitoring and Evaluating the Community Action Plan

We will write an evaluation plan by the end of winter 2024 to detail how we will monitor progress of the community action plan. This will inform annual adjustments to the plan so that positive outcomes continue to be achieved. It will also inform three key groups of stakeholders;

- grant makers and funders – to inform them of reach and community-level impact
- community groups – to use results to guide them in decisions about where to focus their efforts
- residents – to positively affect their sense of community belonging and resultant wellbeing

Targeted surveys which draw in representation from the various industries that operate within our community should

be incorporated in each annual review. This is to make sure that our community continues to consider the underlying needs of businesses to secure a stable, buoyant year-round local economy.

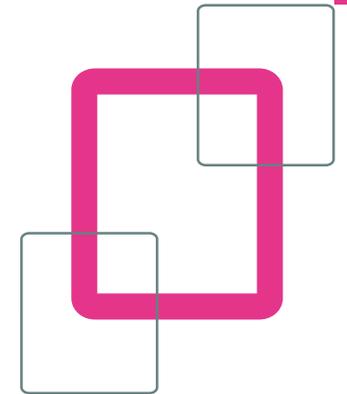


What's next?

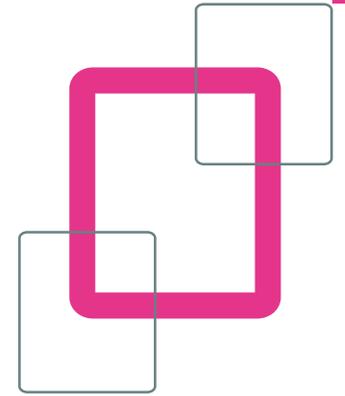
This is a dynamic plan which is expected to change over time as actions are completed and new priorities and ideas emerge. It will be reviewed annually to reflect this changing landscape. As part of this ongoing review process we will:

- continue to encourage local residents to share their ideas and aspirations by getting involved in future public consultations and surveys, making use of [ASK GALE](#) open sessions and ongoing community dialogue
- monitor progress towards implementing the actions within this plan and where appropriate, deepen our consultation to further refine our community vision, better understand our local spaces and create a Local Place Plan
- proactively seek out and encourage mutually beneficial partnerships to share ideas, collaborate and implement actions within this plan

As the Community Development Trust for the area covered by this Community Action Plan, GALE will act as custodian of the Plan, promoting and sharing its findings, undertaking future reviews and reporting on progress.



Appendices



Working together

The preparation of the plan has been organised by the Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action Forum (GALE). Community consultations were delivered in cooperation with Kinlochewe Village Hall, Poolewe Village Hall, Gairloch Community Hall, Community Out West Trust, Wester Ross Fisheries Trust, Wester Loch Ewe Trust and representatives from Wester Loch Ewe Community Council and Aultbea Community Council.

The community engagement work has been carried out by the GALE Community Action Planning Team. Production of the plans used for the community consultation were provided by Highland Council. The work was funded by Highlands and Islands Enterprise and Gairloch and Loch Ewe Action Forum.

GALE would like to thank everyone who contributed to the formation of this action plan, either through the various consultations, editorials, including all four Community Councils, other development trusts and community groups. Thanks to all those who took the time to share their views and to all who gave their time voluntarily to be part of the community consultation process. This plan is for the whole community and is jointly owned by all the organisations and individuals who took part in its preparation.

Local People have their Say

Much of the consultation followed the 'nationally recognised community planning process' known as [Planning for Real®](#) which we started in January 2020. Planning for Real® is participatory and community-led which empowers communities to engage in a non-confrontational and democratic process where the loudest voices do not dominate, which can often happen in public events.

GALE organised a total of 23 drop in sessions and workshops, across the three community council areas, where residents were invited to share their ideas on how they wanted to develop their area. These were advertised across our communities via the local radio station (Two Lochs Radio), local newspaper (Gairloch District Times), letterbox drops, notices in local stores as well as being posted

on GALE's Community Planning Facebook page and shared to relevant community Facebook Pages. The sessions were typically around two hours long and were carried out over a variety of times and days. A total of 148 people attended the sessions.

The sessions allowed residents to share their ideas with each other and prioritise which ideas they felt were most important. They were also given the opportunity to passively object to ideas they didn't like. It also gave the community the opportunity to offer up their skills. To support this work, we asked the community to express their view using the Scottish Government's Place Standard Tool survey during September 2022. This helped us gather more information on topics such as wildlife, climate, health provision and safety. It also provided local people

with an opportunity to comment about their experience of living in our rural communities.

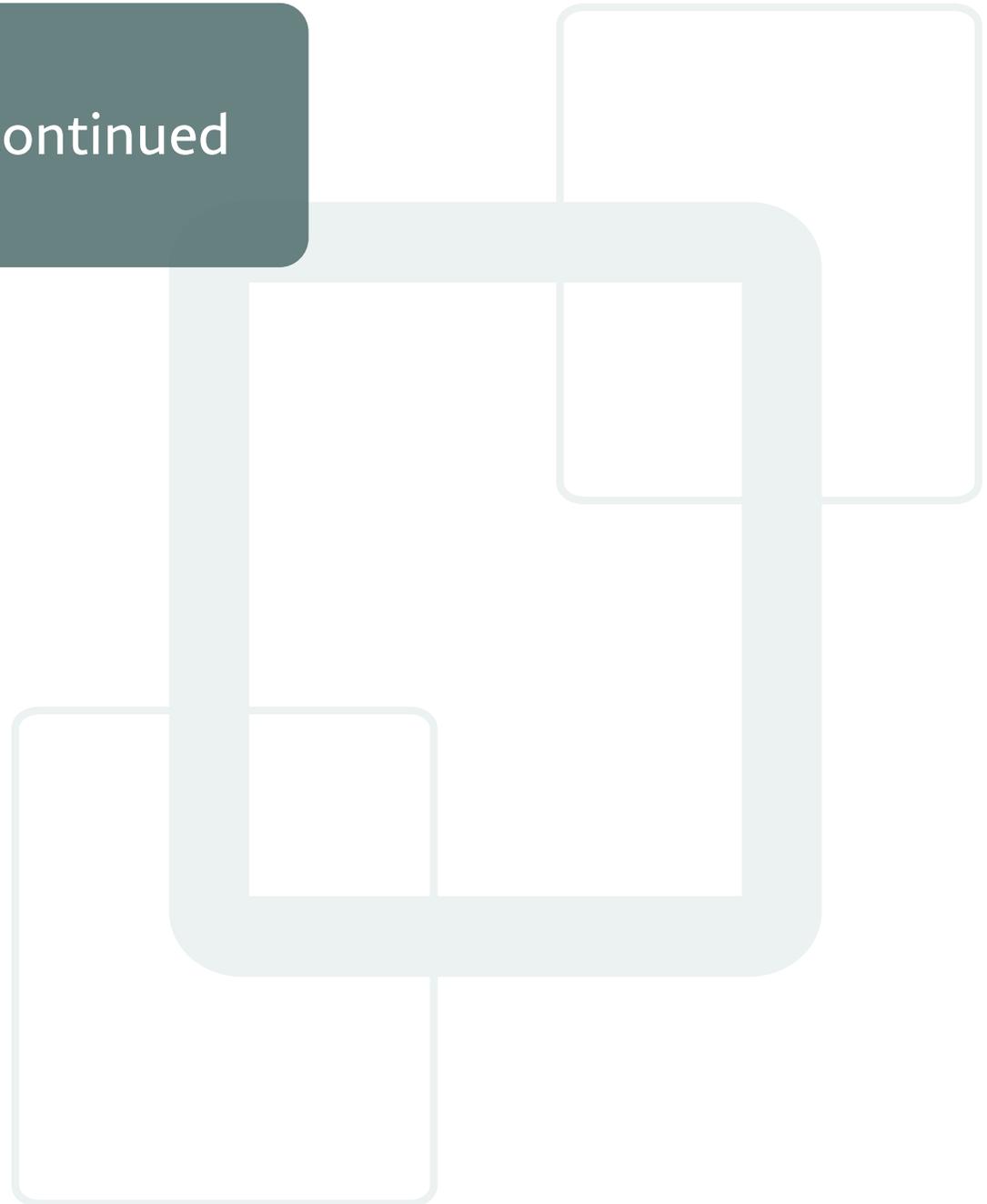
A second survey focused on Aultbea where the GALE team took a different approach to consultation to achieve a higher level of engagement. This was carried out using an online survey platform. The survey asked some broad questions as well as focusing on two specific projects which the community had shown previous interest in; the public toilets and the rejuvenation of the Aultbea Pier. The survey gathered a range of data asking participants to prioritise ideas, offering multiple choice questions as well as a section where participants could suggest ideas or opinions that they felt were not covered in the survey. The survey was primarily online based with additional paper copies available. These made up a very small



Local People have their Say continued

percentage of the responses, suggesting that the high majority of residents who were made aware of the survey had access to the internet. The survey was advertised across a range of social media platforms as well as through word of mouth in the community and advertised on posters in social venues and the local shop. The survey was live for three weeks and all the results were entirely anonymised through the hosting website.

The responses totalled 118.



References

Quotes throughout the document were taken from the consultation processes and names have been removed to preserve anonymity.

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Page number	Photographer	Subject
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12	Mandy Elizabeth Rush	Melvaig Dishes
13	Kirsty MacKay	Residents Parking
17	Visit Scotland Media Library	Man in Magic Mountains
19	Mandy Elizabeth Rush	Laide Woods
20	Tony Cresswell	Slioch
22	Mandy Elizabeth Rush	Cove Honesty Box
24	Mandy Elizabeth Rush	Red Deer at Dawn
25	Kirsty McKay	Recycling Bins
26	Pixabay Royalty Free	Gairloch
27	Pixabay Royalty Free	Aultbea
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