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Scottish Rural  
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Programme

# Highland LEADER 2014-2020 Programme



## Sutherland Local Area Action Plan

Final version 4  
03/05/2016

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## **Terms of reference**

- LDS – Highland Local Development Strategy
- LAAP – Local Area Action Plan
- LAP – Local Area Partnership
- LAG – Highland Strategic Local Area Group

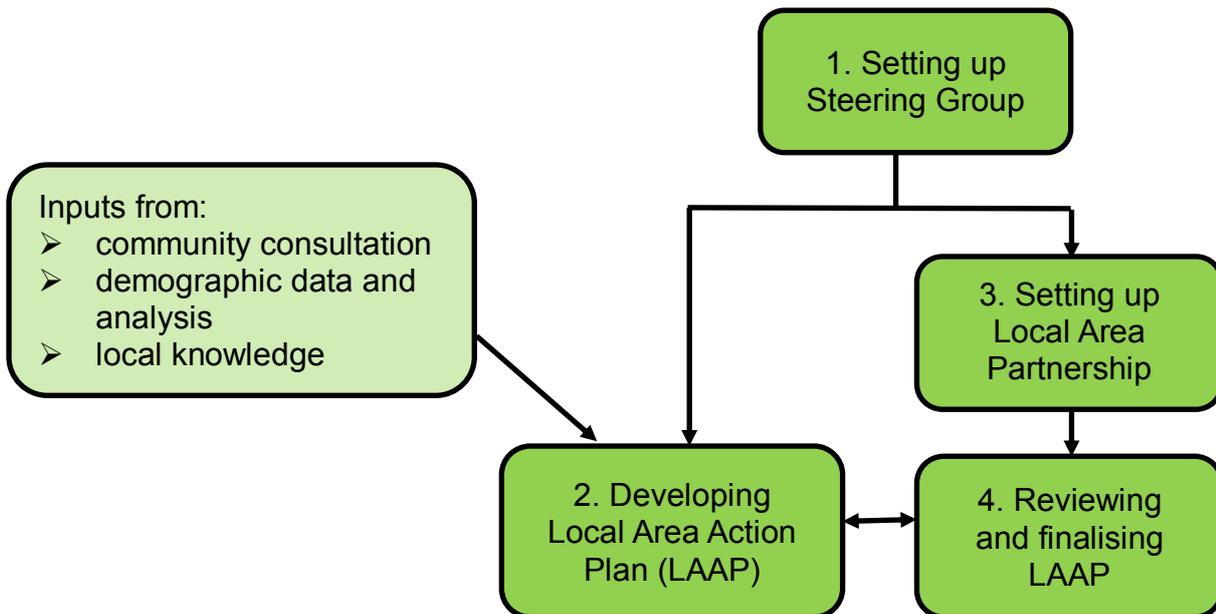
**SECTION 1: Summary**

The Highland Local Development Strategy (LDS) sets out the aims and objectives of the Highland LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020. The Programme will be delivered locally by seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), of which one will represent Sutherland. Each LAP will have the flexibility to focus on specific priorities from within the LDS which are of most relevance locally and these priorities will be set out in Local Area Action Plans (LAAPs). Collectively, the seven plans will need to demonstrate that the aims and objectives of the LDS will be met and this will be monitored by the Highland Strategic Local Action Group (LAG).

This Local Area Action Plan sets out the priorities for LEADER funding in Sutherland. It includes details of the processes that have been followed:

- to inform and develop the LAAP, and
- to form the Local Area Partnership, ensuring that it collectively possesses the skills, experience and knowledge required for delivery of the LAAP and has an appropriate demographic and public/private distribution of membership.

The four key steps that have been followed are as shown in the diagram below. Each of these is explained in detail, in this Local Area Action Plan.



In June 2015 a Steering Group was formed in Sutherland. An open invitation went out to members of the LAP from the previous LEADER Programme, Elected Members and Ward Managers to see whether they would be interested to help form the steering group. In addition, Community Councils were each invited to nominate a representative from their area to join the group.

The Steering Group had two key tasks:

- To start producing the LAAP in support of the Highland Local Development Strategy (LDS), which led to the.
- Identification of the skills, knowledge and experience required on the Sutherland LAP.

The Steering Group was provided with:

- Relevant demographic data (appendix 1, p19).
- Information gathered during a community consultation process undertaken by the Highland LEADER team in preparation of submission of the Highland LDS, presented as a SWOT analysis (appendix 2, p28).
- Suggested key priorities for Sutherland taking account of the demographic data and results of the community consultation (appendix 3, p32).

Using the information provided, together with their local knowledge, Steering Group members considered and prioritised target groups, themes and outcomes to be delivered by the Highland LDS in terms of their relative importance for LEADER funding in Sutherland. As a further step, Steering Group members identified the types of project that will deliver their chosen outcomes and deliver maximum benefit to communities in Sutherland.

Following approval of the Highland LEADER Financial Strategy by the Strategic Local Area Group (LAG) in August 2015, a number of funding considerations have also been agreed.

The funding priorities, and additional considerations, together with the processes followed to determine them, are set out in this LAAP which has subsequently been endorsed by the Local Area Partnership.

Based on the priority outcomes and project types, the Steering Group were able to identify the key requirements in terms of skills, knowledge and experience that are required on the LAP to inform LEADER funding decisions.

Steering Group members were invited to put themselves forward to sit on the LAP by completing a Skills Checklist. The skills, knowledge and experience of prospective members were compared with that required on the LAP to ensure that the relevant skills, knowledge, experience would be represented. Additionally, to ensure that there would be:

- a correct geographic and demographic mix of members
- the required public/private voting member representation (maximum of 49% of voting members to be from the Public Sector).

The Sutherland LAP has built into this LAAP, provision for a **review following two full LAP meetings at which project applications are reviewed**. It is accepted that any changes

required as a result of this review will need to be submitted to the Strategic LAG for approval.

The Sutherland LAAP should be viewed in the context of the Highland LDS.

## **SECTION 2: Funding Allocations & Priorities**

Sutherland has been allocated a devolved '*indicative*' budget of £633,673 for the duration of the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme and this section sets out the local priorities for this funding.

Additionally, Sutherland project applicants will have access to other elements of the Highland LEADER funding which have been 'ring-fenced' to deliver specific aspects of the Highland LDS. These are summarised in appendix 4, p34.

The Sutherland LAP will consider funding projects that meet at least one of the Highland Themes. In addition, all projects must meet the first three Cross Cutting Themes and the remaining two where a direct link can be made to projects.

All project applications will be assessed by the Sutherland LAP and greater weighting will be attached to the types of project identified as best delivering the four Sutherland priority outcomes, and delivering benefits to those in the Sutherland Target Groups (both shown on the page 7).

**Highland Themes** (ranked in order of priority to Sutherland):

- A Growing and Diversified Economy that Promotes Sustainability
- Increased and Sustained Local Services and Activities
- Stronger and More Resilient Communities
- Enhanced cultural and natural assets

### **Cross Cutting Themes**

All projects across Highland must contribute to the first 3 themes and, if appropriate, remaining 2 where they are relevant to the nature of the project:

- Fairer Highland – advancing equality (addresses equality issues or benefits people in groups that are under-represented or disadvantaged)
- Innovation (a new or different approach is proposed within the area)
- Sustainability/Legacy (the project outcomes will continue beyond the life of the project)
- Carbon Clever (the project can demonstrate a positive impact on the environment)
- Skills Development (the project aims to expand the skills of those involved in implementing the project and/or on its participants)

## **Target Groups**

The Sutherland LAP has agreed the following target groups for funding under the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme:

- Young people
- Elderly people
- Disabled people (including people with mental health issues)
- Isolated people

These are groups that:

- would benefit from removing/minimising barriers or disadvantage,
- have particular needs,
- or, where under-representation or prejudice could be tackled or understanding could be promoted.

## **Outcomes**

Of the ten outcomes, to be delivered by the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme, the Sutherland LAP will focus on those shown below. For a full definition of the outcomes, please refer to the Highland LDS:

- Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)
- Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/ development
- People have better access to local services and activities
- Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets

Within these outcomes, the Sutherland LAP has identified specific project types that it would like to see being submitted; projects that it feels will maximise the benefits of LEADER funding to the communities in Sutherland. The table on pages 8-10 lists the project types and indicates which primary outcomes they should deliver. In a number of cases, additional outcomes may be delivered depending upon the remit of the project. Whilst many of the project types have been identified in broad terms to stimulate innovation, applicants will need to ensure that their projects align with the eligible activities listed under each outcome in the LDS (see appendix 5, 35).

### SECTION 3: Sutherland LEADER Project Priorities

Specific Priority Projects that Sutherland Local Area Partnership feel would maximise the benefits from LEADER funding.				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Priority outcome project is likely to deliver</li> <li>✓ Other priority outcomes that could potentially be delivered by the project</li> </ul> Projects that:	Increased employment opportunities locally	People have better access to local Services and activities	Improved management/conservation/	Increased partnership working between groups
1. support enterprise, new and existing businesses that will create employment, have a viable business plan	✓	✓	✓	✓
2. support diversification of types of industry, for example through encouraging the creation of employment in the county where people can live and work, by addressing the specific challenges of the inefficiencies associated with remote location and small community size	✓	✓		
3. enable groups which administer apprenticeship schemes to enable them to widen their remit, for example by up-skilling young people who are unable to find an apprenticeship or by raising awareness with employers of the potential benefits of having upskilled young people (encouraging them to work with SDS to develop an appropriate apprenticeship linked to their business if not already available)	✓			
4. provide learning opportunities/skills development for all staff	✓			
5. develop and/or promote mentoring schemes so that new employees can 'hit the ground running'	✓			
6. support crofters and farmers to diversify and maximise output	✓			
7. develop, establish and deliver marketing strategies (including website development) that promote local/regional brands/markets for produce, attractions or facilities e.g. 'buy local' campaign. This could include working in partnership with groups out-with Sutherland to compare similar experiences, successes and share best practice – possible co-operation project		✓		✓
8. develop local community health and social wellbeing hubs through partnership working e.g. third sector, NHS, THC as appropriate		✓		✓
9. develop hubs for groups (including intergenerational) working together and sharing resources e.g. sharing events and running mentoring for volunteers and the		✓		✓

public				
10. overcome the practical barriers of accessing transport within Sutherland at the time of day required to enable participation in events/activities, within reasonable cost (this might additionally include making the area more accessible too visitors without private transport		✓		
11. undertake feasibility for pilot car schemes or provide start-up funding for schemes that are sustainable		✓		
12. improve internet access, access to broadband, including the development of skills to enable internet access/technology as broadband is rolled out		✓		
13. provide support for small communities to purchase connection to fibre optic broadband cable/community broadband across Sutherland		✓		
14. provide support for village hall/community building developments to accommodate new/innovative services/activities where long term sustainability can be demonstrated		✓		
15. increase the capacity of organisations providing services through building extensions or the ability to offer additional services		✓		
16. make the connection between business and housing infrastructure by providing access to affordable accommodation for employees		✓		
17. support for community housing initiatives		✓		
18. support for activity centres and sports facilities		✓		
19. provide support for healthier living initiatives in communities		✓		
20. undertaken by social enterprises that provide health benefits		✓		
21. establish and promote footpaths, exhibits and trails that are sustainable i.e. have a robust plan in place for long term maintenance		✓		✓
22. support for new/innovative projects that promote energy efficiency and carbon reduction			✓	
23. conserve, manage or promote the cultural, natural or heritage assets of Sutherland		✓	✓	
24. enable local communities to take responsibility for conservation/management of cultural, natural and heritage assets			✓	✓
25. promotion and development of the environmental, cultural, natural and heritage assets of the area by business, social enterprise or partnership working, for the benefit of locals and visitors		✓	✓	✓
26. different groups/individuals with common interests coming together for support				✓

27. support partnerships that are likely to lead to long term relationships and/or future project opportunities with defined outcomes that are sustainable				✓
28. provide or promote opportunities for mentoring, networking or training for people working in the community, including volunteers, through partnership working and using the skills/talents of those within community/voluntary groups	✓			✓

**The additional outcomes included in the Highland Local Development Strategy are:**

- Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds.
- Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities.
- People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities.
- Increased income from local produce through adding value.
- Improvements in the visitor experience.
- Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets.

## **SECTION 4: Additional Funding Considerations**

### **Alternative Sources of Funding**

The Sutherland LAP does not want to discriminate against any community but applicants will be expected to demonstrate that they have fully explored alternative/additional sources of funding and each application will be reviewed to ensure that local support for the project is reflected in contributions from known local funding sources.

Where Sutherland based projects are eligible for funding under the 'ring-fenced' Rural Enterprise or Farm Diversification LEADER budgets or under the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF), it is expected that these sources of funding will be considered in the first instance.

### **Funding Priorities**

The funding priorities for Sutherland are set out in pages 8 - 10. Projects that address these priorities will be best placed to attract LEADER funding however **by exception** other projects will be considered provided that they can demonstrate;

- that they are particularly innovative, and
- will deliver significant other benefits, in line with the Highland LDS, to communities in Sutherland.

### **Funding for Staff Posts**

Projects which involve the employment of staff, will be considered on their merits, however staff posts will need to have very clearly defined and measurable outputs linked to specific project activity that is consistent with the priorities set out in the Local Area Action Plan.

### **Grant Sizes**

Given the lower level of funding available in relation to the previous LEADER Programme and the expectation that grant applications for projects in Sutherland will significantly exceed the locally devolved '**indicative**' budget, grants will be capped at a maximum £50,000.

The minimum grant size will be £5,000, which reflects the availability of alternative sources of funding for small projects and the administrative requirements associated with applying for, and administering LEADER funded projects.

### **Intervention Rates**

Intervention rates for projects submitted by community/voluntary groups will be considered up to a maximum of 50%. Projects submitted by public sector organisations, agencies and national charities will be subject to a maximum intervention rate of 20%.

### **Project Duration**

Projects will be funded for the *maximum period of 2 years*. All projects must be fully claimed by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2020.

### **'Decision in Principle' Funding Offers**

'Decision in Principle' offers will be considered for a *maximum period of 60 days only*. If this time has lapsed, the application will be rejected and a new project application will need to be submitted. No new project approvals after 31<sup>st</sup> March 2019.

### **Monitoring the Local Area Action Plan**

The Sutherland LAP will put in place a monitoring system for the ongoing monitoring of the distribution of LEADER grants (geographically and in terms of the outcomes being delivered/target groups benefitting) and it will proactively seek to facilitate, encourage, and support projects from areas/communities that are less pro-active/experienced in submitting applications to ensure that there is an appropriate distribution of funds and that priorities are met across the county.

Monitoring will also include the ongoing assessment against plan of expenditure/claims by projects so that any underspend can be identified at the earliest opportunity, and reallocated.

The LAP will have an option to review this LAAP following two LAP meetings at which applications are considered, to allow any early requirements for refinement to be considered, in the light of applications coming forward. The LAAP will then be subject to review on an annual basis thereafter and this could lead to changes in the intervention rates and minimum or maximum grant available.

## SECTION 5: Steering Group Formation

In line with the process agreed by the Strategic LAG for setting up local steering groups, invitations to join the Sutherland Steering Group were sent to Councillors and Ward Managers and members of the Sutherland Local Area Partnership at the end of the last LEADER Programme. Additionally, all Community Councils in Sutherland were given the opportunity to put forward someone from their area that was interested/involved in community development. Initial membership of the Group is shown below.

Steering Group Member Invitees	Organisation	Title	Public/Private
Garry Cameron	Highland Council	Ward Manager (East Sutherland and Edderton)	Public
Andy Mackay	Highland Council	Ward Manager (North, West & Central Sutherland)	Public
Jim McGillivray	Highland Council	Elected Member (East Sutherland and Edderton)	Public
Graham Phillips	Highland Council	Elected Member (East Sutherland and Edderton)	Public
Anne Sutherland	Brora and District Action Group	Brora CC Nominee & Previous LAP Member	Private
Ian Mitchell	Scottish Natural Heritage	Previous LAP Member	Public
Christine Ross	VGES	Previous LAP Member	Private
Christian Nicolson	NHS	Previous LAP Member	Public
Caroline Munro	Culrain and District Hall Committee Invercharron Highland Games	Previous LAP Member	Private
Alison Searl	RSPB	Replacement for previous LAP Member,	Private
Magda Macdonald	Lairg and District Initiative	Lairg Community Council Nominee	Private
Sandy Allison*	Lairg Community Council		Public
Jeff Norrie*	Lairg Community Council		Public
George Farlow	Highland Council	Elected Member (North, West & Central Sutherland)	Public
Deirdre Mackay	Highland Council	Elected Member (East Sutherland and Edderton)	Public
Frances Gunn	Highland Third sector Interface	Previous LAP Chair	Private
Ronnie Lansley	CVS North	Previous LAP Member	Private
Helen Houston	Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust	Ardgay & Creich Community Council Nominee	Private

\* Sandy Allison and Jeff Norrie attended meetings in support of their nominee, Magda Macdonald as she has been in her post as Lairg and District Development Officer for just 2 weeks.

At the first meeting of the Steering Group, Anne Sutherland was appointed Chair.

Membership was discussed and it was agreed that additional members would be sought to provide a better geographical split. As a result, a number of additional members were identified, as shown in the table below:

Fiona Mackenzie	Bettyhill, Strathnaver & Altnaharra Community Council	Public
Laura Hamlet	NWH Geopark	Private
Judi Sutherland	Dornoch Community Council	Public
Durrant Macleod	Assynt Tourism Group (& previous LAP member)	Private

William Sutherland, a former LAP member subsequently joined the Group

William Sutherland	Dornoch & District Community Trust	Previous LAP Member	Private
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## **SECTION 6: Local Area Partnership Formation**

The Sutherland LAP will have responsibility for making decisions about the allocation of LEADER funding to local projects, in line with their Job Description (appendix 6, 37), and a set of Operating Guidelines. This section outlines the collective skills, knowledge and experience required on the Sutherland Local Area Partnership to provide informed assessment of Expressions of Interest and Applications, and give appropriate guidance and support to applicants. This will enable effective prioritisation of projects and allocations of grant funding, thereby maximising outputs from delivery of the Local Area Action Plan and therefore community benefits.

Skills, knowledge and experience requirements for the Sutherland LAP have been derived from a review of the skills required to deliver the prioritised themes, outcomes and project priorities, with focus on the groups to be targeted in Sutherland , in line with the Skills Matrix. Each requirement was reviewed to establish whether this is essential or desirable.

As part of the process of establishing the membership of the LAP it was agreed that those members of the Steering Group wishing to put themselves forward to sit on the LAP would complete a Skills Checklist, so that collective skills, knowledge and experience could be checked against a list of essential skills that the LAP would require to be covered.

Ahead of the Steering Group meeting on 17 August 2015, 12 people had put themselves forward to sit on the LAP. The table on page 15 provides a summary of their collective skills, and those identified as being required on the LAP. On the basis of this assessment, it was agreed that:

- the LAP would be able to cover all areas normally required (with the exception of disabilities/equalities) , and that ad hoc advisory support would be called on, if necessary
- the LAP had a reasonable geographic coverage
- the LAP had an appropriate balance of public and private members

During the meeting, two Steering Group members who had not submitted their Skills Checklists indicated that they would like to sit on the LAP and their nominations were approved.

Additionally, a nomination for an advisory member from HIE was approved. Subsequent to the Steering Group meeting, an additional nomination was received from North West Sutherland and this nomination was unanimously supported by the LAP members.

All LAP members will provide the name of a deputy or their organisation/area that can attend meetings and make decisions in their absence.



Graham Phillips	Elected Member, East Sutherland & Edderton	Public
Angela Simpson	Highlands and Islands Enterprise	Public (Advisory)
Frances Gunn	Third Sector Interface	Private
Laura Hamlet	North West Highlands Geopark	Private
Helen Houston	Kyle of Sutherland Development Trust	Private
Ronnie Lansley	Council for Voluntary Services North	Private
Durrant Macleod	Assynt Tourism Group	Private
Caroline Munro	Culrain and District Hall Committee & Invercharron Highland Games	Private
Christine Ross	Voluntary Groups East Sutherland	Private
Alison Searl	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds	Private
Anne Sutherland	Brora and District Action Group	Private
William Sutherland	Dornoch and District Community Association	Private

At the inaugural meeting of the Sutherland LAP on 22<sup>nd</sup> September 2015, Frances Gunn and Anne Sutherland were appointed joint Chair/Vice Chair. Frances and Anne will alternate the Chair of LAP meetings, each taking the chair from the start of one meeting until the start of the next. Anne chaired the meeting on 22 September 2015 and will be chair until the start of the next meeting on 12 November 2015.

With the exception of this chairing arrangement, the Sutherland LAP has agreed to adopt the Highland LEADER (2014-2020) Programme Operating Guidelines (see appendix 7, 39).

#### **Membership changes after plan approval (28/10/2015)**

- On the 1<sup>st</sup> December 2015 Peter Guthrie from HIE stepped down from the LAP. Angela Simpson joined the group as his replacement on the 10<sup>th</sup> March 2016.
- On the 9<sup>th</sup> December 2015 Gary Sutherland from Kinlochbervie Community Council withdrew his membership from the LAP. There were no volunteers from the Community Council to replace Gary. The group agreed that there was sufficient representation from the Kinlochbervie area amongst the remaining members to meet the geographic coverage/representation of the LAP area.
- The skills matrix on p16 was amended to reflect the above changes – 02/03/2016.

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## APPENDIX 1

### Area Overview: Sutherland



### Demographic Data

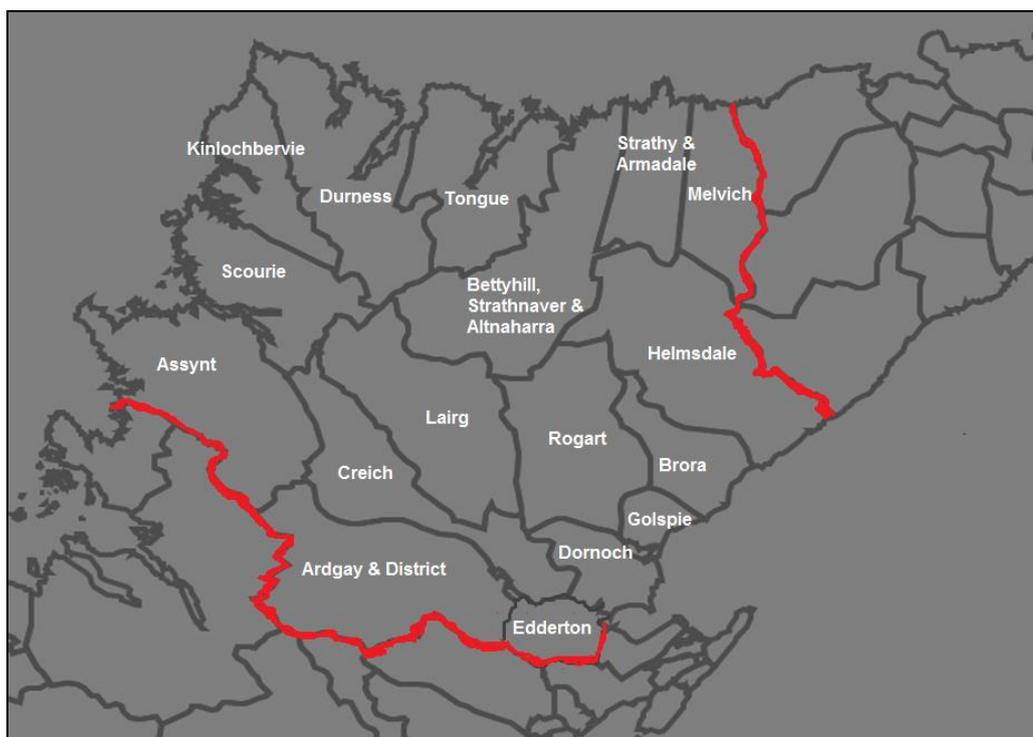
**Note: All figures in this section are based on 2011 Census, unless specified otherwise**

### Physical Features

Sutherland covers some 6,376 square kilometres and constitutes one quarter of the Highland land mass and 8% of the area of Scotland.

It divides into four sub areas; the east, west and north coast settlements and the extensive central area. It has diverse habitats including good agricultural land on the east coast, crofting townships across the area, and extensive mountainous, loch, moor and peat land areas, as well as outstanding coastal environments.

The area includes a large number of sites designated as of local, national and international significance.



### **Settlement Pattern**

Sutherland is the most sparsely-populated former county in Great Britain and one of the largest. The population represents around 6% of the population of the Highlands. Over 50% of the population live in the 'relatively' more densely populated east coast, with over 60% of these living in the remote small coastal towns of Helmsdale, Brora, Golspie and Dornoch, which provide local retail and public services. In the larger and more remote central, west and north western areas, circa 50% of the population live in the four largest settlements of Lairg (central) , Tongue (north coast), Lochinver and Kinlochbervie (west coast).

There are considerable distances between settlements and those in the eastern end of the north coast area are more associated with Thurso for services and travel.

### **Demographic Profile**

Sutherland has a population of 13,844 which has risen from 13,466 in 2001. This is an increase of 2.8%, compared to the population increase in Highland of 11.1%.

58.3% of the population in Sutherland are over the age of 45 years. 26.4% of the population are aged between 16 and 44 years. This shows an older population in

Sutherland than in Highland, where 48.5% are aged over 45 years and 33.7% are aged 16-44 years.

In 2001, 18% of the population were aged 15 years or younger. In 2011, 16-29 year olds made up 12% of the population. This implies that young people are leaving the area. This change is similar in Highland as a whole: in 2001 the under 15 population was 20% and in 2011, the 16-29 population was 15% - (adjusting to take account of the differences in the fact that the census categories span 16 and 14 years respectively).

Generally the population in Sutherland is ageing: in 2001, 52% of the population were over 45 years; by 2011 this had risen to 58.3%. There is a similar trend across Highland: in 2001, 44% of the population was over 45 years and in 2011 this had risen to 48.5%

Using the SIMD (see page 24), there are no areas in Sutherland in the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland or Highland

## Population

### Age Distribution

58.3% of the population of Sutherland is aged over 45; this compares with a Highland average of 48.5% and a Scotland average of 44.3%.

Conversely, the percentage of the population in each of the younger age bands is below the Highland and Scotland averages. The greatest variance is in the 16 to 29 year old age group, which represents 12% of the population of Sutherland, 15% of the population in Highland and 18.5% of the population in Scotland.

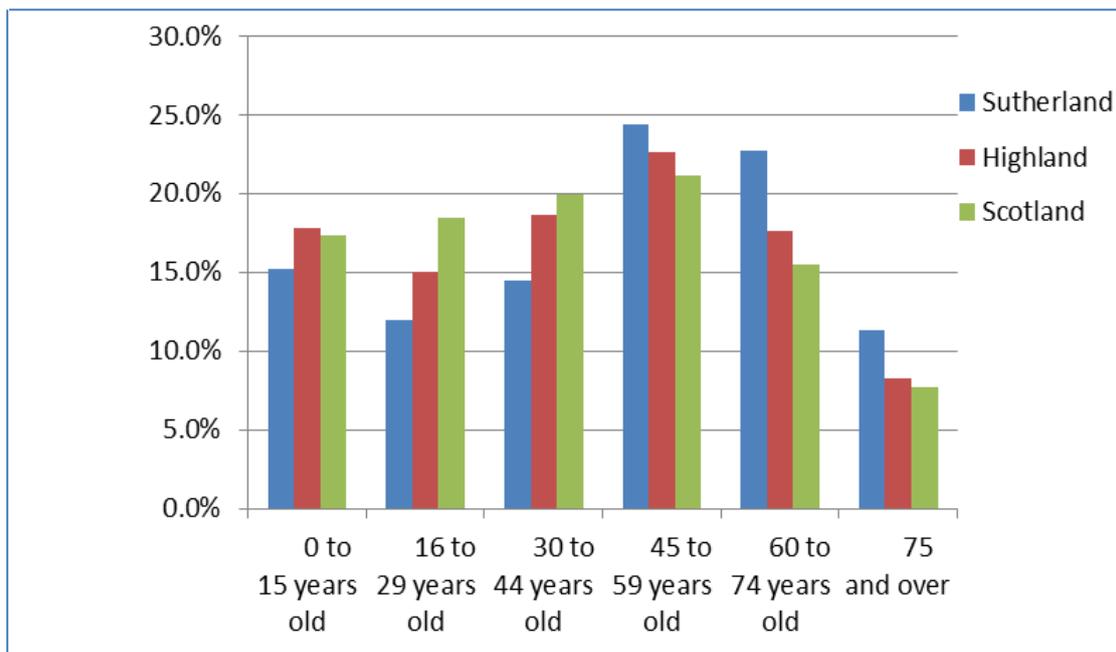
### Ethnicity

	Sutherland	Highland	Scotland
<b>White- Scottish</b>	75.4%	79.9%	84.0%
<b>White- Other British</b>	21.4%	14.7%	7.9%
<b>White- Irish</b>	0.4%	0.6%	1.0%
<b>White- Polish</b>	0.4%	1.5%	1.2%
<b>White- Other</b>	1.7%	1.9%	1.9%
<b>Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British</b>	0.3%	0.8%	2.7%
<b>Other ethnic groups</b>	0.4%	0.7%	1.4%

99.3% of the Sutherland population are White, with 0.4% White Polish. 0.3% of the population are Asian, and 0.4% are Other ethnic groups.

There is a higher percentage of Other British people living in Sutherland (21.4%) than in Highland (14.7%) and Scotland (7.9%).

### Percentage of Population by Age Group



### Health

81.1% of the population in Sutherland rate their health as good or very good. This is comparable to the figures in Highland (84%) and Scotland (82.3%).

22.4% have a long-term health condition that limits their day to day activities. This is higher than in Highland (18.6%) and Scotland (19.7%).

9.9% of the population provide some unpaid care each week, with 2.5% providing 50 or more hours each week. This is slightly higher than the figures for Highland (9%) and Scotland (9.3%).

### Local Economy

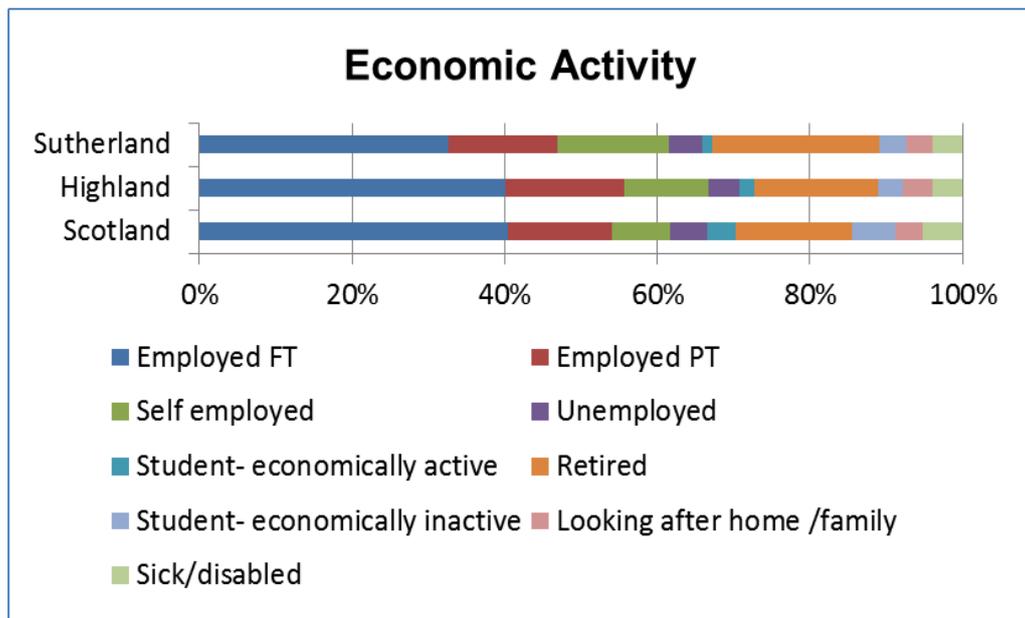
There are no Data Zones\* in Sutherland with SIMD (Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation) ranks in Scotland and Highland (i.e. in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland or Highland)

**Data Zones in the LAP Area with Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks in Scotland and Highland**

**Zones in 15% most deprived shaded**

<b>Data Zone</b>	<b>Data Zone Name</b>	<b>Overall SIMD 2012 Rank in Scotland</b>	<b>Overall SIMD 2012 Rank in Highland</b>
S01003968	Helmsdale & Kinbrace	2,138	53
S01003962	Brora North	2,517	72
S01003988	Melvich	2,750	89
S01003990	Durness	2,800	92
S01003966	Lairg	2,824	96
S01003960	Golspie North	2,846	97
S01003974	Tongue, Bettyhill & Altnaharra	3,015	106
S01003949	Edderton	3,115	110
S01003973	Kinlochbervie & Achfary	3,135	112
S01003959	Rosehall	3,167	114
S01003965	Rogart	3,189	116
S01003961	Brora South	3,228	118
S01003970	Stoer & Scourie	3,269	125
S01003967	Lochinver & Elphin	3,289	126
S01003954	Embo	3,315	129
S01003957	Bonar Bridge	3,391	134
S01003952	Clashmore	3,555	145
S01003958	Golspie South	3,623	151
S01003964	Brora Rural	4,374	214
S01003950	Dornoch East	4,392	217
S01003951	Dornoch West	4,465	226

\* **Data zones** are areas that have populations of between 500 and 1,000 household residents. Where possible, they have been made to respect physical boundaries and natural communities. As far as possible they contain households with similar social characteristics.



In 2011, 66% of the population aged 16-74 years were economically active, with 4.3% unemployed. This is slightly below the Highland average of 71.5%.

There is a smaller percentage of students in Sutherland (4.7%) and Highland generally (5%) than in Scotland overall (9.2%).

21.6% of the population in Sutherland are retired, compared to a Scottish average of 14.9%.

8.3% of unemployed people in Sutherland have never worked. This contrasts favourably with the Highland average of 9.3% and the Scotland average of 13.9%.

**Benefits**

2.5% of the working age population claimed job seekers allowance\* in the year November 2012- October 2013. This is lower than the Highland average of 2.6% and the Scottish average of 4%.

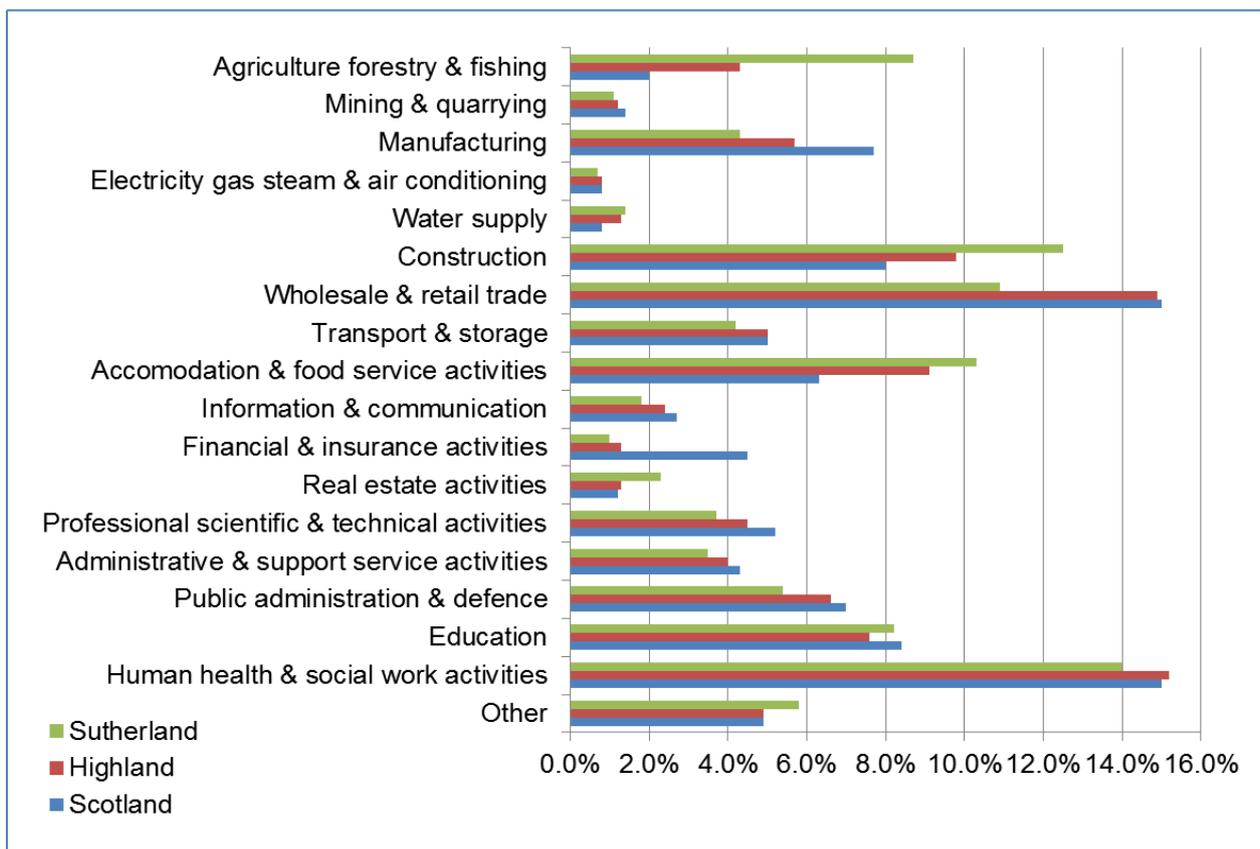
There can be seasonal changes to this figure, as many people work in seasonal jobs in Highland.

The 2012/2013 figure has been used as this is the 12 months running up to the introduction of Universal Credit. It can be difficult to make comparisons using Universal Credit as this has not been introduced nationally and it is not clear what benefits are being claimed in the Universal Credit payment.

\* Not all unemployed people claim job seekers allowance.

Unemployment		Sutherland	Highland	Scotland
% Unemployed People in 16 – 74 Year Age Group		4.3%	4.0%	4.77%
Persons aged 16-74 who are unemployed	Aged 16 to 24	26.4%	28.5%	30.2%
	Aged 25 to 49	46.4%	48.6%	51.4%
	Aged 50 to 74	27.1%	22.9%	18.4%

## Employment



For those who are in employment, the graph to the left shows the percentage employed in each industry/sector.

Looking at employment by industry, Sutherland has a higher percentage of people working in agriculture, construction and accommodation and food services, and a lower percentage of people working in a number of industries including manufacturing, wholesale and retail trade, and financial & insurance activities than Highland and Scotland.

In 2011, 18.9% of people in employment in Sutherland worked 49 hours or more a week, which is higher than the Scottish figure of 11.7%.

## Education

### Percentage of Population with Qualifications

	Sutherland	Highland	Scotland
<b>No qualifications</b>	28.2%	25.5%	26.8%
<b>Level 1*</b>	24.4%	24.5%	23.1%
<b>Level 2**</b>	14.3%	14.1%	14.3%
<b>Level 3***</b>	8.1%	9.2%	9.7%
<b>Level 4 and above****</b>	25.0%	26.4%	26.1%

28.2% of people in Sutherland have no qualifications, compared to 25.5% in Highland and 26.8% in Scotland.

A slightly lower percentage hold Level 4 or above qualifications (25%) than in Highland (26.4%) and Scotland (26.1%).

\*O Grade, Standard Grade, Access 3 Cluster, Intermediate 1 or 2, GCSE, CSE, Senior Certification or equivalent, GSVQ Foundation or Intermediate, SVQ level 1 or 2, SCOTVEC Module, City and Guilds Craft or equivalent; Other school qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications).

\*\*SCE Higher Grade, Higher, Advanced Higher, CSYS, A Level, AS Level, Advanced Senior Certificate or equivalent, GSVQ Advanced, SVQ Level 3, ONC, OND, SCOTVEC National Diploma, City and Guilds Advanced Craft or equivalent.

\*\*\*HNC, HND, SVQ Level 4 or equivalent; Other post-school but pre-Higher Education qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications).

\*\*\*\*Degree, Postgraduate qualifications, Masters, PhD, SVQ Level 5 or equivalent,

Professional qualifications (for example, teaching, nursing, accountancy), other Higher Educations qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications).

## Leaver Destinations

Highland Council School Leaver Destination Report 2012/13 (Initial Destination Percentages)

	<b>Dornoch Academy</b>	<b>Farr High School</b>	<b>Golspie High School</b>	<b>Kinlochbervie High School</b>	<b>Highland</b>
<b>Higher Education</b>	35.6%	45.0%	21.4%	50.0%	33.7%
<b>Further Education</b>	31.1%	40.0%	37.5%	8.3%	23.7%
<b>Training</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
<b>Employment</b>	24.4%	0.0%	28.6%	41.7%	31.2%
<b>Voluntary work</b>	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.7%
<b>Activity Agreements</b>	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
<b>Unemployed-seeking employment</b>	4.4%	15.0%	10.7%	0.0%	5.6%
<b>Unemployed- not seeking employment</b>	2.2%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
<b>Unknown</b>	0.0%	0.0%	1.8%	0.0%	0.5%

The majority of school leavers in 2014 carried on to further or higher education in Sutherland and in Highland. Those going on to higher education are likely to leave the Sutherland area to do so.

15% of leavers from Farr High School and 10.7% of leavers from Golspie High School are unemployed but seeking work. This again could lead to young people leaving the area if they are unable to find suitable work nearby.

41.7% of Kinlochbervie High School leavers go on to employment, which is higher than in Highland (31.2%).

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Community Consultation - SWOT Analysis**

This SWOT Analysis was undertaken during community meetings in June 2014 and refined following feedback from an on line surveys in June and September 2014.

#### **Strengths**

- There are lots of community organisations active in Sutherland, with a good volunteer pool of people interested and willing to engage (e.g. Embo Trust where 20 volunteers operate a community run shop and post office), and good support mechanisms for the voluntary sector. Many of these groups have developed actions plans.
- There are also many young carers with skills to offer.
- Together with the community organisations there are sustainable trusts (enhanced by wind-farm investment) both with proven experience of project delivery, and some good instances of partnership working.
- There has been growth in the food, drink, energy and tourism sectors in recent years. There is a versatile and enterprising pool of skilled people.
- People view the quality of life as being high in terms of security from crime. Local people also benefit from the caring and supportive aspect of neighbours and communities.
- The University of the Highlands and Islands, Dornoch campus offers a training hotel for the catering industry and has championed the Golf Management degree course. Dornoch Academy has a good reputation for secondary education, attracting inward migration.
- The East Coast and has the advantage of a rail service from Inverness which serves Lairg, Golspie, Brora and Helmsdale.
- Sutherland benefits from low pollution, clean air and good water supply.
- Sutherland has enormous strengths in terms of scenery, natural assets and landmarks, and coastal and inland areas of heritage and interest. It offers a wide choice of marine, wildlife and outdoor activities, including specialist activities such as bird watching and geology.
- It also has a vibrant, modern arts and crafts community, together with an established cultural heritage.

## Weaknesses

- As in so many areas, there is volunteer fatigue amongst those involved in the community and voluntary sectors; this affects all parts of the area, but is especially so in the central and north western areas. Almost 50% of people live in very small remote communities; the scattered nature of many communities in Sutherland can also make networking and joint work difficult. In some areas there is a reluctance to co-operate with other organisations.
- Land ownership patterns present a significant barrier to community development (Sutherland extends to 1.3million acres of which 1.2million are in the hands of fewer than 100 owners). One of the barriers to growth in Sutherland is the lack of a clear identity. Sutherland can sometimes be linked to Wester Ross and Skye, or grouped with Caithness rather than being seen as a community in its own right.
- There are weaknesses in the local economy and the remoteness of many rural communities can also mask poverty.
- For people who live in very small remote communities, there is increased time and cost required to access services, for example, in Inverness or the central belt. In particular fuel costs, access to training and job opportunities, and access to care and health services are all impacted.
- The sparsity of population and lack of a clear area identity can impair the capacity of communities to influence service provision and resource allocation. People in Sutherland identify a 'lack of political power or influence' as a weakness and there is a sense that 'decision makers don't understand what it's like up here'.
- People in central and north west Sutherland are concerned by the poor transport links between communities (many communities are linked by single track roads with infrequent public transport services), and public transport costs.
- There are concerns about the lack of training and employment opportunities available (and the effect of this upon the aspirations of local people), low wage levels and seasonal employment patterns. There is also a perceived lack of private sector employment opportunities. A lack of affordable family housing makes it difficult to retain or attract workers.
- Broadband and mobile connectivity is poor in many parts of the area and non-existent in some, especially around the North West.
- The physical scale and diversity of the area presents distinct marketing challenges.

## Opportunities

- The existence of many local development plans demonstrates the strength of community commitment, and there is a real opportunity to drive these forward through the engagement of development officers.
- The renewable energies, food and drink sectors all present growth opportunities in the economy.
- Sutherland is well placed for renewable energy development, and in particular from planned offshore wind farms in the Moray Firth and tidal energy in the Pentland Firth. The Environmental Research Institute at the University for the Highlands and Islands in neighbouring Caithness provides a hub for peat research and the development of marine renewables.
- There are also opportunities to build on the food and drink sector, particularly as this not only benefits the local community but also enhances the experience for visitors seeking the 'unique Highland food offering'. Highlands and Islands Enterprise recognise the UK/international market potential of Sutherland's businesses.
- Community ownership and social enterprise provides opportunities to enhance civic and economic life. There is an opportunity for community development of a harbour at Loch Eriboll and investment in the Flow to the Future restoration project.
- There are considerable opportunities in terms of tourism and heritage development. The growth of nature, environmental and marine tourism offers a good fit with Sutherland's visitor offer. There are also opportunities to extend the tourist season from the current peak months of May to September. The Royal Dornoch Golf Club has also been identified as offering a tourism opportunity.

## Threats

- The ageing population and outward migration of young people to Central Scotland is a threat to development of the economy.
- Burdensome reporting requirements and other expectations from community funders can act as a deterrent to volunteers in applying for much needed grant support.
- There are significant concerns about the implications of budget cuts to services. These are likely to affect rural populations disproportionately, undermining the sustainability of some communities. There is a perceived lack of awareness of this amongst service providers although the changes also offer an opportunity to look at the role of community anchor organisations in order to enhance their role in service provision.
- The plan to close 8 of 9 Highland Council Service points in Sutherland is seen as a threat, given the distances people will have to travel to access services.

- The environmental impacts of renewable energy opportunities are seen as a threat to the environment.

## **APPENDIX 3**

### **Key Priorities for Sutherland**

During June and July 2014, the Highland LEADER team engaged consultants Blake Stevenson to facilitate a series of public meetings across Highland. These sessions were aimed at identifying local opportunities for funding in the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme. Meetings for Sutherland communities were held in Durness (19/06/2014) and Golspie (30/06/2014).

Further consultation was undertaken in the form of an online questionnaire in September 2014.

Combined output from the Sutherland meetings and from Sutherland respondents to the surveys is attached in the form of a SWOT analysis as Appendix 2.

A review of the SWOT analysis, supported by demographic data, has identified four key challenges for Sutherland:

#### **Out-migration of Young People**

In 2001, 18% of the population were aged 15 years or younger. In 2011, 16-29 years olds made up 12% of the population. Adjusting to take account of the differences in the fact that the census categories span 16 and 14 years respectively, there has been a net outward migration in this youth population of around 6% over the ten year period. This implies that young people are leaving the area. A similar change can be seen across Highland.

The SWOT analysis highlighted a lack of training and employment opportunities, low wage levels, seasonal employment, lack of private sector employment and a lack of affordable family housing: these could all contribute to a lack of retention of young people in Sutherland.

However, the SWOT analysis also noted that the UHI campus in Dornoch offers courses in catering and golf management. These courses could attract young people to, or retain young people in Sutherland.

#### **Industry Development**

The SWOT analysis highlighted the potential of renewable energy, tourism and food and drink industries. However the SWOT analysis also highlighted the potential conflict between renewable energy and maintaining the natural landscape.

It was also stated that community ownership and social enterprise could provide opportunities to enhance the economy in Sutherland.

## **Access**

In the SWOT analysis it was noted that 50% of residents in Sutherland live in very small remote communities and the poor public transport links, particularly in central and North West Sutherland, lead to increased time and costs to access services.

It was highlighted that any future budget cuts are likely to affect rural populations disproportionately, undermining the sustainability of some communities.

## **Community Engagement**

In the SWOT analysis a noted strength was the number of community organisations and sustainable trusts in Sutherland, many of which are experienced in project delivery. However it was also acknowledged that there is volunteer fatigue and there were limited opportunities for networking and joint working due to the scattered nature of communities in Sutherland.

The burdensome reporting requirements from community funders can also act as a deterrent to volunteers applying for much needed grant funding.

The SWOT analysis highlighted that Sutherland could be encouraged to build on the current levels of community commitment through the engagement of development officers.

## APPENDIX 4: FINANCIAL STRATEGY SUMMARY PAPER FOR LAPs

### Programme Finance

The Strategic LAG has agreed the following split of the Programme budget:

Administration/Animation	£2,201,347 (25%)
Co-operation between two or more LAG areas	£440,269 (5%)
Co-operation between two or more LAP areas in Highland	£440,269 (5%)
Rural Enterprise	£880,538 (10%)
Farm Diversification	£880,538 (10%)
Pan Highland – Strategic projects across all/most LAP areas in Highland	£500,000
Local Area Projects	£3,462,427
<b>Total indicative allocation</b>	<b>£8,805,388</b>

### Intervention Rates

Programme/Highland wide intervention rates will be revisited for decision when further clarity is received over how state aid will impact intervention rates across the Programme.

### Local Decision Making

The Strategic LAG has indicated that it would like the local areas to have as much local control over what they are funding as is possible within the parameters set out by the EU/Financial Regulations. As such,

and providing it is detailed as part of the approved Local Area Action Plan, Local Area Partnerships should be able to decide the following locally:

- Local intervention (pending any limits set by the LAG during discussions over a Highland wide rate)
- Whether to issue “in principle” offers (for a maximum of three months)
- Whether to set a limit on maximum grant or project costs
- Whether to go increase the Highland wide limit of a minimum of £5,000 project costs
- Setting of annual allocations within initial review period

### Allocations to LAPs

The LAG agreed the following allocations to LAPs using the methodology that the Scottish Government have adopted across Scotland for the 2014-2020 Programming Period:

ALLOCATIONS TO LAPs	
Caithness	£497,080.51
Sutherland	£633,673.16
IMF North	£550,574.97
Wester Ross	£506,688.74
Skye	£313,745.13
IMF South	£412,683.91
Lochaber	£547,978.15
<b>Total</b>	<b>£3,462,424.57</b>

## APPENDIX 5: ELIGIBLE ACTIVITIES FOR PRIORITISED OUTCOMES (FRM LDS)

### **1<sup>st</sup> Outcome: Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/ development**

#### **Eligible Activities:**

- feasibility and development of new and existing businesses in terms of capital and revenue
- support for social enterprises
- projects that promote partnership within and across sectors
- support for new businesses
- training and employability skills
- business infrastructure (e.g. business units, chilling facilities)
- support the introduction of more efficient processes including in the wider supply chain.

### **2<sup>nd</sup> Outcome: Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets**

#### **Eligible Activities:**

- new pathways and
- cycle paths, particularly where they link up to other existing paths/cycle routes or create linkages between local villages and sites or have health related benefits
- improved access for disabled people to sites
- feasibility studies/development of new sites
- information products, websites, marketing and promotion initiatives
- projects which promote safe access and appropriate signage
- projects which promote the opportunities for cultural activities to be accessed locally, opportunities to improve biodiversity and habitats around paths and tracks
- improved access to archaeological sites
- projects which promote the Gaelic language and culture

### **3<sup>rd</sup> Outcome: People have better access to local services and activities**

#### **Eligible Activities:**

- feasibility studies and development costs for new services/activities identified as a need within the community
- local solutions for community transport issues, including ways of integrating transport schemes
- feasibility and development of local internet/Wi-Fi centres for use by residents and visitors
- wider initiatives to tackle increased broadband provision and access
- improved information-sharing locally including local website improvement
- feasibility and development of projects that address access to housing and improved access to job opportunities
- projects that promote inclusion and well-being
- health activities across age groups
- local solutions to address the needs of an ageing population
- services for vulnerable individuals and families including piloting initiatives
- services that tackle re-offending, youth disengagement and substance misuse
- community re-use and recycle IT scheme
- training for basic repairs and maintenance
-

**4<sup>th</sup> Outcome: improvements in the visitor experience****Eligible Activities:**

- anything which can demonstrate it will lead to an improved visitor experience which may include enhancing an existing attraction/service
- providing wet weather facilities (as this has been identified as an area of need in several areas)
- developing and testing innovative ideas
- provision of sustainable transport solutions for visitors projects which promote cultural tourism

## **APPENDIX 6: LAP MEMBERS JOB DESCRIPTION**

Members of Local Area Partnerships will be required to deliver agreed outcomes of the Highland Local Development Strategy at local level to ensure that the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme delivers on the commitments. Key Responsibilities will be to:

- Develop a Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) which contributes to the themes, outcomes and outputs required to deliver the Highland Local Development Strategy, with focus on local target groups and priorities.
- Supported by reports from the Programme Administrative Team, Monitoring & Evaluation Committee and Equalities Review Group, monitor and review delivery of the LAAP.
- Make decisions relating to applications for funding.
- Identify specific projects to address any gaps in contribution to the themes, outputs and target groups set out in the LAAP.
- Promote and reinforce the seven LEADER principles of: area-based local development strategies, bottom-up elaboration and implementation of strategies, Local public-private partnerships (Local Area Groups), integrated and multi-sectoral actions, innovation, co-operation and networking.
- Promote and raise awareness and understanding of issues.

Additionally, the LAP Chair will attend Strategic LAG meetings as an advisory representative of the LAP.

### **Person Specification**

- Specific skills/knowledge/experience of at least one of the following sectors: agriculture, forestry, fisheries, tourism, education, small business/enterprise, natural/cultural heritage, community/voluntary, and/or.
- Representative of youth organisations, organisations that provide services/support for the elderly or groups of people with protected characteristics.
- Keen interest in rural regeneration in the Highlands and willingness to work in co-operation with other LAPs, FLAG, Enterprise Group and members of the Programme Administrative Team to deliver a successful Programme.
- Capacity and time to undertake the role. The LAP will meet at least four times a year, in a central location: LAP members will be required to:
  - Read and review all material circulated prior to meetings, to enable be informed decisions to be made at the meetings.
  - Attend all meetings, or where this is not possible, ensure that a named substitute attends (travel expenses can be reimbursed for private sector members).

- Participate in electronic decision making or requests for comment between LAP meetings.
  - Act as a two way communication channel between the LAP and local communities, to maximise engagement and interest in the Programme.
- Engage with individual projects which would benefit from the member's specific skills/ knowledge/experience.

## **APPENDIX 7: HIGHLAND LEADER (2014-2020) PROGRAMME OPERATING GUIDELINES**

### **1. Name of Local Action Group**

Highland LEADER Local Action Group (LAG).

### **2. Objective**

In line with the Highland LEADER Local Development Strategy, the Highland LEADER LAG will deliver the Highland LEADER Programme 2014 – 2020 Programme.

The Highland LEADER area will include all of the Highland Council area, except for the Settlement Development Area for Inverness (as given in the 2012 Inverness Local Plan) and the part of the Highland Council area within the Cairngorms National Park.

### **3. Structure and Composition**

The LEADER Programme will be delivered through the Highland LEADER LAG, which consists of a strategic LAG and a suite of seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs), a Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) and an Enterprise Group. Local Area Partnerships will cover the following areas: Caithness, Sutherland, Wester Ross, Skye, Lochaber, Inner Moray Firth North and Inner Moray Firth South).

Two sub groups to the strategic LAG will also be established to advise on Monitoring & Evaluation (Monitor & Evaluation Committee – M&E), and Equalities (Equalities Reference Group - ERG).

### **4. Governance**

#### **4.1 The Highland Community Planning Partnership (CPP)**

The Highland LEADER Programme is a Highland Community Planning Partnership supported initiative which is central to the partners support for community development across the region and the place communities have in the delivery of the Highland Single Outcome Agreement 2013/14 – 2018/19.

The Board of the Highland Community Planning Partnership therefore have an active interest in the success of the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 and have agreed that while the delivery of the Local Development Strategy (LDS) will be overseen and managed by the Strategic LAG, the Board will receive an annual report on progress. The Board's operational involvement with the Programme will be via the Highland Council as the accountable body.

#### **4.2 The Highland Council**

The Highland Council, on behalf of the LEADER strategic LAG, has agreed to be the accountable body for the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020. In doing so the Council has accepted delegated responsibility for administering LEADER finances under the terms of a Service Level Agreement that will be entered into with the Scottish Government.

The Council has also accepted that in being the accountable body it will be responsible to the Strategic LAG (including the Local Area Partnerships and the Fisheries and Enterprise Groups) for supporting the operation of the LEADER Programme and supporting the successful implementation of the Local Development Strategy

### **4.3 Memorandum of Understanding**

In order that all involved in the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 are clear about their respective roles and responsibilities, it is proposed to prepare a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU). This will build upon the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 Operating Guidelines and the positive and supportive working arrangements already established. The MoU will specifically address the relationships, roles and responsibilities between the:

- Council (as accountable body) and the Strategic LAG;
- Council/Strategic LAG and LAP's and Fisheries and Enterprise Groups

In addition, to aid understanding of the context within which the LEADER Programme operates, the MoU will set out the headline roles and responsibilities contained within the Scottish Government/accountable body Service Level Agreement.

The MoU will be subject to review during the 2014-2020 Programme period.

## **5. Decision Making**

### **5.1 Application Approval**

Local decision-making on local projects based on a local development strategy is the core principle around which the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2010 will be based. This means essentially, decisions on pan Highland or strategic projects will be taken at the Strategic LAG and decisions on local projects will be taken by the respective LAP. This decision-making approach will be continued and complemented with the Enterprise Group making decisions on enterprise applications and the Fisheries Group making recommendations to Marine Scotland on fisheries applications.

Projects will be considered and assessed as part of a two phased approach, with the first phase being triggered by the submission of an Expression of Interest, allowing early consideration of project proposals by the strategic LAG, LAP's, Fisheries or Enterprise Groups. This will provide the opportunity to identify projects which meet the objectives of the local development strategy and to offer comments during the development of a project and before a formal application is completed and submitted for grant approval.

The Strategic LAG, each of the LAP's and the Enterprise Group will have authority to make grant award decisions on applications that come before them. As per Scottish Government guidance, the FLAG will make recommendations to Marine Scotland on grant award decisions.

Approval of Expressions of Interest and Applications will be assessed against agreed scoring templates

If for any reason any of the LAP's or the Fisheries or Enterprise Groups are unable to determine an request for funding, it will be referred to the Strategic LAG for a final decision.

If the LAP's, Fisheries or Enterprise Groups conclude that a specific project is required to deliver the Local Development Strategy, a partner organisation who is a legal entity, will be invited to develop a project proposal. Such a project will be considered in accordance with the established two phased decision-making process, but amended whereby the decision on grant award (or in the case of EMFF, the recommendation to Marine Scotland) is taken by the Strategic LAG. This division in decision making ensures that the project proposal receives the same level of scrutiny as any other project and cannot receive preferential consideration.

If the Strategic LAG is advocating that a strategic project is developed, a similar process will be followed but amended in that each of the LAP's will be asked to score the application. These scores will be presented to the Strategic LAG to inform their discussion – the final decision on grant award will be made by the strategic LAG. This will help ensure that any strategic project developed will receive local scrutiny and cannot receive preferential consideration.

If a grant award decision is taken by any of the LAP's or the Enterprise Group and the LEADER team have concerns over the propriety of the decision reached, the grant award will not be acted upon and the matter referred to the Strategic LAG Chair to determine whether the decision taken should be reconsidered or referred to the Strategic LAG for determination. This will also apply to recommendations that the FLAG make to Marine Scotland for grant award decisions.

## **5.2 Appeals/Complaints**

Procedures for appeals will follow national guidance issued by the Scottish Government.

Complaints will be dealt with through the Highland Council complaints process:

[http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/670/consultations\\_complaints\\_and\\_compliments/368/make\\_a\\_complaint](http://www.highland.gov.uk/info/670/consultations_complaints_and_compliments/368/make_a_complaint)

## **6. Operational Management and Delivery**

### **6.1 Strategic Local Action Group (Strategic LAG)**

The Strategic LAG will be responsible for the overall management and strategic direction of the LDS. It will monitor progress in the delivery of the Highland LEADER Programme 2014-2020 and either through direct action itself or through directing others ensure delivery of the LDS.

Membership of the Strategic LAG will reflect the aims of the LEADER Initiative regarding involvement of community representatives while achieving the necessary balance of statutory, private and community representation, i.e. 49% public maximum with the other 51% drawn from private/community representatives.

Initial formal voting members of the Strategic LAG (membership may change over life of the Programme) will be drawn from the following:

- National Farmers Union
- Tourism Sector
- Forestry Sector
- Federation of Small Businesses
- Crofters Federation
- Third Sector Interface
- Fisheries Local Action Group
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise
- Scottish Natural Heritage
- University of Highlands and Islands
- The Highland Council
- NHS Highland

Initial advisory members of the Strategic LAG (membership may change over the life of the Programme) will be drawn from:

- Accountable Body Advisor
- Visit Scotland
- Forestry Commission
- Enterprise Group
- Representative from each LAP
- Monitoring & Evaluation Committee
- Highland Youth Convener
- Highland Council Environment Manager
- Equalities Reference Group
- LEADER Programme Manager and Administrative Team
- Ad-hoc Advisors as required

Strategic LAG members will appoint a Chair and Vice Chair for a two year period, and will appoint/re-appoint the Chair and Vice Chair every two years. The Chair will not be a representative of the accountable body. Best practice will be that where possible the Chair and Vice Chair will not represent the public sector.

The Group will also complete a skills matrix to ensure that it includes representation from key sectors, and target groups which should be given priority for LEADER funding, as well as demonstrating a good geographic and demographic mix. Where any gaps are identified, the Group will call on specialist advisors and/or make a public call for additional membership (using the Code of Practice for Ministerial Appointments to Public Bodies, April 2012). This process will be repeated as required or at least every two years. It may be required if for example consideration of a specific project proposal requires specialist skills or knowledge.

Any requests to join the LAG will be submitted in writing, along with a completed skills matrix, and decided at the next meeting following receipt of the request and in line with the decision making process outlined below.

If a member of the strategic LAG or their substitute does not attend over three consecutive meetings, the presumption is that membership will be terminated at the discretion of the Chair.

The Strategic LAG's role will be to oversee the successful establishment and operation of the Programme throughout the Highland LEADER Programme area. In doing so it will;

- Meet at least 4 times a year (to be reviewed as appropriate).
- Approve, monitor and review as appropriate a financial strategy for the allocation of funding to achieve the aims of the LDS.
- Consider reports from the Programme Manager and the Monitoring & Evaluation Committee concerning the delivery of the Programme. This shall include progress on applications received, approved, grant committed, grant claimed and progress on achieving the agreed output targets.
- Consider annual reports, which will be forwarded to the Scottish Government as part of their monitoring and evaluation process.
- Consider regular financial reports, which will detail expenditure, accrued on the administration and delivery of the Programme and on projects. These will reflect the information submitted to the Scottish Government as quarterly financial claims.
- Maintain liaison with the UK/Scottish LEADER Network and ensure representation at its meetings.
- Review progress made towards achieving targets set in the business plan and if necessary, issue revised guidance to the LAPs, FLAG and Enterprise Group to address any anomalies.
- Advise on communication and publicity strategies.

This Strategic LAG will:

- Take the lead on transnational/trans-regional aspects of the Programme; supported by the Programme Manager and Local Development Officers.
- Seek a link to the Highlands & Islands Transitional Committee (HITC) to ensure consistency and added value.
- Ensure the horizontal themes of Fairer Highland, Innovation, Sustainability/Legacy, Carbon Clever and Skills Development are adhered to.
- Approve Local Area Action Plans which will be prepared by LAPs. The strategic LAG will, after consulting with the relevant LAPs, local groups, or equivalent, assess and approve project applications for individual pan Highland projects or projects that span more than two LAP areas.

Subsidiary groups of the strategic LAG should follow these operating guidelines or establish their own, which should be signed off by the strategic LAG in order to ensure consistency with the LEADER requirements.

As a minimum, operating guidelines for these groups should ensure compliance with LEADER requirements as set out in this document around:

- Membership
- Quorum
- Appeals/complaints
- Chair
- Declarations of Interest
- Decision making
- Delegated authority

And should provide for delivery of the functions as described below:

#### **6.1.1 Monitoring & Evaluation Committee**

The main function of the Monitoring & Evaluation Group will be to monitor, assess and report progress against the Monitoring & Evaluation Plan and to ensure that any actions agreed at the Strategic LAG are followed through.

#### **6.1.2 Equalities Reference Group Equalities Reference Group (ERG) - advisory**

The main functions of the Equalities Reference Group will be:

- Reviewing applications for projects that have significant equalities issues/impact and providing guidance to applicants, decision making groups and the LEADER Team, including recommendations on project specific conditions to address the issues/impact.
- Providing guidance and support to the LEADER Team in the development of processes, communications and guidance for applicants to ensure equalities issues are considered from the pre-application stage to project completion (for example in relation to Publications & Printed Materials, Websites, Community Engagement, Holding Public Events, Holding Training Events).
- To input to the ongoing EQIA process and monitor actions being taken to address issues arising.
- To keep the Strategic LAG updated by reporting on any trends/key issues, and progress against EQIA actions.

### **6.2 Local Area Partnerships (LAPs)**

LAPs will provide the local focus for the new LEADER programme, bringing local knowledge and expertise to determine prioritisation and the allocation of funding to project applications and facilitate delivery of the Programme. A transparent process should be used to establish these groups as agreed by the strategic LAG and the following guiding principle will need to be adhered to: groups must reflect public, private and voluntary sector interest in their area

(49% public maximum with the other 51% drawn from private/community representatives) and must be able to demonstrate through the preparation of a local area action plan and its implementation a link with the Highland LEADER Plan.

Local groups will be expected to:

- Co-ordinate the preparation of and implement a local action plan for their area, which meets the aims of the Highland LEADER LDS.
- Work with local groups to exploit opportunities offered through LEADER and other funding streams.
- Meet on a regular basis (as a minimum 4 times per annum, to be reviewed as appropriate).
- Promote the Programme across area.
- Assist and lead as appropriate with the development of local project proposals/plans.
- Once the local action plan is approved consider and make decisions on applications seeking grant assistance.
- Ensure wide community involvement in line with the National Standards of Community Engagement.
- Comment to the strategic LAG on projects which impact locally but are of a pan Highland or are of wider local area coverage.
- Monitor delivery of LEADER funded projects and either through direct action via one of its partner organisations or through the encouragement of others, ensure delivery of the LDS.

### **6.3 Fisheries Local Area Group (FLAG)**

The FLAG will oversee the delivery of the European and Maritime Fisheries Fund (EMFF) funding in line with the integrated vision of the LDS, bringing local sectoral knowledge and expertise to determine prioritisation and the allocation of funding to project applications and facilitate delivery of the Programme. The FLAG will:

- Work with local groups to exploit opportunities offered through EMFF and other funding streams.
- Meet on a regular basis (as a minimum 4 times per annum, to be reviewed as appropriate).
- Promote the Programme across area.
- Assist and lead as appropriate with the development of local project proposals/plans.
- Consider and make recommendations to Marine Scotland on applications seeking grant assistance.

- Ensure wide community involvement in line with the National Standards of Community Engagement.
- Monitor delivery of EMFF funded projects and either through direct action via one of its partner organisations or through the encouragement of others, ensure delivery of the LDS.

#### **6.4 Enterprise Group**

The Enterprise Group will oversee the delivery of the Rural Enterprise funding in line with the integrated vision of the LDS, bringing local sectoral knowledge and expertise to determine prioritisation and the allocation of funding to project applications and facilitate delivery of the Programme. The Enterprise Group will:

- Co-ordinate the preparation of and implement a local action plan , which meets the aims of the Highland LEADER LDS.
- Work with local groups to exploit opportunities offered through Rural Enterprise funding and other funding streams.
- Meet on a regular basis (as a minimum 4 times per annum to be reviewed as appropriate).
- Promote the Programme across area.
- Assist and lead as appropriate with the development of local project proposals/plans.
- Once the local action plan is approved consider and make decisions on applications seeking grant assistance.
- Ensure wide community involvement in line with the National Standards of Community Engagement.
- Monitor delivery of projects awarded Rural Enterprise funding and either through direct action via one of its partner organisations or through the encouragement of others, ensure delivery of the LDS.

#### **6.5 Partners**

Partner organisations across the community, business/third sector and public sectors, in addition to submitting representatives to the strategic LAG, LAP's and Fisheries and Enterprise Groups, will provide overall guidance on policy and project matters and, through its emphasis on ensuring a balanced representation of public sector agencies and community and the voluntary sector, to ensure a bottom up approach based on the ideas of local people, encouraging community involvement, partnership and innovation.

It is the responsibility of partners to communicate with other organisations in the sector which they represent. Organisations will be encouraged to appoint substitutes to attend meetings on their behalf if the usual representatives are unable to attend.

If the strategic LAG, LAP's, FLAG or Enterprise Group considers it necessary to encourage or facilitate direct action to deliver aspects of the LDS, the partners, or The Highland Council, may directly deliver a project/activity on their behalf.

## **7. Delegated Authority**

Authority is delegated to the Secretariat, the Chair/Vice Chair of the LAG and the Accountable Body in respect of changes to approved applications. The following is a non-exhaustive list of example situations where this authority might be exercised:

- Where, during the course of an approved project, expenditure exceeds or is less than the indicative budget set, permission to switch budget between one budget head and another (referred to as project virement), may be granted by the Secretariat. Virement should only be considered if the existing purpose of the project is not affected, the change is complimentary to the project and or brings additional value to the project.
- Where the scale of the change exceed 10% of the total project costs the request for approval will be passed to the strategic LAG Chair and Vice Chair for authorisation. Where the changes are deemed to be significant the strategic LAG or LAP views will be sought.
- Where total project costs increase by up to 10% and provided the increase is within the spirit of the approval, the Programme Manager, Chair and Vice Chair will have delegated authority to approve this change. If the change is in excess of 10%, the request is passed to the original decision making authority for a decision.
- Where a project requires an extension to the finish date or a revision of project milestones the Secretariat may approve a change to that date.
- Where alternative, but sufficient, match funding is proposed, relative to the original application, the Secretariat may approve the necessary changes.
- Any matters of ambiguity around delegated authority will be referred to the Chair, Vice Chair and Accountable Body.

## **8. Additional Rules Of Procedure For The Strategic LAG**

### **8.1 Conduct of Meetings**

- Meetings of the partnership will be arranged to ensure that they are as accessible as possible to all members of the partnership and that timing, venues and the need for video/ teleconferencing are suitable. Meetings will be arranged with a minimum of one month's notice where possible to avoid conflict with other commitments.
- All meetings will be minuted (by the Secretariat) and approved minutes will be freely available and posted on the Highland LEADER website.

## 8.2 Chair

- The Strategic LAG will appoint a Chairperson and Vice Chairperson. At all meetings of the LAG, the elected Chairperson, or in their absence, the Vice-Chairperson shall preside over the meeting. The Accountable Body will not be appointed to the Chair or Vice Chair position.
- If both are absent, partners will choose a member to preside. Members should respect the authority of the (acting) Chairperson who will decide matters of order, competency, relevancy and urgency.
- The Chairperson's duty is to preserve order and ensure that all members/partners are given a fair hearing. Appointment of the Chair and Vice Chair will be reviewed every two years.

## 8.3 Quorum

- The Strategic LAG will be quorate when there are at least 5 voting members present – 3 of which must be either community or private/third sector.
- If more than 5 members are present, the required 51/49% split between community, business, third sector and public sector voting members must be achieved.
- Where the meeting is inquorate due to the balance of public/private representation, but the requirement of 5 voting members has been met, the second vote of the Chair/Vice Chair may be used to count towards the quorum.
- If members of the Strategic LAG are unable to attend a meeting, their named substitute should attend.
- For purposes of the quorum, participation of partners by video-conferencing links will be considered as present.
- Where a large number of LAG members declare an interest in an item, leaving the meeting inquorate for that item, the remaining members of the LAG shall be competent to debate and decide that item at the earliest opportunity, using whichever procedure is expedient.
- If the meeting is not quorate no decision can be taken but at the discretion of the Chair/Vice Chair, the meeting can discuss and make recommendations which in turn can be circulated to the wider membership for a decision to be taken by written/electronic procedure.
- Where a quorate response cannot be achieved (either at a meeting or by written procedure) then the LAG/LAP can continue to discuss the item and put forward their recommendation to the Chair and Vice Chair to determine. This approach will only be acceptable if the Chair and Vice Chair positions are not dominated by the Public sector, ie as a minimum there must be a 50:50 split between public and community/private representation.

- Use of video conference/skype/telecommunications will be encouraged to overcome distance/travel barriers and aid discussions/decision-making by the strategic LAG, LAP's and Fisheries and Enterprise Groups.
- The preference will always be to have meetings – be they in person and/or via video conference/skype/telecommunications to encourage dialogue and debate rather than taking decisions by written/electronic procedure; however, decisions taken by written/electronic procedure will be valid.

#### **8.4 Declarations of Interest**

All members of the strategic LAG will be required to make declarations of interests. Such declarations of interest are intended to produce transparency in regard to interests which might influence, or be perceived to influence, any actions/decisions taken.

Where an interest has been declared from a member and it is considered as a conflict of interest, then that person should withdraw from the meeting while the item is being discussed and a decision taken.

Representatives from match funders, where they are not the applicant, are only eligible to participate and vote on the discussions relating to an application if the representative does not have direct financial responsibility for funding the project. For example, a Highlands and Islands Enterprise Officer might remain in the meeting if the project under consideration was funded by another part of the organisation for which s/he has no budgetary influence. In such cases the minute of meeting should state that any such person remaining in and participating in the meeting did not have funding responsibilities for the project.

If any elected Members of The Highland Council are members of the strategic LAG, they do not need to declare an interest unless s/he has a direct financial connection with the project or applicant, e.g. is an employee or Director of the applicant body, or has a close relative with a direct connection with the project or applicant, or has a direct budgetary responsibility for some portion of the project's match-funding (including Ward discretionary funds). Such a stance is in accordance with the Standards Commission Scotland's The Councillors' Code of Conduct (3rd edition, December 2010 s.5).

Other members of the Strategic LAG are also required to comply with the above procedure. Interests will be declared and recorded in a formal Register of Interests, which will be maintained by the Programme secretariat.

#### **8.5 Order of Business**

The main business of meetings will be to consider the progress of the LEADER Programme and strategic issues and, if required, to consider grant applications.

Notwithstanding this, the items of business will be considered in the following order:

- Those members present and apologies
- Declarations of interest by members
- Minutes of previous meetings will be considered as a correct record
- Matters arising
- Progress Reports

- Consideration of grant applications, as required
- Urgent business intimated at the start of the meeting
- Any other competent business included on the agenda
- Date, Time and Location of next meeting

### **8.6 Decision Making and Voting**

Subject to compliance with the LEADER guidelines as laid down by the European Commission and the Scottish Government as the Managing Authority, all questions coming or arising before the meeting will be decided on a consensus basis or failing this by a majority of the members present.

Views from LAG members submitted in writing or by e-mail prior to the meeting will be accepted and included as part of the discussion.

While efforts will be made to seek a consensus decision, where this proves not possible a vote may be taken by a show of hands. In the event of a tie, the Chairperson will have a second or casting vote. In the case of subsidiary groups to the LAG, the Chair will also have the discretion to refer the matter to the LAG for a final decision.

In terms of scoring stage one and stage two applications for funding, voting members of the LAG present at the meeting will agree an overall score for each of the criteria laid down in the scoring template and this score will be noted in the meeting minutes. Where a consensus score cannot be reached the paragraph above applies.

LAG members will be expected to individually score applications in advance of meetings. Where there are a high number of applications to be considered then scoring members will be paired up and will take the lead on scoring of allocated projects.

The presumption is that decisions on funding applications will be made following discussion at a meeting; however, in exceptional cases decisions on applications can be made by written procedure. In this case, two LAG members (at least one of whom will be from the private sector) will work together to agree scores for the application which will then be circulated to the LAG as a recommendation for a decision by written procedure.

### **8.7 Special Meetings**

Special meetings may be called at any time if the strategic LAG or Secretariat receives a request from partners setting out the purpose of the business to be considered at that meeting.