

Highland LEADER Programme 2014 - 2020



Inner Moray Firth South Local Area Action Plan

Summary Version for Applicants

November 2016: Version 1



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Introduction

The Inner Moray Firth South (IMFS) Local Area Partnership (LAP) will be responsible for delivering the Highland LEADER Programme in Nairnshire and Rural Inverness, excluding Inverness City. The LAP has developed a Local Area Action Plan which sets out the priorities for LEADER funding in the area.

The Plan will be used to guide LEADER funding decisions with the LAP reviewing and making decisions on funding applications, based on the extent to which they will deliver the local priorities set out in the Plan.

This document provides a summarised version of the Plan for applicants. The full Plan outlines the processes followed to form the Local Area Partnership and to develop the Local Area Action Plan. Please contact the LEADER Development Officer for the Inner Moray Firth South if you would like to request the full version of the Plan.

This summarised document provides an overview of the Highland LEADER Programme. It sets out what the Programme aims to achieve and the types of projects the LAP would like to support. You will also be able to find out how to apply for LEADER funding and what you should ensure you cover in your application.

It is important to note that there is significantly less funding available in the 2014 - 2020 programme compared to the 2007- 2013 programme. The funding environment is likely to be very competitive as a result of this. Applicants are therefore encouraged to familiarise themselves with the content of this plan and ensure they demonstrate how their project will contribute to its aims and objectives.

Please note the Local Area Action Plan will be monitored to ensure the Plan and projects approved by the LAP contribute towards the overall aims and objectives of the Highland LEADER Programme. As the Plan is subject to review, potential applicants should be aware of the possibility of changes to the LAP's priority outcomes, grant intervention rates and the level of grants available from the Highland LEADER Programme. Please check the website or contact the LEADER Development Officer for the most up to date information.

The LAP is supported by a LEADER Development Officer, Fiona Daschofsky. Fiona will work with LEADER applicants to guide them through the process of applying for and managing a LEADER grant. If you would further information about LEADER or have any queries please get in touch with Fiona:

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What is LEADER?

LEADER is an EU Fund aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. It operates in rural areas throughout the European Union. Its name comes from a French acronym and means **L**iaison **E**ntre **A**ctions de **D**éveloppement de l'**E**conomie **R**urale or “links between actions for the development of the rural economy”.

As well as promoting rural economic and community development, the fund promotes cooperation, networking and sharing of best practice. This is to encourage rural communities to learn from and build on each other's experiences.

The other key aspect of LEADER is that it is very much a community led fund. It is about local people determining their own priorities for development within their areas and then making decisions as to which projects should receive LEADER funding to deliver these. Further information about how the Highland LEADER Programme is delivered is outlined below.

How Are Decisions Made on LEADER Funding Priorities?

To help direct LEADER funding, EU member states are divided up by their governments into what are known as Local Action Groups (LAGs). In the UK, these broadly tend to cover the geographic boundaries of a local authority area. As it is a rural development fund, generally LEADER funding is not available in communities with a population of more than 10,000.

A LAG is responsible for consulting with communities within its area and identifying their needs and priorities for development. The LAG then produces a Local Development Strategy (LDS) to set out how these will be met, how it wants to target LEADER funding and what types of project it wishes to see come forward.

A LAG typically consists of around 20 voting members. They are made up of a range of individuals representing both the public and the private/community/voluntary sectors. Because it is a community led fund, public sector representatives are not allowed to make up more than 49% of their membership.

LAGs make decisions on awarding LEADER funding to projects. They are usually supported by a team of development officers and administrators. Development officers assist projects with the application process, and present assessments to the LAG to inform their decision making. Administrators also advise potential applicants and deal with claims and grant payments.

LEADER in Scotland

In Scotland, LEADER is delivered as part of the wider Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). It is one of 12 schemes within this. The other schemes are narrower in their focus, supporting specific topics such as forestry, beef farming, crofting support and food processing. LEADER can support a broader range of community development projects and is very much led and shaped at grassroots level.

Delivering LEADER in Highland and the Inner Moray Firth South

As with other areas in Europe, there is a Local Action Group (LAG) with overall responsibility for delivering LEADER in Highland. The Highland LEADER Programme covers the mainland Highlands, the Small Isles and Skye. A separate LEADER programme operates in the area of Highland covered by the Cairngorm National park and the programme does not operate in Inverness, due to its population exceeding 10,000.

The Highland Strategic LAG is made up of representatives from both the public and private/voluntary/ community sectors. The LAG is responsible for the overall management and delivery of the Highland LEADER Programme. The LAG assesses applications relating to rural enterprise, farm diversification, projects that will operate across all of Highland and cooperation projects with other LEADER programmes in the UK and further afield.

There is one aspect of delivering LEADER in Highland that is quite distinct from most other areas. This is the idea of the “Local Area Partnership”. Due to the size of the area and the range of diverse local communities in Highland, delivery of “core” LEADER projects (those that focus on general community development) is devolved from the Highland LAG down to seven Local Area Partnerships (LAPs).

Inner Moray Firth South

Inner Moray Firth South is one of these seven partnerships. It is an amalgamation of the Nairnshire and Rural Inverness LAPs that operated under the 2007-13 LEADER Programme.

The Inner Moray Firth South LAP is responsible for delivering the LEADER Programme in Nairnshire and Rural Inverness, excluding Inverness City. The LAP is made up of a mix of public and private/community/voluntary sector representatives. Like the LAG, the LAP cannot comprise of more than 49% public sector representation.

The LAP has an indicative budget of £412,684 to award to projects which will benefit communities in the LAP area. The LAP will meet at least quarterly to consider local projects seeking LEADER support.

You can find out more information about the Strategic LAG and the Local Area Partnerships, including lists of LAG/LAP members, by visiting the Highland LEADER Programme website: www.highlandleader.com

If you would like further information about the processes followed to form the Local Area Partnership please contact the LEADER Development Officer to request the full version of the Local Area Action Plan.

What funding is available from the Highland LEADER Programme?

The Highland LEADER Programme has a number of different funding programmes for projects which will benefit communities in the Highlands:

Type	Overview	Minimum LEADER grant available	Maximum LEADER grant available	Indicative Budget for Highland (unless otherwise indicated)
A Local Project (Inner Moray Firth South)	A LEADER project operating in a specific local community, or the boundaries of the Inner Moray Firth South area	£10,000	£50,000	£412,684 for Inner Moray Firth South area
Strategic Project	A LEADER project operating across Highland	£5,000	£100,000	£500,000
Co-operation Project	A LEADER project involving partners from other areas either in the UK or elsewhere in Europe	£5,000	£100,000	£880,538
Rural Enterprise	A LEADER project targeted specifically at business start-up/development and employment opportunities. These are likely to be projects that are more commercial in nature rather than “not for profit”	£5,000	£100,000	£880,538
Farm Diversification	A LEADER project targeted specifically at farms or crofts seeking to diversify and develop non- agricultural sources of income - for example a farm seeking to offer quad biking or a golf driving range	£5,000	£100,000	£880,538

£1 million is also available for fisheries and maritime related projects in coastal communities in Highland and Moray. To find out more about the European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) please visit the Highland & Moray Fisheries Local Action Group website: www.highlandmorayflag.co.uk

This Local Area Action Plan outlines the priorities for LEADER funding in the Inner Moray Firth South.

To find out more about Strategic, Co-operation, Rural Enterprise and Farm Diversification funding please visit the Highland LEADER Programme website: www.highlandleader.com

Further information about the other six LAP areas in Highland can also be downloaded from the Highland LEADER Programme website: Inner Moray Firth North; Lochaber; Sutherland; Caithness; Skye; and Wester Ross, Lochalsh & Strathpeffer.

Highland Local Development Strategy & Local Area Action Plan

The Highland LAG has produced a Local Development Strategy (LDS) which sets out priorities for LEADER funding and what the programme aims to achieve in Highland by 2020.

As part of the development of the Highland LDS, between June and September 2014, a number of public meetings, questionnaires, focus groups and stakeholder meetings were held. These were to gather people's views about local priorities for community development.

On the basis of the consultation, a SWOT analysis was produced for the LAP area (appendix 4). A review of the SWOT analysis, supported by demographic data (appendix 3) identified development priorities and issues for the Inner Moray Firth South area (appendix 5).

The above helped inform the development of the Highland LDS, shaping the vision for the Programme, and the selection of outcomes to direct LEADER funding.

The seven LAPs have developed a Local Area Action Plan for their respective area. These are simply plans to oversee the delivery of LEADER funding at a local level. The Inner Moray Firth South Local Area Action Plan was developed, drawing on LAP members' local knowledge and experience, together with key information from the community consultation (appendix 3-5).

Each Local Area Partnership has the flexibility to focus on specific priorities from within the Highland Local Development Strategy which are considered to be of most relevance locally and these priorities are outlined in this Local Area Action Plan.

The seven plans will contribute towards the overall aims and objectives of the Highland Local Development Strategy. Collectively, the seven plans contribute towards the four themes and ten outcomes outlined in the Highland Local Development Strategy.

If you would like further information about how the Local Area Action Plan was developed please contact the LEADER Development Officer to request the full version of the Local Area Action Plan.

What will LEADER fund?

LEADER looks for new project ideas or at least a clear development of existing projects or service provision. Development and innovation are key to what LEADER seeks to achieve in rural communities. The fund will not support the straight continuation of existing activities or provision. Similarly it will not fund routine repairs, maintenance or existing operating costs.

LEADER projects must not start before written approval of funding has been issued by the Highland LEADER Programme. LEADER is unable to fund activity that has already taken place prior to formal approval of funding.

What types of projects are eligible?

Projects which contribute towards the aims and objectives of the Highland LEADER Programme will be eligible for consideration.

As part of the application process, you will be asked to demonstrate how your project contributes towards the delivery of the Highland Local Development Strategy and Inner Moray Firth South Local Area Action Plan.

This Local Area Action Plan sets out the priorities for LEADER funding in Inner Moray Firth South. This Plan will be used to guide LEADER funding decisions with the LAP reviewing and making decisions on funding applications, based on the extent to which they will deliver the local priorities set out in the Plan.

It is important to note that there is significantly less funding available in the 2014- 2020 programme compared to the 2007- 2013 programme. The funding environment is likely to be very competitive as a result of this. Applicants are therefore encouraged to familiarise themselves with the content of this plan and ensure they demonstrate how their project will contribute to its aims and objectives.

A summary version of the Highland Local Development Strategy can be downloaded from the Highland LEADER website: www.highlandleader.com

LEADER themes and outcomes

The Inner Moray Firth South LAP has selected the following LEADER themes and outcomes to meet local development needs and help deliver the overall aims of the Highland LEADER 2014- 2020 Programme:

Themes

The Inner Moray Firth South LAP will consider funding projects that meet **one or more** of the themes of the Highland LEADER Programme:

- Increased and Sustained Local Services and Activities
- A Growing and Diversified Economy that Promotes Sustainability
- Stronger and More Resilient Communities
- Enhanced Cultural, Natural and Heritage Assets

The rationale behind the themes is described on pages 10 and 11.

Cross Cutting Themes

In addition to the four main themes above, there are five* cross cutting themes projects need to contribute to:

1. Fairer Highland – advancing equality (addressing equality issues and/or benefitting people in groups that are under-represented or disadvantaged)
2. Innovation (a new or different approach is proposed within the area)
3. Sustainability/Legacy (the project will continue to deliver benefits after LEADER funding)
4. Carbon Clever (the project can demonstrate a positive impact on the environment)
5. Skills Development (the project aims to expand the skills of those involved in implementing the project and/or on its participants)

**It is recognised that it would be difficult for every project to contribute to all of these themes. Therefore all projects will have to demonstrate how they meet the first three. Cross cutting themes 4 and 5 will be delivered by projects where applicable.*

Outcomes

Of the ten outcomes to be delivered by the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme, the Inner Moray Firth South LAP has identified five Primary Outcomes which it would like to deliver.

All projects seeking funding will be required to deliver **at least one** of the following Primary Outcomes:

1. Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/development
2. People have better access to local services and activities
3. Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities
4. Increased income from local produce through adding value
5. Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets

It is recognised that many projects will deliver more than one outcome and priority will be given to projects that, in addition to delivering one of the Primary Outcomes, also delivers one or more of the following additional Outcomes:

6. Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)
7. People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities
8. Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds

Outcomes not prioritised for delivery by the Inner Moray Firth South LAP

The outcomes included in the Highland Local Development Strategy, but not prioritised for delivery by the Inner Moray Firth South LAP are:

9. Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets
10. Improvements in the visitor experience

Although the LAP has not included outcome 10 as a priority outcome for delivery, they recognise the importance of tourism in the area and expect projects to come forward that deliver this outcome under the prioritised outcomes selected.

Whilst the Inner Moray Firth South LAP wishes to focus on projects that will deliver against its prioritised outcomes it also notes that there is often an overlap between outcome headings and eligible activity. The LAP therefore retains the discretion to consider applications that deliver against the outcomes not prioritised for delivery by the LAP if the applicant provides sufficient evidence that the project will deliver substantial community impact/legacy/ benefit.

The LAP has the discretion to commission projects that meet its priorities if these do not come forward in the normal course of events. Commissioned projects will be assessed in line with the process outlined in the Highland LDS.

Linkages with other EU, national or local strategies

As part of the application process, applicants will also need to show how their project links with other EU, national or local strategies. The table provided in appendix 6 demonstrates the linkages between the Highland Local Development Strategy and the EU 2020 priorities, Rural Priorities, the UK Partnership Agreement and the Highland Single Outcome Agreement.

Highland LEADER Programme themes

A brief description of the rationale behind the LEADER Programme themes is described below.

Stronger and More Resilient Communities

This theme is of key importance in delivering the strategic vision of the Programme and is likely to be impacted by initiatives falling under any of the other themes. Stronger and more resilient communities is an aspiration that Highland LEADER wishes to deliver and was ranked as the most important theme during the final consultation in September 2014. This theme has emerged from points raised in the SWOT process that have been categorised under the broad heading “Population & Community” and the Programme will look for projects that seek to combat the weaknesses and threats in this section, or which aim to deliver the noted opportunities. Impact on this theme could come through ensuring that people who volunteer their time are well supported; that community groups are encouraged and supported to work together in partnership within and across areas (including inter-generational partnerships); that everyone in the community knows what’s available locally and that the projects which are funded are carefully evaluated to ensure that the impact they have and the benefits they bring can be evidenced, which in turn will assist with sustainability. Stronger and more resilient communities also rely on a thriving local economy and it is expected that businesses will have a significant role to play in impacting this theme.

A Growing and Diversified Economy That Promotes Sustainability

We want to encourage more business start-ups and more diversification within the economy so that it will grow and supply more local employment. Tourism has been identified through the SWOT process as a key part of the economy in terms of local communities, and generally it is felt there are a number of opportunities to enhance this. We want to ensure we support projects that ensure visitors receive the best experience possible and that the tourist season is extended where feasible. We want to see new social enterprises developed where appropriate, and projects that aim to add value to local produce. This theme will directly impact the strategic vision of achieving growth and diversification of the local economy and has arisen from the points grouped under the economy heading in the SWOTs and statistical analysis.

Increased and Sustained Local Services and Activities

We are interested in services and activities that will make a difference to people who live here and also visitors to the area, for example better changing facilities linked to individual leisure activities or a central place in local communities with access to good broadband/WiFi. We want to support more community ownership and control of local services/activities where this is appropriate. We want to see improved access, including transport access, to these services and activities. This theme has arisen from points made under the quality of life heading in the SWOTs. In general quality of life is considered to be high in Highland although it is recognised that there are pockets of deprivation masked by overall statistics. Where negative points were made about quality of life these were related to isolation and difficulty in accessing activities and services. It is intended that this theme will directly contribute to both elements of the strategic vision through ultimately strengthening communities by increasing and sustaining what is on offer locally and/or improving the visitor experience.

Enhanced Cultural, Natural and Heritage Assets

The SWOT identified key strengths in Highland under the broad heading of cultural, natural and heritage assets. We want to ensure there is the best possible access to these assets, both physical and knowledge based – for example through excellent marketing and websites. We want to conserve the assets we have and see new ones developed and opened up, which in turn will contribute to the strategic vision of growth and diversification of the local economy. This theme recognises the importance of cultural, natural and heritage assets in providing a sense of place and strengthening the local community as much as a driver for the economy in terms of visitor spend.

What types of projects can LEADER fund under each outcome?

Under each outcome, we have explained what they could mean in practice for local communities. We have also provided examples of the types of project the Inner Moray Firth South LAP would look to support to deliver these outcomes.

Please note, 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 Highland Local Development Strategy (appendix 7).

1. Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/development

A strong local economy is essential in order to create development opportunities for Highland Communities. The LEADER programme aims to encourage more business start-ups and create a more diversified economy in Highland, so that it grows and provides more local employment. We want to help introduce new types of businesses and new products and services. We also want to help existing businesses to expand into new markets and deliver new services to increase their income. Creating additional jobs means that people have more disposable income to spend in Highland, helping to secure existing businesses and make them more sustainable. A wider range of employment and development opportunities is likely to lead to more young people choosing to remain in Highland. It will also help encourage more people to relocate to the area, bringing new skills. This in turn promotes the long term sustainability and prosperity of our communities.

Eligible Activity

Where Inner Moray Firth South based projects are eligible for consideration under the 'ring-fenced' Rural Enterprise or Farm Diversification LEADER budgets, the Inner Moray Firth South LAP expects that these projects will be signposted to these sources of funding in the first instance.

The Inner Moray Firth South LAP will revisit eligible project activities under this outcome once funding criteria has been determined for the central Rural Enterprise and Farm Diversification funds.

Funding from the Inner Moray Firth South budget towards this outcome will be directed towards activity that is not considered a priority for funding from the 'ring-fenced' Rural Enterprise/Farm Diversification funds. Funding from the Inner Moray Firth South budget will focus on small, local community based enterprises and upskilling of people.

2. People have better access to local services and activities

People in Highland communities are keen to have access to a range of local services and activities, without necessarily having to travel long distances. In some instances this may be about developing services/activities, in others it is about improving access to those which already exist.

Eligible Activity

Projects that:

Develop local services and activities, in particular:

- a) village hall/community building developments to accommodate new/innovative services/ activities
- b) clubs that provide sports, health and wellbeing activities and services
- c) development of community energy or recycling/reuse schemes
- d) community events which improve community cohesion or attract inward investment

- e) Services and activities which promote inclusion and wellbeing/reduce isolation, address the limited availability of indoor or wet weather facilities, or include the regeneration of vacant/dilapidated sites and facilities, would be particularly welcome.

Improve access to new and existing local services and activities, through:

- f) increasing awareness/better promotion of what is available locally
- g) removing or minimising barriers or disadvantage to services/activities
- h) improving physical access through, for example, the development of sustainable transport schemes, cycle tracks and pathways (of a scale which fits with the LAP budget) particularly where these are able to provide better links between communities and local services/attractions, better broadband and mobile phone coverage
- i) provision of digital skills training

3. Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities

Community ownership, or control, of land or buildings can be a key way in which rural communities can develop. This can be about protecting or enhancing local facilities, creating new spaces and new uses, or generating income for community activities and development projects. Community ownership can bring a new lease of life to facilities; it can increase community confidence, and allow communities to take more control of their own development needs. Examples of this might include retaining a local shop, renovating a derelict site or providing a new hub for community activities. Control of local assets can be a key factor in making a community more attractive to live in, supporting economic regeneration and sustainable development. The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill seeks to extend the community right to buy and make asset transfer requests easier. Highland LEADER seeks to support local communities to take advantage of this opportunity.

Eligible Activity

Projects that:

- a) enable communities to take over and/or sustainably develop community assets, services and activities
- b) provide support for the development and expansion of social/community enterprises and community owned/managed resources

- c) support communities to acquire income generating assets which enable them to become more sustainable and assist with community regeneration
- d) increase community engagement with community development and planning
- e) aim to put income earning opportunities within the hands of local communities

This could include all aspects of support from feasibility through to acquisition of assets and service delivery. Initiatives under this outcome should take account of the potential for displacement and there should be engagement with the business sector to protect businesses that use the asset the community is acquiring. It should also be possible to support businesses and community groups to work together to acquire an asset.

4. Increased income from local produce through adding value

Highland region produces superb local food and drink, renowned for its high quality. It is also famous for a wide range of traditional arts and crafts products. However, there are ways in which the value of these can be increased, leading to greater income directly for their producers, rather than distributors and retailers further down the supply chain. Highland LEADER is keen to help maximise the income generating opportunities for producers in the region and this will also have benefits for the communities in which they are based. Adding value to a product involves thinking creatively about a number of issues including how it is marketed, branded, packaged, its target audience and customer demands. It is about making products stand out in the market place in terms of unique identity and high quality.

Eligible Activity

Projects that:

- a) undertake feasibility and development work on adding value to local produce
- b) promote local produce including through a co-ordinated approach
- c) support collaboration between food/drinks producers and cultural activities/events
- d) develop food networks and trails
- e) encourage the development of local markets so local people can buy local produce, including developing wider supply chain and distribution links

5. Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets

Local people see that improved access can be of benefit both for them and for visitors. There are benefits in terms of raising the national and international profile of Highland to attract more visitors. Through improving access to the natural landscape there are both health and tourism benefits to be gained. Access can take different forms: it can relate to physical access (better pathways and cycle paths; better linkages between adjacent sites), it can relate to the feasibility and development of new sites, and it can also relate to better awareness and knowledge about what is available through information boards, newsletters, websites, marketing and promotion.

Eligible Activity

Projects that:

- a) improve access for disabled people to sites
- b) undertake feasibility studies/development of new sites
- c) relate to information products, websites, marketing and promotion initiatives
- d) promote safe access and appropriate signage
- e) promote opportunities for cultural activities to be accessed locally

- f) improve biodiversity and habitats around paths and tracks
- g) improve access to archaeological sites
- h) promote the Gaelic language and culture

The Inner Moray Firth South LAP will consider path development of a scale which fits with the available budget. Please contact the LEADER Development Officer for further information regarding the eligibility of path development projects.

Additional outcomes

Priority will be given to projects that, in addition to delivering one of the Primary Outcomes, also delivers one or more of the following additional Outcomes:

6. Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)

Local consultations have identified the need to support more partnership working within and between communities in the Highlands and further afield. Supporting the development of both existing and new partnerships can lead to more effective project delivery and more efficient use of funding and resources. It can also mean new ideas can be developed, communities can learn from each other's experiences, and new approaches to community development can be delivered.

However communities and businesses require support to develop partnership working. This might be something as simple as being able to visit a project in another area. It might involve supporting the evaluation of existing ways of working and identifying ways in which working with others might improve the effectiveness of a project. Once identified, support may be needed to train people in new ways of working and put in place systems and procedures to support this. Where new partnership working involves projects from other LEADER areas in Highland or further afield, these will be classed as co-operation projects. During final consultation in September 2014, 93% of survey respondents agreed with this outcome.

Eligible Activity

Eligible projects may include:

- a) funding for partnership events
- b) visits between partner areas
- c) one-off facilitation for capacity building around new project ideas
- d) communication/information/networking tools, preparatory and other costs for co-operation projects
- e) development of networks at local and Highland wide level
- f) shared learning events
- g) mentoring programmes

7. People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities

Volunteers play a crucial role in many community projects in Highland. However, it is recognised that there is high pressure on them at times. There is a need for more volunteers generally, for more young people to take up volunteering and for volunteers to have the opportunity to increase the range of skills they can offer.

If more volunteers are to be attracted to help deliver projects in Highland, it is essential that there is support for them to participate and develop new skills. Local consultations stressed the importance of this. During final consultation in September 2014, 95% of respondents agreed with this outcome.

Eligible Activity

Eligible projects might include:

- a) capacity building for volunteer managers
- b) support for new ways to engage younger volunteers
- c) communication and feedback tools for working with volunteers
- d) projects that provide volunteers with transferable skills
- e) provision of tools to help volunteers communicate and support each other
- f) projects which promote/value community based volunteering or combat volunteer fatigue

8. Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds

Being able to evidence the impact any project makes is vital. Individual projects need to show that they have been effective, in order to attract further grants, investment or additional service users or customers. It is important that projects know how to evaluate what they have delivered and present this clearly and effectively. At a higher level, entire grant programmes need to be able to demonstrate their impact. This is necessary in order to receive funding for future rounds, ensure funds are being targeted effectively to deliver the aims of the programme, make changes where necessary and in some cases to justify the use of taxpayers' money.

However, there are challenges in effectively showing the impact a project has had. Issues include lack of capacity/skills to undertake self-evaluation; lack of resources to commission external evaluations; lack of baseline evidence to compare projects with similar ones elsewhere. We want to ensure these issues are addressed. Given the importance of demonstrating the impact of projects, this issue has been set as one of the ten specific outcomes for the 2014- 2020 Highland LEADER Programme.

Eligible Activity

Eligible funding ideas will include:

- a) capacity building around self-evaluation
- b) resource to support baseline evidence gathering
- c) resource to support external evaluation for projects
- d) training in digital media evaluation techniques

Who can apply?

Applications can be made by anyone who lives in the Inner Moray Firth South area and/or wishes to undertake an activity within the area. This can include:

- individuals (including self employed)
- community and voluntary organisations (constituted bodies such as Development Trusts)
- micro & small enterprises (including social enterprises, charities, Community Interest Companies)
- public bodies

Target groups in the Inner Moray Firth South

During consultation undertaken to help develop the Highland Local Development Strategy, communities were asked to identify any groups:-

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

Across Highland the main groups identified were:

- Young people
- Older people
- Disabled people (including people with mental health issues)

The Inner Moray Firth South LAP agrees that whilst the above groups should be targeted, this should not be to the exclusion of others. The LAP also agreed to include Carers in the third category (Disabled people).

The LAP has decided not to initially target specific geographical areas as there is a wish to try to spread the benefit of LEADER funding throughout the Inner Moray Firth South area. However, applications are encouraged from the following:

- Remote/rural communities
- Communities ranked amongst the most deprived – Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

What level of support can my project receive?

- The Inner Moray Firth South LAP will consider applications for projects with total eligible project costs of £20,000 or above.
- Grants are available between £10,000 and £50,000
- Intervention rates will be available up to a maximum of 50%
- Please note that state aid rules may apply and this may limit how much you can claim, depending on what other public funding you have received
- The Inner Moray Firth South LAP reserves the right to award grants in excess of £50,000, or fund projects at a higher intervention rate (over 50%), in exceptional cases where a project will deliver significant community impact/legacy/ benefit

Match Funding

Match funding is the amount of funding secured from other sources in order to deliver the project. All match funding must be in the form of a direct cash contribution. In-kind (non-cash contributions) are ineligible as match funding. Please note European Funding of any kind cannot be used as match funding.

Applicants will be expected to demonstrate that local support for the project is reflected in contributions from known local funding sources, where appropriate.

Applicants should have match funding (or an Agreement in Principle) in place, or likely to be approved prior to the consideration of a LEADER funded project.

The Inner Moray Firth South LAP may consider projects where the match funding is not yet confirmed and issue a 'decision in principle', pending confirmation of the match funding. The decision in principle is not an offer of grant and will have an expiry date no longer than 60 days from the date of issue to ensure that LEADER funding for other eligible projects can be accessed. If the match funding is not secured before the expiry date, the application will be rejected and you will be required to submit a new application once the match funding has been confirmed.

Alternative Sources of Funding

As part of the application process, applicants will be required to demonstrate that they:

- are unable to fund the project from their own resources
- have fully explored alternative/additional sources of funding, for example a commercial loan

Where 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), these sources of funding will be considered in the first instance.

LEADER is one of several schemes included in the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP). Applicants should explore the availability/eligibility of other Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funding sources before approaching LEADER.

For further information about all the SRDP schemes please visit <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/>

Please note if an application for SRDP funding (including LEADER) is rejected, applicants cannot apply for funding for the same project to another SRDP scheme during that programme year.

How do I apply for LEADER funding?

If you have an idea for a LEADER project, please submit an Expression of Interest (EOI) form via the Scottish Rural Network website <https://www.ruralnetwork.scot/funding/leader/expression-interest-form>

The submission of an EOI is the first formal step in applying for LEADER funding.

The Expression of Interest form asks you for a short overview of your project, to enable us to assess if it is technically eligible for LEADER funding, if it broadly supports what LEADER is trying to achieve in Highland, and whether or not there are other funds more suitable for you to apply to.

If we approve your expression of interest, you will be invited to submit a full application form - this is the form on which the final decision will be made as to whether LEADER will fund your project. It is completed online and will ask for details on all aspects of your project.

How Long Does An Application Take?

A LEADER application can be a fairly lengthy process and you should bear this in mind when planning a project. The programme receives a high volume of enquiries and applications and these take time to assess and process.

You will need to submit your final application at least **8 weeks** before the meeting at which it is to be assessed. Please note this is the deadline for the submission of the final version of your application. A significant amount of information/detail is required, therefore your Development Officer will review draft versions of the application and provide feedback to help develop your application further. We would expect to comment on a number of draft versions of the form before an application is ready for submission, therefore a draft should be submitted as early as possible and well in advance of the deadline for final applications.

Meeting Dates and deadlines for submission can be found at www.highlandleader.com

What Happens If I Am Successful?

If your application is successful, we will write to you with a formal offer of grant, together with various terms and conditions. You will need to sign this and return it before you can start your project. Before signing, a LEADER Development Officer will meet with you to go through the contents, to ensure you are clear on what your obligations will be.

How Will I Receive My LEADER Money?

LEADER does not pay out grants in advance of work being undertaken. You will need to incur project expenditure and then claim it back from LEADER, typically on a quarterly basis. You will do this by completing a claim form, together with updates on how your project is progressing. You will need to submit original invoices and bank statements showing that they have been paid. LEADER staff will provide you with guidance and support in this. The application process will ask about cash flow for the project and how you plan to manage this.

What Makes A Good LEADER Application?

You should always discuss the specifics of your application with your local LEADER Development Officer. However, the following general points will help you to make a stronger application.

- Show how your project helps to deliver the objectives of the Inner Moray Firth South Local Area Action Plan. Make sure you familiarise yourself with this document. It is the benchmark against which your project will be assessed for eligibility and suitability for funding.
- Also think about the “bigger picture”- what wider national strategies or plans might your project help to deliver their objectives?
- Build your case- provide clear evidence of need and demand for your project. LEADER is a community led fund- show that you have consulted with the local community about your project and that there is support there for it.
- Be able to show what’s NEW about your project and that it’s not a continuation project or duplication of any existing local provision.
- Have a clear idea of project costs and be able to show how you have arrived at these- for example quotes, or examples of comparable projects elsewhere.
- Think carefully about project timescales and what you need to achieve by when. When you apply, you will be asked to set out clear project milestones. You will have to show you have met these before you can claim money from LEADER.
- There is quite a lot of reporting and record keeping involved with a LEADER project- ensure you will have a good administrative and record keeping system in place to support your project.
- The application process asks specifically about equalities issues- think carefully about how your project can be as inclusive as possible and whether any actions are required to help any groups to participate.
- Show that you have carefully considered project cash flow and that you have allowed enough time for your LEADER claim to be processed and paid out.
- You will be asked about your project’s expected targets and outcomes- be able to show how you have arrived at these- are they realistic? How will you prove you achieved them? How will you evaluate if your project has delivered what it set out to?
- First impressions are important- Is the form clearly written? Are all questions answered? Do figures add up correctly? Are signatures and contact details included? Is all supporting documentation attached?
- Does your organisation have the necessary skills to deliver the project? Do you need to bring in external support to help you? Have you factored this cost into your project?
- Have you identified possible risks to the project’s success and contingency plans to deal with these? Don’t dismiss this issue- funders expect there to be risks- the important thing is to show you have considered and planned for them.

Please note that regardless of the support received prior to submission of an application, your application will still be subject to a rigorous assessment.

Assessment Criteria

All projects will be scored against the following criteria:

Strategic Fit

Extent to which the project aligns and delivers against the Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) and Highland Local development Strategy (LDS), linking with the relevant themes, cross cutting themes and outcomes.

Engagement and Support

Extent of appropriate community and stakeholder engagement, support and participation, in relation to the nature/scale of the project.

Meeting a Need or Demand

Extent to which the project is responding to evidence of community need or gap in provision.

Project Legacy & Exit Strategy

Extent to which the project will deliver impact/benefit beyond the funding period and where applicable, there is a clear exit strategy so that this impact benefit can be delivered without future grant dependency.

Equality

Extent to which the project can demonstrate a positive impact for individuals in target groups identified in the Highland LDS and Local Area Action Plan and/or can demonstrate that it will advance equality of opportunity.

Value for Money/Reasonableness of Cost

The extent of economic/rural development or community/social benefits to be delivered by the project in relation to the level of LEADER grant requested and extent to which costs can be justified.

Organisational Competence

Extent to which the applicant has demonstrated they have the right level of resources with the necessary skills and an understanding of external funder requirements, to effectively deliver the project.

Robust and Achievable Delivery Plans

Extent to which the project plan (activities, timescales, milestones, cash-flow and outputs) are robust and realistic and that delivery can be measured and evidenced. Risks have been identified and where necessary plans are in place to manage/mitigate these.

Potential Displacement/Distortion

Extent to which there is evidence of distortion and/or displacement and where appropriate, the extent to which this will be managed.

Further information

Further information about the Highland LEADER Programme is available on www.highlandleader.com or by contacting Fiona Daschofsky, the LEADER Development Officer for the Inner Moray Firth South area:

Tel: 01463 702 542

Email: fiona.daschofsky@highland.gov.uk

Fiona will support and guide applicants in the Inner Moray Firth South area, through the process of applying for and managing a LEADER grant

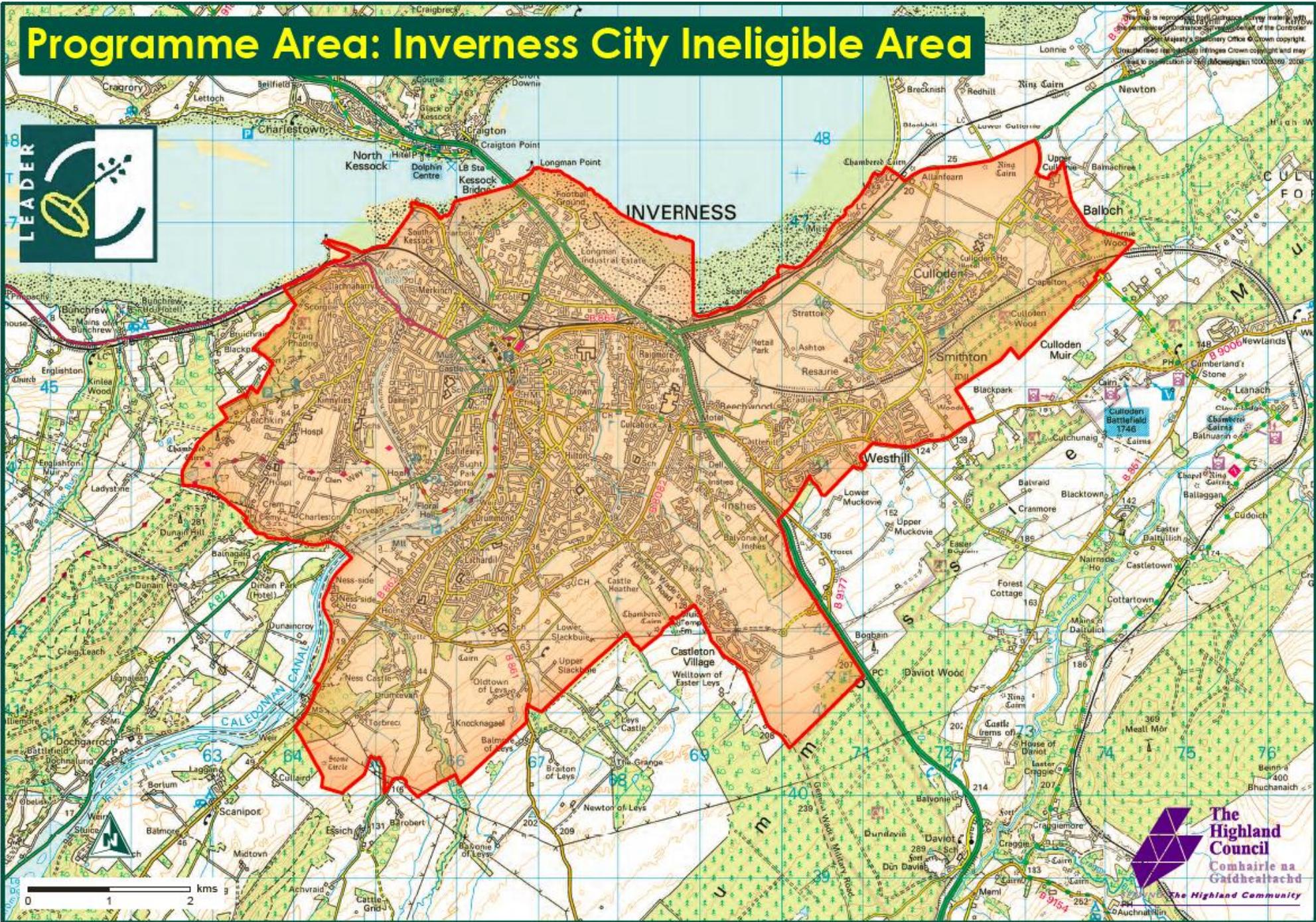
Useful Links

- Information on other funding schemes within the Scottish Rural Development Programme www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/SRDP20142020Schemes
- LEADER Expression of Interest Form www.ruralnetwork.scot/funding/leader
- Advice About Other Funding Options www.fundingscotland.com/

APPENDICES

1. Map – Inverness City Ineligible Area
2. Map – Cairngorm LEADER Programme Area
3. Area Overview and Demographic Data
4. SWOT Analysis
5. Key Priorities/Challenges for Inner Moray Firth South
6. Strategic Linkages
7. Highland Local Development Strategy Eligible Activities

Programme Area: Inverness City Ineligible Area

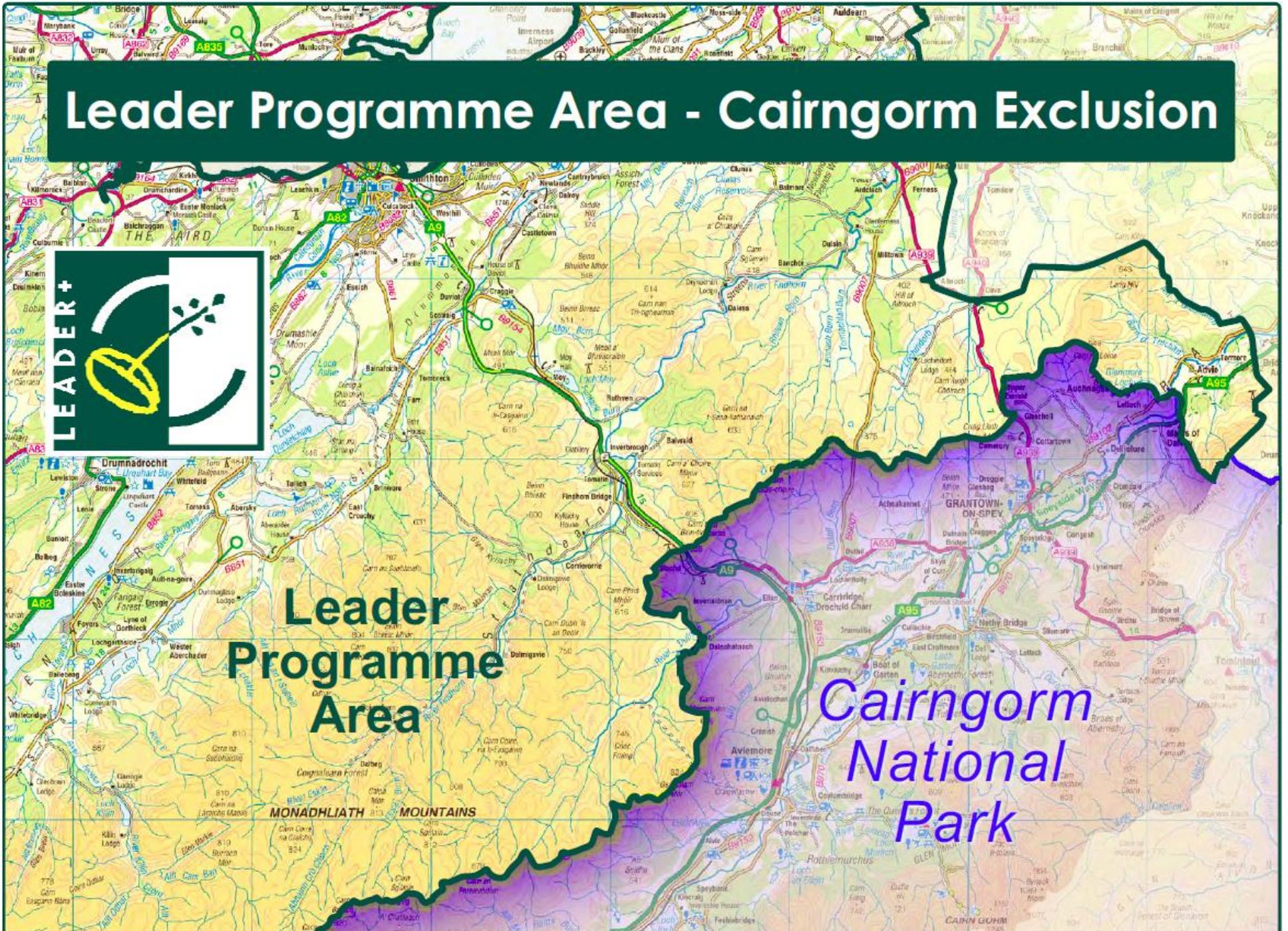


Leader Programme Area - Cairngorm Exclusion



Leader Programme Area

Cairngorm National Park



Inner Moray Firth South Area Overview and Demographic Data

Physical Features

Inner Moray Firth South is an amalgamation of the Nairnshire and Rural Inverness Local Area Partnerships. The Rural Inverness area comprises the Aird and Loch Ness Ward, part of Inverness South Ward outwith the city development area and the rural part of Culloden and Ardersier, Cawdor and Piperhill. It extends south to the boundary of Badenoch and Strathspey. The extremities of the area include national and international heritage designations with little human occupation but with significant archaeological, wilderness and wildlife values.

The former county of Nairnshire is the eastern gateway to the Highlands. It stretches from the Moray coast south over moorland to the boundary with Badenoch and Strathspey. The area benefits from prime agricultural land, forestry and mineral reserves, as well as a long sandy beach at Nairn which makes it a popular holiday destination.

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

Settlement Pattern

The main village settlements of Drumnadrochit, Beauly, Fort Augustus, Ardersier, Croy, Kirkhill, Kiltarlity and Dores have a dependency of over 75% on Inverness for employment. There are also more remote and fragile landward communities to the south and west of Inverness.

In Nairnshire, Nairn is the principal administrative and service centre. A significant proportion of the population live in scattered hamlets and individual farm cottages throughout the rural area. The village of Auldearn is the other sizeable population centre in the area.

Demographic Profile

Inner Moray Firth South has a population of 28,928 which has risen from 24,681 in 2001. This is an increase of 17.2%: within this average figure, the growth was higher in Rural Inverness at 19.0%, with lower growth of 14.9% in Nairnshire. These figures compare to the population increase in Highland of 11.1% over the same period.

50.9 % of the population in Inner Moray Firth South are over the age of 45 years. 31.1% of the population are aged between 16 and 44 years. This compares to Highland figures of 48.5% over 45 years and 33.7% aged 16-44 years.

In 2001, 20% of the population were aged 15 years or younger. In 2011, 16-29 year olds made up 13.0% of the population. Whilst these figures are not directly comparable (the census categories span 16 and 14 years respectively, and not people in the 15 years or younger age group in 2001 will have reached the 16-29 year old group by 2011) they do suggest a trend of outward migration of young people over the ten year period, which is consistent with the increasing percentages of people in the older age groups over the same time period.

Generally the population in Inner Moray Firth South is ageing: in 2001, 45.4% of the population were over 45 years; by 2011 this had risen to 50.9%. There is a similar trend across Highland but with a marginally higher percentage in the older age group; in 2001, 44% of the population was over 45 years and in 2011 this had risen to 51%. Taking account of the overall population growth, the Inner Moray Firth South has shown an increase in the population of those aged over 45, of 3,515 over the ten year period – a 31.5% increase, which is higher than the Highland average increase of 28.8%.

There are three areas in the Inner Moray Firth South that are ranked in the 15% most deprived areas of Highland, but no areas ranking in the 15% most deprived areas in Scotland (see Local Economy section for more detail).

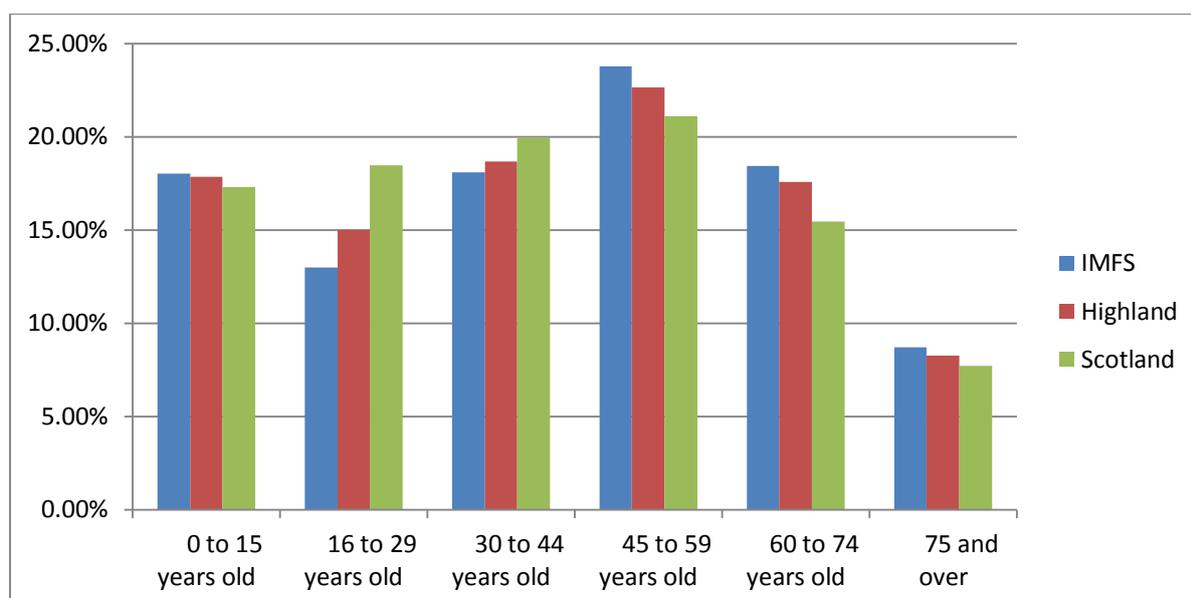
Age Distribution

Over half of the population of Inner Moray Firth South is aged over 45 (51%). This is higher than the Highland average (48.5%). Both are significantly higher than the Scotland average of 44.3%.

The 0 – 15 year age group in Inner Moray Firth South represents 18% of the population; this is slightly higher than the Highland average of 17.8% and the Scotland average of 17.3%.

The 16-44 year old group in Inner Moray Firth South represents just 31% of the population. This is well below the Highland average of 33.7% and the Scotland average of 38.4%. The variance is particularly evident in the 16 to 29 year old group; where the percentage in Inner Moray Firth South is 13%, which compares with 15% in Highland and 18.5% in Scotland.

Percentage of Population by Age



Ethnicity

	IMFS	Highland	Scotland
White – Scottish	77.1%	79.9%	84.0%
White - Other British	18.9%	14.7%	7.9%
White - Irish	0.7%	0.6%	1.0%
White - Polish	0.4%	1.5%	1.2%
White - Other	1.5%	1.9%	1.9%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	0.7%	0.8%	2.7%
Other ethnic groups	0.8%	0.7%	1.4%

98.5% of the Inner Moray Firth South population are White, including 0.7 White Irish and 0.4% White Polish. 0.7% of the population are Asian, and 0.8% are Other ethnic groups.

There is a higher percentage of White Scottish and other British people living in Inner Moray Firth South (96%) than in Highland (94.6%) or Scotland (91.9%).

Health

85.2% of the population in Inner Moray Firth South rate their health as good or very good. This is comparable to the figures in Highland (84%) and Scotland (82.3%). 18% have a long-term health condition that limits their day to day activities. 9.1% of the population provide some unpaid care each week, with 2.4% providing 50 or more hours each week. Similar figures can be seen in Highland and Scotland.

Local Economy

There are three Data Zones in Inner Moray Firth South with SIMD ranks in Highland, but none in Scotland (i.e. in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland or Highland)

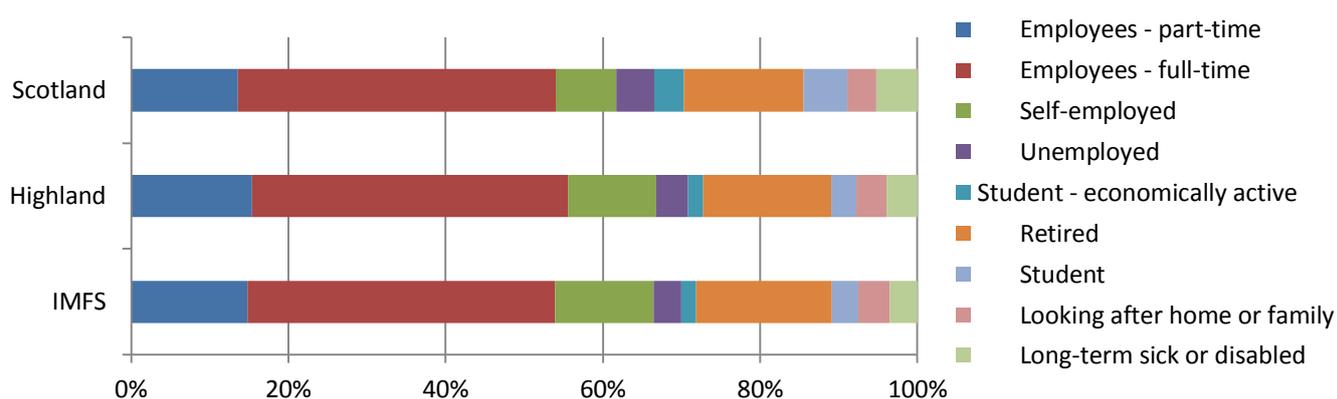
Data Zones in the LAP Area with Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks in Scotland and Highland			
Zones in 15% most deprived shaded			
Data Zone	Data Zone Name	Overall SIMD 2012 Rank in Scotland	Overall SIMD 2012 Rank in Highland
S01003887	Nairn South	1,463	27
S01003882	Nairn Moss-side	1,481	29
S01003878	Ardersier	1,726	37
S01003758	Loch Ness East	2,554	78
S01003894	Nairn Central	2,620	82
S01003885	Nairn Sandown	2,767	90
S01003886	Nairn Academy	2,819	95
S01003892	Nairn Boath Park	3,093	109
S01003865	Croy	3,240	120
S01003777	Kiltarlity	3,388	133
S01003776	Loch Ness North West	3,582	147
S01003854	Beaulay East	3,603	149
S01003847	Beaulay West	3,626	152

S01003782	Nairn South Rural	3,896	176
S01003857	Cawdor	3,931	181
S01003762	Strathnairn & Strathdearn	4,181	193
S01003883	Auldearn	4,252	204
S01003899	Nairn Lochloy	4,274	207
S01003753	Loch Ness South	4,330	210
S01003780	Drumossie	4,332	211
S01003775	Strathglass	4,408	219
S01003769	Drumnadrochit	4,418	220
S01003875	Nairn West Rural	4,464	225
S01003842	Kirkhill	4,500	231
S01003874	Dalcross	4,510	232
S01003770	Balnain	4,519	234
S01003795	Moniack	4,521	235
S01003900	Nairn Fishertown East	4,570	239
S01003803	Bunchrew	4,825	250
S01003843	Beaully Rural	4,885	255
S01003888	Nairn East Rural	4,944	258
S01003891	Nairn Achareidh South	5,293	269
S01003898	Nairn Fishertown West	5,971	284
S01003896	Nairn Achareidh North	6,065	288
S01003890	Nairn Showfield	6,310	291

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.

SIMD = Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

Economic Activity



In 2011, 70.9% of the population aged 16 – 74 were economically active, with 3.4% unemployed. This is slightly lower than the Highland average of 71.5%. The percentage of unemployed people in this age range is lower than the Highland and Scotland averages. Of those people who are unemployed, in Inner Moray Firth South, 8% have never worked. This contrasts favourably with the Highland average of 9.3% and the Scotland average of 13.9%.

Self employment at 12.4% is higher than the Highland average of 11% and both are significantly higher than the Scotland average of just 7.5%.

Benefits

1.7% of the working age population claimed job seekers allowance* in the year November 2012- October 2013. This is significantly lower than both 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).

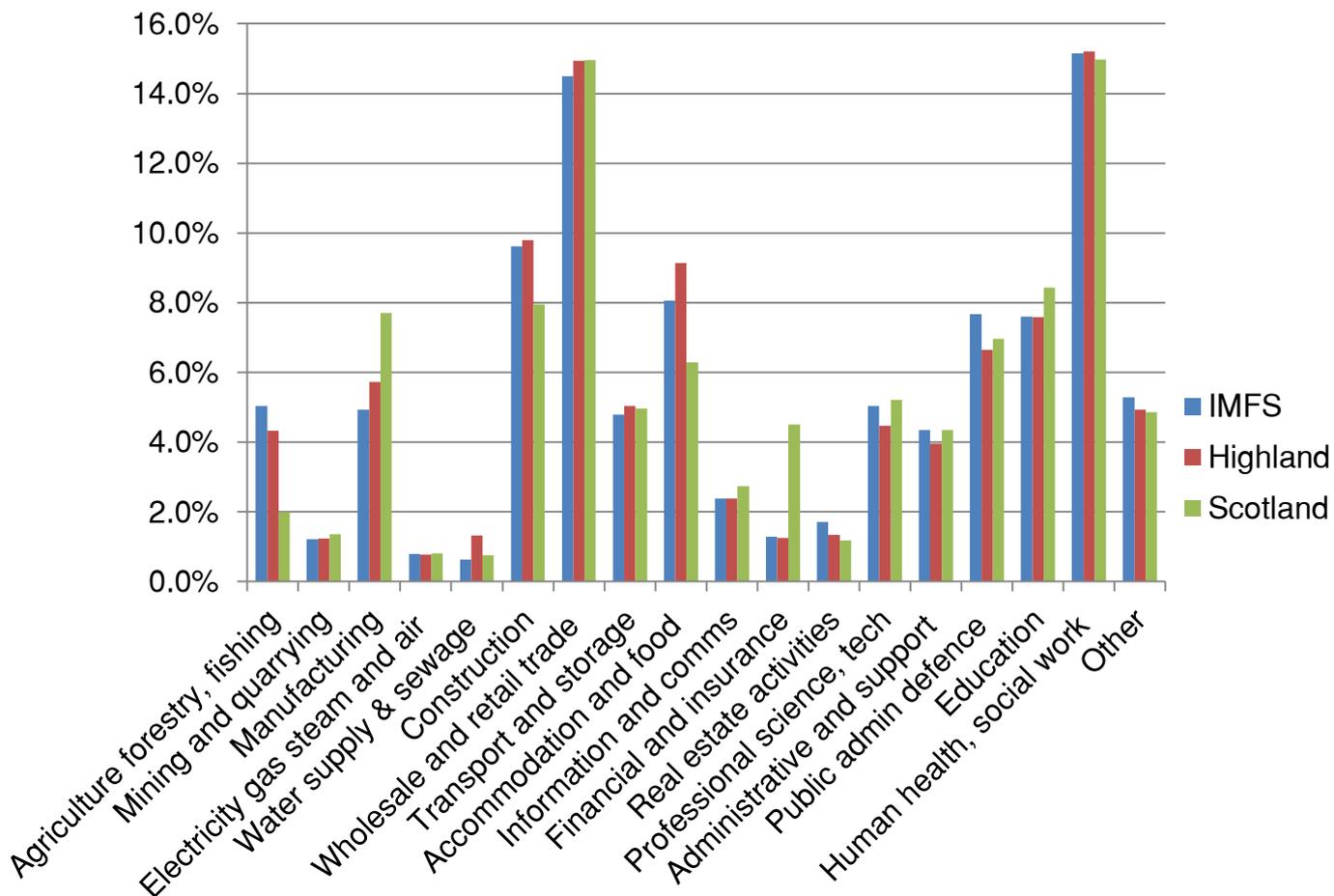
The 2012/2013 figure has been used as this is the 12 months running up to the introduction of Universal Credit. It can be difficult to make comparisons using Universal Credit as this has not been introduced nationally and it is not clear what benefits are being claimed in the Universal Credit payment.

* Not all unemployed people claim job seekers allowance.

Unemployment

		IMFS	Highland	Scotland
% Unemployed People in 16-74 Year Age Group		3.4%	4.0%	4.77%
Percentage of Unemployed People by Age Group	Aged 16 to 24	25.9%	28.5%	30.2%
	Aged 25 to 49	48.1%	48.6%	51.4%
	Aged 50 to 74	26.0%	22.9%	18.4%

Inner Moray Firth South: Employment By Industry



Looking at employment by industry, Inner Moray Firth South has a higher percentage of people employed in agriculture, and public administration/defence and a lower percentage employed in manufacturing, wholesale and retail, and transport than both Highland and Scotland.

The general distribution of employment by industry is consistent with Highland as a whole with no more than 1% variance in any given category.

In 2011, 17.7% of people in employment in Inner Moray Firth South, worked 49 or more hours per week, which was higher than the Highland average of 15.8% and significantly higher than the Scotland average of 11.7%.

Education

Percentage of Population over 16 with Qualifications

	IMFS	Highland	Scotland
No qualifications	23.6%	25.5%	26.8%
Level 1*	24.2%	24.5%	23.1%
Level 2**	14.5%	14.4%	14.3%
Level 3***	9.0%	9.2%	9.7%
Level 4 and above ****	28.7%	26.4%	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 Education qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications)

23.6% of people in Inner Moray Firth South have no qualifications, compared to 25.5% in Highland and 26.8% in Scotland.

A higher percentage hold Level 4 or above qualifications (28.7%) compared to Highland (26.4%) and Scotland (26.1%).

Leaver Destinations – Source: Highland Council SLDR 2012/13

	Charleston Academy	Glen Urquhart HS	Inverness Royal Academy	Kilchuimen Academy	Nairn Academy	IMFS	Highland Overall
Higher Education	31.80%	60.00%	37.80%	25.00%	34.30%	36.00%	33.70%
Further Education	26.40%	8.00%	20.70%	33.30%	27.30%	27.40%	23.70%
Training	5.40%	4.00%	2.10%	0.00%	2.10%	2.80%	1.90%
Employment	27.90%	24.00%	29.80%	16.70%	28.00%	28.10%	31.20%
Voluntary Work	0.80%	4.00%	1.10%	0.00%	0.00%	0.80%	0.70%
Activity Agreements	0.80%	0.00%	2.70%	8.30%	2.10%	2.00%	1.90%
Unemployed Seeking	6.20%	0.00%	4.80%	16.70%	4.20%	5.00%	5.60%
Unemployed Not Seeking	0.00%	0.00%	1.10%	0.00%	1.40%	4.07%	0.80%

A Higher percentage of school leavers carried on into higher and further education than in Highland as a whole.

A Higher percentage of school leavers are unemployed but not seeking work in Inner Moray Firth South (4.07%) compared to the Highland average of 0.8%; this represents 20 school leavers.

Inner Moray Firth South SWOT Analysis

The consultation undertaken to develop the Highland LDS also identified area specific development priorities and issues. These are set out below for Inner Moray Firth South.

Strengths

- There is a well-educated population (borne out by more positive school leaver destination rates than other parts of the Highlands or the Scottish average) and a good body of volunteers in the Rural Inverness communities. People also remark on an independent, 'can do' spirit. The active and engaged human resource of Rural Inverness supports a wide range of community groups and associations. Community transport is strong (perhaps in response to remoteness and the need to address limited private/public transport services).
- Nairnshire has a robust and diverse economy. Strengths include agriculture, forestry and several internationally focused green energy businesses.
- In addition to Nairn's popularity as a tourist destination in its own right, particularly around golf, fishing and high quality beaches, the wider area around the Moray Firth offers a strong attraction for tourists and a valuable marketing resource. The surrounding hinterland has a range of attractive and accessible tourist destinations.
- There is a solid (but ageing) road infrastructure. Good rail links exist and the proximity to the airport at Inverness is seen as a distinct advantage for businesses in the surrounding area.
- Tourism is seen as a major strength of the economy across the area, with assets that can be marketed internationally.
- People in Rural Inverness specifically commented that they value the low crime rate, secure nature of the area and the quality of its primary schools. People in Nairnshire rate their quality of life highly in terms of access to sport, leisure and recreation opportunities. There is an attractive green riverside area and a harbour/ marina now devoted entirely to leisure sailing.
- Nairnshire has a favourable climate and a varied and attractive environment, which ranges from coastal plain and seaboard forest, through lowland pasture and a narrow river valley to woodland and open moorland. The cultural heritage of Nairnshire is also attractive, with historic urban architecture within Nairn (High Street and Fishertown conservation area) and several sites of historical interest. The Moray Firth offers a high quality habitat for birds and wildlife.
- Rural Inverness contains numerous popular visitor locations, particularly around Beaulieu, Drumnadrochit and Fort Augustus, Fort George and the Moray Firth coastline. Specific attractions include Glen Affric National Nature reserve, Loch Ness, Urquhart Castle, the Great Glen Way, the Caledonian Canal, and the General Wade Bridge at Whitebridge amongst others.

Weaknesses

- The demographics of Rural Inverness were seen as a weakness, with a declining working age population. There are also concerns about 'volunteer fatigue' and a need to improve leadership skills within the voluntary sector. There is scope for greater co-ordination and a sharper focus on leadership in the community and voluntary sectors. There is also a need to improve social interaction between communities, individuals and different age groups.
- Rural communities close to Inverness are felt to lose out as they are deemed to be accessible and not remote which means less funding is available for services/ infrastructure essential to support community resilience
- Within Nairnshire, there were also concerns about a higher than average proportion of retired and older residents, and a limited third sector infrastructure to support community and voluntary groups.
- Within Nairnshire, while the skills and expertise of local people were viewed as a strength, it was felt there were few opportunities for local employment. There are barriers to further growth and development. Facilities for independent travellers are limited and there is a lack of 'mid-market' tourist accommodation. The condition of Nairn's High Street is considered to have deteriorated and is in need of improved maintenance and repair. Visitor signage is also felt to be poor. A number of these weaknesses, and proposals for addressing them, were captured in the Nairn Town Centre Action Plan Workshop at the end of April 2014.
- The number of absentee landlords, key buildings lying empty (such as Rosebank Church) some derelict vacant sites in the town centre, and the volume of traffic in the town also has a negative impact.
- The shortage of local jobs may, in part, be due to the proximity of Inverness, where public sector organisations, local retailing and services, third-sector offices, and most commercial and industrial enterprises are concentrated. The reduction and centralisation of local administration reinforces the perception that Nairnshire can be served by Inverness based services.
- Connectivity between bus, rail and airport services is poor, and the frequency and routing variable. Provision for safe cycling is minimal. Late night public transport links between Inverness and Nairn in particular are felt to be limited. Traffic congestion on the A96 in Nairn is a current weakness- there are felt to be problems with traffic flow and traffic light synchronisation.
- Within Rural Inverness, there are concerns in terms of tourism around the seasonal nature of the holiday market and fluctuations in employment and income.
- The growth of Inverness and its influence was felt to be a weakness for the smaller and more remote rural communities in the area and their local economies. It was noted that house prices are pushed up in some towns and villages where commuters live making them less affordable for local people and it creates a distinctive 'two tiered' aspect to Rural Inverness with an inner circle of dormitory towns and an outer more remote part which is seen as being far from services.

- Pockets of Rural Inverness still have either very poor or no broadband, which is an obvious weakness in terms of economic development.
- Public transport is a key barrier in Rural Inverness with significant drive time in some parts to key services – amongst the highest in the Highlands.
- In Nairnshire, while the availability of a range of leisure and recreation facilities in the town is highly valued there is awareness that out with the town centre, opportunities tend to focus much more on outdoor activities alone.
- A specific geographical issue was raised regarding Ardersier which gets by-passed by tourists going to Fort George which is seen as a lost opportunity for that community.
- Potential income from renewable energy schemes is noted to be something that can greatly assist local communities. However, it was felt that one weakness of these is that the financial benefit is often confined to too small a radius from the scheme.

Opportunities

- Community land and asset ownership, as a way of generating income and assisting with community regeneration, resilience and delivery of services, is felt to be a key opportunity. It was noted however that any such actions or initiatives would require adequate support for communities if they were to be successful.
- In Nairnshire, a number of new opportunities were identified. It was felt more sport events making use of the flat coastal terrain (such as cycling or triathlon events) and angling events would help attract visitors at quieter times of the year.
- There is a dedicated business/industrial park at Balmakeith which is not fully occupied and still has sites and premises available. There are opportunities for imaginative development primarily in the town centre (around bus station/Regal cinema/Rosebank Church/High St) where regeneration would encourage greater footfall for business and services.
- There are currently discussions ongoing between the Association of Nairn Businesses and ward 19 Councillors to see whether a Nairn Economic Initiative would work along the lines of the original Nairn Initiative.
- The proposed A96 bypass is viewed as both an opportunity and a potential threat in Nairn. When seen as an opportunity, there is a view that it may enhance the appeal of Nairn as a tourist destination by reducing traffic congestion in the town.
- In Rural Inverness, the main point that was raised was that more emphasis is needed on the marketing of Rural Inverness beyond the attraction of Loch Ness. While the obvious importance of Loch Ness as a tourist attraction and internationally marketable asset was acknowledged, it was felt there was a need for wider marketing to communicate the region's diversity. It was also felt there was scope for greater inter agency collaboration in the area.
- The 2007- 2013 LEADER programme saw a number of successful play park development projects that have had a positive impact on the communities concerned. There is felt to be an opportunity to roll this out further in the next programme, and for

communities to learn from the experiences of those who have already undertaken such projects.

- There are several other emerging opportunities. Communities can benefit economically from renewable energy projects – both in terms of cost savings and also in terms of feed-in tariffs leading to greater sustainability.
- A key opportunity exists to improve transport and better link up the various communities of Rural Inverness, including the development of green routes into work and leisure facilities. There may be scope for social enterprise to play a role in addressing this service gap.
- Considerable tourism and heritage opportunities were identified across the LAP area. In Nairnshire there is scope, for example, to re-establish former Victorian walks along the river for local people and tourists. There is potential to develop walks linking the Moray Coastal Walk to that of Inverness and the Great Glen Way as already outlined in detail in local development plans, but not (yet) implemented. The starting point for a better developed and integrated path network could be a harbour ‘hub’ with a café and harbour sport and leisure activities. This would also add to the appeal of the adjacent busy caravan holiday park. There is also considerable scope to enhance and upgrade the existing amenities in the Links area.
- There is further scope for more creative marketing initiatives such as treasure hunts incorporating castles and the whisky trail. Nairn already has a reputation as a ‘festival town’ and this can be further developed. Within Rural Inverness, more can be done to develop the coastal areas with a wider range of paths felt to be of importance. Improved access to water sports, including rowing, sea kayaking, canoeing and sailing was felt to be an opportunity that would benefit both locals and tourists alike. The potential of a marine/coastal festival was raised. The possibility of investigating and developing new marine transport opportunities to connect coastal communities was also raised.
- More generally, it was felt that there was potential to make more of the Natural Environment, through Nature based tourism or activities utilising the natural environment.
- There is also scope to increase land productivity and produce more food locally. The availability of good quality, fertile land creates opportunities for people to grow their own fruit and vegetables.

Threats

- A key threat was felt to be that while the continuing growth of Inverness isolates the more remote rural communities, there is felt to be an absence of strategy to address this. The complexity of private land ownership arrangements is a threat to a more integrated approach to addressing this problem.
- As noted above, the impact of the planned A96 bypass is seen as both a threat and an opportunity. There is some concern that it may reduce visitor spend for local traders (already facing the threat posed by the rise of internet shopping).
- The development of the new town of Tornagrain between Inverness and Nairn has implications for local services and the local population. Similarly the establishment of a business park adjacent to Inverness airport, while potentially stimulating demand for

housing in Nairn, will be a rival location for potential local businesses offering employment.

- There are also significant threats to quality of life in Nairn posed by inadequate sewerage capacity, traffic congestion and the deterioration of the fabric of some buildings. Absentee landlords are also felt to be a problem. Quality of life could also be improved by improving pedestrian routes
- There are risks to the quality of life for people in Rural Inverness. Public sector cuts threaten services for ageing, dispersed and remote communities. The risk is that a prosperous 'inner Rural Inverness', benefiting from its proximity to the City, masks a more deprived and isolated 'outer Rural Inverness'
- There is a challenge to counter the appeal of surrounding national parks as well as to balance the appeal of Loch Ness with wider marketing of the area. Climate change also poses a long-term threat e.g. in terms of the golf courses in Nairn and potential rises in sea levels.
- The growth of renewable energies, while generally viewed as an opportunity, also throws up threats. There are concerns about the impact of renewables on the landscape and this needs to be carefully managed.

Key Challenges for Inner Moray Firth South (IMFS)

A review of the SWOT analysis (appendix 5), supported by demographic data (appendix 4), has identified four key challenges for IMFS:

Proximity to Inverness

The SWOT analysis highlighted that Nairnshire and Rural Inverness are poorly served as they are seen as close enough to Inverness to make use of the services and amenities there

There is a shortage of local jobs as many businesses and public sector organisations are based in Inverness

There may also be further threats from the development of Tornagrain, the development of a proposed business park at Inverness Airport and the A96 bypass

Tourism

The SWOT analysis highlighted the importance of tourism across Inner Moray Firth South and there are many opportunities to improve this in Nairnshire and in Rural Inverness.

However the seasonality of tourism related work was highlighted so it will also be important to ensure there are year-round employment opportunities

Impact of Renewables

The money that is available to communities from renewable energy projects is seen as beneficial but there is concern that communities that can benefit from this money are confined to too small a radius from the scheme

There may also be a detrimental impact on the landscape and this needs to be carefully managed

Strategic Linkages

Programme Outcomes

1. Improved access for residents and visitors to cultural and natural assets
2. Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural and natural assets
3. People have better access to local services and activities
4. Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities
5. Improvements in the visitor experience
6. Increased income from local produce through adding value
7. Increased employment through small enterprises
8. Volunteers are better supported
9. Increased partnership working between community groups (within and across areas)
10. Improved measuring of the benefits/impacts of projects

Programme Theme	Contributing Outcomes	Rural Priorities	EU 2020	UK Partnership Agreement	Single Outcome Agreement 2013/14 – 2018/19
Stronger and more resilient communities	3. 4. 7. 8. 9. 10	<p>1. Fostering knowledge transfer, co-operation and innovation</p> <p>6. Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development</p>	<p>1. Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p> <p>2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies</p> <p>8. Promoting employment and supporting labour mobility</p> <p>9. Promoting social inclusion and combating poverty</p>	2. Addressing social exclusion and unemployment	<p>Children receive the help and support they need to optimise their well-being at every stage.</p> <p>Children get the best start in life and enjoy positive, rewarding experiences growing up.</p> <p>To improve the wellbeing of families to support children</p> <p>To improve the ways in which communities participate and are</p>

			<p>10. Investing in education, skills and lifelong learning</p> <p>11. Enhancing institutional capacity and an efficient public administration</p>		<p>empowered</p> <p>Children thrive as a result of nurturing relationships and stable environments</p> <p>People are, and feel, free to live their lives without harassment and discrimination, and can take part in community life.</p> <p>People benefit from public services in a fairer way and are able to have their say about them.</p> <p>Highland becomes even safer</p> <p>Reduce fuel poverty</p> <p>Increased number of people in areas of deprivation engaged in activities that strengthen the skills and confidence of those communities to take effective action on community issues.</p> <p>Improved mental wellbeing</p> <p>Geographical</p>
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					<p>inequalities: Reduced health inequalities between the targeted areas and the four least deprived areas in Highland</p> <p>People are healthy and have a good quality of life</p> <p>People are supported to realise their potential and to maximise their independence</p> <p>People are geographically & socially connected and do not become isolated</p>
A sustained, growing and diversified economy	3. 4. 5. 6. 7.	<p>1. Fostering knowledge transfer, co-operation and innovation</p> <p>2. Enhancing competitiveness, promoting innovative technologies and sustainable management of forests</p> <p>3. Promoting food chain organisation and risk management</p>	<p>1.Strengthening research, technological development and innovation</p> <p>2. Enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies</p> <p>(3) enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and</p>	<p>1.Increasing labour market participation, promoting business competitiveness and research and development investment</p>	<p>Business Support - Business support activities are aligned to help businesses prosper</p> <p>Skills & Employability – Workforce skills are matched to the needs of key growth sectors and businesses</p> <p>Widen participation in the labour market across all client groups</p>

		<p>5. Promoting resource efficiency and transition to low carbon economy</p> <p>6. Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development</p>	<p>the fisheries and aquaculture sector (for the EMFF);</p> <p>(4) supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p> <p>(6) protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency</p> <p>(7) promoting sustainable transport and removing bottlenecks in key network infrastructures</p> <p>(8) promoting employment and supporting labour mobility</p> <p>(10) investing in education, skills and lifelong learning</p>		<p>and across all Highland geographies.</p> <p>Ensure that young people can enter the labour market with aspiration, skills and experience.</p>
<p>Increased and sustained local services and activities</p>	<p>3. 4. 6. 7. 8.</p>	<p>1. Fostering knowledge transfer, co-operation and innovation</p> <p>6. Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development</p>	<p>(2) enhancing access to, and use and quality of, information and communication technologies</p> <p>(3) enhancing the competitiveness of small and medium-sized enterprises, the agricultural sector (for the EAFRD) and the fisheries and</p>	<p>2. Addressing social exclusion and unemployment</p>	<p>Infrastructure - High quality infrastructure secures Highland's competitive success</p> <p>Creating Successful Places –Highland towns, industrial and rural areas prosper as a result of the right environment to make them attractive for</p>

			<p>aquaculture sector (for the EMFF);</p> <p>(9) promoting social inclusion and combating poverty</p> <p>(10) investing in education, skills and lifelong learning</p>		<p>people and investment</p> <p>Improve access to services for hard to reach and disadvantaged groups</p> <p>Robust transport network that prioritises active travel opportunities</p>
Enhanced cultural, heritage and natural assets	1.2.	<p>1. Fostering knowledge transfer, co-operation and innovation</p> <p>2. Enhancing competitiveness, promoting innovative technologies and sustainable management of forests</p> <p>5. Promoting resource efficiency and transition to low carbon economy</p> <p>6. Promoting social inclusion, poverty reduction and economic development</p>	<p>(4) supporting the shift towards a low-carbon economy in all sectors</p> <p>(5) promoting climate change adaptation, risk prevention and management</p> <p>(6) protecting the environment and promoting resource efficiency</p> <p>(8) promoting employment and supporting labour mobility</p> <p>(10) investing in education, skills and lifelong learning</p>	3.Developing an environmentally friendly and resource efficient economy	<p>Manage sustainably the outstanding natural heritage of the Highlands to optimise the economic, health and learning benefits</p> <p>To increase and develop the use of renewable energy (linked to economic recovery and employability outcomes).</p> <p>A carbon neutral Inverness in a low carbon Highland by 2025</p> <p>Improve access to the outdoors</p>

LDS Eligible Activities

Please refer to section 3 of the Highland Local Development Strategy for further information.

Primary Outcomes

Outcome: Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification

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

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/WiFi 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

Outcome: Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities

Eligible Activities:

- all aspects of community ownership from feasibility through to acquisition
- support for future planning and developments to existing community owned and led services
- projects which increase community engagement with community development and planning
- projects that aim to put income earning opportunities within the hands of local communities

Initiatives under this outcome should take account of the potential for displacement and there must be engagement with the business sector to protect businesses that use the asset the community is acquiring. It should also be possible for business in a community be supported to work together and acquire an asset.

Outcome: Increased income from local produce through adding value

Eligible Activities:

- development and feasibility work on adding value to local produce
- promotion of local produce including through a co-ordinated approach
- collaboration between food/drinks producers and cultural activities/events
- development of food networks and trails

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

Additional Outcomes

Outcome: Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including inter-generational partnerships)

Eligible Activities:

- funding for partnership events
- visits between partner areas
- one-off facilitation for capacity building around new project ideas
- communication/information/networking tools
- preparatory costs for co-operation projects
- development of networks at local and Highland wide level
- shared learning events
- mentoring programmes

Outcome: People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities

Eligible Activities:

- capacity building for volunteer managers
- support for new ways to engage younger volunteers
- communication and feedback tools for working with volunteers
- projects that provide volunteers with transferable skills
- provision of tools to help volunteers communicate and support each other
- projects which promote/value community based volunteering or combat volunteer fatigue

Outcome: Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds

Eligible Activities:

- capacity building around self-evaluation
- resource to support baseline evidence gathering
- resource to support external evaluation for projects
- training in digital media evaluation techniques

Outcomes not prioritised for delivery by the IMFS LAP

Outcome: Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets

Eligible Activities:

- capacity building for volunteers/staff in managing cultural, natural and heritage assets
- conservation projects that involve local people/volunteers and potentially can benefit visitors to the area
- feasibility studies to explore new ways of sustaining what exists
- projects that contribute to energy conservation and carbon reduction as well as general protection for the environment (marine and terrestrial)
- conservation of built heritage
- management of natural assets
- project identifying and enhancing ecosystem services and training for conservation volunteers
- community asset ownership

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, developing and testing innovative ideas
- provision of sustainable transport solutions for visitors
- projects which promote cultural tourism