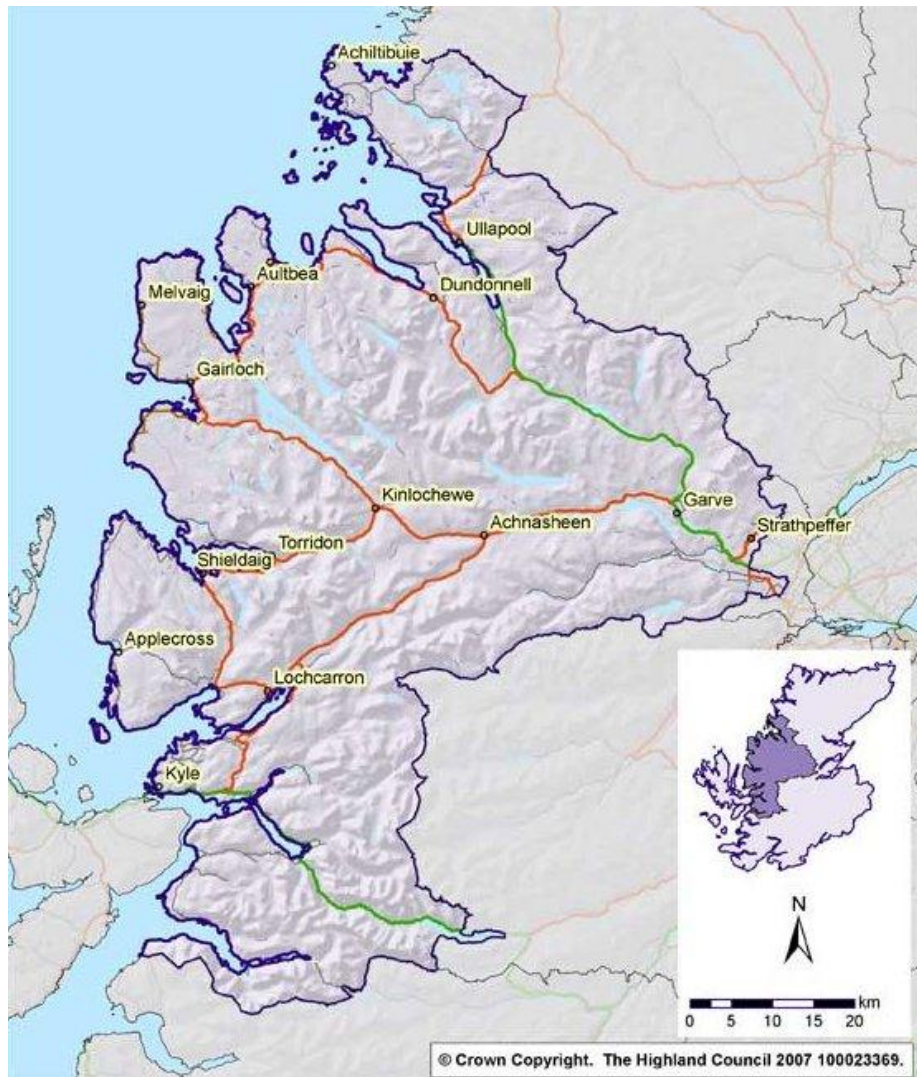


WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER & LOCHALSH

Local Area Partnership

Local Area Action Plan



Version 1.4 (May 2017)

Version	Date	Revision
1.0	December 2015	
1.1	April 2016	To reflect LAG/LAP comments/changes
1.2	August 2016	Reviewed by LAP
1.3	November 2016	WRSL LAP Member Update
1.4	May 2017	WRSL LAP Member Update



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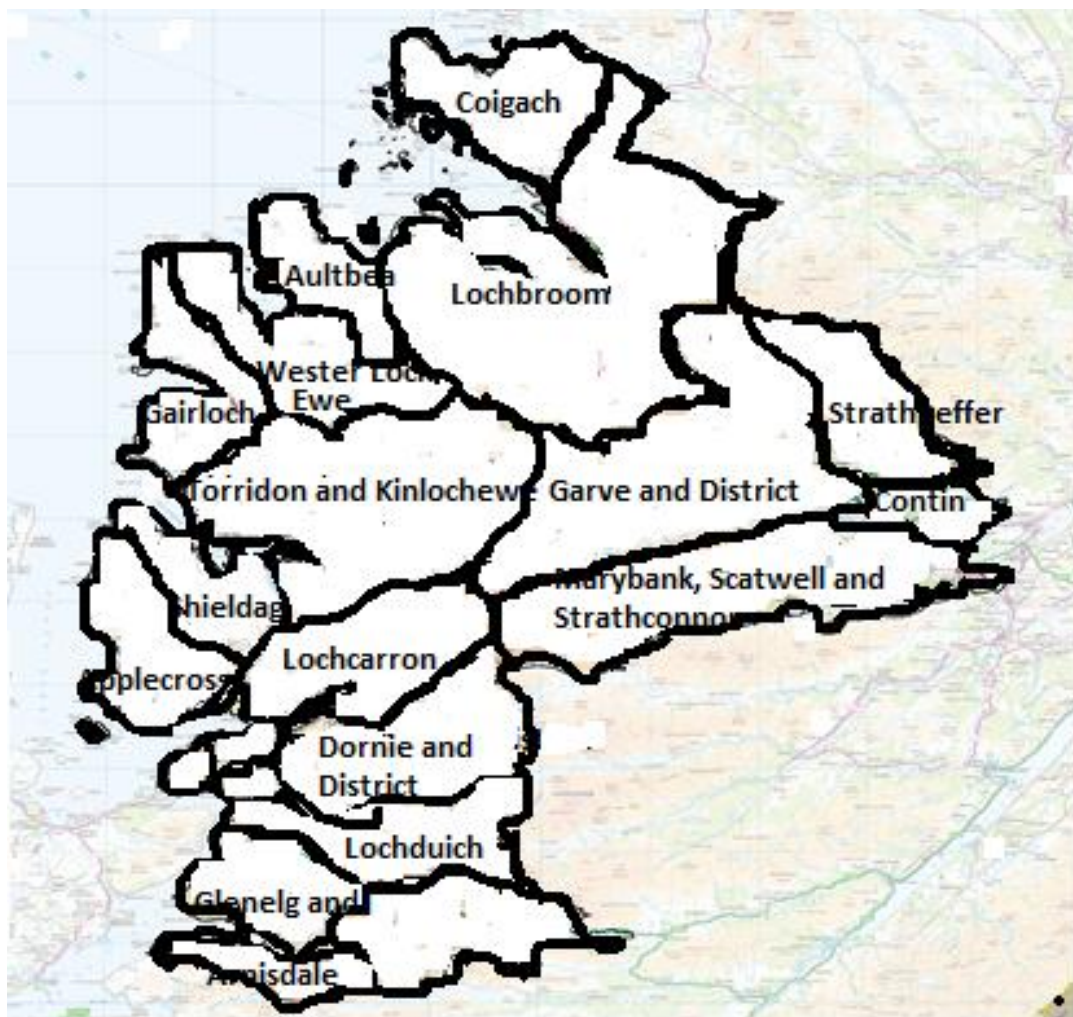


INTRODUCTION

This Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) is designed to help the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL) Local Area Partnership (LAP) determine where LEADER funding should be focused, based on local priorities.

It pulls together key demographic data, together with feedback and information gathered from community consultations and questionnaires in 2014 including a SWOT analysis of the area which have helped to outline what types of projects to fund and to understand if there are any groups in the area which should be specifically targeted.

Eligibility for LEADER is still defined as per the Highland LEADER Local Development Strategy (LDS) but the Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL) Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) gives a local focus to the project activities required to deliver local priorities for Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL).



AREA OVERVIEW AND DEMOGRAPHIC DATA

Physical Features

The area, the second largest Highland LAP area and the largest Highland Council ward (also identified as Highland Council Ward 6) extends to 4948 square kilometres, covering Wester Ross, Lochalsh and the gateway area linking through Achnasheen and Garve to Strathpeffer.

It is a mountainous region with settlements separated by an extensive coastline and sea lochs. It is an area of outstanding natural beauty.



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Settlement Pattern

The main villages in the west, Kyle of Lochalsh, Lochcarron, Gairloch and Ullapool, home to 30% of the population of this vast area, provide local services but are some distance from each other.

A further 12% of the population live in Strathpeffer which sits at the eastern boundary of this area.

In between, the population is sparse and settled in small villages, hamlets or on estates and farms and crofts.



Demographic Profile

All figures in this section are based on 2001 and 2011 Census data, unless specified otherwise.

Population

The area has a population of 11,867 which has risen from 11,223 in 2001; an increase of 5.7% compared to the population increase in Highland of 11.1%.

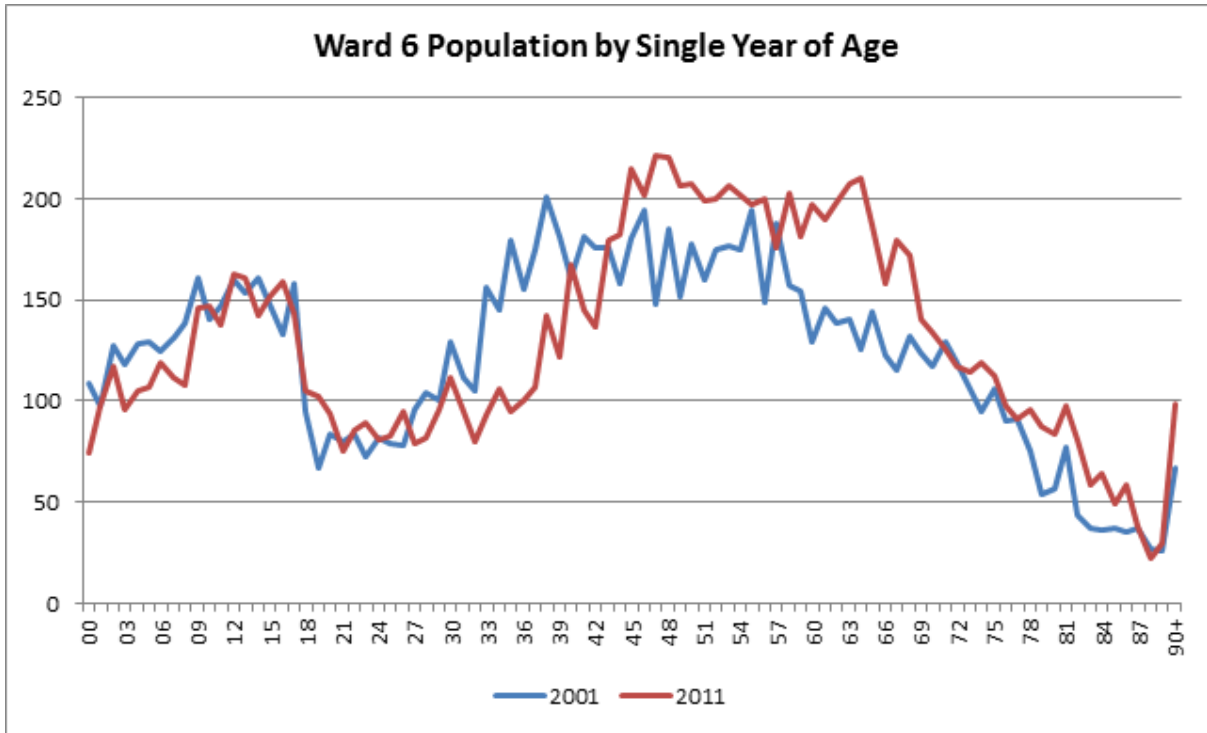
The increase in population is accounted for by increases in the over 45 age categories, with falls evident in the younger age groups (see below table).

Ward 6 Population by Age				
Age Group	2001	2011	2001 %	2011 %
0-15	2,174	1,985	19.4	16.7
16-44	3,703	3,231	33.0	27.2
45-64	3,246	4,037	28.9	34.0
65-74	1,204	1,446	10.7	12.2
75+	896	1,168	8.0	9.8
Total	11,223	11,867	100.0	100.0

A particular feature of the population profile in WRSL is the drop in numbers seen in the young-adult age range. While this is in part explained by out-migration of school leavers for further and higher education, it may also indicate a lack of employment opportunities locally.

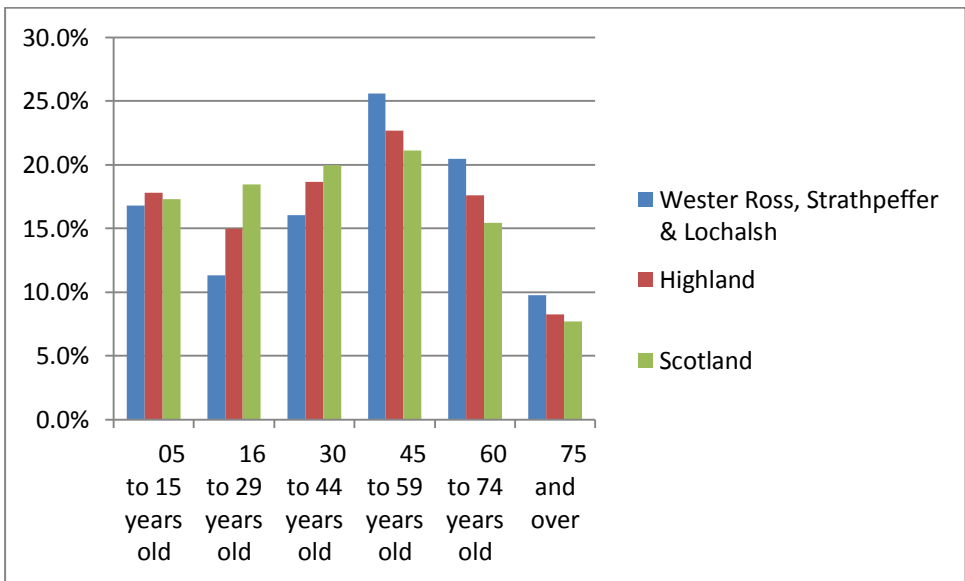
In the past, it has been suggested that out-migration of 18 year olds was either temporary or was matched by in-migration of people in their early thirties and this was supported by the 2001 census data. However the 2011 census showed no evidence of in-migration or return of young adults and that the gap in the population profile now extends from 18 through to early 40s.

Not unexpectedly, the reduction in population of child-bearing age has led to a reduction in the number of children under 10.



People aged over 45 comprise well over half of the population of WRSL, at 55.8%. This is more than 7% higher than the Highland average of 48.5% and almost 12% higher than for the whole of Scotland, which is 44.3%. While in part this is a statistical consequence of the loss of population in the younger age ranges, there has also been an absolute increase in the number of people in their mid-fifties to mid-sixties.

While it is not clear that the ageing population will choose to remain in WRSL as they get older, an ageing population coupled with an absolute loss of younger people gives real cause for concern on the sustainability and viability of WRSL communities.



Ethnicity

98.7% of the WRSL population are 'White', with 0.4% 'White Polish'. 0.5% of the population are 'Asian' and 0.8% are 'Other Ethnic Groups'.

There is a higher percentage of 'Other British' people living in WRSL (23.4%) than in Highland (14.7%) and Scotland (7.9%).

	Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh	Highland	Scotland
White - Scottish	71.7%	79.9%	84.0%
White - Other British	23.4%	14.7%	7.9%
White - Irish	0.8%	0.6%	1.0%
White - Polish	0.4%	1.5%	1.2%
White - Other	2.4%	1.9%	1.9%
Asian, Asian Scottish or Asian British	0.5%	0.8%	2.7%
Other ethnic groups	0.8%	0.7%	1.4%

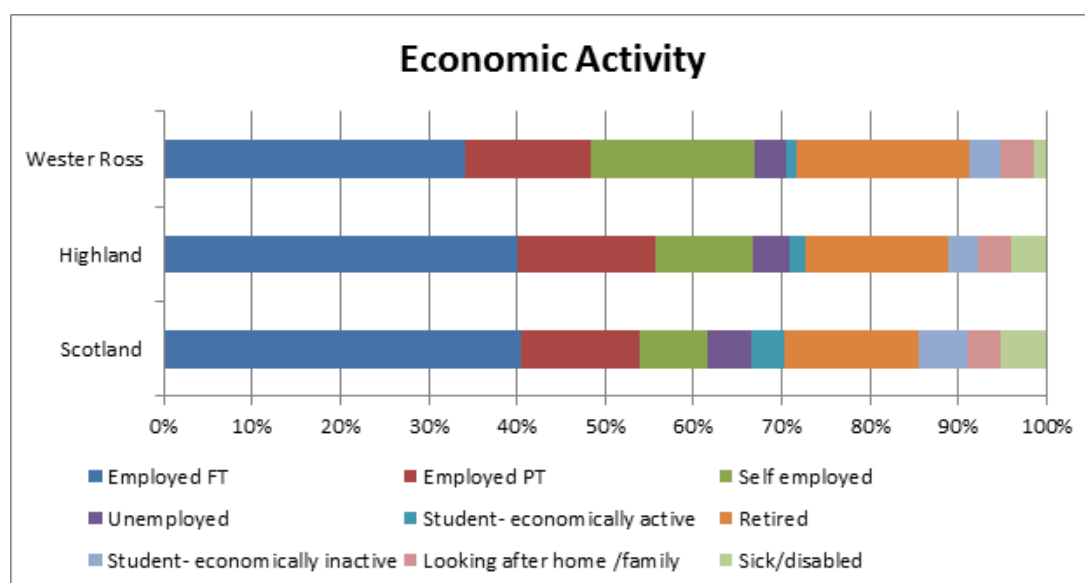
Health

83.8% of the population in WRSL rate their health as good or very good. This is comparable to the figures in Highland (84%) and Scotland (82.3%).

19.8% have a long-term health condition that limits their day to day activities.

10.5% of the population provide some unpaid care each week, with 2.4% providing 50 or more hours each week. This is slightly higher than the figures for Highland (9%) and Scotland (9.3%).

Economic Activity



In 2011, 69.6% of the population aged 16-74 years were economically active, with 3.4% unemployed. This is slightly below the Highland average of 71.5%.

There is a smaller percentage of students in WRSL (4.6%) and Highland generally (5%) than in Scotland overall (9.2%).

18.7% of the population in WRSL are retired compared to a Highland average of 16% and a Scottish average of 14.9%.

24% of unemployed people living in WRSL are aged 16-24 years which compares favourably with 28.5% of unemployed people in Highland and 30.2% in Scotland.

Only 4.5% of unemployed people in WRSL have never worked which compares favourably with the Highland average of 9.3% and the Scotland average of 13.9%.

In the 50-74 years age group, 28.6% are recorded as unemployed in WRSL compared to an average of 22.9% in Highland and 18.4% in Scotland.

Unemployment		Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh	Highland	Scotland
% Unemployed people in 16-74 year old age group		3.4%	4.0%	4.77%
Persons aged 16-74 who are unemployed	Aged 16 to 24	24.0%	28.5%	30.2%
	Aged 25 to 49	47.4%	48.6%	51.4%
	Aged 50 to 74	28.6%	22.9%	18.4%

Benefits

2.1% of the working 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%. (*Not all unemployed people claim job seekers allowance.)

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.

Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation

Using the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD), there are no data zone areas in Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh (WRSL) ranked in the 15% most deprived areas of Scotland or Highland, although 13 out of the 16 data zones are in the 5% most remote in terms of the Geographical indicator.

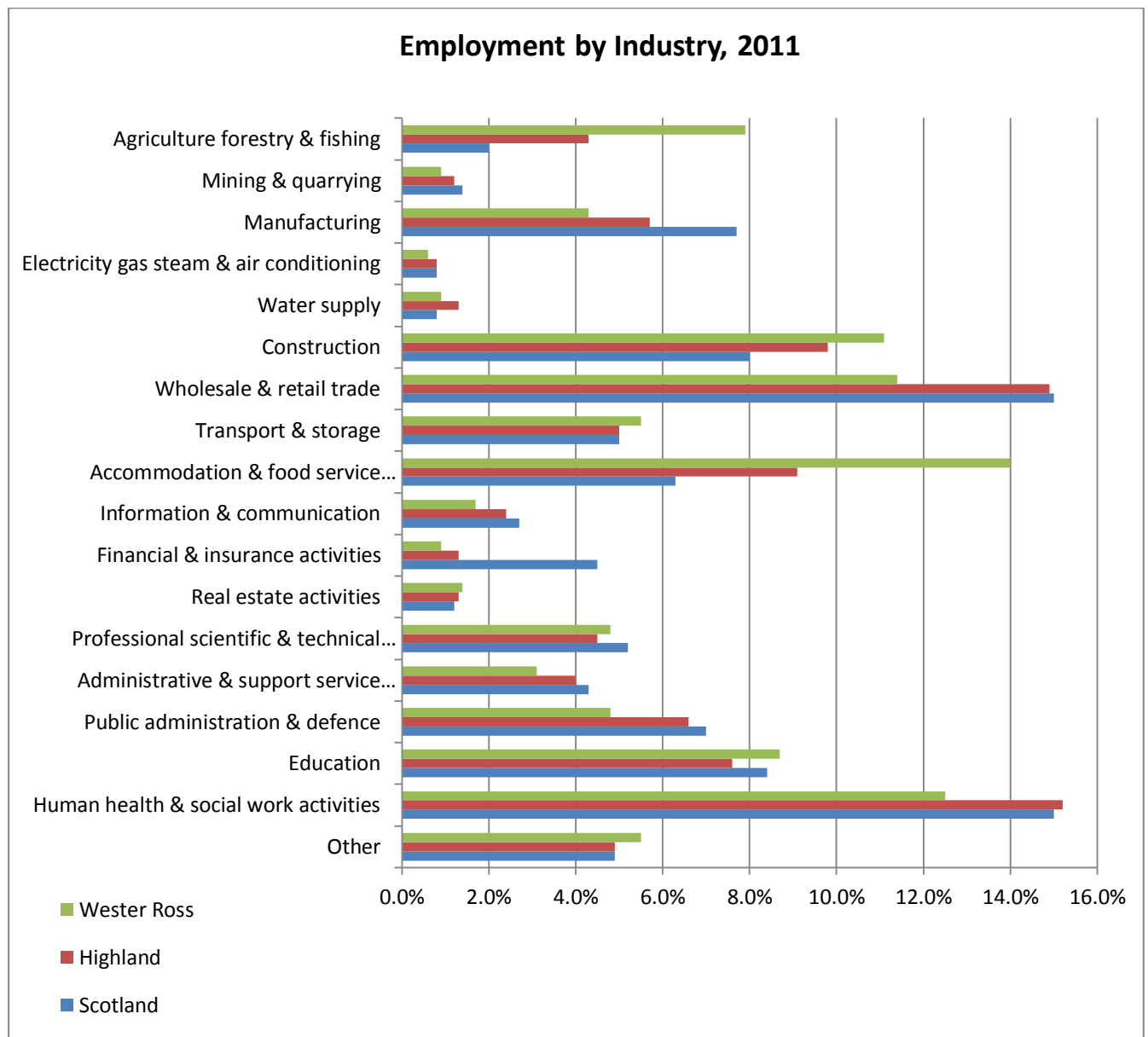
It should be noted that the SIMD is designed to identify deprived communities and cannot identify deprivation at the household-level. In rural areas it is more common for deprived households to be scattered throughout the wider community and these families are consequently more difficult to identify by any statistical process. Furthermore in areas of low population density, data zones have to be much larger with a consequent amalgamation of affluent and deprived households into a single averaged output. While the mixed nature of rural populations may have some benefits for deprived households, support services that are visible and easily accessed in urban settings can be difficult to access or not known to people living in more remote communities.

*Data Zones in the LAP Area with Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation ranks in Scotland and Highland (*Areas that have populations of between 500 and 1,000 household residents)

Data Zone	Data Zone Name	Overall SIMD 2012 Rank in Scotland	Overall SIMD 2012 Rank in Highland
S01003765	Kyle of Lochalsh	2,747	87
S01003915	Garve, Achnasheen & Kinlochewe	2,804	93
S01003773	Balmacara & Dornie	2,979	104
S01003933	Poolewe & Badachro	3,209	117
S01003873	Strathconon	3,394	135
S01003953	Aultbea	3,474	139
S01003757	Glenshiel & Glenelg	3,475	140
S01003846	Lochcarron	3,591	148
S01003946	Gairloch	3,661	156
S01003963	Achiltibuie	3,677	157
S01003948	Ullapool Rural & Dundonnell	3,740	164
S01003869	Applecross, Shieldaig & Torridon	3,863	174
S01003955	Ullapool South	4,193	195
S01003774	Plockton & Achmore	4,210	198
S01003902	Strathpeffer	4,263	205
S01003956	Ullapool North	4,933	257



Employment



Looking at employment by industry, WRSL has significantly higher percentages of people working in agriculture forestry and fishing, and accommodation and food services, and significantly lower percentages of people working in manufacturing, than Highland or Scotland. In common with Highland overall, there is a significantly lower percentage of people working in financial and insurance services.

In 2011, 20.8% of people in employment in WRSL worked 49 hours or more a week, which is higher than the Scottish figure of 11.7%.

Education

- 22.9% of people in Wester Ross have no qualifications, compared to 25.5% in Highland and 26.8% in Scotland
- A higher percentage hold Level 4 or above qualifications (31.2%) than in Highland (26.4%) and Scotland (26.1%)

	WR,S & L	Highland	Scotland
No qualifications	22.9%	25.5%	26.8%
Level 1*	22.6%	24.5%	23.1%
Level 2**	15.0%	14.1%	14.3%
Level 3***	8.2%	9.2%	9.7%
Level 4 and above****	31.2%	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 Educations qualifications not already mentioned (including foreign qualifications)

Leaver Destinations

	Gairloch High School	Plockton High School	Ullapool High School	Highland
Higher Education	44.8%	44.2%	51.4%	33.7%
Further Education	10.3%	18.6%	8.6%	23.7%
Training	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.9%
Employment	34.5%	27.9%	34.3%	31.2%
Voluntary work	3.4%	0.0%	2.9%	0.7%
Activity Agreements	0.0%	0.0%	2.9%	1.9%
Unemployed-seeking employment	3.4%	9.3%	0.0%	5.6%
Unemployed- not seeking employment	3.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.8%
Unknown	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.5%

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

In 2014, 29.7% of school leavers from Plockton High School were recorded as employed compared to 34.5% from Gairloch High School, 34.3% from Ullapool High School and 31.2% overall in Highland. In 2014, 9.3% of leavers from Plockton High School were recorded as unemployed but seeking work. Lack of employment opportunities could lead to young people leaving the area if they are unable to find suitable work nearby.

It is also important to consider the types of jobs these schools leavers go into as these may be low-paid, seasonal jobs.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

The process of preparing a community led local development strategy for WRSL included community consultation and information gathered during 2014/2015 which included:

- Two facilitated public meetings held in June 2014, undertaking a SWOT analysis of the area and testing the initial draft themes and outcomes from the Highland local development strategy.
- An electronic survey available for anyone who could not attend these consultation meetings and which was also widely circulated to previous applicants, Highland councillors, Ward Manager, community councils, etc.

From the information gathered at the public meetings and electronic survey, a draft SWOT analysis was produced for the WRSL area which was circulated to all who attended the public events.

Invitations to form a WRSL Steering Group were issued in May 2015 to:

- All WRSL community councils asking them to nominate individuals interested in community development
- Previous WRSL LAP members including HIE and SNH
- Ward Manager for the WRSL ward
- Highland Councillors for the WRSL ward

The Steering Group was responsible for starting the process of developing the Local Area Action Plan for WRSL and determining local priorities, and for determining the membership requirements for the WRSL Local Area Partnership.

The WRSL Local Area Partnership (LAP) was responsible for completing the process of developing the Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) for the WRSL area and is responsible for undertaking periodic reviews of the WRSL LAAP.

The WRSL LAP is also responsible for ensuring the input of young people (and/or their representatives). To date there has been contact with the Highland Youth Convenor, youth development officers, and a survey was circulated to a Youth Conference asking young people for their views about how best to engage with them and the types of project activity that LEADER could support. An open invitation was also extended to attendees of this conference from the WRSL area to attend a local LEADER Steering Group meeting. Outcome priorities and possible related project activity was also discussed at a subsequent Youth Forum event. The WRSL LAP accepts that the formal round table setting of a LAP meeting is often not conducive to encouraging young people to put their views across and, if this turns out to be the case, the WRSL LAP will look at alternative ways of securing the input of young people to the LAP's decision making process.



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SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- ▶ There is a good people resource in this ward, educational levels are high and there are high levels of volunteering. People are reported as being resourceful and creative with a strong sense of initiative which transfers into high levels of community activity and activism
- ▶ There is an important tourism sector in Wester Ross which has a long season with many opportunities for walking, cycling and water sports. It possesses good quality, high end tourist accommodation and dining possibilities.
- ▶ There are also firms involved in high quality food production, including locally vital fisheries such as creel, prawn and salmon.
- ▶ Strathpeffer is an attractive former Victorian Spa town on the bus route for many Highland tour programmes.
- ▶ People are generally very satisfied with the quality of life in Wester Ross. A high level of confidence in many of the schools is reported. Communities feel very safe and secure and there are positive levels of health and wellbeing with a higher than average life expectancy.
- ▶ It is a mountainous area of considerable natural beauty and possesses outstanding tourism and heritage opportunities including geographical landmarks, sites of historical interest and a variety of harbours and anchorages.
- ▶ It has a strong cultural heritage and international links eg Cape Breton and Appalachian Trail.

Weaknesses

- ▶ There are concerns that while community engagement is high, key individuals risk 'burn-out'. There is also a fear that there is an insufficient infrastructure and a lack of will between groups preventing community organisations working together with each other and supporting each other to overcome fatigue.
- ▶ There are concerns over the sustainability of community and voluntary activism as the demographics show an ageing population structure and insufficient learning or skill opportunities to retain the younger population.
- ▶ Some feel that there is an over reliance on tourism, the single biggest employment sector but which is subject to seasonal and annual fluctuations and offers limited range of employment opportunities with salary levels often minimum wage.
- ▶ There are weaknesses within the tourism sector with a lack of short-term visitor stay options and a very high proportion of second homes (up to 40% in some communities).
- ▶ The fishing and forestry sectors are in decline. Much of the fishing infrastructure is in need of renewal and upgrade and there are management and sustainability issues which threaten viability and a lack of skilled workers willing to enter the sector.
- ▶ The accessibility of the area is undermined by a limited road and public transport network. Poor broadband and mobile phone access is also reported.
- ▶ Remoteness can be challenging and high fuel prices impact upon the cost of living. Old stone built croft houses can be expensive to heat and difficult to insulate leading to fuel poverty.
- ▶ The high proportion of second homes is pushing up house prices and creating an affordability gap for local people and sometimes workers and families seeking to re-locate to the area.
- ▶ High proportions of second and holiday homes coupled with seasonal employment prospects reduce the opportunities for developing the over-winter cultural events and activities.
- ▶ The diversity of local Gaelic culture is weakened by an ageing population and relatively low remaining numbers of speakers.
- ▶ Whiles the area is noted for its natural heritage value, many of the important sites are remnant examples of more extensive systems and as such are fragile, widely dispersed and lacking the resilience that would come from larger areas with a greater degree of inter-connection.

Opportunities

- ▶ Opportunities arise at local level through the work of several community development bodies including Applecross Community Company, Coigach Community Development Company, Lochcarron Community Development Co, the Ullapool Community Trust, the Kyle and Lochalsh Community Trust, Gairloch & Loch Ewe Action Forum, the Gairloch & District Heritage Company, and Visit Wester Ross who are considering a range of projects including affordable community owned housing, community energy scheme, ownership/development of piers, pontoons, innovative transport solutions, walking/cycle path development, sports/recreation facilities, eco-tourism, workshop units for self-employment, signage/gateway projects, wildlife/nature tourism, ownership/development of community woodland for amenity and fuel, artisan cheesemaking/residential training/development of milking herd/cafe, food production/marketing partnerships, community shop, camping/caravan site, bike rental, visitor toilet/shower/laundry facilities, heritage access and interpretation, recreational facilities, community hub, marine development, trails, land and building acquisition and development, and delivery of the WR Tourism Development Strategy which supports increasing local capacity and capabilities, encouraging and supporting collaboration across the area, and developing a strong advocacy voice, etc.
- ▶ There are major opportunities for community organisations to develop through community asset ownership which could be linked to the harbour and jetty infrastructure to develop fisheries related opportunities.
- ▶ Whilst UNESCO has given the Beinn Eighe National Nature Reserve the status of Biosphere Reserve it does not fulfil the current criteria so there is opportunity to develop it so that it does and through the re-designation of a wider area, to embrace and promote sustainable development within Wester Ross. The Coigach and Assynt Living Landscape is a large landscape restoration project being developed which offers opportunities for employment and training in land based skills.
- ▶ Renewable energies offer major opportunities providing useful income streams for communities and reducing energy prices for local people is sold locally. There is scope for capitalising on the quality of the environment
- ▶ There are opportunities for communities to install their own broadband system (as already done in Applecross) and in the absence of public transport being provided, opportunities exist for communities to develop transport services.
- ▶ Educational opportunities are improving through increased institutional activity across the Highlands. Scope for better alignment of training and qualification with growth sectors in renewable energies and food and drink. Scope for economic diversification and possibly establishing some form of academic research centre, perhaps associated with UHI but not necessarily.
- ▶ There are significant tourism and heritage (including Gaelic) opportunities by building on marine tourism, nature/wildlife tourism, cycle networks, culture and music, as well as the International Appalachian Trail following the route of the Cape Wrath Trail.
- ▶ The proposed development the Heritage Railway in Strathpeffer offers opportunities for growth and increased visitor spend.

Threats

- ▶ Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh is the largest ward in the Highlands with the second lowest population density.
- ▶ Poor economic performance and public sector cuts may lead to de-population.
- ▶ Accessibility is further undermined by poor connectivity which is a threat to the sustainability of communities through its impact on business performance
- ▶ Higher fuel prices in comparison to some areas of Highland is also a threat making it harder for local businesses to compete.
- ▶ .People are concerned about the impact of public sector cuts on smaller, isolated communities
- ▶ Whilst there is a high level of confidence in local schools it was reported that there is some concern about declining numbers and the implications of this ie fewer teachers, fewer subjects at High School level, and closure of primary schools, which can adversely affect the sustainability of a whole community.
- ▶ Rising fuel prices are also a threat making it harder for communities to access goods and services including healthcare.
- ▶ Climate change poses a threat to the natural heritage as a rise in the frequency of extreme weather events gives rise to higher risks of drought, wildfires, flooding and river-basin scouring.
- ▶ Population turnover, while enhancing diversity of local culture reduces the opportunity for inter-generational transfer of local traditions.

KEY CHALLENGES/OPPORTUNITIES IDENTIFIED

The suggested key challenges/opportunities are based on the most recent demographic data available and the results of the SWOT analysis of WRSL undertaken in 2014.

Access

In the SWOT analysis it was noted that the road and public transport network is poorly developed, and that this threatens the sustainability of some communities. However, it was also highlighted that there may be opportunities for communities to develop transport services.

Outmigration of young people

A long term feature of the demographic profile of the area is that the number of 19 year-olds is about half the number of 17 year-olds, showing a large outmigration as young people move on from school to further and higher education or to seek employment outwith the area. The 2001 census showed that this population deficit remained from age 18 to 28 but then recovered between ages 28 and 38. However the 2011 census showed that this deficit has lengthened to be from ages 18 to 38, with recovery from ages 38 to 48. This shows a continuing outmigration of young adults, with no evidence of any net return in the last ten years.

In 2011, the 16-29 year-old population was 11.3% compared to a Highland average of 15% and a Scottish average of 18.5% confirming that young people are leaving the WRSL area in greater numbers than Highland and Scotland as a whole and leaving a distinct gap in this important and productive part of the age range.

Increasing population of older people

Generally the population of WRSL is ageing at a faster rate than Highland overall. The demographic data reveals that people over 45 years of age in WRSL comprise well over half of the population at 55.8%, which is higher than the Highland average of 48.5% and more than 10% higher than for the whole of Scotland which is 44.3%.

18.7% of the population in WRSL are retired compared to a Scottish average of 14.9% and a Highland average of 16%.

Generally the population of WRSL is ageing at a faster rate than Highland overall: in 2001, 47.6% of the population of WRSL were over the age of 45 years but by 2011 this had risen to 55.8%; an increase of 8.2%. A similar but less marked trend can be seen across Highland where 44% of the population of the area was over 45 years in 2001 but by 2011 this had risen to 48.5%; an increase of 4.5%.

Diversification of industry / Seasonal and low paid employment

The SWOT analysis showed concern about an over-reliance on tourism which is currently the single biggest employment sector but which is subject to seasonal and annual fluctuation and offers limited range of employment opportunities with salary levels often minimum wage. This is reflected in the 'employment by industry' census figures which show that 14% of the population of the area are employed in accommodation and food service activities, compared to 9% in Highland overall.

The fishing and forestry sectors are reported as being in decline with much of the fishing infrastructure in need of renewal and upgrading as well as a lack of skilled workers willing to enter the sector.

The SWOT analysis suggested academic diversification, for example into renewable energy, establishing an academic or research centre, or renewal of the fishing industry. There were also suggestions to build on the tourism opportunities, by building on marine tourism, culture and music.

Community Involvement and Volunteer Fatigue

The SWOT analysis noted high levels of volunteering, community activity and activism in the area. There are opportunities for community groups to develop transport services and broadband systems, as well as developing through community asset ownership.

However, it was stated that volunteer fatigue is a concern, due to an insufficient infrastructure and a lack of support between groups. There is an ageing demographic in the area with 56% of the population over the age of 45 and reducing numbers of young people which could mean a lack of younger volunteers available to maintain volunteering levels.

Broadband and Mobile Phone Services

Both services now seen as essential to attracting/retaining young people/young families and business but current provision in WRSL does not always support this leaving some communities disadvantaged and vulnerable to further de-population due to lack of/poor service provision.

Housing

A lack of long-term rental properties and a high proportion of second/letting/retirement property is pushing up house prices and creating an affordability gap for local people and sometimes workers and families seeking to re-locate to Wester Ross

Community Trusts/Companies and Social Enterprises

The SWOT analysis and subsequent discussions have highlighted such organisations as offering opportunities for communities to acquire/develop assets and to fill gaps in the provision of local services and activities and build on community aspirations.

Tourism

Opportunities to build on the area's strong identity/brand and its rich heritage and landscape and to offer additional high quality visitor experiences to attract more visitors and encourage them to stay longer and increase visitor spend. Opportunities to build on marine tourism, cultural, natural, and heritage sites and assets, nature/wildlife tourism, visitor networks/trails, and the biosphere reserve status of Beinn Eighe promoting sustainable development within the wider area. Opportunities to build on the Wester Ross Tourism Development Strategy which aims to bring local businesses, organisations and communities throughout the area together to collaborate on developing and promoting high quality products and services to an expanded range of visitor types in order to grow tourism in a sustainable manner that creates opportunities for local people, enhances economic performance and contributes to social cohesion.



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HIGHLAND CROSS CUTTING THEMES

▶ 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)

There may be challenges for projects impacting on all five cross cutting themes and there is therefore an emphasis on projects demonstrating how they can meet a number of these themes efficiently rather than all of them to a weaker extent.

Therefore **all** projects will have to demonstrate how they meet the Fairer Highland, Innovation, and Sustainability/Legacy cross cutting themes and that the remaining cross cutting themes of Carbon Clever and Skills Development will be delivered by projects only where a direct link can be made.

PRIORITISING OF HIGHLAND THEMES FOR WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER AND LOCHALSH

The Highland LEADER programme themes are ranked in order of priority to Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh, based on the results of an online survey in September 2014 and the collective rankings of the WRSL Steering Group/LAP.

THEME	COLLECTIVE RANKING
▶ A Growing and Diversified Economy that Promotes Sustainability	1
▶ Increased and Sustained Local Services and Activities	2
▶ Stronger and More Resilient Communities	3
▶ Enhanced Cultural and Natural Assets	4

The theme ranking exercise is considered a guide only as it is expected that WRSL projects will individually deliver against more than 1 theme and collectively deliver against all 4 themes.



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PRIORITISING OF HIGHLAND OUTCOMES FOR WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER & LOCHALSH

The Highland Local Development Strategy is committed to contributing to ten outcomes.

However, given the indicative WRSL LAP budget allocation of £506,688 and based on the SWOT analysis and various consultations undertaken over 2014 and 2015, the WRSL Steering Group/LAP undertook a ranking exercise and has decided to initially focus their LEADER budget on fewer outcomes which they have identified as being of particular importance to the WRSL area:

PRIORITY OUTCOMES FOR WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER & LOCHALSH	COLLECTIVE PRIORITISATION RANKING
▶ Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/development	1
▶ Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities	2
▶ People have better access to local services and activities	3
▶ Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships)	4
▶ Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets	5

Whilst the WRSL LAP wishes to focus on projects that will deliver against its prioritised outcomes, it also notes that there is often overlap between outcome headings and eligible activity and, if permitted, it wishes to retain the discretion to consider applications that also deliver against non-prioritised outcomes if the applicant can provide evidence to support substantial community impact/legacy/benefit.

The WRSL LAP would also welcome applications for consideration that fit with existing local economic development plans and also applications that could lead to potential employment opportunities.

Where WRSL 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), the WRSL LAP expect that these sources of funding will be considered by applicants in the first instance.

It is also expected that projects relating to partnership working with other LAP/LAG areas will explore the sourcing of funding through the LEADER 'ring fenced' Co-operation budget.

Applicants will also be expected to explore the availability/eligibility of other Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funding sources for their projects before approaching LEADER.

It was felt that the five prioritised outcomes agreed on produce some clarity for potential applicants and will hopefully attract projects that will, within the constraints of the WRSL budget allocation, help to address **some** of the challenges/opportunities identified in the consultation process and help to deliver impact and legacy leading to stronger communities with an improved quality of life and the growth and diversification of the local economy.

In summary, the WRSL LAP will consider funding projects that meet one or more of the Highland themes and all appropriate cross cutting themes.

All project applications will be assessed by the WRSL LAP against agreed scoring criteria and priority will be given to the types of projects identified as best delivering the five WRSL priority outcomes.

Within these prioritised outcomes, the WRSL Steering Group/LAP has identified project types that it would like to see being submitted; project types that it feels will maximise the benefits of LEADER funding to its local communities.

The project types initially listed as worthy of support have been identified in broad terms to stimulate interest but applicants will also need to ensure that their projects align with the eligible activities listed under each outcome in the Highland LDS.

The LAP accepts that the project types listed might initially not be as specific as they had hoped but will re-assess and review their LAAP including its initial outcome and project priorities after 2 expression of interest/application cycles when they hope to be more aware of what project applications are coming forward and are most likely to deliver greatest impact/legacy to communities in the WRSL area.

This will hopefully enable the WRSL LAP to then identify more specific projects/types that it considers will maximise the benefits of LEADER funding to communities in the WRSL area.



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PRIORITISED OUTCOME 1:

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

It is recognised that a strong local economy is essential in creating a strong and resilient community. There is a tradition of self-employment in Highland and a higher rate of business start-ups than most other areas of Scotland. The impact of jobs being available locally in order to sustain rural communities is a key message that has been highlighted in the consultation. During final consultation in September 2014, 93% of survey respondents agreed with this outcome.

LEADER Eligible Project Activity: 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 to introduce more efficient processes including in the wider supply chain.

In order to support the delivery of increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/ development and where they relate to LEADER eligible activities which are unlikely to be eligible for other SRDP funding sources, the WRSL LAP will consider applications for the delivery of:

- Projects which support enterprise and the development and growth of sustainable social enterprises to develop employment opportunities that could help sustain communities
- Projects which help to address the reliance on seasonal employment opportunities and create year round long-term employment opportunities
- Projects which create employment in new and existing businesses especially if they would help to attract/retain young people and young families in the area
- Projects which create employment opportunities and include/provide/allow for childcare facilities
- Projects which support web or community based cottage style industries eg arts/crafts sector
- Projects which support employment training opportunities
- Projects which support diversification if this creates employment opportunities
- Projects which create employment opportunities by adding value to local produce
- Projects which create employment opportunities by promoting and developing local markets
- Projects which create employment opportunities through the development of local services, activities and facilities
- Projects which create all year round tourism employment opportunities
- Projects which support the provision of workshops and business units addressing identified under-provision and creating new employment opportunities

NOTES: It was felt that projects delivering against this outcome might also deliver against other outcomes eg better access to local services/activities, increased ownership/control of assets and services/activities, increased income from local produce through adding value

It was also felt that project applications delivering against this outcome should initially explore the sourcing of funding through the LEADER 'ring fenced' Rural Enterprise / Farm Diversification Funds.

The WRSL LAP have included for any early re-assessment of their outcome and project priorities to be considered in light of the actual applications/expressions of interest coming forward.



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PRIORITISED OUTCOME 2:

Increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities

“In many cases, the key to effective community led action may be ownership or control of land or buildings. This can be about protecting or enhancing local facilities, creating new spaces and new uses, generating income for community activity or providing alternative stewardship for heritage and environmental assets. It can increase community confidence and cohesion, allowing communities to realise their aspirations and control their destinies. Whether it is retaining the local shop, renovating a derelict site or providing a hub for community activities, control of assets can be a key factor in making a community more attractive to live in, supporting economic regeneration and sustainable development.”

(Scottish Government, Community Empowerment (Scotland) Bill, Policy Memorandum p.13).

The Bill which is currently going through Parliament seeks to extend the community right to buy and make asset transfer requests easier. During final consultation in September 2014, 91% of survey respondents agreed with this outcome.

LEADER Eligible Project Activity: Eligible projects will include 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 will 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 for business in a community be supported to work together and acquire an asset.

In order to support the delivery of increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities and where they relate to LEADER eligible activities which are unlikely to be eligible for other SRDP funding sources, the WRSL LAP will consider applications for the delivery of:

- Projects that enable communities to take over and sustainably develop community assets, services and activities
- Projects that identify potential assets including derelict/underused buildings for community acquisition and sustainable development
- Projects that help to secure assets for sustainable community development but that do not displace private enterprise
- Projects that support LEADER eligible training and partnership working related to community ownership/control of assets and services/activities
- Projects that build on community aspirations for greater control of local assets and the filling of gaps in the provision of local services and activities
- Projects that support the provision of community owned housing and community owned visitor accommodation

NOTES: It was felt that projects delivering against this outcome might also deliver against other outcomes eg increased employment opportunities, increased partnership working, improvements to the visitor experience, and better access to local services and activities.

The WRSL LAP have included for any early re-assessment of their outcome and project priorities to be considered in light of the actual applications/expressions of interest coming forward.



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PRIORITISED OUTCOME 3:

People have better access to local services and activities

Local people are keen to have access to a range of local services and activities, from more affordable housing through to leisure pursuits. In some instances this may be about developing such services/activities in others it is about improving access to those which already exist. Transport is a key issue in relation to access in some local areas, in others it is about basic information sharing, improved internet access (available to residents and visitors alike) and improved websites. During final consultation in September 2014, 95% of survey respondents agreed with this outcome.

LEADER Eligible Project Activity: Examples of projects eligible to achieve this outcome include: 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 schemes; training for basic repairs and maintenance. Applicants will be expected to demonstrate how new initiatives can become sustainable.

In order to support the delivery of people having better access to local services and activities and where they relate to LEADER eligible activities which are unlikely to be eligible for other SRDP funding sources, the WRSL LAP will consider applications for the delivery of:

- Projects that remove or minimise barriers or disadvantage particularly for the decreasing younger and increasing older population age groups
- Projects that support communities to sustainably develop/provide local services/activities
- Projects that help communities to secure improved access to services such as Broadband and mobile phone coverage where currently there is a lack of or poor service provision
- Projects that help prevent further de-population due to lack of or poor service provision
- Projects that support community involvement in the delivery of local services and activities
- Projects that help improve the availability of short-term visitor accommodation and long-term affordable housing where there is identified under-provision and a lack of private investment
- Community transport projects testing/providing solutions to identified under-provision
- Projects that help to address the limited availability of recreational activities
- Projects that increase the accessibility of activities/services especially for younger/older people
- Projects which investigate and deliver innovative and sustainable local solutions to current or anticipated under-provision of services and activities
- Services linked to visitors and popular visitor sites including tourist information, parking, toilets
- Projects that support the development of community energy schemes
- Projects that support recycling/reuse/repair initiatives especially where they support jobs
- Projects that support LEADER eligible training for basic repairs and maintenance

NOTES: It was felt that projects delivering against this outcome might also deliver against other outcomes eg increased employment opportunities, increased partnership working, improvements to the visitor experience.

The WRSL LAP have included for any early re-assessment of their outcome and project priorities to be considered in light of the actual applications/expressions of interest coming forward.



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PRIORITISED OUTCOME 4:

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

The local consultations have identified the need to further support partnership working within and between communities with the Highlands and further afield. To do this effectively requires resource and this can be partly supported by the role of the Development Officers. However communities/businesses may identify capacity development issues and/or communication and knowledge sharing issues that require a further resource or may simply require resource to allow them to visit their partner area. This outcome will also include projects that are classed as co-operation projects. During final consultation in September 2014, 93% of survey respondents agreed with this outcome.

LEADER Eligible Project Activity: Eligible projects may include funding for partnership events; visits between partner areas; one-off facilitation for capacity building around new project ideas; communication/information/networking tools, preparatory and other costs for co-operation projects; development of networks at local and Highland wide level; shared learning events; mentoring programmes.

In order to support the delivery of people having increased partnership working between groups and where they relate to LEADER eligible activities which are unlikely to be eligible for other SRDP funding sources, the WRSL LAP will consider applications for the delivery of:

- Partnership events/working leading to the development of sustainable community facilities, services, activities and employment opportunities
- Local communities/organisations working with other communities/organisations and sharing ideas/resources and helping to develop and deliver better planned projects
- Partnership working networks between communities and other LAP areas
- Partnership working leading to the shared delivery of services and activities and the shared use of facilities
- Partnership working leading to improved tourist opportunities
- Partnership working promoting and developing tourist opportunities linked to cultural, natural and heritage assets
- Partnership working leading to employment and LEADER eligible training opportunities
- Food production and marketing partnerships
- Partnership mentoring programmes
- Intergenerational partnership working and the transfer/sharing of local knowledge
- Collaboration projects that share funding, staffing, knowledge, experience, skills, etc to create greater impact and sustainability

NOTES: It was felt that some projects successfully delivering against this outcome might also deliver against other outcomes eg better access to local services/activities and the delivery of increased community ownership/control of assets and services/activities.

It is expected that projects relating to partnership working with other LAP/LAG areas will explore the sourcing of funding through the LEADER 'ring fenced' Co-operation budget.

The WRSL LAP have included for any early re-assessment of their outcome and project priorities to be considered in light of the actual applications/expressions of interest coming forward.



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PRIORITISED OUTCOME 5:

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

Cultural, natural and heritage assets in Highland have been highlighted throughout the consultation period and in existing policy documents as a key strength of the area. Local people see that improved access can be of benefit both for them and for visitors (health and economic gains). 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. During final consultation in September 2014, 95% of respondents agreed with this outcome.

LEADER Eligible Project Activity: Projects that would contribute to this outcome could include: 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.

In order to support the delivery of improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets and where they relate to LEADER eligible activities which are unlikely to be eligible for other SRDP funding sources, the WRSL LAP will consider applications for the delivery of:

- Projects which build on the existing strengths of the area relating to the beauty of the natural landscape and cultural and heritage assets
- Infrastructure projects which improve access to and enjoyment of the area's cultural, natural and heritage assets eg cycleways, walking routes/path networks, marine facilities, viewpoints, parking, toilet facilities, etc
- Marketing and promotion initiatives improving access and understanding of the area's cultural, natural and heritage assets/sites
- Projects providing signage and interpretation of cultural, natural and heritage assets
- Projects that promote Gaelic culture and language
- Better integrated interpretation/promotion of sites/features and better promotion of trails
- Projects building on the area's identity/brand and its rich heritage and landscape
- Projects building on access to marine tourism
- Projects securing and building on the Beinn Eighe biosphere reserve status and access
- Cultural, natural and heritage access projects which improve the visitor experience
- Projects which co-ordinate visitor access to popular cultural, natural and heritage sites
- Projects which support the work of local museums including support for setting up new exhibitions and festivals.

NOTES: It was felt that projects delivering against this outcome might also deliver against other outcomes eg increased partnership working, improvements to the visitor experience.

The WRSL LAP have included for any early re-assessment of their outcome and project priorities to be considered in light of the actual applications/expressions of interest coming forward.



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The remaining outcomes included in the Highland Local Development Strategy but not included in WRSL's priority outcomes are:

◀Increased income from local produce through adding value (the WRSL LAP felt that some projects delivering against this outcome could be considered under the increased employment opportunities through business development outcome which the WRSL LAP has prioritised)

◀Impact of funded projects can be better demonstrated leading to increased capacity to secure future funds (the WRSL LAP felt that this was more of a crosscutting outcome anticipated for all projects)

◀Improved management/conservation/sustainability of cultural, natural and heritage assets (the WRSL LAP felt that, with limited budget, it should target its funds at improving access to its cultural, natural and heritage assets which might in some instances overlap with this outcome)

◀People feel better supported to undertake volunteering opportunities (the WRSL LAP felt that prioritising the outcome relating to the delivery of increased partnership working between groups would also help contribute to the delivery of this outcome)

◀Improvements in the visitor experience (WRSL LAP felt that by prioritising the outcome relating to improved access to cultural, natural and heritage assets it would also help to deliver this outcome)

REVIEW CYCLE

Based on the constraints of the indicative LEADER budget allocation for the WRSL area and currently unaware of the actual projects/applications that are expected to come forward for LEADER funding, the WRSL LAP recognize that they might not be able to deliver against all five prioritised outcomes.

The WRSL LAP will therefore review its Local Area Action Plan following two cycles of LAP meetings at which applications and/or expressions of interest have been considered and assessed against the delivery of the prioritised local outcomes for the WRSL area.

Following this review, any proposed substantive changes to the priorities and funding criteria identified in the WRSL LAAP will be submitted to the Highland LAG for their further consideration/approval.

The LAAP will then be subject to review on an annual basis thereafter.

Potential LEADER applicants should therefore be aware of the possibility of WRSL LAAP changes including its outcome priorities, grant intervention rates, level of LEADER grants available, etc.

ADDITIONAL FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

LEADER applicants will be expected to have explored alternative/additional sources of funding.

WRSL LAP support for projects will largely be determined by the extent of their contribution to the delivery of the prioritised outcomes and the benefits being delivered in the WRSL area but the level of financial support secured by applicants from other sources will also influence LAP decision making.

Where WRSL 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), the WRSL LAP expects that these sources of funding will be considered by applicants in the first instance.

It is also expected that projects relating to partnership working with other LAP/LAG areas will explore the sourcing of funding through the LEADER 'ring fenced' Co-operation budget.

LEADER is one of several schemes included in the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) and applicants will be expected to have explored the availability/eligibility of other Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funding sources before approaching LEADER. For further information about all the SRDP schemes refer to <http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP/>. Identifying the most appropriate SRDP funding for a project is essential.

LEADER funding cannot be match funded with other EU funding including any other SRDP funding.

Funding for staff posts will only be considered if they relate to new posts which have clearly defined and measurable outputs relating to the delivery of the prioritised outcomes for the WRSL area. If a LEADER funded staff post is ongoing beyond the duration of the grant funded period, a clear grant funding exit strategy evidencing future sustainability will be required.

Maximum LEADER grant intervention rates will initially be set at 50% but, at the WRSL LAPs discretion and to expedite the delivery of a prioritised outcome, the WRSL LAP reserves the right, within the options available to it, to consider varying this maximum.

Given the requirements associated with applying for and administering LEADER grants, the WRSL LAP will initially not normally consider LEADER applications for grant requests of less than £10,000 but, at its discretion and to expedite the delivery of a prioritised outcome, the WRSL LAP reserves the right to consider grant applications for less than £10,000.

It has been decided not to initially set a maximum LEADER grant or maximum project size but this could change following future LAAP reviews.

It has been decided not to initially target specific geographical areas as there is a wish to try to spread the benefit of LEADER funding throughout the WRSL area.

The WRSL LAP does not wish to vary grant intervention rate maximums between public and private/community applicants but will assess applications on their individual benefit and legacy to the area.

The WRSL LAP recognises the value of sometimes issuing 'decisions in principle' as a means of possibly leveraging/expediting confirmation of match funding and will therefore consider issuing 'decisions in principle' pending confirmation of any outstanding match funding. The 'decision in principle' is not an offer of grant and will have an expiry date which will be determined by Scottish Government guidance (which is currently expected to be no more than 60 days). If the match funding is not secured before the expiry date, the application will be rejected and the applicant will be required to submit a new application once the match funding has been confirmed.

OUTPUTS

Guidance from the Scottish Government is currently awaited regarding the output categories that will need to be delivered Highland wide.

Outputs will be used to show what progress is being made towards achieving the Programme Outcomes. All projects that are awarded LEADER funding will commit to delivering a number of Outputs selected from a list of Programme Outputs.

Project Applicants that are awarded LEADER funding will be asked to monitor achievement of Outputs.

The WRSL LAP will monitor Output achievement across all projects awarded LEADER funding in the WRSL LAP Area.

Output achievement will also be monitored as part of the Highland LEADER Monitoring & Evaluation Strategy to ensure each LAP is on track to deliver its Local Area Action Plan, and Highland is on track to deliver its Local Development Strategy.

EQUALITIES / TARGET GROUPS

During the consultation process in 2014, 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)

A number of additional groups were identified eg homeless people/people with housing problems, people suffering from substance abuse/addictions, people from the LGBT community, hard to reach learners, more isolated residents, and working people/young families.

There was also widespread reference to remoteness and transport (lack of provision, cost, exposed bus stops) as being a key barrier to inclusion.

The WRSL LAP acknowledges the groups identified in Highland that might benefit from removing/minimising barriers or disadvantage, that have particular needs, and/or where under-representation or prejudice could be tackled or understanding could be promoted and will remain vigilant of such issues and consider any particular recommendations highlighted by the LEADER Equalities Reference Group.

Local demographic data and the SWOT analysis for the WRSL area has highlighted the challenges associated with attracting and retaining the area's young people and serving the needs of an increasing older population and, whilst not prioritising either of these groups for LEADER support, it is committed, when relevant, to consider the needs of these groups or their representatives, as part of their decision making process.

The WRSL LAP membership will also seek to ensure that, where relevant, project applicants consider the views/needs of these groups as part of their project development and, where relevant, that younger and older people provide useful input to the LAP's decision making process.

The monitoring that the WRSL LAP undertakes will also pay particular attention to these two groups to determine whether specific targeting is subsequently required.



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WRSL LOCAL AREA PARTNERSHIP

The initial approach to setting up the WRSL Local Area Partnership (LAP) followed Highland LAG requirements/recommendations and involved setting up a WRSL Steering Group comprising:

- Former LAP members
- Community Representatives (each Community Council in WRSL area was given the opportunity to nominate a representative from the community/business sector) who would bring local knowledge and expertise to facilitate delivery of the Programme
- WRSL Ward Manager and Highland Council Elected Members for the WRSL Ward

Drawing on their local knowledge and experience the WRSL Steering Group comprising of 15 members began the task of:

- Developing a Local Area Action Plan prioritising the outcomes for WRSL area
- identifying the types of projects that would deliver the identified outcome priorities
- identifying the skills, knowledge and experience that would need to be represented on the WRSL LAP in order to deliver the LAAP

The collective skills, knowledge, experience of the WRSL LAP needs to be sufficient to enable informed assessment of Applications against the themes and prioritised local outcomes for WRSL and the wider Highland LEADER strategy.

As part of the process of establishing the membership of the WRSL LAP it was agreed that those members of the Steering Group wishing to put their names forward for consideration for WRSL LAP membership would complete Skills Checklists to identify whether:

- there were any gaps against key skills, knowledge or experience requirements
- there was a good geographic and demographic mix of members

Whilst the skills, knowledge and experience detailed on the checklists received was extremely varied and identified a good geographic spread and knowledge of the WRSL area it was felt that input from the 16-29 years age group would be beneficial. Youth development officers covering the Plockton, Gairloch, Ullapool and Strathpeffer areas were then invited to nominate representatives from the 16-29 years age group for LAP membership.

Whilst there is no set limit for the number of members required for each LAP, it is anticipated that the WRSL LAP will have between approximately 12-18 voting members supplemented by additional ad hoc advisory input as and when required.



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Currently the WRSL LAP comprises of 7 private/community voting members, 4 public voting members, plus 4 advisory members.

The required Public/Private voting membership balance of the WRSL LAP will be maintained by either reducing the public voting LAP membership and/or increasing the private/community voting LAP membership.

See attached for consolidated skills checklist of final current WRSL LAP members.

All WRSL LAP members will be given the opportunity to provide the name of a substitute from their organisation or sector who can attend LAP meetings and make decisions in their absence.

The WRSL LAP will meet as often as required which is expected to be quarterly.

The WRSL LAP will assess and address its training needs on an ongoing basis.

The WRSL LAP will review and build upon the work undertaken by the WRSL Steering Group and ensure that the WRSL LAAP meets Highland LAG requirements.

WRSL LAP MEMBERSHIP:

LAP Member Name	Organisation/Sector	Public or Private/Community	Voting or Non-Voting
Isabelle Campbell	The Highland Council	Public	Voting
Kate Stephen	The Highland Council	Public / Advisory*	*Advisory Member providing back-up vote for Isabelle Campbell if/when absent
Ian Cockburn	The Highland Council	Public	Voting
Derek MacLeod	The Highland Council	Public / Advisory*	*Advisory Member providing back-up vote for Ian Cockburn if/when absent
Mary Gibson	Scottish Natural Heritage	Public	Voting
Roddie MacKenzie	Aultbea Community Council (also previous LAP member)	Public	Voting
Lindsay Simpson	Highlands & Islands Enterprise	Public / Advisory	Non-Voting (replacing Ingrid Galbraith 16 May 2016)
Robbie Bain	The Highland Council	Public / Advisory	Non-voting
Fran Cree	Visit Wester Ross (nominated by Gairloch CC)	Private/Community	Voting
Kristine MacKenzie	Lochcarron Community Development Company (also previous LAP member)	Private/Community	Voting
Tristan Southall	Marine Management and Marine Recreation Sector (nominated by Plockton CC)	Private/Community	Voting
Amy MacDonald	Inverasdale Heritage Group (nominated by Wester Lochewe CC)	Private/Community	Voting
Norma Ross	Representing Contin Community Trust (nominated by Contin CC)	Private/Community	Voting
Clara Hickey	Strathpeffer Community Council / Strathpeffer Community Association nomination	Private/Community	Voting
Carla Lees	Youth representative nominated/supported by the Ullapool area Youth Development Officer	Private/Community	Voting

Where a prospective LAP member has involvement with more than one organisation/sector they have, for the purposes of their LEADER LAP involvement, declared just **one** associated organisation/sector so that the LAP's public/private member ratio could be determined.

Currently the WRSL LAP comprises of 7 private/community voting members, 4 public voting members, plus 4 advisory members. Additional ad hoc advisory input will be identified/secured as and when required.



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WRSL LAP OPERATING GUIDELINES

Where relevant and not otherwise varied in this Local Area Action Plan the WRSL LAP has decided to adopt the Operating Guidelines that have been agreed by the Strategic LAG.

APPENDICES

- Highland LEADER Programme Finance
- Consolidated WRSL LAP Member Skills Checklist
- WRSL LAP Skills Matrix
- LAP Members Job Description
- Operating Guidelines
- Glossary of Common Terms / Acronyms

HIGHLAND LEADER PROGRAMME FINANCE

The Highland Strategic Local Action Group (LAG) has agreed the following split of its indicative 2014-2020 LEADER Programme budget:

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

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 consider issuing time-limited “decisions in principle”
- Whether to set a limit on maximum grant or project costs
- Whether to increase the Highland wide limit of a minimum of £5,000 project costs
- Setting of annual allocations within initial review period

INDICATIVE BUDGET ALLOCATIONS TO LAPS

- Using the methodology that the Scottish Government have adopted across Scotland for the 2014-2020 Programme, the Highland LAG agreed the following indicative allocations to LAPS

INDICATIVE ALLOCATIONS TO HIGHLAND LAPS	
Wester Ross, Strathpeffer and Lochalsh	£506,688.74
Skye	£313,745.13
Caithness	£497,080.51
Sutherland	£633,673.16
Inner Moray Firth North	£550,574.97
Inner Moray Firth South	£412,683.91
Lochaber	£547,978.15
Total	£3,462,424.57

Highland LEADER 2014-2020 Programme

Collective Skills/Experience/Knowledge Checklist – WESTER ROSS, STRATHPEFFER & LOCHALSH

Name	WRSL LAP
Name of Organisation/Group being represented (if relevant)	WRSL LAP
Is this a Public or Private Organisation (if relevant)?	Mixed

Sectoral	
Farming/Crofting	vvvvvvvv
Forestry	vvv
Fisheries	vvvv
Food/drink	vvvvvvv
Construction/building	vvv
Transport	vvvvv
Tourism	vvvvvv
Education	vvvvvvvv
Healthcare	vvvv
Socialcare	vv
Leisure	vvvv
Youth	vvvvvvvvvv
Elderly	vvvv
People with Disabilities	vvvvvvv
Equalities	vvvvv
Local Government	v

Commercial	
Business start-up/development	vvvv
Business finance	vvv
Business support	vv
Financial management	vvvv
Economic development and analysis	vvv
Communications	vvvvv
Sales	vvv
Marketing/promotion	vvv
Website design/development	vv
IT systems/software	vv
Employment law and advice	vv
Training/skills development	vvvv
Mentoring/coaching	vvvvv
Voluntary/Community	
Voluntary sector	vvvvvvvvvvvv
Community representative	vvvvvvvv



Environmental			
Wildlife and ecology	vvvvvvvvvv	Social enterprise	vvvvvvvv
Biodiversity	vvvvvvvvvv	Partnership working & networking	vvvvv
Natural heritage	vvvvvvvv	Funding	vvvvvv
Cultural heritage	vvvvvvvv	Fundraising	vvvvvv
Energy conservation	vvvvvv	Community ownership	vvvvv
Renewables	vvvvvvvvvv	Community development	vvvvv
Recycling	vvvvvv		
Pathways/cycleways	vvvvv	Project Development/Management	
		Project assessment	vvvvvvvvv
		Project management	vvvvvvvv
		Project monitoring/evaluation	vvvvvvvv
Other – please give details of any other skills/knowledge/experience or interest that may be called upon to support delivery of the Programme			
<p>Wester Ross business, cultural, political, landward and marine related knowledge and experience. Wider Highlands and Islands knowledge and access to HIE network and other advisory bodies. Governance, international partnerships, and policy analysis experience. Member and supporter of a variety of local groups/organisations with a broad knowledge of various groups, businesses and developments in Wester Ross. Experience of young people trying to find professional work/jobs/opportunities in the local area. Marine, oil, offshore and crofting knowledge and experience and interest in local history. Hotel Management graduate with experience of running a tourism business in Wester Ross. Past involvement in Activity Scotland, HOST, Highland Tourism Partnership, Visit Wester Ross, and Business Association. Walking holiday, hostel business, self-catering and B & B business, and crofting experience. Retired head teacher with experience of writing development plans, target setting, monitoring and evaluation. Previous LAP/chair experience. Crofting, livestock and diversification project experience. Fisheries/Marine management consultancy experience, Marine Stewardship Council Assessor, RYA Yachtmaster, Senior Dinghy Instructor and local Sailing Club secretary, youth projects, social enterprise, experience of writing grant applications, experience of assessing grant applications, knowledge of asset transfer, communication skills</p>			

To ensure that the Strategic Local Area Group meets the requirements set out in our Local Development Strategy, in terms of representing a good geographic and demographic mix of members, could you please provide the following information:

1) How would you prefer to describe your sex – please tick

Male	√√√√√√√
Female	√√√√√√√√√√√√√√
Other	
Prefer not to answer	

2) Age Group – please tick

Under 16	√√
16 - 29	√√√
30 - 44	√√
45 - 59	√√
60 - 74	√√√√√√√√√√
75+	
Prefer not to answer	√

3) Geographic Area Represented – please enter

Wester Ross, Strathpeffer & Lochalsh area, Gairloch area (+ Tourism in the wider Wester Ross area), Wester Lochewe area, Wester Ross, Kinlochewe area, Contin, Jamestown and Tarvie area, Lochcarron, Strathcarron and Kishorn area, Plockton, Ullapool, Strathpeffer

4) Do you consider yourself to have a disability? – please tick

Yes	√
No	√√√√√√√√√√√√√√√√√√
Prefer not to answer	

Skills Matrix for Delivery of Highland LDS VIA WRSL LAP AREA RANKED THEMES AND OUTCOMES

Themes	Key Elements of Theme	Skills/Knowledge/Experience
Stronger and more resilient communities (3)	Higher quality of life Support for volunteers Encourage partnership working Better knowledge of what's available locally Project assessment to assess potential benefits	Voluntary sector Partnership working and networking Project management/assessment Funding Marketing Website development/training Equalities
Growing and diversified economy that promotes sustainability (1)	More business start-ups Economic diversification Best possible visitor experience Extend tourist season New social enterprises Value added to local produce	Business start-up/finance/planning/development/support Financial management Economic development and analysis Employment law and advice Social enterprise Sectoral knowledge/experience
Increased and sustained local services and activities (2)	Services and activities that make a difference to visitors and locals Increased community ownership and control Improved access (including transport) to services and activities	Public services (especially Health and welfare, Transport) Care of elderly Community facilities/ownership/broadband Website development Communications Equalities
Enhanced cultural, natural and heritage assets (4)	Best possible access to assets Excellent marketing and websites Conservation of existing assets Development of new assets	Voluntary sector Website development Wildlife and ecology Cultural and built heritage Gaelic language and heritage

Cross Cutting Themes		Additional Skills/Knowledge/Experience not listed above
Fairer Highland – advancing equality (addresses equality issues or benefits people in groups that are underrepresented or disadvantaged)		From or representing underrepresented groups
Innovation (a new or different approach is proposed within the area)	Creativity Adapting	Innovation
Sustainability/legacy (the project outcomes will continue beyond the life of the project)		Project evaluation Voluntary sector
Carbon clever (the project can demonstrate a positive impact on the environment)	Energy efficiency Environmental protection	Energy conservation Renewables
Skills development (the project aims to expand the skills of those involved in implementing the project and/or its participants)	Training and capacity building Mentoring and coaching Collaboration	Training & skills development Mentoring/Coaching Partnership and networking
Outcomes		Skills/Knowledge/Experience
Increased community ownership/control of assets (2)	Community owned and led services Increased community engagement with community development Income earning opportunities within the hands of local communities Community 'Right to Buy' Asset transfers	Community development/ownership/engagement Business development Experience of right to buy/asset transfers Sales Training/Mentoring & coaching
Increased partnership working between groups (within and across areas, including intergenerational partnerships) (4)	Capacity development Communication/knowledge sharing Networking tools/shared learning events Mentoring	Partnership and Collaboration Communication Mentoring/Coaching Community Development Website



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<p>Increased employment opportunities locally through new business start-ups and existing business diversification/development</p> <p>(1)</p>	<p>Support for social enterprise Partnership within and across sectors Support for new businesses Training & employability skills Business infrastructure and efficient processes including supply chain</p>	<p>Social enterprise Partnership and Collaboration Business development/support Training and mentoring/coaching Sales v Employment law and advice</p>
<p>People have better access to local services and activities</p> <p>(3)</p>	<p>Development of services Improving access to existing services and activities Improved transport – access and integration of transport schemes Improved internet access and websites Information sharing Promotion of inclusion, wellbeing and health activities Services for vulnerable individuals and families Community re-use and recycling</p>	<p>Sectoral experience – healthcare, transport Public services Recycling Website Business development Communication Equalities /From or representing under-represented groups Community development</p>
<p>Improved access for residents and visitors (physical and knowledge based) to cultural, natural and heritage assets</p> <p>(5)</p>	<p>Better pathways/cycle paths and linkages between sites Development of new sites Better knowledge/awareness through newsletters, websites, marketing & promotion Improved access to sites and assets Safe access and appropriate signage Local access to cultural activities Improved biodiversity and habitats Promotion of Gaelic language and culture</p>	<p>Pathways/cycle paths Sectoral experience - tourism Equalities Communication Website Natural and cultural heritage Wildlife and Ecology/Biodiversity Marketing/Promotion Gaelic</p>



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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 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.



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 (M&E) Committee), 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 accountable body.



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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.



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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

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:

NFU

Tourism Sector

Forestry Sector

Federation of Small Businesses



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Crofters Federation

Third Sector Interface

FLAG

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

Programme Manager and Administrative Team
Members

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.



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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/transregional 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



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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.



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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

REGISTRATION OF INTERESTS GUIDANCE

Conflict of interest is commonly defined as a situation that has the potential to undermine impartiality due to the possibility of conflict between individual or collective self-interest, professional interest or public interest.

The Local Action Group must therefore ensure the following requirements have been met:

The LAG must hold an up-to-date register of interests of LAG members

The LAG must make sure that no close relative of an individual applicant or an employee or representative of an organisation applying for funding can:

- (i) participate in the LAG decision making process
- (ii) score an application from that applicant (which, for the avoidance of doubt, may include the accountable body)
- (iii) be involved in any monitoring activities relating to the applicant



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The European Agricultural Fund
for Rural Development
Europe Investing in Rural Areas



The Scottish
Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba



The following paragraphs set out the categories of interests, financial and otherwise, which you have to register. These are "Registrable Interests", and you must ensure that they are registered, when you are elected and whenever your circumstances change. **The register should cover the period commencing from 12 months prior to and including your current term of office.**

It is your personal responsibility to comply with these regulations and you should review regularly and at least once a year your personal circumstances. Annex A contains key definitions and explanatory notes to help you decide what is required when registering your interests under any particular category. The interests which require to be registered are those set out in the following paragraphs and relate to you.

Remuneration – to be completed IF you fall into one of the categories listed below and you may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

- 1 You have a registrable interest where you receive remuneration by virtue of being:-
 - (i) employed;
 - (ii) self-employed;
 - (iii) the holder of an office;
 - (iv) a director of an undertaking;
 - (v) a partner in a firm; or
 - (vi) undertaking a trade, profession or vocation, or any other work.
- 2 You do not have a registrable interest simply because you are a Strategic LAG/LAP member.
- 3 If a position is not remunerated it does not need to be registered under this category. However, unremunerated directorships may need to be registered under category two "Related Undertakings".
- 4 If you receive any allowances in relation to membership of any organisation the fact that you receive such an allowance must be registered.
- 5 When registering employment, you must give the name of the employer, the nature of its business and the nature of the post held in the organisation.
- 6 When registering self-employment, you must provide the name and give details of the nature of the business. When registering an interest in a partnership, you must give the name of the partnership and the nature of its business.
- 7 Where you otherwise undertake a trade, profession or vocation, or any other work, the detail to be given is the nature of the work and its regularity. For example, if you write for a newspaper, you must give the name of the publication and the frequency of articles for which you are paid.
- 8 When registering a directorship, it is necessary to provide the registered name of the undertaking in which the directorship is held and detail the nature of its business.
- 9 Registration of a pension is not required as this falls outside the scope of the category.

Related Undertakings to be completed IF you fall into one of the categories below and the organisation may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

- 10 You must register any directorships held which are themselves not remunerated but where the company (or other undertaking) in question is a subsidiary of, or a parent of, a company (or other undertaking) in which you hold a remunerated directorship.



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- 11 You must register the name of the subsidiary or parent company or other undertaking and the nature of its business, and its relationship to the company or other undertaking in which you are a director and from which you receive remuneration.
- 12 The situations to which the above paragraphs apply are as follows:-
- (i) you are a director of a board of an undertaking and receive remuneration - declared under Category one; and
 - (ii) you are a director of a parent or subsidiary undertaking but do not receive remuneration in that capacity.

Land and Buildings to be completed IF you own any buildings/land which may be used by an applicant applying for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

- 13 You have a registrable interest where you own or have any other right or interest in land and buildings, such as being an owner or a tenant, including Council tenant.
- 14 You are required to give the address of the property, or otherwise give a description sufficient to identify it.

Interest in Shares and Securities - to be completed IF the company or other body you have a registrable interest may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

- 15 You have a registrable interest where you have an interest in shares comprised in the share capital of a company or other body and the nominal value of the shares is:-
- (i) greater than 1% of the issued share capital of the company or other body; or
 - (ii) greater than £25,000.

Gifts and Hospitality

No LAG member (including representatives or employees of the accountable body) may accept or offer gifts, hospitality or benefits to or from a third party that might be seen to compromise their personal judgement or integrity in carrying out their functions under the LEADER programme.

- 16 You must register the details of any gifts or hospitality received, however it is not necessary to record any gifts or hospitality as described below:
- You are personally responsible for all decisions connected with the acceptance of gifts or hospitality offered to you and for avoiding the risk of damage to public confidence in the LAG/LAP. As a general guide, it is usually appropriate to refuse offers except:-
- (i) isolated gifts of a trivial character, the value of which must not exceed £50;
 - (ii) normal hospitality associated with your duties and which would reasonably be regarded as appropriate



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Non-Financial Interests to be completed IF you are a member of any categories as listed below and may apply for LEADER funding from the Highland LEADER Programme.

17 LAG/LAP members may also have significant non-financial interests and it is equally important that relevant interests such as membership or holding office in:

- public bodies,
- companies,
- clubs,
- societies
- organisations such as trades unions and voluntary organisations, are registered and described.

In this context, non-financial interests are those which members of the public might reasonably think could influence your actions on the LAG/LAP which could include any project approvals for other organisations.

Contracts

18 You have a registrable interest if any of the above apply to you and you have made a contract with the Highland LEADER Programme or any projects funded by the Highland LEADER Programme under which goods or services are to be provided, or works are to be executed

19 You must register a description of the contract, including its duration, but excluding the consideration.



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ANNEX A

DEFINITIONS

1. "**Remuneration**" includes any salary, wage, share of profits, fee, expenses, other monetary benefit or benefit in kind. This would include, for example, the provision of a company car or travelling expenses by an employer.
2. "**Undertaking**" means: (i) a body corporate or partnership; or (ii) an unincorporated association carrying on a trade or business, with or without a view to a profit.
3. "**Related Undertaking**" is a parent or subsidiary company of a principal undertaking of which you are also a director. You will receive remuneration for the principal undertaking though you will not receive remuneration as director of the related undertaking.
4. "**Parent Undertaking**" is an undertaking in relation to another undertaking, a subsidiary undertaking, if (i) it holds a majority of the voting rights in the undertaking; or (ii) it is a member of the undertaking and has the right to appoint or remove a majority of its board of directors; or (iii) it has the right to exercise a dominant influence over the undertaking (a) by virtue of provisions contained in the undertaking's memorandum or articles or (b) by virtue of a control contract; or (iv) it is a councillor of the undertaking and controls alone, pursuant to an agreement with other shareholders or councillors, a majority of the voting rights in the undertaking .
5. "**A person**" means a single individual or legal person and includes a group of companies.
6. "**Group of companies**" has the same meaning as "group" in Section 262(1) of the Companies Act 1985. A "group", within s262(1) of the Companies Act 1985, means a parent undertaking and its subsidiary undertakings.
7. "**Any person**" includes individuals, incorporated and unincorporated bodies, trade unions, charities and voluntary organisations.
8. "**Spouse**" does not include a former spouse or a spouse who is living separately and apart from you.
9. "**Cohabitee**" includes a person, whether of the opposite sex or not, who is living with you in a relationship similar to that of husband and wife.
10. "**Chair**" includes Committee Convener or any person discharging similar functions under alternative decision making structures.



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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 minuted. 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 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.



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GLOSSARY OF COMMON TERMS / ACRONYMS

Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) - provides funding for economic, environmental and social measures for the benefit of rural Scotland, as a 'pillar' of the Common Agricultural Policy (the other 'pillar' being to protect farmers' incomes). The SRDP is co-funded by the European Commission and the Scottish Government.

LEADER - LEADER is one of the EU funds under the SRDP aimed at promoting economic and community development, specifically in rural areas. This will include support for non-agricultural small businesses including farm diversification. 'LEADER' is an acronym based on the French Liaison Entre Actions de Développement de l'Economie Rurale (or 'links between actions for the development of the rural economy').

European Maritime and Fisheries Fund (EMFF) - this is the fund for the EU's maritime and fisheries policies for 2014-2020. It is one of the five European Structural and Investment (ESI) Funds which seek to promote a growth and job based recovery in Europe.

Managing Authority (MA) - is the body in charge of the management of the rural development programmes, whether at National or Regional levels. For the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme, The Scottish Government is the Managing Authority.

Accountable Body (AB) - is the Group or Organisation with delegated responsibility for managing the LEADER Programme and administering LEADER finances, under the terms of a Service Level Agreement with the Scottish Government. Highland Council is the Accountable Body for the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme.

Strategic Local Action Group (LAG) - is a broad-based local private-public partnership whose aim is to improve the long-term potential of the local area and who has the ability to define and implement a development strategy for the area, which is based on criteria set up at the programme level by the Managing Authority.

Local Area Partnership (LAP) - these are the seven local private-public partnerships across Highland who will develop Local Area Action Plans to set out local priorities for LEADER funding. Once the plans have been approved by the Strategic LAG, the LAP will meet on a regular basis during the LEADER programme to review project applications and determine which will receive LEADER funding in line with the priorities set out in that Plan.

Fisheries Local Action Group (FLAG) - the FLAG is a private-public partnership across Highland who will develop a Fisheries Business Plan to set out Highland priorities for EMFF funding. Once the Plan has been approved by Marine Scotland, the FLAG will meet on a regular basis to review project applications and determine which will receive EMFF funding in line with the priorities set out in the Plan.

Enterprise Group (EG) – is a private-public partnership across Highland (and a sub group to the Strategic LAG) who will develop a Plan to set out Highland priorities for the proportion of LEADER funding that is earmarked for non-agricultural small businesses including farm diversification.

Equalities Reference Group (ERG) – is the group that will guide LEADER administrative staff, LAPs and applicants to ensure that plans are developed and implemented in line with the Highland Council's 'A Fairer Highland' policy.

Local Development Strategy (LDS) - is the document drawn up by the Highland Strategic LAG for approval by the MA with a view to achieving objectives of one or more development themes which should contribute to the local development.

Local Area Action Plan (LAAP) - this is the plan that each LAP will need to develop. It will set out priorities for funding in the local area and the rationale for that prioritisation. LAAPs will be reviewed and approved by the Strategic LAG if they are satisfied that collectively the LAAPs for Highland will deliver the Highland LDS.

Service Level Agreement (SLA) - formal agreement between The Scottish Government and The Highland Council, as Accountable Body, setting out the arrangements for and terms of delegated authority in relation to the management and administration of the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme.

Operating Guidelines - documents which set out how the Strategic LAG, LAPs, FLAG and Enterprise Group will operate. They will include decision making, operational management, authority levels and the conduct of meetings.

Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) - document setting out the respective roles and responsibilities of those involved in the Highland LEADER 2014 – 2020 Programme. It 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

Remote Rural Area - is a settlement of less than 3,000 people AND with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 people or more.

Accessible Remote Small Town - is a settlement of between 3,000 and 10,000 people AND with a drive time of over 30 minutes to a settlement of 10,000 people or more.

Rural Area – is a settlement of less than 3,000 people within 30 minutes' drive time to a settlement of 10,000 people or more.

Data Zones – the country is split into geographic areas called Data zones. Each data zone has a population 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 – this is the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation. It is a tool for measuring deprivation. For the purposes of this toolkit, it has been applied to data zones, which have then been ranked from most deprived to most affluent. Identifying the number of data zones in an area, ranked in the lowest 15%, shows the areas with the worst concentrations of deprivation.

SSSI – is a Site of Special Scientific Interest in the UK, for example in terms of nature and geology. They are protected from development by legislation .

Social Enterprise – is a business or organisation with primarily social objectives, which applies commercial strategies to maximise human and environmental wellbeing by reinvesting surpluses in the business or in the community, rather than being driven by the need to maximise profit for external shareholders and owners.

Micro Enterprise – is a business with less than ten employees (which includes self employed individuals) and a turnover or balance sheet total of less than two million Euros.

Community – is a group of people living in the same place or having a particular characteristic (e.g. interest, social group or nationality) in common and who often have a common cultural or historical heritage.

Farm Diversification – the development of new business activities to traditional farming, though new products or services, for example developing alternative agricultural products (fish farming, livestock or livestock products, crops), farm shops, training and promoting rural crafts such as dry stone waling, opening facilities for craft making and retailing, tourism i.e. offering camping/caravan sites, self catering or B&B.

Participant – a person(s) or organisation(s) participating in a training course or grant project or scheme

Beneficiary – applicant organisation which is the direct recipient of LEADER funding



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