

Agenda Item	5
Report No	BIER-15-24

The Highland Council

Committee: Black Isle and Easter Ross Committee

Date: 5 August 2024

Report Title: Opportunity Black Isle, Your Place, Your Future – The Black Isle Local Place Plan

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1 Purpose/Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report invites Members to adopt The Black Isle Local Place Plan - [Opportunity Black Isle](#) **Appendix 1**

Opportunity Black Isle, an Area/Local Place Plan hybrid, provides a Black Isle wide vision for a more sustainable and resilient future, bringing together actions by the local community, Community Planning Partners and others covering big issues such as getting about, housing, community facilities, and nature and the environment.

The report also provides an update on next steps for progressing the Plan and how the Plan will be monitored and overseen going forward.

2 Recommendations

- 2.1 Members are asked to:
- i. Adopt the Plan, using it as a tool to inform and support decision making about the Black Isle.
 - ii. Note Opportunity Black Isle is both a Local Place Plan in line with national Planning Legislation and an Area Place Plan in line with Highland's Place Based Framework.
 - iii. Note the Plan will be taken into account in preparation of the Highland Local Development Plan (HLDP) as guided by the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019
 - iv. Note the next steps for progressing the work set out in the plan

3 Implications

- 3.1 **Resource** – No additional resource is requested. Highland Council support for initiatives outlined in the Plan may have resource implications in the future which would be subject to appropriate Committee or Service decision making.

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

- 3.2 **Legal** – There are no legal implications rising from the adoption of Opportunity Black Isle, which is a commitment to support the vision.
- 3.3 **Risk** – Opportunity Black Isle will help to coordinate future activity and investment in the area but requires clear communication and coordination of resources across partners and sectors. Developing a place-based approach is encouraged through the Scottish Government’s Place Principle, the Christie Commission recommendations and is required by the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 for community planning.
- 3.4 **Gaelic** – A focus on place, and considering the priorities for a local area, has potential to support a focus on Gaelic language and culture if identified by communities and partners.

4. Impacts

- 4.1 In Highland, all policies, strategies or service changes are subject to an integrated screening for impact for Equalities, Poverty and Human Rights, Children’s Rights and Wellbeing, Climate Change, Islands and Mainland Rural Communities, and Data Protection. Where identified as required, a full impact assessment will be undertaken.
- 4.2 Considering impacts is a core part of the decision-making process and needs to inform the decision-making process. When taking any decision, Members must give due regard to the findings of any assessment.
- 4.3 Integrated Impact Assessment - Summary

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

- 4.4 The Screening process has concluded that the plan has a positive impact on promoting equality, addressing inequality (including socio-economic) and targeting the priorities of the people of the Black Isle and therefore a full impact assessment is not required. Members are asked to consider the following summary to support the decision making process.

Impact Assessment Area	Conclusion of Screening/Full Assessment (to be deleted as appropriate)
Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children and Young People – Positive • Children affected by disability – No impact • Older adults –No impact
Socio - economic	Positive

Human Rights	No impact
Children's Rights and Wellbeing	Positive
Island and Mainland Rural	No impact
Climate Change	Positive
Data Rights	No impact

5 Background

5.1 The Black Isle Local Place Plan is both a Local Place Plan and an Area Place Plan and was initiated and facilitated by the Black Isle Partnership through funding from the Place Based Investment Fund and Community Regeneration Funding.

The Plan sets out the aspirations and ambitions of the Black Isle community which:

- Articulate long term shared strategic outcomes for the whole area.
- Support informed local and national decision making about public services, budgeting, planning policy & other policy areas.
- Support community action and provides partners with evidence for funding bids.
- Build on the good work that is already happening across the Black Isle and makes the most of opportunities and new investment.
- Provide a framework for individual local communities to prepare their own more detailed plans should they wish.

5.2 Understanding the hybrid nature of Opportunity Black Isle

What is an Area Place Plan?

In partnership with local communities, public agencies, private and third sector, Highland Council is leading the development of a place-based approach to planning for the future of each sub-regional area. During 2024/2025, area-based plans are being produced as a clear statement of shared priorities for development and investment, service delivery and community action.

The [Place Principle](#) is a Scottish Government and CoSLA initiative to encourage better collaboration and community involvement. It is about understanding the issues, opportunities and relationships in a place, so we can work effectively together to improve the quality of life for our communities. Knowing how a community is structured and how it works helps us make good decisions on investment, service delivery and how to coordinate change.

In Highland, sub regional Area Place Plans are being developed to bring an overview of existing strategies and projects, so, collectively, we are clearer on what we are working towards. Community engagement will build a shared understanding of how Place underpins development, service delivery and how communities and organisations work together. These plans will be a future guide to get the best impact for people living in an area, based on shared understanding of local need.

At its simplest, Area Place Plans will create a shared vision for an area, outlining priority outcomes and how they will be achieved. The Plans will make publicly clear what activity is happening in each area, the outcomes being sought, when they are intended to be delivered and who is responsible for doing so.

5.3 What is a Local Place Plan?

Following recent changes to the national planning system, communities have been invited to consider preparation of their own [Local Place Plans](#) – a community’s proposals for development of use of land and buildings in their local area. Currently across Highland, several groups are engaging their local community to reflect how to make their place better, agree priorities for the future and how to act on them – often working with others. While local place plans have a particular role in the planning system, they may also highlight other priorities for service delivery and community action.

The Black Isle Partnership, in discussion with Highland Council, recognised the opportunity to develop and deliver a plan which met both the requirements and aspirations of both a local and an area plan.

6 How the Plan was prepared

6.1 The Plan was developed over 2023 and early 2024 with engagement being carried out in three key stages:

1. Aspirations - understanding community issues, aspirations and opportunities;
2. Solutions - Identifying solutions; and
3. Plan - Agreeing the plan with the community.

Community engagement was extensive and resulted in:

- 2, 800 written comments from 380 participants at nine Stage 1 events
- 120 participants at four public workshops in Stage 2 and 3 events
- 216 children and young people engaged through surveys and focus groups
- 350 online responses
- 7 focus groups involved in drafting the plan.

7 Opportunity Black Isle – setting out the vision for the future

7.1 The overarching outcomes set out in the plan are for the Black Isle to become a **net zero carbon, sustainable, and resilient** community with **opportunity, health and wellbeing for all**. To achieve these outcomes, the Plan further sets out the following four Calls for Action for the community, public and private sectors:

- **Community infrastructure:** facilities and services that are fit for purpose & minimise travel, including education, health & social care, infrastructure, recreation, emergency services & other community facilities;
- **Think global, act local:** climate-focussed action to achieve a net zero, biodiversity rich, ecologically coherent, resilient and sustainable community;
- **Affordable homes for all:** so young people, workers and families can afford to live in environmentally-friendly homes that are fit for purpose; and
- **Getting about:** making it safe, convenient & affordable to move around without a car.

7.2 How the plan will be used

The Plan has been written for the local community, community organisations, businesses and Highland Community Planning Partners. To achieve the outcomes set out in the plan, it will require all partners, community, public, third and private, working together. The Plan should be used as it is intended – as a tool to bring people together to inform decision making, to collaborate on and to achieve better outcomes for the community.

The Plan is an ambitious evidenced based statement of the community's aspirations, based on sound and robust community engagement. This therefore provides all who are responsible for delivering services, looking after assets or with a vested interest in the Black Isle, to use this Plan to inform decision making about service design, delivery and investment.

7.3 The Plan requires collaboration which is based around two key principles – **resetting the relationship** between the public sector and local communities and **thinking differently** about funding and resources. The Plan will help foster greater opportunity to:

- support and enable the community to influence and understand their future;
- empower the local community as an active partner;
- create more trust and collaboration between community and authorities; and
- enable equitable and smoother delivery of services and investment.

To support this in practice, Public Sector partners and funders are asked to utilise the Plan to inform discussion and decision making on service design, delivery and budget allocation. The Plan should help influence how budgets are allocated, how services could be delivered, provide evidence for decision making, inform policy and support communities to acquire and develop their own income-generating assets and funding sources. This can be achieved by Members, Council officers, statutory and community partners considering the Plan in various forums eg

- Area Business Meetings
- HC Area Service Meetings
- Mid Ross Community Partnership
- NHS Adult Services Mid Ross Locality Plan Group

8 Next Steps - Governance Arrangements

8.1 Following discussions to determine governance arrangements with the Black Isle Community Council Forum, Place Plan steering group and local Elected Members, an agreement has been reached to establish a Board. The structure will be simple and membership will be drawn from Community Councils (5 places) and Elected Members to ensure it is democratic in nature. In addition to these positions a further 5 places, including an independent Chair, will be available through a recruitment process seeking individuals with the key skills to advocate for and drive the plan.

8.2 Next Steps – Delivery

As the plan moves from development to delivery, it can continue to act as a tool which brings different interest groups together to collaborate on a shared vision for the future. That has been made possible by the robust approach to process and broad participation, including the guidance and participation of Elected Members, officers, community councillors and, importantly, the wider Black Isle community.

The approach taken to the development of the Black Isle Plan has been increasingly recognised as an example of best practice. This is evidenced by representatives of the group being invited in to regional and national forums to share their experiences, learning and knowledge. A sample of illustrative highlights include the following:

- Community led - the plan being prepared by, and for, the community with public, private and third sector partners supporting;
- Elected Member engagement and participation throughout;
- Considered and extensive community engagement consistent with national standards of community engagement, with particular focus being made on reaching *quieter voices*;
- Collaborative and transparent, keeping communities up to date throughout;
- Testing and confirmation of priorities to ensure those included in the plan represent the community as a whole;
- Wealth of information captured providing stakeholders with rich data for their own purposes;
- Simplifying how we work together through achieving a holistic plan which meets the requirements and aspirations of local place plan, community action plan and area place plan; and
- Support and guidance from national experts in community participation and planning working alongside locally based and well-connected Development Officer.

8.3 The anticipated benefits and impact of the Black Isle wide Place Plan are that it will:

- Consolidate local priorities from across a variety of plans and strategies – national, regional and local
- Develop a shared understanding of our communities' priorities and opportunities for the future
- Make clear what current projects and interventions are working towards, when they will be delivered and who is responsible
- Re-set relationships by strengthening collaborative working and trust between communities, public and third sectors
- Provide a framework for delivering a shared vision, priority outcomes and actions to deliver these in a way that is tailored to the needs of the Black Isle
- Target resources, investment and action in line with local priorities
- Improve communication providing greater certainty to communities on how partners will support changes in the Black Isle
- Track and publicise the impact of spending and project delivery against local priorities.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

Date: 22 July 2024

Author: Fiona Richardson, Community Development Manager

Background Papers:

Appendices: Opportunity Black Isle



Opportunity Black Isle
Your place, your future

THE **BLACK ISLE** LOCAL PLACE PLAN

JUNE 2024

Acknowledgements

Preparation of this Local Place Plan was facilitated by the Black Isle Partnership on behalf of the local community, with financial assistance from the Highland Council.

The Black Isle Partnership's roles have been two-fold. Firstly, as a conduit for the Council's funding to pay for the Plan on behalf of the community. Secondly, to manage preparation of the Plan, with valuable support from Community Councils, other community groups across the Black Isle, and a steering group of local residents. The content of the Plan was not influenced by the Partnership: it has been generated by the local community itself.

Special thanks to the many local people who helped to develop this Plan during 2023 and 2024. Without their input there would be no Plan.

*Becky Richmond & Nick Wright, Plan facilitators
11 June 2024*

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FOREWORD



Kate Forbes, MSP

I have had the privilege of being the constituency MSP for the Black Isle since I was first elected 2016, and it gives me tremendous pleasure to be able to write this foreword for the area's first-ever place plan.

There are three key points I would like to highlight which strike me as being particularly important:

Firstly, this is the most extensive consultation process which I have ever seen carried out across the Black Isle. In my duties as constituency MSP, I know that Culbokie is not Cromarty, nor is Rosemarkie Redcastle. Though I do believe the Black Isle to be a particularly special place, and also home to some of the warmest Highland homes I've

ever experienced, there are distinctive communities with their own needs in their own rights. Too often in the past, there has been a temptation to lump one 'Black Isle' voice together – which perhaps does not fully capture the nuances of every area.

What has struck me as particularly impressive, is the detailed breakdown for each consultation event. It is a statistician's delight – but also hugely helpful to see the level of engagement and the differing takes on individual issues by communities.

Secondly, and building on my first point, it is now absolutely imperative that public bodies take cognisance of this place plan.

This is an opportunity for organisations like Highland Council to use the core points from the plan, and genuinely do things differently. There is a wealth of data & knowledge captured, and we cannot allow that expertise to sit in a place plan gathering dust on a shelf. I hope public bodies can use this place plan meaningfully and also be creative with their own traditional models of engagement to ensure the data in the Black Isle Place Plan is used to maximum effect. It should not be perceived as a threat, but rather a huge opportunity for everyone to work together. I know I will be trying to make optimal use of it in my capacity as constituency MSP.

Thirdly, and finally, the plan is not perfect or even finished, but rather a helpful start – let me explain. Community needs are changing and evolving all the time, and there will never be a perfect 'finished article'. So perhaps if you missed your local event, or ran out of time to send your thoughts by email to the original draft consultation – there is still time for your own input. The organisers are acutely aware they have not reached everyone – so please come forward, engage and continue to do so as the various stages of the plan are implemented.

As well as counting it a privilege to be the constituency MSP for the Black Isle, I count it a privilege to be a resident here. It is fantastic area, and it is a real blessing to be bringing up children in this part of the world.

I look forward to seeing the plan being further developed, and different parts being put into action.

Kate Forbes
MSP for Skye, Lochaber & Badenoch

1 INTRODUCTION

This Local Place Plan has been prepared by the people of the Black Isle. It is our agenda for the next decade, keeping the most of what we value about the Black Isle, and shaping it for the better.

The plan is a [Local Place Plan](#), developed in line with legislation and guidance. But it will also guide wider community action and inform decision-making by the public and private sectors. It is an ambitious statement of our aspirations which:

- Focuses on long term strategic outcomes for the whole of the Black Isle.
- Should inform local and national decision-making about public services, budgeting, planning policy & other policy areas.
- Supports community action, for example as supporting evidence for funding bids.
- Builds on the good work that is already happening across the Black Isle, and make the most of opportunities such as the Green Freeport (see page 15).
- Should be updated as circumstances changed (see page 36).
- Provides a framework for individual local communities to prepare their own more detailed plans should they wish.

The Plan could take a decade to implement, and it will evolve along the way. It will only be

realised if the local community steps forward, and we all work with the public and private sectors for common purpose.

What is the Black Isle?

The Black Isle is a peninsula surrounded on three sides by the waters of the Cromarty, Moray and Beaulie Firths and is joined to the mainland at its west end (see Map 1 overleaf, which also shows the area the Plan covers, including Community Council & Highland Council Ward boundaries).

There are five main towns and villages on the south side and one on the north, with Cromarty sitting at the tip of the east end & Muir of Ord and Conon Bridge (east of the River Conon) at its west end. The opening of the Cromarty and Kessock bridges in the 1980s made Inverness and Dingwall more accessible, leading to population growth and a decline in local shops.

The Black Isle has a rich heritage. Its landscape has been changing ever since the first evidence of man arriving here. Agriculture and forestry are our primary industries; grains for whisky and seed potatoes are two of the products for which our farms are renowned. In recent years we have seen a growth in Christmas Tree plantations. The fishing fleet has declined,

with the harbours of Avoch and Cromarty now housing more yachts and leisure craft than fishing boats.

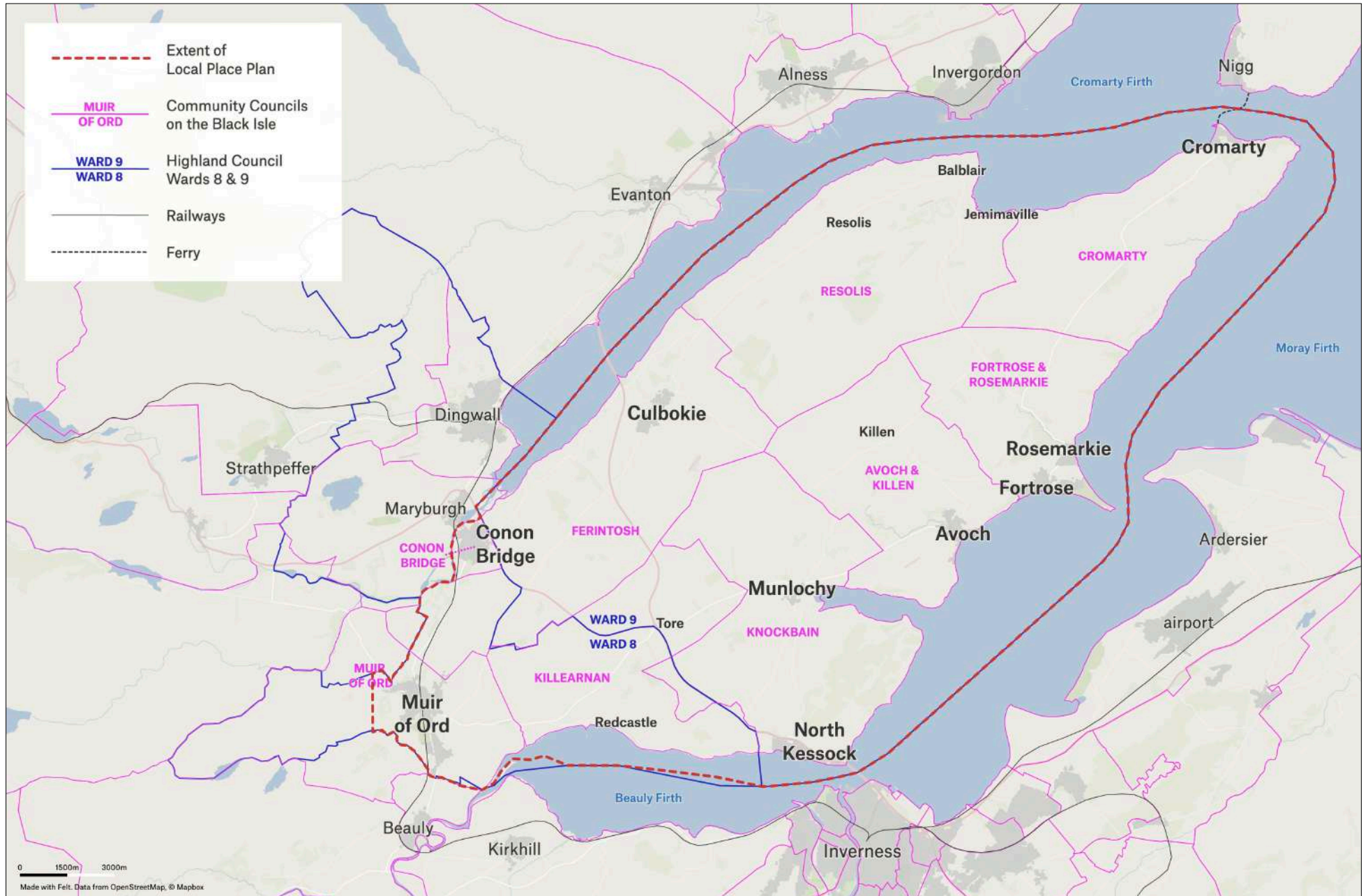
The accessibility of the Black Isle brings with it both opportunity and risk. It is important to remember that the Black Isle is home to families and businesses that have lived here for generations, who can see their way of life threatened by those who move into the area and wish to change things. Like the rest of the Highlands, the Black Isle has become increasingly attractive for retirees and leisure seekers. But it is also home to young people, many of whom want to live and work in the environment in which they grew up. Balancing those different needs requires sensitivity and understanding.

Who is the Plan for?

The Plan is written for the local community (residents, community organisations and businesses), the Highland Council and its Community Planning Partners, the Green Freeport, the Scottish Government & national agencies, and investors.

Whichever of those you are, you can help to implement this Plan. How you can do that is explained in chapter 8 (Making it Happen).

Map 1: Local Place Plan boundary & context



How was the Plan prepared?

The main stages of how the local community engaged in preparing the Plan are summarised in Figure 1. All engagement activity was planned and delivered in line with the National Standards for Community Engagement¹ and the Scottish Government's draft How To Guide on Local Place Plans².

Stage 1 built on recent work by Community Councils and previous consultations by other community organisations. At each stage, the results of previous stages were shared publicly and people encouraged to review them. This acted as a check in the system to make sure that the emerging priorities reflected community aspirations.

Engagement activities were constantly reviewed to broaden the reach, such as developing alternative ways of reaching young families, farmers and businesses.

A summary of the stage 1 results, which formed the foundation of the Plan, is in Appendix 2. Fuller details of responses from stages 1 and 2 are contained in Appendix 3.

Stage 3 (consultation the draft Plan, consultation feedback and subsequent changes to the Plan) is outlined in Appendix 4.

A flavour of the community engagement is shown graphically in Figure 2 (overleaf).

Figure 1: Plan preparation stages






¹ www.voicescotland.org.uk

² www.ourplace.scot/local-place-plans

Figure 2: Community engagement infographic



-  2,800 written comments from 380 participants at 9 Stage 1 public drop-ins
-  120 participants at 4 public workshops in Stages 2 & 3
-  31 primary school pupils & 70 parents completed surveys



-  270 people signed up to
-  185 high school students at
-  350 online responses

You've told us what you think. Now let's decide what to do.

Join us at one of our two events where we'll be discussing the priorities laid down by the community and how we can begin to address them.

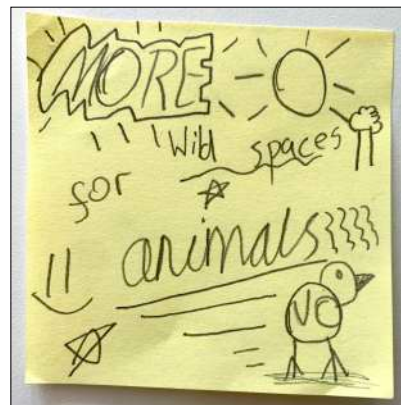
Saturday 3rd June

Morning session
Start: 10am sharp
Finish by: 12:30pm
Finton Hall, Outbooke

Afternoon session
Start: 1pm sharp
Finish by: 5:00pm
Fortrose Free Church, Fortrose

Both events will be chaired by Black Isle resident Lucy Muir.

 Opportunity Block



-  7 focus groups helped develop the draft plan
-  2 videos produced for social media
-  42 responses to the draft Plan



Implementation

This Plan is intended to cover up to a 10 year period. Some things can happen immediately. Most, however, are likely to take a number of years to come to fruition.

The Plan builds on activities that are already happening or which are in the pipeline, from community-led projects to government initiatives.

The raw material used to create the Plan are summarised in Figure 3, together with who needs to be involved in delivery, and how the Plan should be used to inform future reviews of national and local policy (see 'The bigger picture' on page 14).

Delivery of the Plan will only be successful if the local community, national and local government, other public bodies, funders, businesses and landowners work together for common purpose. Everybody needs to be involved and pull in the same direction if the Plan is to become a reality. Chapter 8 contains more information on this important message, including highlighting what each potential delivery partner can do.

Figure 3: Linking aspirations & actions



2 CONTEXT

The Black Isle

This Plan is a community-led plan based on local aspirations. That means making informed choices and, to do that, information is essential. So, one of the first steps in preparing the Plan was to gather facts and figures about the Black Isle to share publicly.

Gathering data for the Black Isle is difficult, because the community's definition of the Black Isle does not neatly conform to administrative areas (see page 5). Publicly available information came from various sources, the most useful being the 2011 Census, the Council and Community Planning partners.

The [Black Isle Area Profile](#) produced by Highland Council (see Appendix 4) is a source of up-to-date statistics. Although it appears to exclude Muir of Ord & Conon Bridge (which have a combined population of around 5,000 people), it shows that the population of the rest of the Black Isle - approximately 10,500 people - grew by almost 6% over the decade to 2020. That is more than the Highland or Scottish averages.

That population growth looks set to continue: the Highland Council's [Corporate Plan 2022-27](#) projects a population increase for Mid Ross of 6.6% (an additional 1,560 people) between 2018 and 2040, a rate of growth in

Highland that is second only to Inverness. & that is without factoring in the growth that would derive from the [Green Freeport](#) proposals currently being developed (see page 15 of this Plan for more background on the Green Freeport).

Moreover, our population is older than the rest of Highland. That older population is growing: the over-65 age group grew by 40% between 2010 and 2020 (see Appendix 5).

Those examples demonstrate how statistics are useful, because they help discussions about the future to take account of realities & trends.

Another example is the statistic from the Black Isle Area Profile that the average travel time to key services on the Black Isle is longer than the Highland average, by car and particularly by public transport - despite the area's relative proximity to Inverness and Dingwall.

To ensure that community discussions were informed, a series of information boards was developed for the first stage of engagement. They used maps, graphics and text to present facts and figures on a range of known issues facing the community, established through previous community engagement:

- Population and housing.
- Community facilities & services.

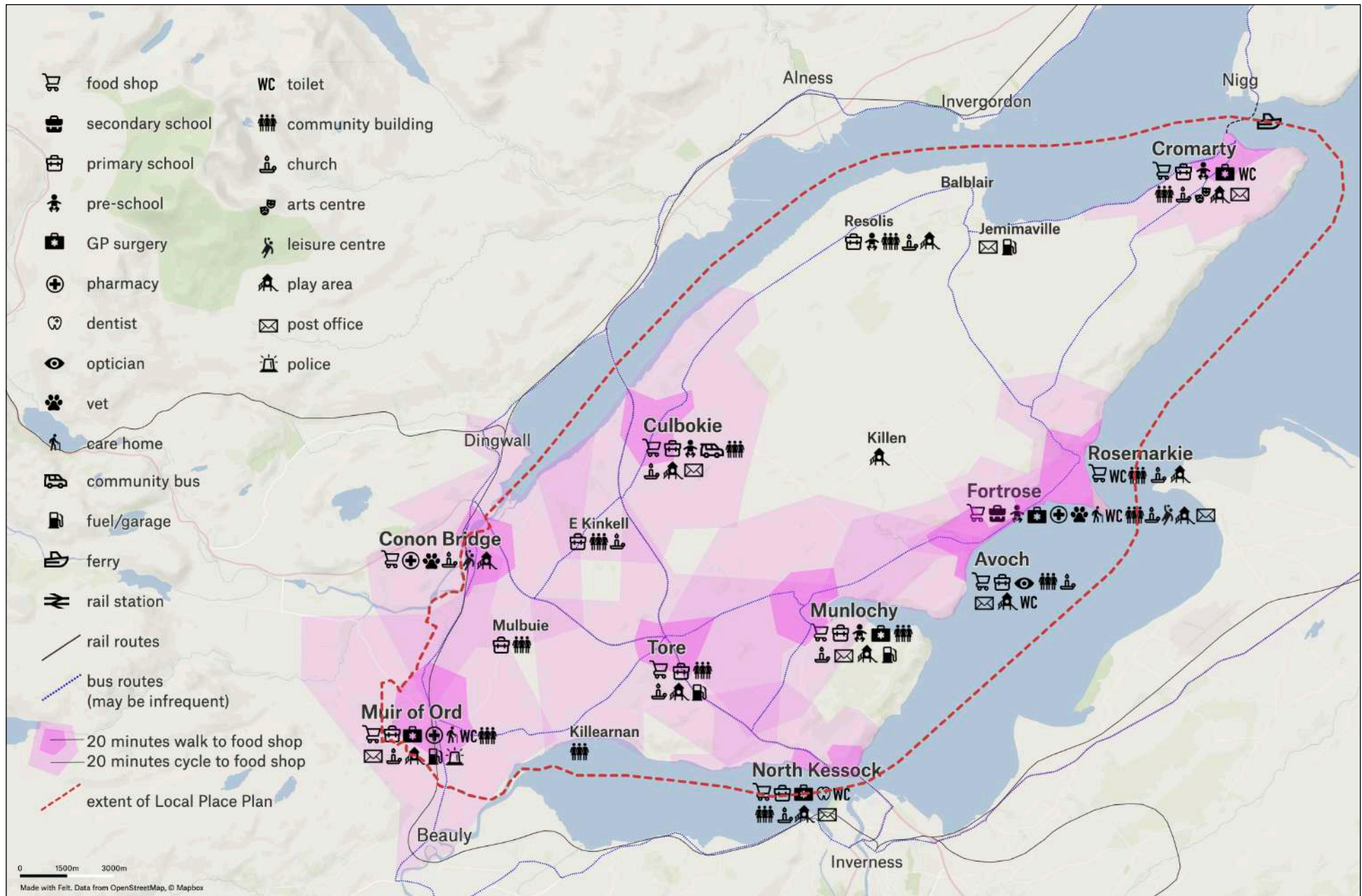
- Getting about.
- Jobs and business.
- Nature and environment.
- Tourism.

Those boards can be seen in Appendix 6 and downloaded [here](#). They proved popular at community engagement events and are worthy of attention if you are unfamiliar with the Black Isle.

In addition, the maps on the following pages contain useful information on:

- Local services and facilities (Map 2, page 11).
- Active travel routes and visitor facilities (Map 3, page 12).
- Nature and landscape designations (Map 4, page 13).

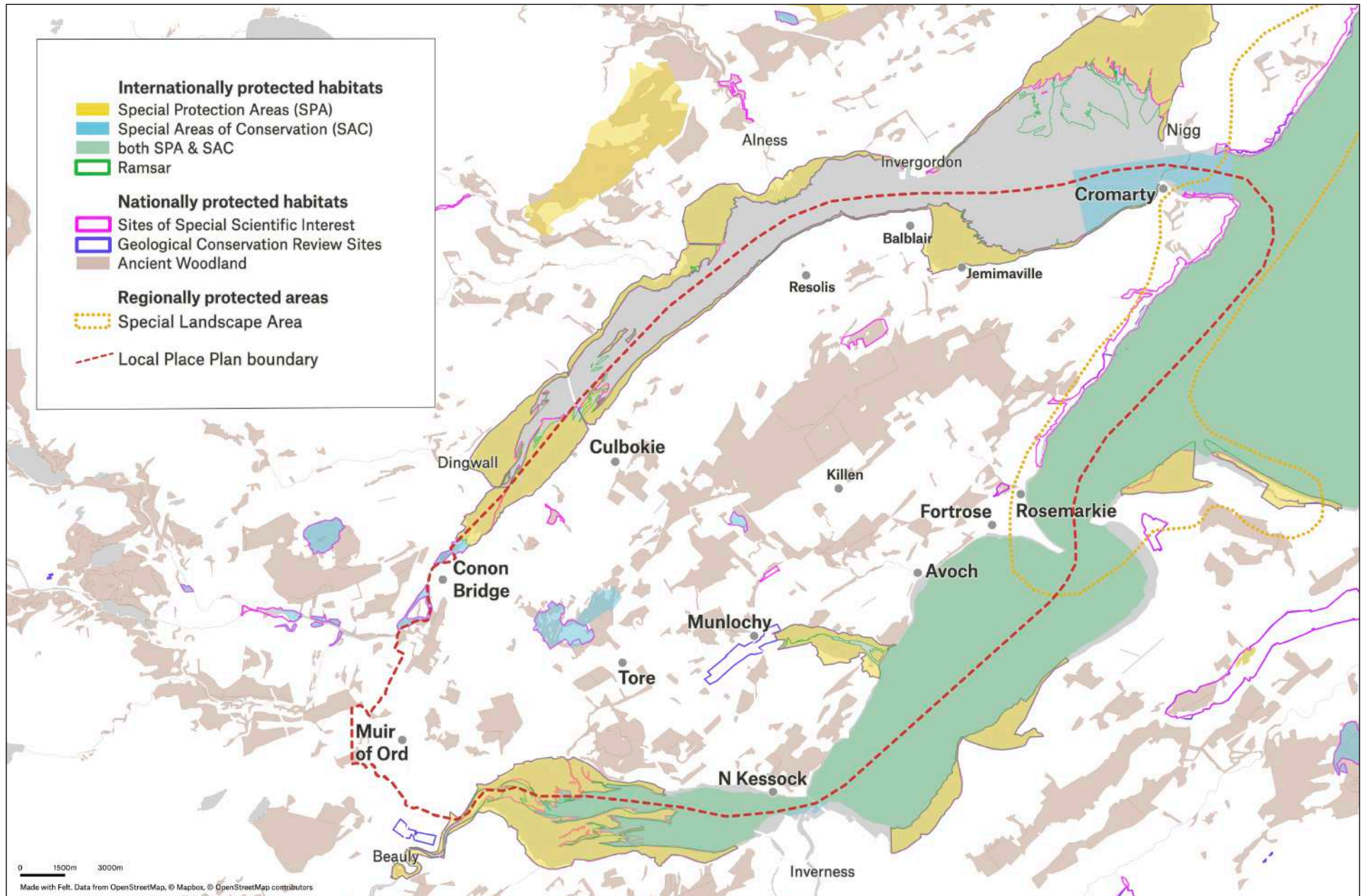
Map 2: Community facilities on the Black Isle



Map 3: Active travel routes and visitor amenities (courtesy of Black Isle Tourism, 2023)



Map 4: Nature & landscape designations



The bigger picture

Whilst the Plan is rooted in our community's aspirations, it also reflects the national planning policy aim of creating sustainable, liveable and productive places as expressed in the two parts of the 'statutory development plan':

- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4, adopted February 2023)³ - see Figure 4.
- Highland-wide Local Development Plan (2012)⁴ and the Inner Moray Firth adopted & proposed Local Development Plans⁵ (see relevant extracts of the proposed Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 in Appendix 1).

The Vision and Calls For Action in chapters 3 to 7 of this Plan reflect the statutory development plan and the Proposed Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan.

The Plan also reflects the content of the [Conon Bridge Locality Plan](#), which was prepared just before this Local Place Plan was completed.

This Local Place Plan also takes account of other relevant policy documents including:

- National Performance Framework⁶
- National Strategy For Economic Transformation (2022)⁷
- Highland Outcome Improvement Plan 2017-2027⁸
- Highland Indicative Regional Spatial Strategy⁹
- Highlands & Islands Enterprise Strategy 2023-28¹⁰

All of these statutory planning and policy documents share overarching objectives relating to **climate change, health & wellbeing and sustainable & resilient communities**. The Vision and Calls for Action in this Plan proactively seek to deliver on all of those objectives, including the NPF4 principle & priorities as shown in Figure 4.

The Plan also contains suggestions for the next reviews of local and national policy, which are summarised in chapter 8. We hope these will be taken into account by national and local government. For the Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan, that next review will be taking place in the near future.

Figure 4: NPF4 spatial principles & priorities



³ www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/

⁴ www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan

⁵ www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/202/inner_moray_firth_local_development_plan

⁶ nationalperformance.gov.scot

⁷ www.gov.scot/publications/scotlands-national-strategy-economic-transformation/

⁸ highlandcpp.org.uk/about-us/highland-outcome-improvement-plan/

⁹ www.highland.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/22899/highland_indicative_regional_spatial_strategy_to_2050.pdf

¹⁰ www.hie.co.uk/about-us/policies-and-publications/strategy-and-operating-plan/

The Green Freeport

Major changes to the local context are likely to occur as a result of the Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport being awarded 'Green Freeport' status by the UK & Scottish Governments in early 2023.

According to the Highland Council,¹¹ when operational the Green Freeport will offer a package of tax and customs incentives to attract inward investment and stimulate innovation and growth. The aim is for the Cromarty Firth and wider region to become a major global hub for green energy, and to deliver transformational benefits to Highland communities and the decarbonisation agenda.

The Highland Council agreed to submit the [Outline Business Case](#) for the approval of the UK & Scottish Governments on 3 October 2023. At the time of preparing this Plan in late 2023, development of the Full Business Case and its approval was expected to be completed by Spring 2024. Formal designation of the Green Freeport is anticipated shortly afterwards.

Information for the local community about the Green Freeport was limited whilst this Plan was being prepared; the main source was a community webinar held in March 2023 (see recording on the Green Freeport website¹²).

Over time, the Green Freeport should be a driver of positive environmental and economic change and community investment. During community engagement on this Plan, some concern and uncertainty was expressed about the Green Freeport's impact. This reflected the lack of information available, which in itself tends to breed concern, and the decades-old challenge of ensuring that large 'inward investment' initiatives in the Highlands deliver sustainable long term benefits for local communities as well as investors.

All written comments received during stages 1 & 2 of this Plan's community engagement that refer to the Green Freeport can be seen at bit.ly/484aGVd.

This Plan aims to inform preparation of the Green Freeport's Full Business Case (due to be submitted to the UK and Scottish Governments in 2024) and its subsequent implementation. Please refer to chapter 8 (page 33) for recommendations for the Green Freeport and local/national government.

¹¹ Source: www.highland.gov.uk/greenfreeport

¹² greenfreeport.scot/inverness-and-cromarty-firth-green-freeport-community-webinar/

3 OUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE

Our overarching outcomes are that we become a **net zero carbon, sustainable and resilient** community with **opportunity, health and wellbeing** for all.

To achieve those outcomes, we have four Calls For Action for us as a community and the public & private sectors:

- **Community infrastructure:** facilities and services that are fit for purpose & minimise travel, including education, health & social care, infrastructure, recreation, emergency services & other community facilities (see chapter 4).
- **Think global, act local:** climate-focussed action to achieve a net zero, biodiversity rich, ecologically coherent, resilient and sustainable community (see chapter 5).
- **Affordable homes for all:** so young people, workers and families can afford to live in environmentally-friendly homes that are fit for purpose (see chapter 6).
- **Getting about:** making it safe, convenient & affordable to move around without a car (see chapter 7).

To make this happen, we all need to work together: community, public sector and private sector. That means **resetting the relationships** between sectors (see chapter 8).

Figure 5: Community vision



Combining local & national

Figure 6 shows how our Vision contributes to delivering local and national ambitions (see 'The Bigger Picture' on page 14).

Calls for Action

Chapters 4 to 7 are focussed on specific Calls For Action to achieve our vision. Each of those four chapters explains what we are aiming for, what is already happening to achieve that outcome, & suggest what else is needed.

The focus of the Calls for Action is on outcomes, with examples of projects that could help to deliver those outcomes. As with any plan, other outcomes and projects will emerge during the lifetime of the Plan. If they contribute to achieving the Plan's overall vision, they should be supported.

The Calls for Action were developed through community engagement during preparation of the Plan. They are as much for us as a community to lead on as for others to assist us.

Figure 6: Aligning local and national ambitions

National: Local:	CLIMATE CHANGE Net zero Habitat restoration	HEALTH & WELLBEING Healthy lifestyles Active communities Health, social care & wellbeing services	SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES Local Living Inclusive growth Sustainable demographics Community empowerment
 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE	✓	✓	✓
 THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL	✓	✓	✓
 GETTING ABOUT	✓	✓	✓
 AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR ALL	✓	✓	✓

4 COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE



What we're aiming for

We need community facilities and services on the Black Isle that are fit-for-purpose, to enable 'Local Living' in line with national planning policy (see pages 11 and 14 above).

Local priorities include:

- Education and training
- Health and social care
- Recreation and play
- Community activities and events
- Physical infrastructure and utilities: drainage, power, internet etc
- Public toilets
- Provision for disabled people
- Police presence
- Countryside access
- Visitor facilities

Why? Because our 'community infrastructure' has simply not kept up with our growing population, increasing numbers of visitors, modern standards and the ravages of time. Examples include schools, visitor hotspots, police presence (particularly for younger people), care for older people, broadband and play facilities.

What's already happening

The Black Isle is home to many active voluntary groups which are already delivering or planning local services and facilities, in addition to those provided by public bodies.

These include community buildings, hall refurbishments, campsites, health & social care, public toilets, sports and recreation, and much more.

Existing and anticipated community providers include:

- [Avoch Amenities Association](#)
- [Avoch Sea Scouts](#)
- [Black Isle Cares](#)
- Black Isle Partnership
- [Black Isle Tourism](#)
- [Community Councils](#)
- Community markets
- [Cromarty Care Project](#)
- [Cromarty Arts Trust](#)
- [Cromarty Community Development Trust](#)
- [Culbokie Community Trust](#)
- [Muir Hub / Development Trust](#)
- North Kessock Hall
- [Raddery House](#)
- [Rosemarkie Amenities Association](#)
- [Rosemarie & Fortrose Trust](#)
- [ROGS](#)
- [Transition Black Isle](#)

What else is needed

There are gaps in what is already happening, particularly for those priorities highlighted in the first column on this page.

Map 5 on page 19 shows the local centres which should be the focus for future investment in services, facilities and activities, as well as new homes (see chapter 6).

Figure 7 on pages 20-21 show the priorities for action. More work will be needed to prepare an action plan for each priority.

We recognise that it will be challenging to deliver everything, and that we will need support. Equally, it is important to remember that no single action will deliver what we're aiming for, as described in the first column of Figure 8; a combination of activities will be needed, and others may emerge.

Chapter 8 contains more information on implementing the priorities.

Map 5: Local Living and affordable homes

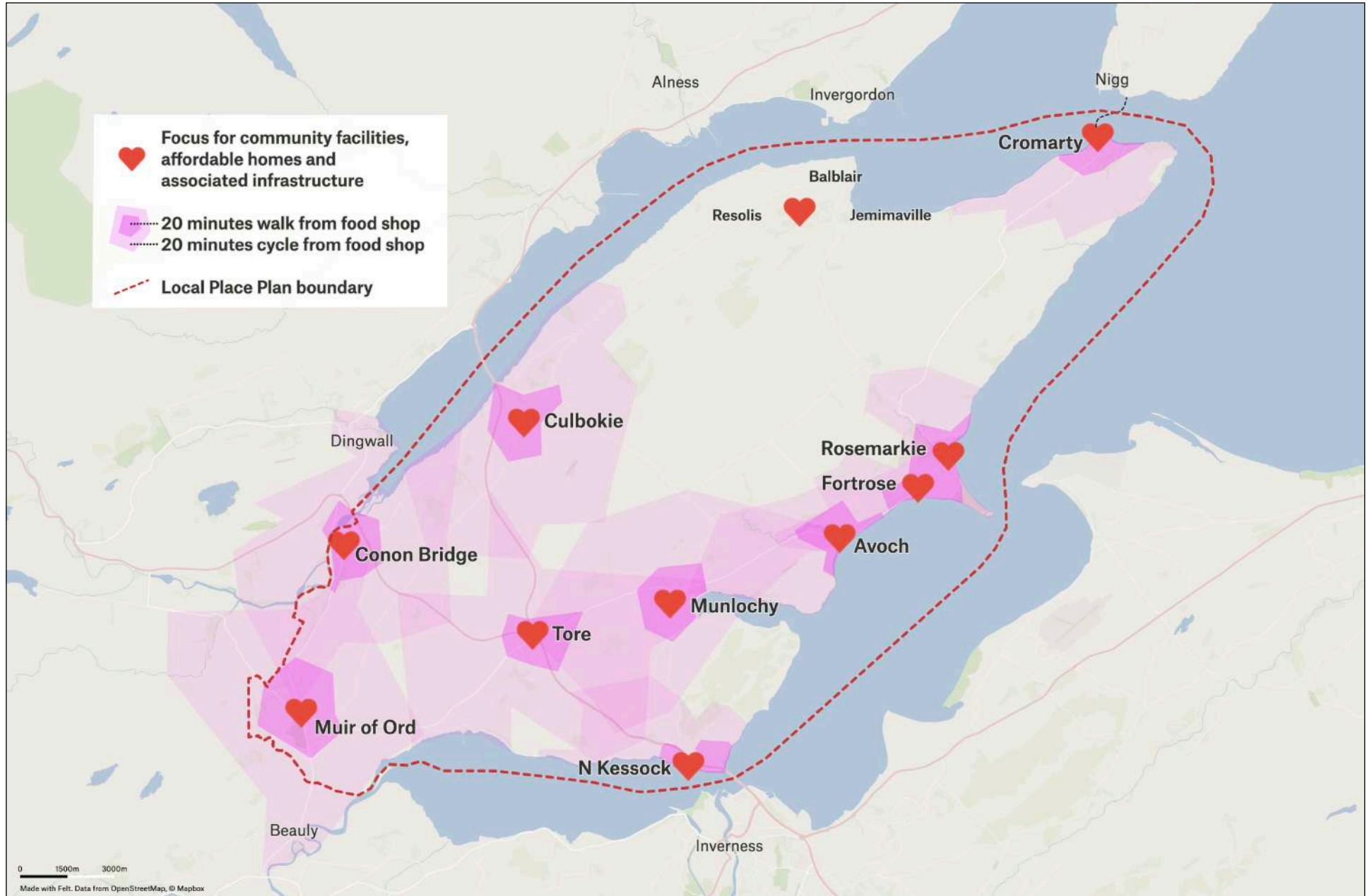


Figure 7

PRIORITIES FOR COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE

Delivery partners (see chapter 8)

Examples of gaps in provision

4.1 Leisure & recreation

- Access to all-weather sports pitches & swimming opportunities
- Network of local play facilities for children & teens across the Black Isle (play parks, pump track etc)

- Council & Community Planning Partners
- Sport Scotland
- Community, private sector, third sector

- All-weather pitch
- Swimming opportunities (e.g. indoor pool, summer pool, lido, pop-up pool or other form of provision)
- Play park improvements

4.2 Public services & utilities

- Fit-for-purpose school buildings, facilities & education
- Care for older people (in their own homes & residential care)
- Police presence (especially for younger people)
- Better facilities & services for disabled people
- Apprenticeships & training (public, private & voluntary sectors)
- Public toilets
- Drugs prevention
- Good quality broadband across the Black Isle
- Sewerage upgrades

- Council
- Community Planning Partners
- Scottish Government
- Key Agencies (Scottish Water, Scottish Futures Trust etc)
- Parent Councils
- Community

- Review & upgrade school facilities & education in Fortrose, Avoch, Munlochy & Conon Bridge. A 3-18 Campus in Fortrose/Rosemarkie has been suggested given the rapidly growing population there, the fact that Primary pupils are currently bussed to Avoch, and the poor condition of Avoch Primary.
- Police presence for young people
- Sustainable finance for local care & arts organisations (see also section 4.5 on the next page)

continued overleaf

4.3 Community hubs & activities		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of community hubs as shown on Map 5 • Make more of hubs for social activities (in partnership with Black Isle Leisure Centre and Leanaig Centre), public services (e.g. health and police) and other opportunities like home working, training and lifelong learning, and visitor facilities (e.g. information & motorhome waste disposal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Council & Community Planning Partners • Highlife Highland 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop new / strengthen existing community hubs in Culbokie, Fortrose, Munlochy & Tore • Review leisure centre activity programmes • Support use of halls and schools for additional activities such as youth clubs, training and adult education
4.4 Information sharing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make information easily available about community activities across the Black Isle, for the public and amongst groups • Ensure data is openly available on educational attainment and school rolls across the Black Isle 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Council & Community Planning Partners • Scottish Government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Black Isle community calendar • Open up detailed school data
4.5 Community assets		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build up community assets to generate income and run services, for example re-use of former churches in Cromarty / Munlochy and community energy generation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Council & Community Planning Partners 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support community organisations to acquire & develop assets

5 THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL



What we're aiming for

We aim to be a net zero carbon, resilient & sustainable community who actively regenerate our marine & land biodiversity.

Why? Because we need to play our part in tackling the twin climate and nature crises, and take action here locally to restore habitats, including those which are of international, national and regional importance valuable (see Map 4, page 13).

This needs action across a variety of sectors:

- Marine, industrial and port activity.
- Flooding and coastal erosion.
- Farming and land management.
- Restoration of nature & biodiversity.
- Environmental awareness.
- Countryside access.
- Visitor management.

What's already happening

This section lists some community projects already happening or planned across the Black Isle, including:

- Allotments & community gardening, such as exist or planned in Avoch, Cromarty, Culbokie, Fortrose & Rosemarkie.
- Black Isle FEAST local food production & retailing initiative.

- [Black Isle Repair Cafe](#)
- Black Isle Sustainable Tourism Plan (led by [Black Isle Tourism](#))
- Chanonry Point Action Plan
- Community markets across the Black Isle
- Culbokie Green
- 'Flourish' environmental education
- [Highland Community Waste Partnership](#)
- [Highland-wide visitor levy](#)
- [Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport](#)
- [MOO Food](#)
- [Moray Firth Coastal Partnership](#), including 'Sea the Value' environmental research facilitated by the Partnership
- [Mossy.earth](#) / [Moray Ocean Community](#) seagrass survey & oyster reintroduction
- Muir of Ord Men's Shed

Other larger scale initiatives are being taken forward by organisations in the public, voluntary and private sectors.

In addition, other previous initiatives have researched local environmental context and proposals, including:

- *Making Space for Wildlife: Creating Corridors & Habitat Networks on the Black Isle* by P. James & P. Young (2004) provides full baseline data & biodiversity & habitat restoration proposals.

- The original report of the Countryside Exchange which led to the creation of the Black Isle Partnership.
- Preparatory work for a [Landscape Partnership Scheme](#), which developed detailed thematic proposals and associated groups of local people.

What else is needed

Despite the range of work already happening, the scale of the climate and nature crises mean that significant gaps remain. This indicates that more work is required if we are to achieve what we're aiming for.

Priorities for action are described in Figure 8 overleaf. It will be challenging to deliver them all, and we will need support. The agricultural sector will be particularly critical, and will need support if there is to be a 'Just Transition' to net zero carbon.

More work will be needed to prepare an action plan for each priority, and other priorities will emerge over time.

Chapter 8 contains more information on implementation. Appendix 7 contains additional resources, information & links for implementation.

Figure 8 PRIORITIES FOR
THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL

Delivery partners (see chapter 8)

Examples of initiatives

5.1 Marine management

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coastal management/protection for tourism & nature conservation, including water quality & natural habitats • Marine habitat restoration/recovery (e.g. salt marshes & managed coastal realignment) • Flood/erosion protection for coastal and other settlements as appropriate • Develop Green Freeport as an international exemplar (see Chapter 8, p.31) • Local training & work opportunities for young people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government Marine Directorate • NatureScot, SEPA, Scottish Water • Moray Firth Coastal Partnership • Coastal Communities Network • District Salmon Fishery Boards • RSPB • Council • UHI • Ports of Inverness, Ardersier, Cromarty Firth, Nigg • The Green Freeport 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent marine, pollution & noise baseline & ongoing monitoring around the Black Isle • Coastal flood risk assessments around the Black Isle • Engage with Green Freeport partners & monitor the impacts of their activities • Coastal habitat restoration • Community-managed coastal park/biosphere for nature conservation & tourism management • Engagement with Regional Marine Planning Forum & National Marine Planning Framework 2 • Managed realignment • Saltmarsh restoration • Marine enhancement • Nature Networks
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continued overleaf

5.2 Land management

- | | | |
|---|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create nature networks within river catchments from sources to coastal zones, including the River Conon (a salmon breeding river) on the western edge of the Black Isle • Encourage the development of farm clusters around these to support habitat restoration • Consider opportunities for community woodlands • Improve footpath networks linked to natural & coastal features • Citizen science/community engagement work & possible engagement with the schools | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scottish Government Agriculture & Rural Economy Directorate • NatureScot, SEPA, Forest & Land Scotland • The Highland Council • Scottish Land & Estates, NFUS, Black Isle Farmers • RSPB, SWT, Woodland Trust, Paths for All, etc • Riverwoods Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create & implement Management Plans for the Black Isle's Special Areas of Conservation • Feasibility study on the development of nature networks/ wildlife corridors • Identify Nature Networks & Local Nature Conservation Sites • Develop farmer clusters linked to nature networks • Community woodlands • Create Black Isle network of community green spaces & verges managed for biodiversity • Nature-linked footpath network |
|---|---|--|

5.3 Sustainable local living

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop Black Isle community-based food & education initiatives such as 'FEAST' & 'Flourish' • Community growing / gardening • Community energy production | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community • Council & Community Planning Partners • Highland Good Food Partnership • Highland Community Waste Partnership | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue & build on the good work already happening (see page 22) • Support community green spaces in all communities |
|--|--|--|

5.4 Visitors, culture & heritage

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In terms of visitor management, focus on "slow tourism" to ensure that tourism has sustainable positive community/economic impacts • Build capacity of Black Isle Tourism as lead body & increasing investment in infrastructure • Chanonry Point: improve visitor management in conjunction with other destinations on the Black Isle • Improve local path networks, including increasing awareness of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code • Investigate a Black Isle heritage/cultural centre | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Council & Community Planning Partners • Community • Moray Firth Coastal Partnership • VisitScotland • Paths for All • Scottish & UK Governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Update/implement Black Isle Sustainable Tourism Plan & Chanonry Point Action Plan (the latter should include visitor management, traffic management, parking, public transport and disabled access to the High Streets and beach) • Audit Black Isle path networks for priority improvements & route development • Consider Black Isle culture/heritage centre or a network of local centres • Build capacity of Black Isle Tourism • Engage with & influence visitor levy |
|--|--|--|

6 AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR ALL



What we're aiming for

Local residents & workers, particularly younger people & working families, need to be able to afford to live on the Black Isle.

Why? Because our communities are ageing, with implications for school rolls, businesses & public services. Increasing prices & a lack of smaller homes make it difficult for young people, key workers & people on lower incomes to move to or stay here.

Unfortunately, the issue of affordability for younger people or working families is simply not being addressed effectively. Everyone, whatever their age, needs to be able to access a home that:

- They can afford.
- Is climate friendly, energy efficient, low carbon and helps biodiversity.
- Has appropriate infrastructure & community facilities.

That will need new homes to be built & existing homes to be upgraded. We do not anticipate swathes of suburban house building and a big jump in population. What is needed is small numbers of affordable homes in and around our existing settlements to sustain those communities - combined with the necessary investment in schools, health and social care, roads and infrastructure.

What's already happening

New homes have of course been built on the Black Isle in recent years, with Conon Bridge, Culbokie, Fortrose & North Kessock being particular focuses for residential development in recent decades. Conon Bridge alone, for example, has received planning consents for 350 new homes since 2010.

However, little of this development has specifically tackled the issue of access to affordable homes. Isolated examples include homes built by Cairn Housing Association (in collaboration with Culbokie Community Trust & at Mansfield Place in Avoch) & with Tulloch Homes in Culbokie.

What else is needed

We recognise that it will be challenging to deliver what is in this Plan, and that we will need support. But a concerted effort is needed, here as across the Highlands, rather than relying on any single initiative.

Map 5 on page 19 shows the local centres where new affordable homes should be made available, with supporting facilities and infrastructure, to support the 'Local Living' principle contained in national planning policy (see page 14).

Figure 9 on pages 26-27 contains a package of priority actions to increase the supply and affordability of new homes, the quality of existing homes, access to finance and advice, and accompanying investment in schools, health and social care, roads and infrastructure. Others actions may be needed too, and more work will be needed to prepare an action plan for each priority.

Action will be needed by a range of stakeholders. The Scottish Government has a key role through leadership, funding, policy and legislation.

Chapter 8 contains more information on implementing the priorities.

Figure 9

PRIORITIES FOR AFFORDABLE HOMES FOR ALL

Delivery partners (see ch.8)

Examples of initiatives

6.1 More affordable homes

- Build more affordable homes across different tenures & types: e.g. mid market rent, starter homes, community owned, shared equity, co-housing, self-build, woodland crofts.
- All new homes should be affordable & remain so in perpetuity ([Rural Housing Burden](#) & changes in national/local planning policy as in Wales (e.g. Gwynedd & Anglesey).
- Encourage affordable housing for local needs in/near villages shown on Map 5, with a more streamlined process for that kind of development in those locations.
- Encourage re-use of empty homes & conversion of other empty buildings such as disused churches, through more use of CPO & ‘forced sales’.

- Scottish Government
- Council
- Landowners, developers & landlords
- Community
- Housing Associations
- Communities Housing Trust

- For each village shown on Map 5, identify site for affordable homes & delivery steps for each one, to feed into Highland Strategic Housing Investment Plan for funding
- [Healthy Homes Skye and Lochalsh](#): improving existing housing condition and energy efficiency by showcasing real examples, strengthening the retrofit workforce, supporting self-help retrofit and improving financing / reducing retrofit costs
- Promote the Black Isle to central / local government & the Green Freeport as a pilot location to trial a package of these policy & investment actions

6.2 Existing housing condition & energy efficiency

- Upgrade homes on lower Council Tax bands to higher EPC ratings with grants/loans & streamlined consents - see [Healthy Homes Skye and Lochalsh](#) example on right

- Scottish Government
- Council
- HIE
- Home Energy Scotland
- [BE-ST](#)
- Community

6.3 Supporting infrastructure & facilities

- New affordable housing must be accompanied by appropriate supporting facilities & infrastructure, including investment in schools, health and social care, roads and infrastructure (see chapters 4 and 7 also)

- Council
- Developers
- Community

continued overleaf

6.4 Access to finance & information		<i>See above</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easier access to low cost finance for workers & young people to buy & upgrade homes • More information for young people on housing options • Encourage downsizing & local sale, like Welsh 'Fair Chance' scheme with tax relief to cover reduction in sale value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scottish Government</i> • <i>Council</i> • <i>Community Planning Partners</i> • <i>Community</i> 	
6.5 Second homes & holiday lets		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prevent existing homes becoming full-time holiday lets (using Short Term Let Control Area) • Control growth of second homes, e.g. by increasing tax & closing tax loopholes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Scottish Government</i> • <i>Council</i> 	
6.6 Social housing		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase stock by local authority buyback of homes (Open Market Purchase Scheme) • More emphasis on local residency & employment in social housing criteria 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Council</i> • <i>Scottish Government</i> 	

7 GETTING ABOUT



What we're aiming for

It needs to be safe, convenient & affordable for everyone to move around without a car within our villages, around the Black Isle and to Inverness & Dingwall - by walking, cycling, wheeling and public or community transport.

Why? Because without a car, accessing jobs, services & facilities is difficult.

Buses are scant and unreliable. The rail network serves only Conon Bridge & Muir of Ord on the western edge of the Black Isle. Walking and cycling is often unsafe within & between villages. Those who cannot drive are excluded. More incentives are needed to encourage people to travel more sustainably.

What's already happening

Some good work has already been done, for example:

- 20mph speed limits in most villages
- [Culbokie Community Cycling Club](#)
- [Ferintosh Wee Bus](#)
- Highland Council in-house bus service & free bus passes.

Other ongoing work includes an active travel route for walking and cycling in Culbokie, and ongoing development work within Highland Council on a long hoped-for route between Avoch and Munloch.

Significant gaps remain if the priorities in the previous column are to be tackled.

What else is needed

Map 6 overleaf (page 29) shows the key routes and destinations across the Black Isle that should be prioritised for improvements to walking, cycling and public/community transport. It should be read in conjunction with the action priorities in Figure 10 (page 30).

We recognise that it will be challenging to deliver all of the priorities, and that we will need support. Equally, it is important to remember that no single action will deliver what we're aiming for, as described on the left; a combination of activities will be needed. More work will be needed to prepare an action plan for each priority.

Chapter 8 contains more information on implementing the priorities.

Map 6: Getting About

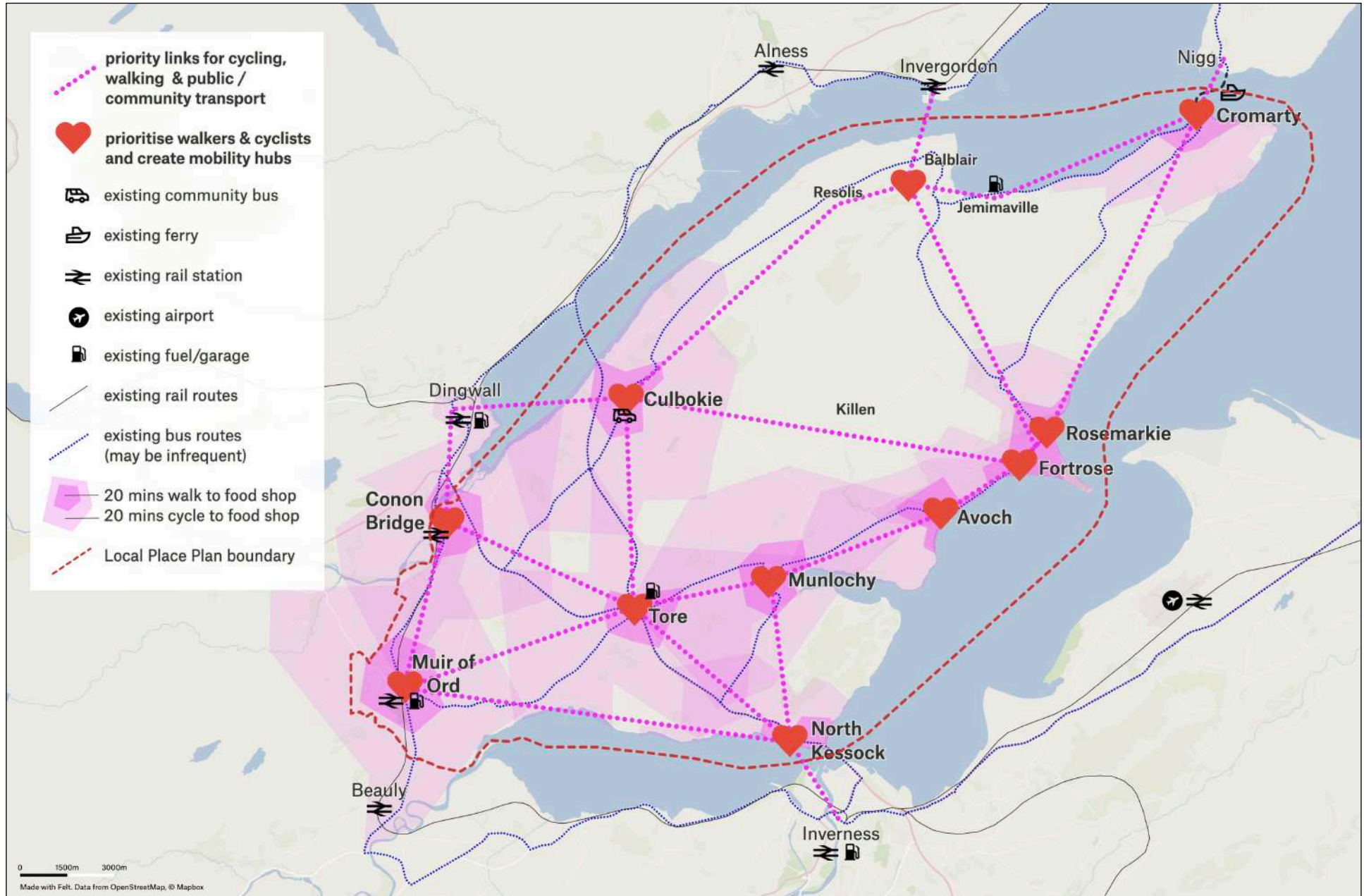


Figure 10

PRIORITIES FOR GETTING ABOUT

Delivery partners (see chapter 8)

Examples of initiatives

7.1 Walking & cycling within villages

- Ensure safe walking, cycling & wheeling within the villages on Map 5, focusing on:
 - > Less mobile people, buggies/mobility scooters, children walking to school or to school buses
 - > Road crossings, footways & lighting
 - > Routes to schools, Tore roundabout & Fortrose High Street

- Council
- HITRANS
- Sustrans
- Community

- Ensure 20mph speed limit are in place in all of the villages on Map 5 with a heart symbol (Culbokie being the main outstanding location)
- Speed reduction measures outwith villages

7.2 Black Isle walking & cycling network

- Between Black Isle villages & across the Firths to Dingwall & Inverness, as shown on Map 6
- Routes for priority action should include Rosemarkie-Avoch-Munlochy & between Culbokie & A9 bus stops

- Council
- HITRANS
- Sustrans
- Community

- Engage with Stagecoach on timetable design
- Improve walking/wheeling within villages
- Use this Plan to inform forthcoming Highland Active Travel Strategy & review of Highland Local Transport Strategy

7.3 Community/public transport

- Create fit-for-purpose Black Isle network of community/public transport (see Map 6), including community transport, buses, ferries, e-bikes, electric car club etc
- Build on the approach pioneered by the Ferintosh Wee Bus to re-allocate existing public transport subsidy where it will deliver better outcomes at the Black Isle scale, such as the [Cairngorms Connected](#) partnership approach

- Council
- HITRANS
- Community

- Prepare Black Isle Travel Needs Analysis to inform future investment & services in walking/ cycling & community/public transport

7.4 Easy interchange

- In villages & Inverness/Dingwall, ensure good & efficient interchange between different modes of transport - for example, accessible 'mobility hubs' in villages with toilets, e-bike & electric vehicle charging, public space & information (see [Scottish Government mobility hub guidance](#))

- Council
- HITRANS
- Sustrans
- Community

- Bid for funding for Black Isle active travel & community/public transport infrastructure

7.5 Infrastructure maintenance

- Improved maintenance of roads & footways as the infrastructure for all modes of transport

- Council
- Scottish Government

8 MAKING IT HAPPEN

This Plan is an ambitious statement of our aspirations. It is likely to take a decade to implement, and should be revised as circumstances change over that period. Not everything in the Plan may come to pass.

Working together

Delivering this Plan's 10 year vision will need collaboration. Although it is the community's plan, the community cannot deliver it alone. It needs everyone to work together for common purpose.

To take one example: increasing the supply of affordable homes is a community priority, but it will need support from the Scottish Government, agencies, the Council's planning and housing departments, and developers.

Collaboration needs to incorporate two principles - **resetting the relationship** between the public sector & local communities, and **thinking differently** about funding and resources. These are covered in more detail on the right.

The **roles of different partners** are described on pages 32 to 34. **Collaborative governance and implementation arrangements** and **planning policy** are covered on page 35.

Resetting the relationship

To enable collaboration, resetting the relationship between the local community and public sector will be critical. That means:

- Enabling the community to influence and understand their future.
- Empowering the local community as an active partner, so creating pride, stewardship and responsibility.
- Creating more trust and collaboration between community & authorities.
- Enabling equitable & smoother delivery of services and investment.

Funding & resources

To deliver the Plan, the public sector and funders need to:

1. **Think differently about how budgets are allocated.** For example, the funding that enables the [Ferintosh Community Bus](#) was redirected from conventional bus services.
2. **Think differently about how services are delivered.** For example, social care can be delivered very efficiently through community organisations as demonstrated by award-winning initiatives elsewhere in the Highlands such as [Boleskine Community Care](#).

3. **Think differently about evidence for decision-making.** This plan is strong evidence of community need and ambition, which should be taken into account alongside other inputs such as statistical data and national policy.
4. **Think differently about policy,** which needs to be more effective in addressing challenges. For example, national housing and planning policy should be updated as described in chapter 7 to tackle the affordable housing crisis.
5. **Think differently about funding and resourcing communities,** enabling communities to acquire and develop developing their own income-generating assets, such as wind turbines, solar farms, commercial forestry etc. Other funding sources include revenue sharing from the Green Freeport (as with oil revenues in Shetland), planning consent Section 75 funds, and crowdfunding/subscription for specific projects.

The various partners identified on the following pages each need sustainable funding and resources if significant progress is to be made on delivering this Plan. UK and Scottish Governments have a vital role in enabling this to happen.

Roles and responsibilities

A range of different partners need to work together to make this Plan a reality. They will each need appropriate resources if they are to help deliver this plan - and the need to think differently about budgets, services and policy as explained on the previous page.

The local community

Some key organisations have important roles in implementing the plan:

- **Community Councils** as the voices of the local community across the Black Isle, particularly in liaison with the Highland Council and other public bodies. Community Councils should endorse the plan and use it in their discussions with public bodies. They may also wish to use it as a framework within which to develop their own more detailed Local Place Plans.
- **Community organisations**, of which there are many across the Black Isle, each doing great work on the ground to bring people together and provide services and activities. The Plan will prove useful to support their activities and development.
- **Businesses, landowners and investors** generate jobs, economic activity and manage/develop land. They will find the Plan a useful source of information about the community's aspirations, and to think about how they can use their investment and activity to help achieve those goals.

The public sector

The **Highland Council, Community Planning Partners and other public agencies** have a fundamental role in supporting and delivering many elements of the Plan, as outlined in each of the Calls For Action in chapters 4 to 7.

Those public bodies include:

- Forestry and Land Scotland
- Highland Third Sector Interface
- Highlands and Islands Enterprise
- Highlife Highland
- HITRANS
- Key Agencies such as SEPA, Scottish Water and Scottish Futures Trust
- NHS Highland
- NatureScot
- Police Scotland
- Scottish Fire and Rescue
- Skills Development Scotland
- The Highland Council
- Transport Scotland
- UHI
- VisitScotland

These organisations should use the Plan as part of their evidence base when setting budgets and reviewing policy. The Plan is, essentially, a comprehensive statement of community aspirations which should be an invaluable part of their decision-making. The community responses in Appendix 3 are a rich source of information about community aspirations.

As Local Place Plans are prepared across the region, we hope that the Council and Community Planning Partners will use the aggregated evidence not only to influence their own spending, policymaking and service delivery, but also to lobby to other public agencies and national government.

The **Scottish and UK Governments** also have a vital role. They set overall policy and resource allocation in relation to every aspect of this Plan, including:

- Biodiversity and climate change
- Community empowerment
- Green Freeport (see below)
- Housing
- Infrastructure
- Planning
- Transport

It is therefore critical that the Scottish and UK Governments also use this Plan to influence their spending and policymaking.

Non-governmental bodies

Many agencies and funders are likely to be able to support specific elements of the Plan, and may themselves require funding support to do so.

For example, Sustrans and Paths for All in relation to active travel; NFU Scotland in relation to farming; and the Communities Housing Trust, Housing Associations and Rural Housing Scotland in relation to housing.

The Green Freeport

Over the coming decades, Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport is intended to play a significant role in boosting renewable energy production, increasing UK energy security, & delivering transformational benefits to Highland communities. There is more information about the background to the Green Freeport on page 15 of this Plan.

At the time of preparing the Plan in 2023, the Green Freeport concept was at an early stage in the designation process and limited information was available. As community engagement progressed on the Plan, both the possibilities and anxieties surrounding the Green Freeport became 'live' issues. Being community-led, this Plan needs to reflect that spectrum of views.

From those community engagement inputs, this Plan makes four recommendations to the Green Freeport & the Highland Council. The aim is to maximise the Green Freeport's potential to deliver positive benefits for local communities and the environment alongside transformational economic opportunities.

1. **Open dialogue** should take place with communities as the Full Business Case is developed and subsequently on more detailed plans and proposals.

This should include strengthening the voice of local communities in planning decisions. For example, extending Statutory Consultee status for Major planning applications to all Community Councils in the Green Freeport zone, not

just the Community Council where the application is located.

2. **The Green Freeport should take every opportunity to deliver community aspirations**, including the following key aspirations expressed in this Plan:
 - *Public transport and active travel links* to access work & training opportunities, including upgrading the Nigg ferry (see chapter 6).
 - *High quality / well paid apprenticeships, skills, training and jobs* including for local young people and adults seeking to re-train (see chapter 5).
 - *Protection and restoration of marine & terrestrial habitats* (see chapter 5).
 - *Mitigation of predicted impacts of sea level rise* (see chapter 5).
 - *Tackling the shortage and affordability of housing* - ensuring that there the growing population can be housed with community infrastructure and facilities, and without harming existing communities (see chapters 4 and 7).
3. **Standards for Green Freeport development and investment** should be drawn up for infrastructure, development, placemaking, environmental impact, community impact, community benefit, and employment and business opportunities - to make the Green Freeport an internationally attractive investment proposition and to meet the aspirations of local communities.

Again, this Plan should form a useful starting point for understanding community aspirations.

4. **Independent environmental baseline survey and long term monitoring** should be put in place before any work starts so that positive impacts of Green Freeport developments on marine and terrestrial habitats can be demonstrated and any potential adverse impacts on communities in terms of noise (including low frequency noise), water, light and air quality can be mitigated.

Partner support in general

Figure 11 shows where individual organisations can help to deliver specific elements of the Plan. The page numbers in the table refer to the Calls for Action in chapters 4 to 7.

Figure 11:
Partner support



Communities Housing Trust			see pp25-27	
Highland Third Sector Interface	see pp18-21	see pp22-24		
Highlands & Islands Enterprise	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
Highlife Highland	see pp18-21	see pp22-24		
Highland Council	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
HITRANS				see pp28-30
Housing Associations				see pp28-30
Inverness & Cromarty Firth Green Freeport	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
NFU Scotland		see pp22-24		
NHS Highland	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
Nature Scot	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30

Paths for All	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
Police Scotland	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
Rural Housing Scotland			see pp25-27	
Scottish Futures Trust	see pp18-21		see pp25-27	
Scottish Government	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
Scottish Water	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	
SEPA	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	
Skills Development Scotland	see pp18-21			
Sustrans				see pp28-30
Transport Scotland				see pp28-30
UK Government	see pp18-21	see pp22-24	see pp25-27	see pp28-30
UHI	see pp18-21	see pp22-24		
VisitScotland	see pp18-21			

Next steps

As well as being registered by The Highland Council, the Plan should also be endorsed by the Council, the Community Planning Partnership, and the Community Councils on the Black Isle.

The local community can deliver elements of this Plan, but implementation of the Plan as a whole will require collaborative action by the public and private sectors too.

For the Plan to lead to meaningful action, there needs to be a mechanism for the community to co-ordinate, advocate, support delivery and monitor the Plan. These functions should involve the appropriate local partner organisations, including those focussed on advocacy and delivery.

During preparation of this Plan, discussions took place about the most appropriate form of implementation governance, culminating in a series of community workshops in early 2024. To take things forward, the Highland Council have offered to facilitate initial meetings to establish this governance structure.

Monitoring & review

The Plan's focus on outcomes rather than specific projects should give it greater flexibility and longevity than a project focus might have. That is because it will enable different ways of achieving the Plan's outcomes to emerge.

Nonetheless, the Plan will need to be updated as circumstances change. The governance body should be responsible for facilitating its review. At the least, a review of the Plan is likely to be required after 5 years.

Planning policy

This plan is in part a [Local Place Plan](#) and therefore contains suggestions that the local community would like to see supported in the next Local Development Plan.

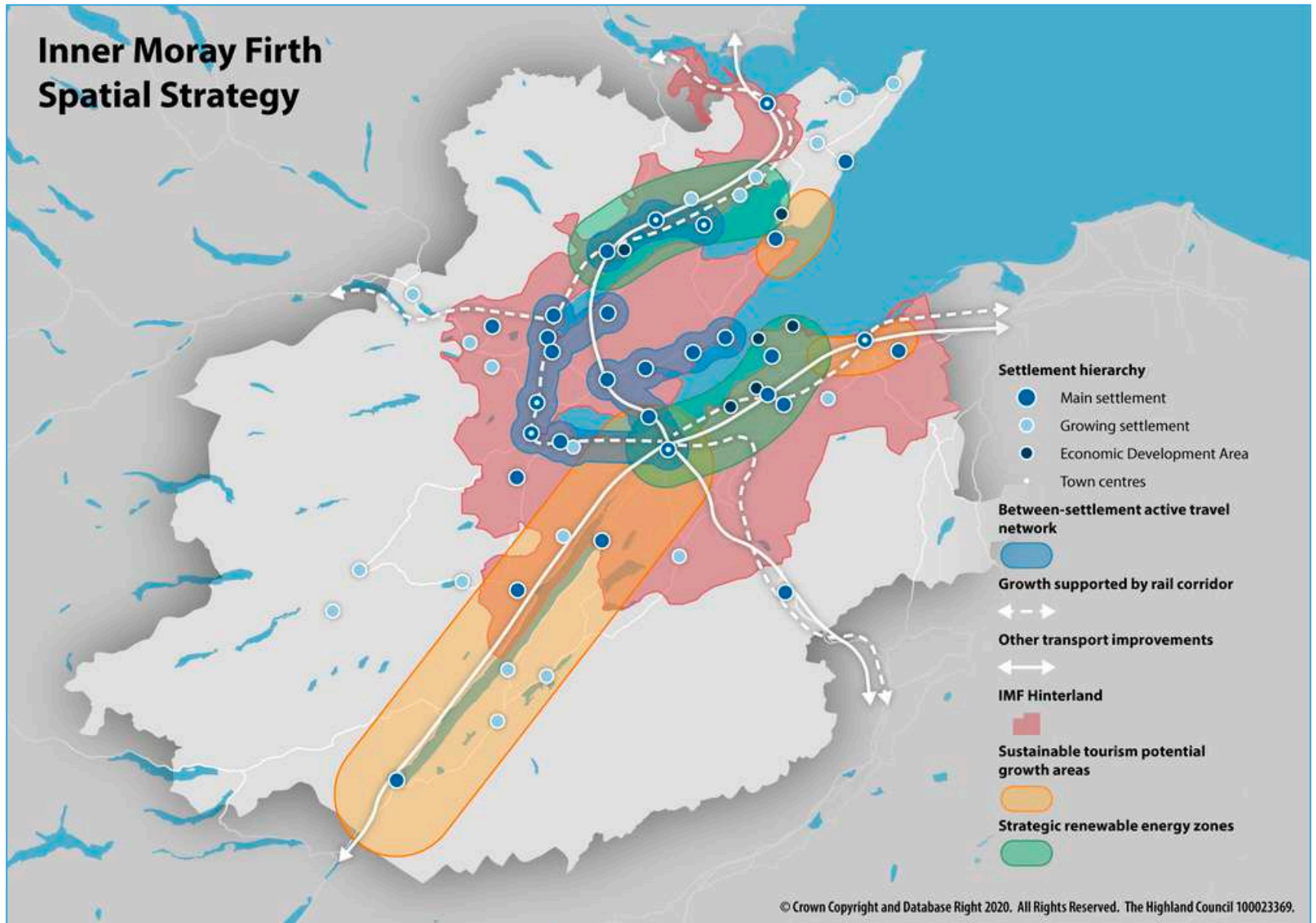
Appendices 8 and 9 summarise suggestions for planning policy as required by Schedule 19 of the Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 and in line with Scottish Government Circular 1/2022).

Appendices

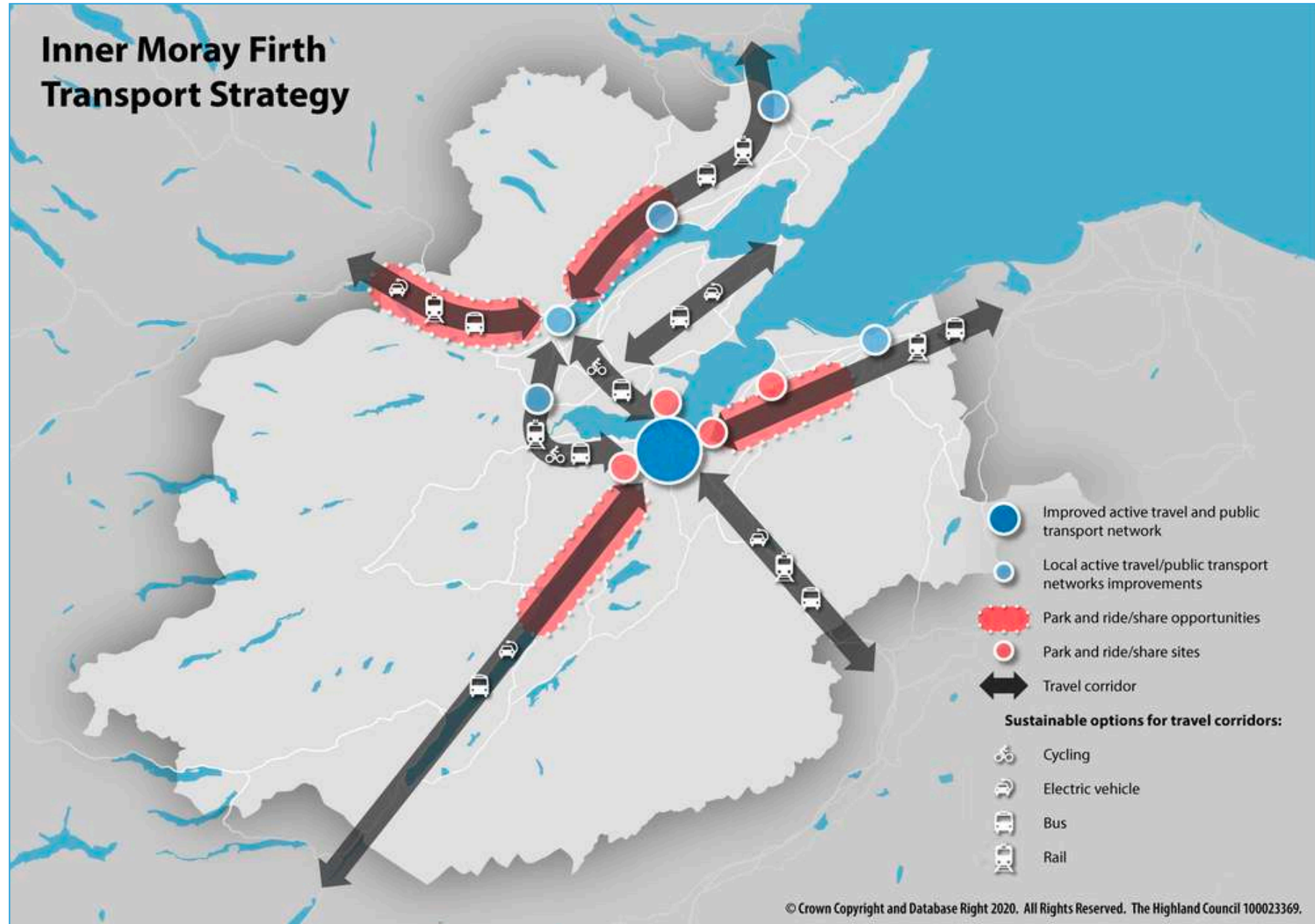
1	Local Development Plan strategy	p 37
2	Summary of engagement stage 1 responses	p 40
3	Full responses to engagement stages 1 & 2	p 41
4	Engagement stage 3 summary & Plan changes	p 42
5	Black Isle Area Profile (Highland Council)	p 56
6	Black Isle facts and figures	p 57
7	Additional resources for Think Global, Act Local	p 58
8	Planning policy recommendations	p 60
9	Map of locations referred to in the Local Place Plan	p 62

Appendix 1: Inner Moray Firth Proposed Local Development Plan, 2023

This appendix contains three strategic maps from the [Proposed Inner Moray Forth Local Development Plan](#) which was submitted to the Scottish Ministers by the Highland Council in March 2023.

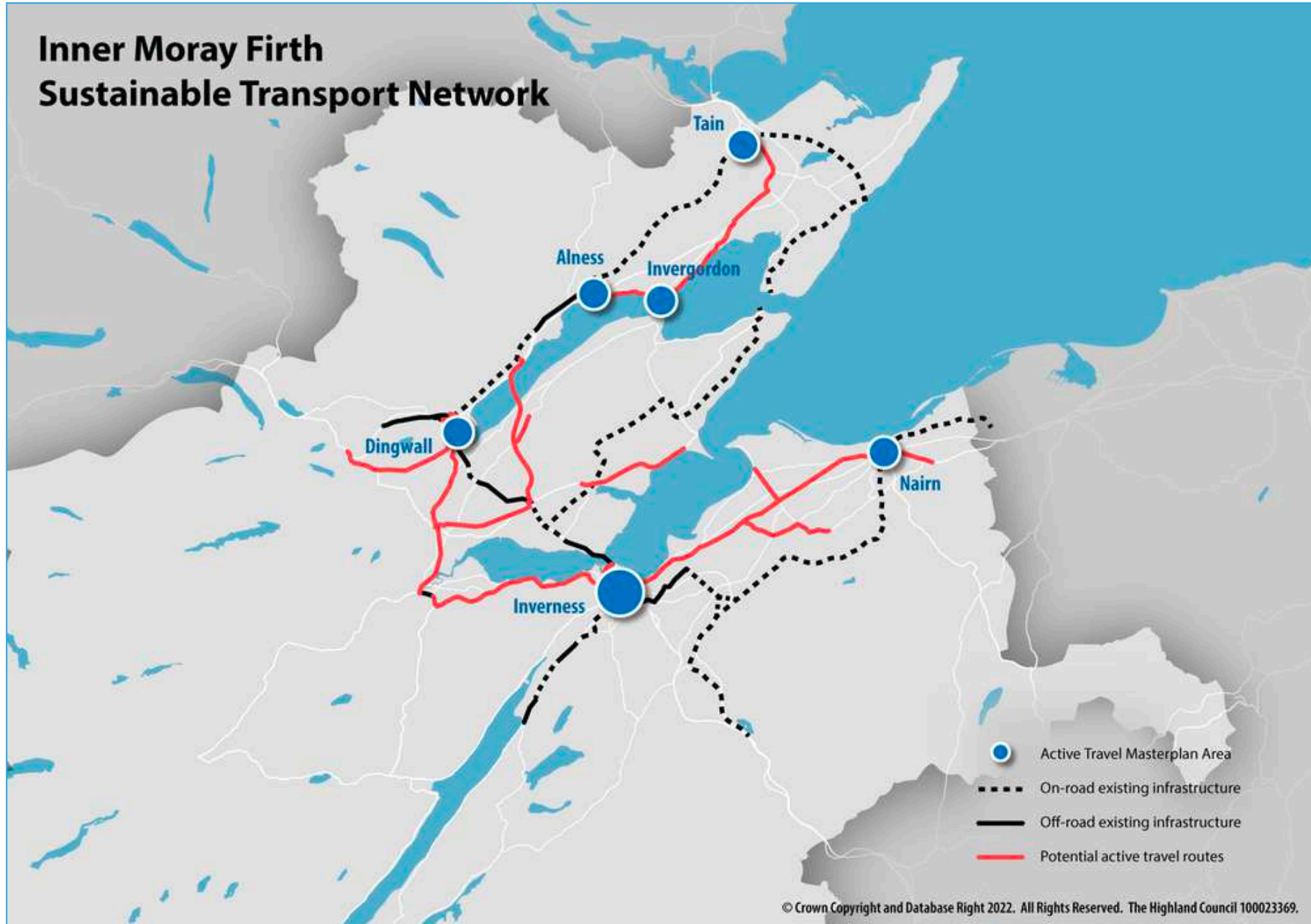


Inner Moray Firth Transport Strategy



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Inner Moray Firth Sustainable Transport Network



Appendix 2: Summary of stage 1 engagement responses

The results from stage 1 formed the foundation for developing the plan.

The thumbnails on this page are of the results summary boards shared at the stage 2 engagement events and online at www.black-isle.info.

High-resolution versions of these thumbnails can be accessed directly at bit.ly/3FmUn9d or through www.black-isle.info.

Full transcriptions of the results can be accessed in Appendix 3.

The story so far
The Black Isle is being supported by Highland Council to prepare its own Community Vision for the future. The first stage, between March and May, took place at a Black Isle events around the Black Isle, online, and through school events across our constituencies. The event was an excellent start to the Black Isle community vision.

The second stage, focusing on today's top events, is to share everyone's feedback and to gather more events to explore solutions and options.

The third stage will take place over the summer. We will share a draft of what we have to do to check and review before it is finalised.

Once the Black Isle plan is finalised later in the year, we will be the **Black Isle Vision** a blueprint for action by local communities, the public sector and business.

Why have we invited you back?
1. So you can see and discuss the results from the first stage.
Each pair of display boards has the questions and information from the first stage. (We have a new look at our survey results and quotes from our local communities.)
2. So you can explore how to address the emerging issues.
You'll see ideas and experience from elsewhere to get you thinking. You might have other ideas too. Let's talk about it but please don't give away!

71 drop-in events
466 participants
60 online responses
over 3,000 comments

1. Population & housing
2. Community facilities & services
3. Getting around
4. Jobs and business
5. Nature & environment
6. Tourism
7. Anything else?

1 Population & housing

Who particularly needs homes locally?

- Young people
- Older people
- Families

What kind of homes do our communities need?

- Shared/with care
- Accessible & adaptable
- Rented
- Fewer holiday homes
- Affordable homes

How should our communities respond to having more older people or fewer younger people?

- Intergenerational activities
- Appropriate housing

2 Community facilities & services

What are the biggest challenges?

- Community facilities
- Health facilities
- Transport
- Leisure facilities

Who in our community is being left behind?

- People on low incomes
- Overseas in community
- Older people
- Young people

What are the opportunities & challenges, small or big, for communities to do more for themselves?

- Land and buildings
- Public sector collaboration
- Funding capacity
- Volunteering

3 Getting about

What are the challenges of getting about within and between our communities, and further afield?

- Roads maintenance
- Road safety
- Road safety cycling
- Public transport

How can we make it safer, more sustainable and more affordable to travel around our communities, villages and further afield?

- Car share
- Walking
- Roads
- Public transport
- Cycling

4 Jobs & business

What are the biggest challenges?

- Transport
- Use local businesses
- Tourism & leisure
- Green energy & green tech

5 Nature & environment

Which aspects of our natural environment and need most attention?

- Forest, woodland & hedgerows
- Coast & sea
- Green energy & green tech

6 Tourism

What are the biggest challenges?

- Accommodation
- Transport
- Facilities

What are the biggest opportunities to make more of tourism as a force for good for locals and visitors alike?

- Invest in facilities & infrastructure

7 Other issues & opportunities

What are the biggest challenges?

- Co-operation within communities
- Communities not listened to

What are the biggest opportunities?

- Co-operation between communities
- Invest in facilities & infrastructure

Appendix 3: Full responses to engagement stages 1 & 2

This appendix contains weblinks to more detail of the engagement responses from stages 1 and 2 of preparing the plan. These may be of interest to organisations working in the area as a record of community views.

Stage 1

2,800 comments were received at the nine public drop-ins, two high school events, & online responses. To complement the summary in Appendix 2, full transcriptions are downloadable through the table below. Due to the large number of responses, these have been transcribed into shorter reports by the source and topic.

Responses from the high school events can be viewed using the following weblinks:

Dingwall Academy

- summary: bit.ly/3FI3046
- full transcription: bit.ly/48SPBhr

Fortrose Academy

- summary: bit.ly/45F501T
- full transcription: bit.ly/4002DWa

Comments relating to the Inverness and Cromarty Firth Green Freeport, from all sources, have been transcribed in this report: bit.ly/484aGVd

Stage 2

Written comments received at public drop-in sessions: bit.ly/3rTNfhz

Fortrose Academy students online survey responses: bit.ly/3rU2uqN

Primary Schools pupils online survey responses: bit.ly/3M6iVXW

Primary Schools parents/staff online survey responses: bit.ly/46XA3H5

Written responses to postcards distributed to households: *What does the Black Isle mean to you?* bit.ly/48mOhC7

<i>Stage 2 comments by event & topic download links are underlined</i>	1. Housing & population	2. Facilities & services	3. Getting about	4. Jobs & business	5. Nature & environment	6. Tourism	7. Anything else?
Avoch & Killen event	bit.ly/3Mt2d5	bit.ly/3MrjXxG	bit.ly/3sqPxVv	bit.ly/3MtQDGV	bit.ly/462XcqJ	bit.ly/40kKcf8	bit.ly/3MswCQS
Cromarty event	bit.ly/3SnI0R	bit.ly/49hqSDz	bit.ly/3QEIOk6	bit.ly/3QGPmPj	bit.ly/3QHwVdn	bit.ly/3tVxMOx	bit.ly/4777yae
Ferintosh event	bit.ly/47dlor	bit.ly/47g6m4h	bit.ly/3QIwH5N	bit.ly/3smlygg	bit.ly/3QK0xa5	bit.ly/49jLzyE	bit.ly/3FJKHpE
Fortrose & Rosemarkie event	bit.ly/3tQzct	bit.ly/3QkL7aF	bit.ly/3u2lbs0	bit.ly/3QmLmC7	bit.ly/3MsJiHx	bit.ly/3MsJw1l	bit.ly/3u7m2sc
Killearnan event	bit.ly/45WuyHS	bit.ly/3FEiCQx	bit.ly/3MTnrx4	bit.ly/49lAgGo	bit.ly/47htTSi	bit.ly/3QjHmlX	bit.ly/3Mswb9c
Knockbain (Munlochy) event	bit.ly/47hx9N	bit.ly/45RSXhX	bit.ly/40o4LXR	bit.ly/3sgDNVx	bit.ly/47e5DRk	bit.ly/3FGBWML	bit.ly/3QqejNw
Knockbain (N. Kessock) event	bit.ly/3Mtsq3	bit.ly/3MqPIXl	bit.ly/3QI3tDW	bit.ly/3MqGYRB	bit.ly/46WPpy2x	bit.ly/46Qunz8	bit.ly/3SiHgxA
Muir of Ord event	bit.ly/3QIvuv	bit.ly/3QIvQSE	bit.ly/3SrXm82	bit.ly/45W9Zvo	bit.ly/40kPdnQ	bit.ly/3tYvFtl	bit.ly/47dOpn5
Resolis event	bit.ly/3sjmBy	bit.ly/49gtOQJ	bit.ly/3sr7jb8	bit.ly/3tXL90N	bit.ly/46UbGL6	bit.ly/3tZAv9X	bit.ly/40nXR4R
Online responses	bit.ly/3QI2hA	bit.ly/40mEGsk	bit.ly/3SrXBzY	bit.ly/3SkZ4bp	bit.ly/49hul50	bit.ly/40pctBm	bit.ly/40oucZw

Appendix 4: Engagement stage 3 summary & Plan changes

1. Introduction

Consultation on the draft Local Place Plan took place over four weeks between 19th January and 16th February 2024. It followed three phases of community engagement starting in March 2023 which are described on the [Local Place Plan webpage](#).

The consultation was publicised by posters and flyers, social media, an e-bulletin reaching over 275 people, and the Local Place Plan webpage.

The [draft Plan](#) was available to view online via the Local Place Plan webpage in both its full version (42 pages) and as a shorter two page summary. Both versions were also available as hard copies in libraries on the Black Isle, in Inverness and in Dingwall, and at the Black Isle Leisure Centre in Fortrose. People were encouraged to comment on the draft Plan using an online survey form, an equivalent paper form, or by email, letter or telephone to named contacts.

The online survey form contained a prominent link to the draft Plan itself and asked respondents to indicate whether they thought the Plan was complete or, if not, what changes they would like to see.

Many thanks to all those who took the time to view and/or comment on the draft Plan.

We do not know how many people viewed the Plan online or as a hard copy, but we do

know that over 240 people viewed the online form (which included a link to view the Plan without needing to complete the survey). Of those 240, just 42 chose to comment: 31 using the online survey form and 11 by email. Two of those emailed responses were from Community Councils, and a third was from an informal group of ten Black Islers engaged in environmental work.

The 31 respondents who completed the online survey were asked if the Plan is ready to be submitted to the Highland Council. Their responses were Yes (7 people); Almost, with small changes (12 people), No (10 people) and Don't know (2 people). As a sample size from a Black Isle population of around 10000, those numbers are too small as a basis on which to make decisions.

The rest of this report summarises comments received, and, where appropriate, changes to the draft Plan. The headings follow the chapters used in the [draft Plan](#):

2. *General comments*
3. *Our vision for the future*
4. *Call for Action 1: Community infrastructure*
5. *Call for Action 2: Think global, act local*
6. *Call for Action 3: Affordable homes for all*
7. *Call for Action 4: Getting about*
8. *Making it happen*

Comments received are summarised in the left-hand column of each table together with a note of which chapter of the plan they refer to. They have been summarised to focus on the essence of the comments and respect confidentiality. Every effort has been made not to lose the primary focus of people's comments.

***Asterisked comments** are those known to have been received from a community body, rather than an individual or household. Where comments are known to have been submitted by a community body, they are located at the start of each chapter. (Responses received via the online survey were anonymous, so it not known whether they were submitted by a community body or an individual/household.)

Subsequent changes to the draft Plan, where appropriate, are summarised in the right-hand column of each table.

Please note that the Plan was only changed where there was a compelling reason to do so and where changes fitted with the overall vision of the Plan. This was to avoid disenfranchising the large number of people who shaped the draft Plan during the earlier stages of community engagement.

2. General comments

Comment summary	Response / change to plan
<p>2.1 * Fortrose and Rosemarkie Community Council welcomes the focus and attention on many aspects of life on the Black Isle that is provided by the Local Place Plan and with the above concerns taken into consideration and once we have been provided with answers on democratic accountability, funding and the preservation of the environmental and economic aspects of the Black Isle that make it an attractive place to live and work, then this could be something with real support by the community council and local residents</p>	<p><i>Each of these points is addressed in response to other more detailed comments later in this report, and amendments to the Plan have been made.</i></p>
<p>2.2 * Conon Bridge is insufficiently mentioned in the Plan.</p>	<p><i>By way of background, the reasons for this are (1) that Conon Bridge and Muir of Ord lie outwith the Black Isle Ward and were added to the Plan process after it started; and (2) Conon Bridge did not have a Community Council or other representative community voice until late 2023, by which time the Plan had been drafted.</i></p> <p><i>However, now that Conon Bridge Community Council has been formed, each of the Calls for Action chapters in the Plan has been updated throughout with their input.</i></p>
<p>2.3 Support for the Plan as valuable document for all stakeholders</p>	<p><i>No change suggested.</i></p>
<p>2.4 “Having been present at several in person events during 2023 I think this draft does a very good job of representing the views which I heard.”</p>	<p><i>No change suggested.</i></p>
<p>2.5 Objection to submission of the Plan to Highland Council for registration on technical grounds, concerns about the democratic accountability of future governance, and there are omissions or amendments required in relation to flooding, nature designations, playparks, community hubs, consultation with delivery partners, shared walking/cycling paths in villages, the definition of affordable homes, public/community transport, and the source of the statistics in Appendix 5.</p>	<p><i>We believe that the Plan does comply with statutory requirements for registration; ultimately that is for the Council to determine.</i></p> <p><i>The governance section in Chapter 8 has been amended to avoid concerns about accountability of future governance contains additional detail, reflecting discussions at community workshops in February/March 2024 specifically about governance.</i></p> <p><i>The other detailed points have each been noted and, where appropriate, the Plan has been updated. The plan does not propose shared walking/ cycling paths, and the Appendix 5 statistics in were published by the Council (as is made clear in the final Plan).</i></p>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
2.6	Churches are missing from Map 2: Community Facilities	<i>Churches have been added to Map 2.</i>
.	On Map 3, a ruined distillery is incorrectly indicated at Mulchaich	<i>Map 3 is a copy of a map published in 2023 by Black Isle Tourism, which has been clarified in the Plan. We are unable to alter a map already published by others.</i>
2.8	Conon Bridge no longer has a permanent Post Office.	<i>Map 2 has been updated accordingly. Map 3 cannot be changed as explained in the response to comment 2.7.</i>
2.9	“The plan feels and looks like a plan for the wrong generation. Of course it should be a nice place for old people but we need it to focus on the youth, the younger families.”	<i>The Plan is intended to be for all generations; there was targeted engagement with young people and parents in developing the Plan (see Appendix 3), and their suggestions and ideas have fed into the Plan. Interestingly, many young people’s aspirations were actually the same as those of older age groups.</i>
2.10	“The idea around the plan is good but it seems like a lot of money has been and is continuing to be invested in a plan which covers things most are covered under central and local government.”	<i>The intention is to influence central and local government spending so that it is more aligned with community priorities, as explained at the start of chapter 1.</i>
2.11	“There doesn't seem to be any concrete or actionable plans. Lots of good intention, but what are we actually going to do?”	<i>The Plan focusses on strategic outcomes and examples of potential ways of delivering those outcomes. This is a conscious decision, the aim being for the Plan to achieve consensus on what is important for the community, and for the community, public and private sectors then to work together on how to achieve those outcomes. This will require further work once the Plan has been published, as is explained in the updated chapter 8.</i>

3. Our vision for the future

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
3.1	“Having been present at several in-person events during 2023 I think this draft does a very good job of representing the views which I heard.”	<i>No change suggested.</i>
3.2	“No changes, great summary of the plan.”	<i>No change suggested.</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
3.3	The Plan should not in any way provide an impediment to other initiatives that are not listed within it, or to the evolving issues and context.	<i>The draft Plan sought to explain this in its structure (vision and calls for action) and content (the focus on outcomes and example projects as ways of achieving them). To make it clearer, the point has been added explicitly on page 18 of the Plan and in the introduction to each Call for Action.</i>
3.4	Adjust the mindset from being “zero carbon” to “carbon neutral” for the time being - given the Black Isle’s large agricultural sector, the “zero carbon” ambition is unrealistic without placing excessive costs onto farmers and crofters.	<i>The Plan’s “zero carbon” aspiration simply reflects the Scottish Government’s target of net zero carbon emissions by 2045, which is written into climate change legislation. The challenges faced by the agricultural sector and need for support have been emphasised in the introduction to chapter 5 (Think Global, Act Local).</i>
3.5	“There needs to be an education topic.”	<i>Education is one of a number of community priorities covered by ‘community infrastructure’. Specific mention has been added to chapter 3 of education, health & social care, infrastructure, recreation, emergency services & other community facilities.</i>
3.6	“Maybe not clear enough in some parts.”	<i>It is difficult to know what to alter not knowing which parts were unclear for the respondent, and we do not want to change things that other respondents found clear.</i>
3.7	Needs more detail around supporting rural communities away from fossil fuels, Chanonry Point as a marine reserve, and how to attract younger families through investment in facilities and housing.	<i>Each of these suggestions is already covered in the Calls for Action, albeit not in as much detail as the respondent would like. As explained in response to another comment from the same respondent, the Plan focusses on strategic outcomes and examples of potential ways of delivering those outcomes. This is a conscious decision, the aim being for the Plan to achieve consensus on what is important for the community, and for the community, public and private sectors then to work together on how to achieve those outcomes. This will require further work once the Plan has been published, as is explained in the updated chapter 8.</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
3.8	The Plan should have more concrete aims.	<i>The Plan focusses on strategic outcomes and examples of potential ways of delivering those outcomes. This is a conscious decision, the aim being for the Plan to achieve consensus on what is important for the community, and for the community, public and private sectors then to work together on how to achieve those outcomes. This will require further work once the Plan has been published, as is explained in the updated chapter 8.</i>
3.9	“Zero carbon is unobtainable but carbon neutral or Net Zero carbon is possible.”	<i>The Plan’s “zero carbon” aspiration (in chapter 3) reflects the Scottish Government’s legally binding target of net zero carbon emissions by 2045. Chapters 2 and 5 has been updated to refer to “net zero” to make this clear.</i>
3.10	As well as creating a net zero, resilient and sustainable community, we should also be biodiversity-rich and ecologically coherent	<i>Added to the text in chapter 3.</i>
3.11	Should “our vision” not be “your vision”?	<i>The Plan should belong to us a community, hence use of the word ‘our’.</i>

4. Community infrastructure

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
4.1	Fortrose Academy is in poor repair and struggles to attract teaching staff - families need a decent school as well as affordable homes.	<i>Education is one of a number of community priorities in the Plan. Various schools around the Black Isle need investment, including Fortrose Academy. This is highlighted in the Plan. The wording in chapter 3 has been updated to reflect the comment and the need for investment.</i>
4.2	There needs to be mention of a new Primary School in Fortrose/ Rosemarkie given the rapidly growing population there, pupils being bussed to Avoch, and the poor condition of Avoch Primary. Ideally there should be a 3-18 Campus in Fortrose.	<i>This has been added to Figure 8 as an example proposal (point 4.2).</i>
4.3	A swimming pool has been an aspiration of many Black Isle residents for many years. Whilst a commitment to a new pool would be reckless in the current climate, the Plan should not block alternative ways of securing access to swimming opportunities.	<i>Figure 8 (point 4.2) has been amended accordingly.</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
4.4	Culbokie already has a community hall, why develop a community hub	<p>Figure 8 (point 4.3) has been amended to clarify that it refers to both development of new hubs and strengthening those that already exist, to create a network across the Black Isle as a whole.</p> <p>The local community in Culbokie is intending to create a community hub which complements the existing hall and the school, such as peripatetic health services.</p>
4.5	We need more adult education classes in the community schools, e.g. cooking, language, arts, carpentry etc.	The intention of point 4.3 in Figure 8 is to create a network of spaces across the Black Isle as a whole which can be used for these and other activities, and to encourage more of those activities. Adult education has been added to point 4.3 as an example of a gap in provision.

5. Think global, act local

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
5.1	* Non-tourist businesses: there is a lack of detail of the impact of the Local Place Plan's focus on tourism on existing non-tourist businesses	The Plan does not seek to increase the amount of tourism, but rather to better manage the visitor economy that already exists so that it is more positive impacts on the local economy, communities and environment. Hence the focus on 'slow tourism' and good environmental management, and the consideration of tourism as part of the "Think Global, Act Local" call for action; the wording relating to visitor management in Figure 9 (point 5.4) has been amended to make this clearer.
5.2	* Additional information suggested for the introductory section, policy framework, delivery partners and potential projects (especially marine and land management).	The information provided has been added to chapter 5 and in a new Appendix 7.
5.3	* Support for tackling visitor management pressures in Fortrose and Rosemarkie (including traffic, parking, improved public transport, disabled access and 'slow tourism')	More detail has been added to Figure 9 (point 5.4).
5.4	* Conon Bridge Community Council "supports any venture that seeks to exploit the treasures of the Black Isle, so long as they sensitive to the environment and are sustainable."	The wording relating to visitor management in Figure 9 (point 5.4) has been amended.

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
5.5	Welcomes the Plan and considers it a good basis for progressing environmental projects on the Black Isle, many of which have been identified and called for over several decades.	<i>No change suggested.</i>
5.6	The Plan contains top-line community objectives. More work is required to develop an action plan around the various objectives.	<i>This is a point which applies across the whole Plan, so it has been added to the introductory section of each of the four Calls for Action.</i>
5.7	Additional action for coastal management/protection for tourism and nature conservation, such as establishment of a community-managed coastal park or biosphere	<i>Added to Figure 9</i>
5.8	“Chanonry Point - It is not enough just to manage the area at the point. One of the issues is car parking - a traffic management Scheme is required to solve the congestion.”	<i>The Plan proposes improving visitor management in conjunction with other destinations on the Black Isle, building on the recent Chanonry Point Action Plan (Figure 9, point 5.4). This would include traffic management.</i>
5.9	Increasing countryside access needs to be accompanied with greater knowledge of the Scottish Outdoor Access Code and the responsibilities that go with the right of access. Irresponsible access is resulting in an increase in livestock worrying for example, and this is likely to get worse.	<i>The aim is to improve local path networks, not to increase the numbers of people using them – but the point is well made. The need to publicise the Code and the responsibilities that go with access has been added to Figure 9 (point 5.4).</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
5.10	<p>Objection to NFU Scotland being mentioned as a delivery partner without direct contact, and many actions for farmers and crofters but no engagement with them. [2 comments] NFU Scotland is incorrectly listed as a public body.</p>	<p>A number of farmers and land managers participated throughout the engagement process, but we would have liked greater engagement given the <i>importance of farming to the Black Isle and to delivery of the Plan's "Think global, act local" Call for Action</i>. NFU Scotland were contacted directly, both to contact them in their own right and also as a conduit to the farming community, but no response was received.</p> <p>No firm commitment has been given yet from any of the potential delivery partners who are mentioned in the Plan. Once the Plan is finalised, there will be ongoing stakeholder engagement for that purpose, including with NFU Scotland.</p> <p>Chapter 8 has been amended to correctly identify NFU Scotland as a non-governmental body, and to emphasise the need for further engagement with the farming community, particularly around delivery of "Think global, act local" call for action.</p> <p>We look forward to working collaboratively with NFU Scotland and farming community to achieve exactly that.</p>
5.11	<p>Nature ambitions conflict with national nature policy such as "Just Transition", with no consideration of conflicts, and seem ambitious considering lack of interaction with landholders.</p>	<p>The Plan's ambitions have in fact been designed to complement national policies (see chapter 3 and the new Appendix 7).</p> <p>The challenges that the agricultural sector faces and need for support for a Just Transition have been emphasised in the introduction to chapter 5 (Think Global, Act Local).</p> <p>See also the response immediately above explaining interaction with the farming community as the Plan was developed and, in the future, as it moves forward into delivery.</p>
5.12	<p>Given the Black Isle's large agricultural sector, the "zero carbon" ambition is unrealistic without placing excessive costs onto farmers and crofters.</p> <p>For example, plastic silage baling is essential to produce good livestock winter fodder, and there is currently not a viable alternative. Farming and crofting are facing increased production costs which machinery prices soaring, fuel prices increasing and ever lower revenues from crops.</p> <p>The ambition should be changed to "carbon neutral".</p>	<p>The Plan's "zero carbon" aspiration (in chapter 3) reflects the Scottish Government's legally binding target of net zero carbon emissions by 2045. Chapters 2 and 5 have been updated to refer to "net zero" to make this clear.</p> <p>The challenges that the agricultural sector faces and need for support have been emphasised in the introduction to chapter 5.</p>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
5.13	Moray Firth Coastal Partnership supports the inclusion of marine management in the Plan (particularly gathering baseline data), and would like to support this (subject to resource availability).	<i>Greater reference has been made to the Partnership in chapter 5.</i>
5.14	Unclear what “managed verges” means in the table (point 5.2, right column).	<i>The wording has been clarified to refer to verges managed for biodiversity.</i>
5.15	The idea of a Black Isle culture/heritage centre could equally be dispersed as a network of local centres in each village	<i>The wording has been amended accordingly,</i>
5.16	The Black Isle’s high quality environment needs to be emphasised. The seabed and inter tidal area need to be mentioned, and seagrass surveys / oyster reintroduction projects.	<i>Conservation and restoration of the Black Isle’s high quality environment, including marine areas, is a central element of the Plan. The ongoing seagrass/oyster project has been added to the introductory section of chapter 5.</i>
5.17	I disagree with a Freeport, it is not Green and will not benefit the community.	<i>The Green Freeport was announced by the UK/Scottish Governments in 2023. The approach the Plan takes is to shape the concept so it provides meaningful benefits for communities and is ‘green’.</i>
5.18	“Given the importance of the natural environment of the Black Isle to the people who live here and to visitors, there needs to be more emphasis on and definite plans for: retaining those semi-natural habitats which have survived thus far (i.e. NO further developments within existing woodlands); increasing habitat connectivity; and drastically scaling-down the intensity of agriculture”	<i>The Plan now has greater emphasis on land management to conserve, restore and connect habitats and more information generally in the ‘Think Global, Act Local’ chapter. The Plan’s vision is of a net-zero future in accordance with the Scottish Government’s legally binding 2045 target. The specific measure of scaling down the intensity of agriculture is not suggested in the Plan because agriculture is such an important part of the local economy.</i>

6. Affordable homes for all

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
6.1	* Concern about more new housing on Fortrose and Rosemarkie without consideration of capacity of schools and health services, the road network and maintenance of infrastructure	<i>The need for investment in supporting infrastructure and facilities has been emphasised in the introductory section and Figure 10 (point 6.3).</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
6.2	There should be more emphasis on retrofitting older homes with better insulation and low carbon heating systems such as heat pumps – see for example the Healthy Homes Skye and Lochalsh report, December 2023	<i>This has been added to Figure 10 (point 6.2)</i>
6.3	In the table, the second bullet point of 6.2 could enable developers to build more housing around every village shown on Map 5, whether affordable or not.	<i>The wording has been amended to make clear that it refers to affordable homes for local needs.</i>
6.4	“The Black Isle is a holiday destination bringing income. Holiday homes can exist as well as building or ring fencing homes for local people. We should not penalise owners letting holiday homes.”	<p><i>The Plan proposes that existing homes should be prevented from becoming full-time holiday lets, and that the growth of second homes should be controlled. This would not affect existing holiday lets or second homes.</i></p> <p><i>Those proposals are in direct response to the concerns expressed by many people about the impact of the proliferation of holiday lets and second homes during preparation of the Plan. This comment expressing concern is the only such comment that has been received.</i></p>

7. Getting about

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
7.1	Cairngorms Connected rural transport partnership Suggested as a model worthy of exploration for the Black Isle	<i>Added as an example.</i>
7.2	Reassurance that Munloch to Drumderfit Hill is not included as a priority in the action table (7.2)	<i>This is correct. The priority referred to in the Plan is east of Munloch to Avoch and Rosemarkie.</i>
7.3	Clarity that work on an Avoch-Munloch active travel route is at a less advanced stage than the Culbokie route	<i>The “What’s already happening” section has been amended accordingly.</i>
7.4	Map 7 (transport) should give more definition of the suggested transport network, e.g. including hubs, routes, interchanges – to give greater clarity and direction for future investment	<i>Map 7 and the accompanying text have been made clearer. It would be inappropriate to add significantly more detail as the purpose of the Plan is to focus on high level strategic outcomes/outputs.</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
7.5	“There is very small mention of walking route provision. Not everyone can cycle.”	<i>Walking is mentioned every time that cycling is mentioned, and it is always mentioned first in line with the Scottish Government’s sustainable transport hierarchy.</i>
7.6	Rosemarkie High Street is dangerous and needs improvements in road safety	<i>Road safety improvements are proposed for all of the villages on the Black Isle including Rosemarkie (see Map 5 and Figure 11, point 7.1). The purpose of the Plan is to focus on high level strategic outcomes/outputs.</i>
7.7	A safe active travel route is needed away from the road between Fortrose and Rosemarkie	<i>This route is already highlighted as a priority in Figure 11 (point 7.2).</i>
7.8	“Why is it only safe walking and cycling in villages. What about between villages and Inverness?”	<i>Safe walking and cycling to Inverness (and Dingwall) is included in Figure 11 (point 7.2). The two towns are now also mentioned in the introductory text on the preceding page.</i>
7.9	“I’d like to see a 50mph speed limit across all Black Isle roads.”	<i>Road safety, particularly for pedestrians and cyclists, is a major priority in the Plan. The need for speed reduction measures between villages has been added to Figure 11 as an example (final column). It would be inappropriate to add more specific proposals as the purpose of the Plan is to focus on high level strategic outcomes/outputs.</i>
7.10	Where is the land for new proposed active travel routes coming from and how will they be funded? Planning without discussing with the landowners/ occupiers seems unlikely to result in constructive discussions.	<i>The Plan identifies which places needs to be connected, in order to achieve consensus on those. The next stage will be to identify route alignments. Engagement with owners should of course be part of that next stage. There is no funding identified yet for route design or development, but a Plan helps to secure funding as explained at the start of chapter 1.</i>
7.11	“Please also consider a plan for the on street parking particularly in Fortrose. As the town grows the number of parked cars is causing congestion. Better yet put in better public transport and cycle routes.”	<i>The Plan tackle this issue as suggested in the second part of the comment – by improving public transport, walking and cycling within and to villages.</i>

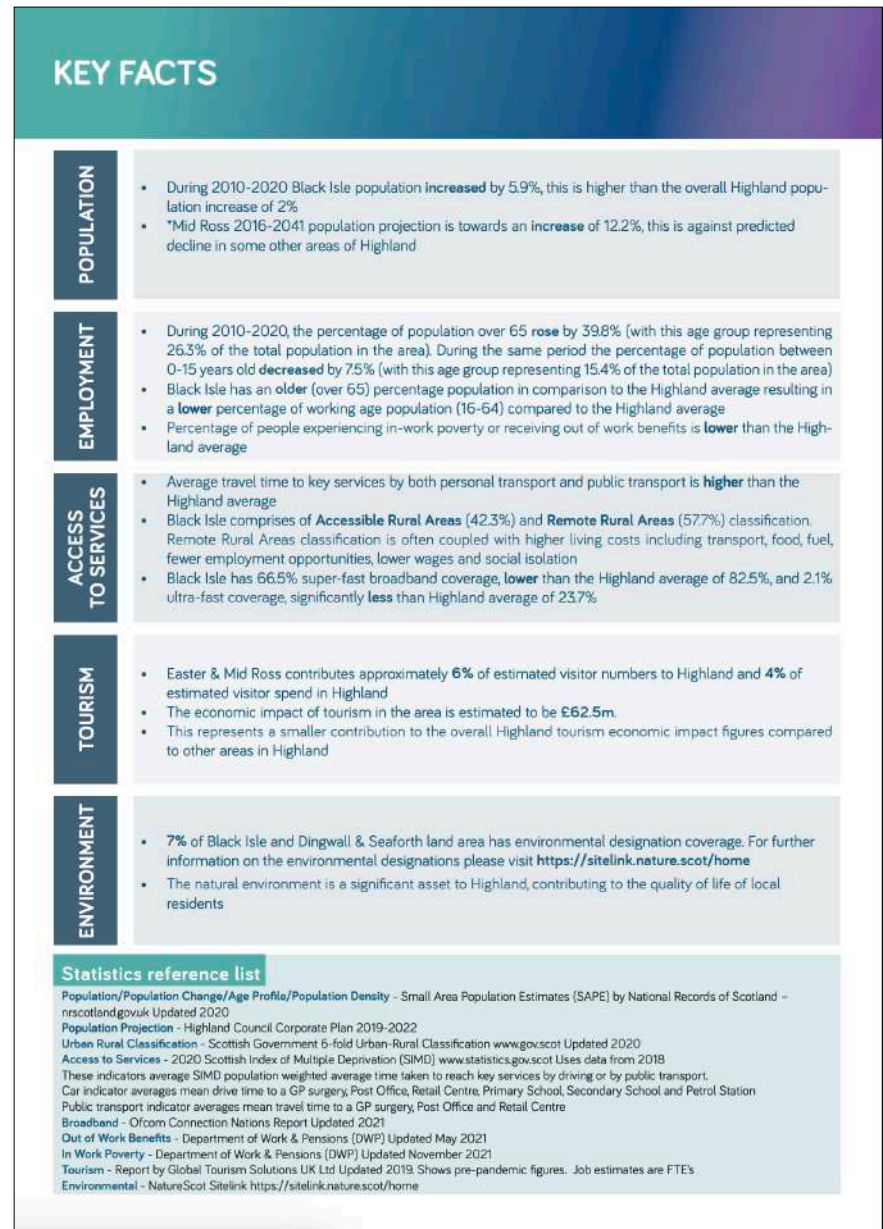
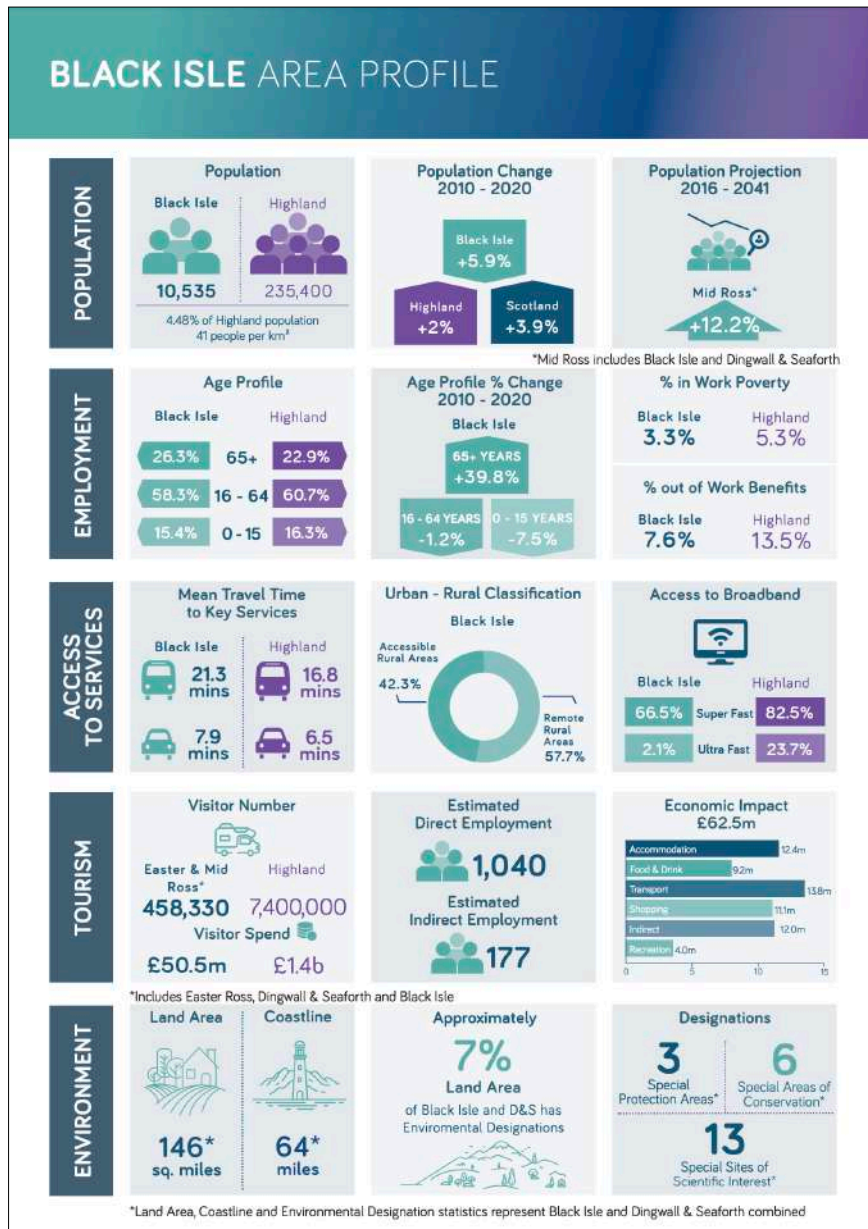
Comment summary		Response / change to plan
7.12	“Concern about 20mph speed limits.”	<i>The Plan proposes that 20mph speed limits should be created in all of the villages on Map 5. The reality is that they are mainly now in place, with Culbokie being the main outstanding location. This is to improve road safety and make walking and cycling safer in the villages, in direct response to concerns and aspirations expressed by many people during preparation of the Plan. This comment expressing concern about 20mph speed limits is the only such comment that has been received.</i>
7.13	“For older people with cars, getting about without one isn't always viable”	<i>The Plan does not aim to prevent older people not to use their cars, but to improve the transport options available to them and make roads and footways safer and more attractive for all users.</i>
7.14	B9169 needs a footpath north of the Ord Muir junction towards Mulbuie School.	<i>This is one of many sections of road across the Black Isle which need improvements for the safety of walkers and cyclists. It falls within the scope of the diagrammatic route network shown on Map 7. The purpose of the Plan is to focus on high level strategic outcomes/outputs.</i>

8. Making it happen

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
8.1	Add a target timeline of key delivery milestones over the next 10 years, to give focus	<i>Ideally this would be included in the Plan; but producing meaningful milestones would need commitment from many stakeholders for every action in the Plan. This would delay finalisation of the Plan by many months. Instead, the Plan proposes that an initial task of the proposed delivery body for the Plan should be to create that action plan with stakeholders. The body will be in a stronger position to do that with the backing of a completed Plan.</i>
8.2	* Community governance arrangements for delivery of the Plan are still unclear. Democratic accountability and independence are vital, and there needs to be a new board for the purpose.	<i>The governance section has been updated to reflect the outcomes of community workshops in February/March 2024 specifically about governance.</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
8.3	Add more detail about governance and leadership, e.g. an independent co-ordinator	<i>The governance section has been updated to reflect the outcomes of community workshops in February/March 2024 specifically about governance.</i>
8.4	“Whilst we accept that you're just covering the principles and proposals in the Draft plan, the section on governance is still a little 'woolly'. I know you provide links to some different examples, but you don't mention the use of any sort of 'steering group' of either key delivery partners or people with specific expertise in the areas of work to be covered, and I think this is essential for good governance of the plan. At first reading it looks like decisions will be made by community councils and enthusiastic locals; who might not be best placed to prioritise appropriately.”	<i>The governance section has been updated to reflect the outcomes of community workshops in February/March 2024 specifically about governance.</i>
8.5	“How do you intend to implement these Calls to Action. It's all well and good saying you wish to but there is no plan as to how you will.” Implementation is covered in chapter 8, which is clear that delivering this ambitious Plan will need collaborative action by the public, private and community sectors and will need resources. An important purpose of the plan is to guide that collaborative action and help secure resources, as explained at the start of chapter 1.	<i>The governance section has been updated to reflect the outcomes of community workshops in February/March 2024 specifically about governance.</i>
8.6	“The majority of it is unrealistic and will not have a budget sufficient to deliver and has the word If in it far too many times.”	<i>Please see response 8.5 above.</i>
8.7	“I think it is a very ambitious plan. It is not clear what the next steps will be. I would like to see the 10 year vision backed up by a 3 year action plan with measurable deliveries tasked to specific bodies otherwise it is all “motherhood and apple pie.”	<i>Please see response 8.5 above.</i>
8.8	“Please make it clear how the Highland Council and Scottish Government are involved with this plan because they surely have the most powers to plan and fund infrastructure and housing for example. They are the organisations with the power to create zones for industry, housing or recreation such as undertake a compulsory purchase order for a cycle route.”	<i>The Council funded preparation of the Plan, and it and its Community Planning Partners have been involved in its preparation – not to guide the vision and calls for action, but to help the Plan be written so that it is as likely as it can be to be implemented. Once the Plan is complete, there will be continuing contact with the public sector to implement the Plan, as explained in chapter 8.</i>

Comment summary		Response / change to plan
8.9	Work with the Council and Developers to apply Section 75 funds related to planning applications more effectively and benefiting the immediate local area	<i>This has been added to chapter 8.</i>
8.10	“A way of sponsoring by subscription to fund projects might focus attention on specific projects e.g. a swimming pool”	<i>This has been added to chapter 8.</i>
8.11	Needs more emphasis on ensuring that the Green Freeport is environmentally sustainable and does not ruin the marine and land environments; needs community involvement.	<i>The recommendations for the Green Freeport in chapter 8 are designed to achieve exactly those aims.</i>
8.12	Concern that the harmful impact of low-impact noise on communities has not been adequately represented.	<i>The wording in the Green Freeport section (point 4) has been amended accordingly.</i>
8.13	An independent ecological terrestrial and marine baseline survey is needed before any work is undertaken by the Green Freeport.	<i>This is included in the recommendations relating to the Green Freeport on page 35; the wording has been updated.</i>
8.14	More practical solutions for money generation are needed; reducing any reliance on public finances is eminently desirable. What about wind turbines? Solar farms? Commercial forestry? All owned by communities.	<i>The introduction to chapter 8 has been amended accordingly.</i>
8.15	A proportion of revenue from the Green Freeport could be used to deliver the Local Place Plan, using the Shetland model of tapping into oil revenues	<i>This has been added to chapter 8.</i>
8.16	Private sector land and investment will be crucial to realisation of the Plan. Planning policy needs to be more flexible to enable this to happen, for example in Fortrose where planning policy does not allocate suitable land for retail and community uses.	<i>Point 1 in the Appendix on planning policy recommendations has been amended to further emphasise the need for planning policy to enable the development of community hubs and facilities in the main Black Isle settlements.</i>



Appendix 6: Black Isle facts & figures

The thumbnails on this page are of boards containing facts & figures about the Black Isle which were on display during the stage 1 public drop-ins & school events between March & May 2023.

The boards were themed on issues of local concern identified in previous consultations. They also contain the questions that were asked at those events; people's responses are summarised in Appendix 2.

Full versions of these boards can be viewed online at bit.ly/4009bEc

1 Population & housing

Who particularly needs homes locally?
What kind of homes do our communities need?
How should our communities respond to having more older people & fewer younger people?

Who particularly needs homes locally?
 This or more intense pressure for housing on the Black Isle, being such an attractive place to live especially post-pandemic. Home prices are high and the housing stock available to local communities is increasingly limited. In migration, second home ownership, holiday lets and Air-BnB all contribute to this.

What kind of homes do our communities need?
 The unfortunate consequence is that young families, people on lower incomes and older people find it almost impossible to find suitable accommodation where they live or work, particularly low cost homes, social housing and specialist accommodation like sheltered housing.

How should our communities respond to having more older people & fewer younger people?
 The age structure of our communities is changing too: we have more older people and fewer young people. Across Mid Ross as a whole, the number of people aged over 65 increased from 37% of the population in 1996 to 26% in 2021, and is forecast to reach 37% in 2030. The top five reasons for implications for school rolls, business staffing, public services, community activities, housing and more.

Black Isle population estimates 2010-2030

2 Community facilities & services

Thinking of our communities' health and wellbeing: what and where are the gaps in services, facilities and activities across the Black Isle?
Who in our communities is being left behind?
What are the opportunities and challenges, small or big, for communities to do more for themselves?

A growing population puts more pressure on infrastructure, services and facilities such as education, health and social care, play and recreation, utilities and transport infrastructure. Old school buildings and lack of affordable social care are particular local issues, disadvantageing younger people and older people respectively.

An increasing population can also make some things more viable, like shops, buses, recreational facilities, businesses and community activities and events. Although the Black Isle has very active communities, volunteers in community groups are often overstretched - as is local government and the public sector.

Nearly 60% of the Black Isle is designated as a "Remote Rural Area", typically associated with higher living costs including transport, food, fuel, fewer employment opportunities, lower wages and social isolation.

Black Isle school rolls predictions 2023-38
 Highland Council data

Key issues to Black Isle
 2023 Census shows that Black Isle has a higher proportion of people aged 65+ than the Highland average. This is a concern for the future of our communities.

Mean Travel Time to Key Services
 Black Isle: 23.5 mins
 Highland: 16.8 mins

Urban - Rural Classification
 Black Isle: 41.3% Urban
 Highland: 57.7% Urban

Access to Broadband
 Black Isle: 85.5%
 Highland: 72.3%

3 Getting about

What are the challenges of getting about within and between our communities, and further afield to nearby places, particularly for people without access to a car?
How can we make it safer, more sustainable and more affordable to move around our towns, villages and further afield?

The ability to move around safely and sustainably is vital for shopping, school, social occasions and other things, particularly for those who don't have or cannot afford access to a car. Getting about, safely, works at a number of levels, within your local village or town, between places on the Black Isle and travelling to surrounding towns and beyond.

Average travel time to key services by personal transport and public transport is higher than the Highland average (see board 2, Community facilities and services). Some people with of course be disadvantaged more than the average - for example disabled people and people on low incomes.

A well maintained road and pavement network is vital for pedestrians, cyclists, buses, delivery vehicles and cars all rely on it not forgetting the Hagg ferry of course). And government policy puts pedestrian and cyclists as top priority.

With a national legally binding target to achieve net zero emissions, we have no alternative but to explore how we can reduce our reliance on private cars. Local initiatives like the Wee Bus in Ferintosh are a good example.

4 Jobs and business

What will most help people access good quality work opportunities in our communities?
How can we support local businesses to thrive?
Where might our future employment and business opportunities lie?

Jobs and business opportunities are the lifeblood of any community. Most people of working age need to earn money. That means access to opportunities is important: opportunities to learn to train, to get a job, to get childcare, to start a business or to employ people. Making sure those opportunities are available involves access to training, college and apprenticeships, transport, childcare, access to finance or business accommodation, and access to labour for employers.

The recently announced Opportunity Priority Farm, green theatre is likely to create more opportunities in relation to green energy production and technology, and of course spin-off employment and business opportunities, but we do not yet know the details.

The Black Isle has a lower percentage of working age population aged 16 to 24 compared to the Highland average. The percentage of people experiencing in-work poverty or receiving out-of-work benefits is lower on the Black Isle than the Highland average.

Tourism, agriculture and services are all key employment sectors. The accompanying table shows 2021 Census data for people's occupations on the Black Isle, unfortunately the 2021 Census data is not yet available.

Employment occupations (2021 Census)	Black Isle	Highland
Professional occupations	100	100
Intermediate occupations	44	36
Elementary occupations	56	64
Unemployed	100	100
Part-time workers	100	100
Seasonal workers	100	100
Part-time workers	100	100
Seasonal workers	100	100
Part-time workers	100	100
Seasonal workers	100	100
Part-time workers	100	100
Seasonal workers	100	100
Part-time workers	100	100
Seasonal workers	100	100

Age Profile
 Black Isle: 10.7% aged 65+
 Highland: 10.7% aged 65+

Age Profile % Change 2010-2020
 Black Isle: +10.9%
 Highland: +10.9%

% in Black Poverty
 Black Isle: 3.3%
 Highland: 5.3%

% out of Work Benefits
 Black Isle: 7.8%
 Highland: 11.5%

5 Nature and environment

Which aspects of our natural and built environment are most valuable and need most attention?
What do we see as environmentally needed to do locally? What support do we need?
As a community, how can we most effectively tackle climate change?

The rich character and identity of the Black Isle is rooted in our environment: landscape, coast, biodiversity and history.

Our beautiful countryside is a complex mosaic of different agricultural, forestry and recreational activities which need to co-exist.

Our magnificent coastline is varied, and flooding and erosion threaten individual freshwater and estuaries.

The built heritage of our villages and towns is important in terms of culture, history and tourism.

Each of these aspects of our environment need conservation and protection.

Land Area
 145 sq miles

Coastline
 64 miles

Approximately 7% Land Area
 is Black Isle and Highland Environmental Designation

Designations
 3 National Nature Reserves
 6 Local Nature Reserves
 13 Sites of Special Interest

6 Tourism

What and where are the biggest challenges and opportunities?
How can our communities make more of tourism as a force for positive good for locals and visitors alike?

With our wealth of history, arts, culture, landscape, coast and wildlife, it's no surprise that tourism is a major part of our local economy.

The infrastructure for handling large numbers of visitors has always had room for improvement, particularly at popular spots like Chonary Point. Funding, signage and better information are all worthy topics.

Our ability to create local economic benefit from visitors is also underdeveloped. There are too few opportunities for visitors to make a positive financial contribution to the local economy and we could make more of the employment and business opportunities resulting from tourism.

Many individual organisations across the Black Isle do excellent work. Collectively, Black Isle Tourism operates as a community-run group of over 300 businesses and individuals committed to managing tourism for the benefit of all.

Water Number
 1040

Estimated Direct Employment
 177

Economic Impact
 £52.2m

Water Number
 458,350

Estimated Indirect Employment
 177

Economic Impact
 £1.4m

Appendix 7: Additional resources for Think Global, Act Local

Related policy framework & initiatives

- Bute House Agreement - [30by30/nature networks/](#) nature restoration farming
- NatureScot – “Developing with Nature”
- National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4) Policy 3 b & c “Guidance on biodiversity”- legal framework for planning in terrestrial areas down to mean low water.
- National Marine Planning Framework 2 (NMPF2) - legal framework for planning in marine areas
- NPF4 and NMPF2 – both state that biodiversity and climate change must be part of all decisions. Also state that developers must contribute to biodiversity projects/ funding.
- Scottish Biodiversity Strategy
- The Highland Council have a coastal remit for biodiversity over the baseline on NPF4 to insist on developers delivering a contribution to local projects.
- The Green Freeport will have to deliver projects creating positive biodiversity – both in their own work and by funding others.
- Highland Council - Nature Networks
- [Local Nature Conservation Sites](#) – areas of local importance
- [Highland Nature: Biodiversity Action Plan 2021 – 2026](#)

- HC biodiversity planning guidance (attached) which includes biodiversity offsetting - which should present some future opportunities.
- [Riverwoods](#) – national/ multi-agency partnership to create a network of thriving riverbank woodlands and healthy river systems across the whole of Scotland
- Agri-environment measures – climate change scheme
- [Nature Friendly Farming Network](#)
- [Cairngorms Connect](#) - landscape scale partnership action initiative

Delivery partners

Marine & coastal:

- Scottish Government Marine Directorate – the regulator
- NatureScot – re. designated areas/ Sustainable Coasts and Seas – national marine plan
- SEPA – water quality, catchment management and monitoring of rivers etc.
- Scottish Water – water discharge
- Moray Firth Coastal Partnership – works with communities and agencies on coastal zone management, will be one of the new Coastal Planning Partnerships
- District Salmon Fishery Boards – very proactive work on the coastal environment linked to rivers
- RSPB – reserves on the Black Isle

- The Highland Council
- [Coastal Communities Network](#) - a community-led network comprising local groups committed to the preservation & safeguarding of Scotland’s coastal and marine environments
- Ports – Inverness, Ardersier, Cromarty Firth, Nigg
- The Green Freeport will have to deliver projects creating positive biodiversity.

Land management:

- NatureScot – designated areas/ “Developing with Nature” - NPF4 3c/ funding opportunities
- SEPA – catchment management/ water quality
- Forest & Land Scotland – national forest management
- The Highland Council – Nature Networks/ Local Nature Conservation Sites/ Biodiversity Planning/ NPF4 developer obligations
- RSPB and SWT – reserves & expertise
- [Riverwoods Partnership \(SWT lead\)](#) – river corridor

[continued overleaf]

Related Black Isle resources and reports

- 'Making space for Wildlife' - James, P. & Young, P. 2004 – report for the Black Isle Partnership
- 'Easter Ross Woodland Survey' – Nature Conservancy Council
- Landscape Partnership Scheme proposals and projects
- Ro Scott MSc Dissertation, 2012 – 'Division of the Commonly of Mulbuie: consequences of the private appropriation of a communal resource'
- Local Nature Conservation Site assessment

Potential funding sources

- Scottish Government – Climate Action Fund
- NatureScot – Nature Restoration Fund/ FIRNS
- Green Freeport – biodiversity obligations
- NPF4/ Highland Council – Developer contributions/ biodiversity offsetting

Appendix 8: Planning policy recommendations

Although this Plan is not solely focussed on statutory land-use planning, chapters 4-8 contain a number of proposals that the local community would like to see supported in the next Local Development Plan or tackled through Development Management.

In line with statutory requirements for Local Place Plan, those actions that relate to land-use planning are summarised in this appendix, together with reasons (as required by Schedule 19 of the Planning (Scotland) Action 2019 and in line with Scottish Government Circular 1/2022).

Please note that this appendix **only relates to statutory land-use planning** and is not a complete list of all the actions included in chapters 4 to 7 of the Plan.

Proposal		Reasons	More details
1	Focus community facilities, infrastructure, mobility hubs & affordable homes investment on the main Black Isle settlements as shown on Map 5 on page 19 of this Plan (including upgrading school facilities & enabling development of community hubs and facilities)	To improve community facilities & infrastructure, build local resilience, and enable Local Living. To identify land or buildings which are significant for the local community (see Planning Circular 1/2022 , para.43).	pages 18-21, 28-30
2	Flood/erosion protection for coastal and other settlements as appropriate	To protect against the impacts of climate change, and identify land or buildings which are significant for the local community (see Planning Circular 1/2022 , para.43 and NPF4 Policies 10 and 22).	pages 22-24
3	Support habitat regeneration initiatives	To mitigate climate change.	pages 22-24
4	In-principle support for community growing across the Black Isle	To increase resilience & create more outdoor opportunities for health and wellbeing, for locals and visitors.	pages 22-24
5	Improve visitor facilities and management at Chanonry Point	To improve critical infrastructure, and to identify land or buildings which are significant for the local community (see Planning Circular 1/2022 , para.43).	pages 22-24
6	In-principle support for a Black Isle heritage/cultural centre, or network of centres, for visitors and residents (no location identified yet)	To support local culture, heritage and the visitor economy.	pages 22-24
7	Improve local path networks throughout the Black Isle	To improve outdoor access, health & wellbeing, and to identify land or buildings which are significant for the local community (see Planning Circular 1/2022 , para.43).	pages 22-24

Proposal		Reasons	More details
8	Develop the Green Freeport collaboratively as an international exemplar including supporting infrastructure, placemaking, habitat restoration and other initiatives as described on page 30	To tackle climate change and deliver sustainable long term benefits for local communities.	pages 22-24 and 33
9	More affordable homes across different tenures & types: mid market rent, starter homes, community owned, shared equity, co-housing, self-build, woodland crofts	To increase the supply of affordable housing and sustain the local community.	pages 25-27
10	Encourage more affordable housing in/near villages shown on Map 5 (page 19) with appropriate supporting facilities and infrastructure and streamlined consenting	To increase the supply of affordable housing, ensure there are appropriate facilities & services, and sustain the local community.	pages 25-27
11	All new homes should be affordable and remain so in perpetuity (using Rural Housing Burden and changes in national/local planning policy as in Wales e.g. Gwynedd and Anglesey)	To increase the supply of affordable housing, manage the growth of second homes, and sustain the local community.	pages 25-27
12	Prevent change of use of existing homes to full-time holiday lets (e.g. using Short Term Let Control Area)	To maintain housing stock, enable people to access affordable housing, manage holiday lets, and sustain the local community.	pages 25-27
13	Encourage re-use of empty homes & conversion of disused non-residential buildings through more use of CPO and 'forced sales'	To increase the supply of housing and sustain the local community.	pages 25-27
14	Upgrade homes on lower Council Tax bands to higher EPC ratings with grants/loans and streamlined consenting	To improve housing quality, tackle climate change & fuel poverty, and sustain the local community.	pages 25-27
15	Active travel network within the Black Isle & to Dingwall as well as Inverness as shown in Map 6 (i.e. more extensive than the proposed Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan extracts in Appendix 1 above)	To support active travel, improve critical infrastructure, build local resilience, and enable Local Living.	pages 28-30 and 37-39
16	Safe walking/cycling within villages as shown on Map 6 (page 29), with priority locations being Tore roundabout, Fortrose High Street and routes to schools	To support active travel, improve critical infrastructure, build local resilience, and enable Local Living.	pages 28-30 and 37-39

Appendix 9: Map of locations referred to in the Local Place Plan

The map on the next page identifies the locations of land or buildings which are of particular significance to the local area because they are referred to in chapters 4-8 of the Local Place Plan and not shown on any other maps in the document.

It is included to satisfy the Highland Council's interpretation of:

- Regulation 3 of the Town and Country Planning (Local Place Plans) (Scotland) Regulations 2021.
- The guidance contained in Scottish Government Circular 1/2022 (paragraphs 43-44).

**Appendix 9:
Map of locations
referred to in Local
Place Plan**

 Local Place Plan boundary

 **COMMUNITY INFRASTRUCTURE**

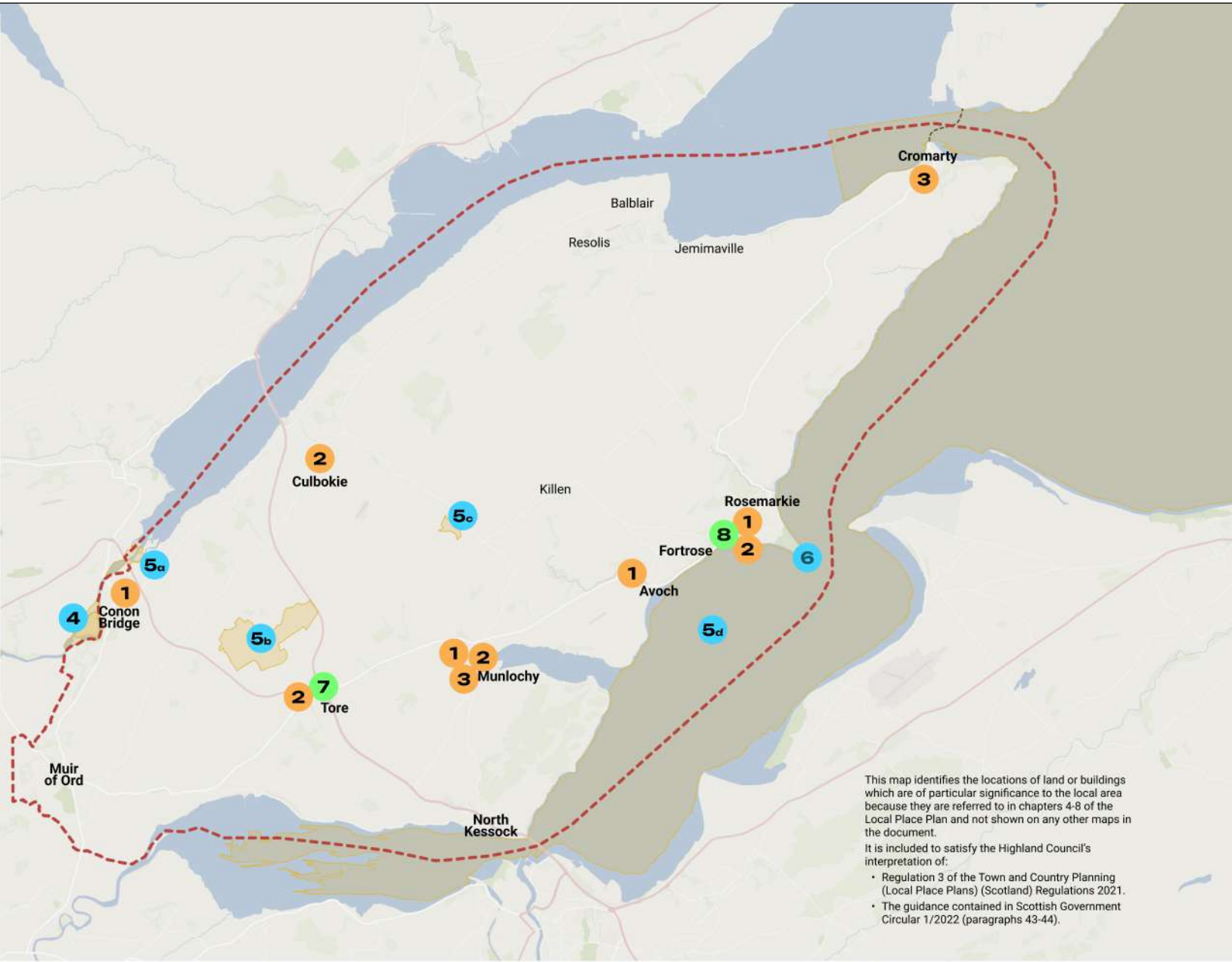
- 1** Existing school facilities in Fortrose, Avoch, Munlochy and Conon Bridge (see page 20, section 4.2)
- 2** Existing community hubs in Culbokie, Fortrose, Munlochy and Tore (see page 21, section 4.3)
- 3** Former churches in Cromarty and Munlochy (see page 21, section 4.5)

 **THINK GLOBAL, ACT LOCAL**

- 4** The River Conon (see page 24, section 5.2)
- 5** Special Areas of Conservation (see page 24, section 5.2)
 - a: Conon Islands
 - b: Monadh Mor
 - c: Dam Wood
 - d: Moray Firth
- 6** Chanonry Point (see page 24, section 5.4)

 **GETTING ABOUT**

- 7** Tore roundabout (see page 30, section 7.1)
- 8** Fortrose High Street (see page 30, section 7.1)



This map identifies the locations of land or buildings which are of particular significance to the local area because they are referred to in chapters 4-8 of the Local Place Plan and not shown on any other maps in the document.

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