

The Highland Council

Agenda Item	7
Report No	NC/17/24

Committee: Nairnshire Area Committee

Date: 4 November 2024

Report Title: Sandown Lands Community Food Growing – Update

Report By: Assistant Chief Executive - Place

1. Purpose/Executive Summary

1.1 At the Nairnshire Area Committee on 8 August 2022, it was agreed that a feasibility study would be progressed to explore the potential of developing Community Food Growing on the Sandown Lands in Nairn. Since then, the feasibility study has now been completed. This report provides an update of its finding and next steps.

2. Recommendations

2.1 Members are asked to:

- i. **Note** the feasibility study and its findings contained within Appendix 2 within the agenda
- ii. **Note** the recommended next steps in section 7.4
- iii. **Note** and **agree** to progress to explore the installation of a PV Panel farm within the lands for income generation with a further paper to come back to committee to update Members on costs associated with the development of this project.

3. Implications

- 3.1 Resource – Financial implications are as outlined in this report. As noted previously by this Committee, ongoing work is required to develop an approach to income generation and development of the NCGF asset portfolio to ensure a source of sustainable revenue. Note that there will need to be sufficient resource from THC to lead and develop any of the proposed the next steps of this project
- 3.2 Legal - The application of funds will fall within the competency guidelines set out both in statute and in common law in relation to Common Good Funds.
- 3.4 Risk - To mitigate the risk to the Common Good Fund, consideration continues to be given to the potential for income generation from Nairn Common Good assets to support ongoing maintenance and sustainability of other projects coming forward.

- 3.5 Health and Safety (risks arising from changes to plant, equipment, process, or people) – all project work directly undertaken on Common Good Fund property will be subject to full compliance with all Health & Safety requirements.
- 3.6 Gaelic - There are no specific implications associated with this report.

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 This is a update report and therefore an impact assessment is not required.
-

5. Background

- 5.1 The Sandown Lands is an area of farming and amenity land on the western approach to the town of Nairn on the A96, shown on the plan contained at Appendix 1. The Sandown Lands is a Nairn Common Good asset.
- 5.2 Following a statutory public consultation on the future use of the Sandown Lands, the Nairnshire Area Committee agreed on 8 August 2022 that options to establish community growing opportunities on the East Sandown Lands field (hatched pink on the site plan contained in Appendix 1) are explored through a feasibility study, which will include further engagement with the community.
- 5.3 Committee requested that a draft feasibility study brief be brought back before this Committee for consideration.

6. Feasibility Study Outcomes

- 6.1 This feasibility study has been carried out to consider the proposed idea of a community food growing project (CFGP) at Sandown Lands, in Nairn, with the potential for a photovoltaic (PV) renewable energy system on the target field also considered. This target field forms part of Nairn's Common Good Land, managed by the council for the benefit of the community. The study has considered and assessed the practicality and viability of options for a CFGP and identifies potential opportunities and issues.
- 6.2 Desk-based research identified a number of community food growing projects across the country, with one-to-one interviews and discussions with a number of these as well with many groups and individuals in Nairn. The options developed for a potential CFGP from this work are shown below:

Baseline. Do nothing. The field continues to be rented by a local farmer, along with the surrounding fields, to produce cereals/grass for animal feed.

Option 1. PV only. Installation of PV panels to generate income for the common good fund and to provide renewable electricity that can either be fed directly into the grid or other users of electricity nearby, now or in the future.

Option 2. Food growing woodland. In figure 22, page 30 of Appendix 2 these are shown in locations around the poly tunnels, plots and growing fields. In reality these could cover the whole of the field if the other options are not implemented.

Option 3. Small CFGP. Establishment of a small community food growing project based on two polytunnels. This has two sheds shown to store equipment and produce, with a parking area for cars and a toilet. Although there is already a polytunnel in the adjacent allotment, the polytunnel focus in this option is used to describe an option that extends the growing season, while at the same time offering a smaller, more manageable and profitable business model than the larger scale project.

Option 4. Large CFGP. Establishment of a large outdoor growing area, with more polytunnels potentially as a part of this. Communal growing plots and fields are shown, that deliver a model where groups of individuals work together to deliver the project. Additional sheds added to reflect higher levels of activity. Although in figure 22, page 30 within Appendix 2 of shows a significant area of the target field being used, this is only illustrative, with any future project scale driven by the group or organisation delivering it.

Option 5. High capital investment. Establishment of larger scale, higher capital cost initiatives e.g. to develop a community garden centre; establishing a centre to support formal education and training, with a café. This could include collaboration with an organisation like the UHI.

Next Steps

7.0

A community organisation – whether an established one or one formed around the garden project - will need to take on the role of driving a project forward, following discussions and agreement on the vision and objectives e.g. will education, training and food growing/selling all be considered important elements of a project and is the organisation committed to securing funding support?

7.1

7.2

Because the Council is responsible for managing the Common Good lands, it will need to be a committed supporter and partner for any project to have long-term success. As part of this the challenges associated with operating complex projects have to be understood. To establish a project which delivers on the options described in this report, there will need to be an understanding that the margins that food growing projects operate to are very tight, but the potential benefits to a community are significant, and therefore the development of a trusted relationship between the council and partners should be an objective of future working arrangements. A key part of this is understanding that a community food growing project, that enables the community to utilise common good land, should be seen as a positive opportunity to develop Sandown lands as a community asset.

7.3

The Council also can support a CFGP if employability, training and community development are objectives, with the No-one Left Behind scheme providing employability support and Shared Prosperity funding (or its future replacement) providing community capacity building support.

Operational (business) plan for developing a CFGP in Nairn

- 7.4 An advisory group should be set up, facilitated by the council, to support the delivery of an engagement process involving parties interested in establishing a CFGP. Its role should be to confirm the preferred option for Sandown Lands, and establish a business plan, which describes the operational and implementation steps required. The plan would describe how local opportunities could maximise community capacity building, involving volunteering as well as job creation opportunities. A plan for engaging with service providers in the council should be developed, in education, employability and prosperity, economic development and community regeneration, to understand how a future CFGP would support their aspirations. This would then facilitate funding applications for the salaries of individuals to drive a project forward. This full report has described the potential of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, subscription-based, with members paying regularly for vegetable and fruit boxes.

This financial support covers operational costs and mitigates the risks by providing an understood regular income, with members receiving regular shares of the farm's harvest throughout the growing season, e.g. weekly. Models such as this have the double benefit and impact of bring the local community into the project, engaging with it and providing support, as well as creating an income stream. A detailed business case would need to be prepared to demonstrate the anticipated financial performance of the CFGP.

This would require council resource which at this point cannot be committed to lead in the development of this project. On that basis we should only proceed when we have resource but also full community groups approach to lead on the options outlined in section 6.2

PV Panels

- 7.5 The council should consider taking forward a PV installation on Sandown Lands that can provide a long-term financial income for the Common Good Fund. Such an installation also has the potential to provide low-cost electricity to a CFGP if there is demand. The plan contained within the study can be further developed with our in-house energy team. A project budget would need to be agreed and officers will come back with an update paper after further discussion with the energy team.

8 Community Empowerment implications

- 8.1 If a particular CRGP option is decided upon, it may trigger a requirement to undertake a consultation under the Community Empowerment Act. For example, the installation of a PV system would constitute a change of use and may, depending on how it is operated, also be a disposal. Sandown Lands are assessed as inalienable. As a result there may be a need to seek Court approval. This is mentioned at this stage for awareness purposes and would be considered in more detail in the event of one of the options being chosen to be progressed.

Designation: Assistant Chief Executive – Place

Date: 23 October 2024

Author: Mark Greig

Background Papers:

https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/80212/10c_consultation_on_potential_future_development_of_sandown_lands_%E2%80%93_consultation_outcome

https://www.highland.gov.uk/download/meetings/id/80789/item_4c_sandown_lands_community_food_growing_-_feasibility_brief

Appendices: Appendix 1 – Site Plan

Appendix 2 – Enscape Feasibility Study Report



THE HIGHLAND COUNCIL

Nairn Community Food Growing Feasibility Study

September 2024



Document No. THC/CFGP/ReportDoc01Rev00

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

OVERVIEW

This feasibility study has been carried out to consider the proposed idea of a community food growing project (CFGP) at Sandown Lands, in Nairn, with the potential for a photovoltaic (PV) renewable energy system on the target field also considered. This target field forms part of Nairn's Common Good Land, managed by the local authority for the benefit of the community. The study has considered and assessed the practicality and viability of options for a CFGP and identifies potential opportunities and issues. The Common Good lands in Nairn are an important feature of the town and the Sandown location is an area which has been debated and discussed extensively in the past, and which has formed a part of the 2024 local place plan being developed through Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise (NICE).

Desk-based research identified a number of community food growing projects across the country, with one to one interviews and discussions with a number of these as well with many groups and individuals in Nairn. The options developed for a potential CFGP from this work are shown below:

Baseline. Do nothing. The field continues to be rented by a local farmer, along with the surrounding fields, to produce cereals/grass for animal feed.

Option 1. PV only. Installation of PV panels to generate income for the common good fund and to provide renewable electricity that can either be fed directly into the grid or other users of electricity nearby, now or in the future.

Option 2. Food growing woodland. In the figure these are shown in locations around the poly tunnels, plots and growing fields. In reality these could cover the whole of the field if the other options are not implemented.

Option 3. Small CFGP. Establishment of a small community food growing project based on two polytunnels. This has two sheds shown to store equipment and produce, with a parking area for cars and a toilet. Although there is already a polytunnel in the adjacent allotment, the polytunnel focus in this option is used to describe an option that extends the growing season, while at the same time offering a smaller, more manageable and profitable business model than the larger scale project.

Option 4. Large CFGP. Establishment of a large outdoor growing area, with more polytunnels potentially as a part of this. Communal growing plots and fields are shown, that deliver a model where groups of individuals work together to deliver the project. Additional sheds added to reflect higher levels of activity. Although the figure shows a significant area of the target field being used, this is only illustrative, with any future project scale driven by the group or organisation delivering it.

Option 5. High capital investment. Establishment of larger scale, higher capital cost initiatives e.g. to develop a community garden centre; establishing a centre to support formal education and training, with a café. This could include collaboration with an organisation like the UHI.

The above options were presented to the community through a digital survey in July 2024.

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

Community engagement and desk-based findings

Community engagement has taken place through a digital survey and more than twenty one-to-one discussions and interviews, and identified that there are many ideas and opportunities for developing a food growing project at Sandown Lands in Nairn.

The initial options identified this report through one-to-one discussions and desk-based research informed the community survey which returned 150 completed responses. Circa 90% expressing their support for the majority of the food growing options, identifying that a key area of interest is the development of a project that provides educational and training opportunities, bringing people together and supporting collaborative working across many different activities. The local place planning (LPP) process has been undertaken at the same time as delivering this feasibility study in Nairn, and although not a key feature of the LPP, where renewable energy and food growing were discussed at workshops in May 2024 the majority of responses were positive about the potential.

If the target field at Sandown Lands is to be used purely for a community food growing project, then planning permission should not be needed. However, if it is to be used for more than just food growing, to include educational or social purposes, then planning permission is likely to be required. Some small-scale works such as the erection of fencing or some agricultural buildings may be carried out without having to apply for planning permission, if the works fall within the definition of 'permitted development'.

Analysis of the options

The options considered are all possible either in their own right, or as complementary or cumulative in terms of developing a CFGP. The cumulative feature applying once a project has been established in the first place.

The PV option is not a food growing one, but could supply low cost electricity to a project at lower rates than are commercially available. Investment in PV offers a payback within 11 years, with a capital cost of £78K required and provides a long term income generation opportunity for the Common Good fund, which could be replicable elsewhere.

The small and larger scale growing projects are described to include polytunnels, growing areas (plots and fields) with sheds for storage of tools and other items. The size of the land (4 hectares) is such that infrastructure (polytunnels, sheds) could be located a significant distance from the A96, adjacent to the existing allotment. A larger option would mean scaling up, to provide larger growing areas and more poly tunnels. Irrespective of these options, there are opportunities to also create a community food growing woodland, with tree planting opportunities around the four hectare site, which has the potential to not only provide nutritious food in the future, but could provide a shelter belt for other growing elements taken forward, provide a foraging habitat for bees etc. A community food growing woodland could be planted at a scale that works with the small and large growing options. Trees could be planted that have ecological, nutrition, commercial, health and well-being value. In terms of the final point, if a holistic viewpoint is taken a woodland could be planted that provides a space for people to use the field for exercise, dog walking etc. This would require access to the site and the construction of pathways inside the boundary, following a planting design outwith the scope of this project.

Regardless of this community access, there is the potential to improve walking and cycling access both to a future food growing project and the existing allotments by creating an entrance to the Sandown Field from the pedestrian pavement, where this ends on the A96.

There may also be potential to take forward more ambitious and related opportunities, to support a community food growing project, involving the development of a community garden centre. Collaboration with the University of the Highlands and Islands may be of value exploring, to understand where collaboration opportunities exist, to connect community growing in Nairn with academic research and education.

Socioeconomic benefits and opportunities

The development of a community food growing project at Sandown Lands would provide a direct supply-demand relationship with food grown locally, generating 2 FTE jobs (3 employees), and if created using a community supported agriculture model could potential results in circa 60 members receiving local, nutritious food, with many gaining health and wellbeing benefits from volunteering and engagement.

The development has the potential to improve connectedness in Nairn if a pathway to access the Common Good Land and allotments could be developed as part of a CFGP. This could improve the road and pedestrian user experience for cyclists and walkers. This could help to create a loop of activity and walking routes off the main road to link up with coast at the West End of Nairn.

Nairn Academy has indicated that a community food growing project would be used extensively by the school and this is an element of potential benefit that could have significant positive impact for children, for example providing education and training linked to the curriculum, providing a land-based opportunity for children that may be in line with their interests/preferences.

Funding and cost benefit analysis

A number of funding opportunities have been identified which would be applicable, in particular for a social enterprise taking forward a CFGP in the future. Opportunities will be available for both council support, through back to work/employment schemes, community capacity building funds. In addition, there are a range of third party funding opportunities for either a start-up or existing social enterprise interested in developing a CFGP. However, it should also be noted that there are increasing risks associated with some potential funding streams, for example, in a period of public sector cuts.

A cost benefit analysis (CBA) carried out on the smaller scale growing option has identified the parameters for a successful project, and an important aspect of this involves understanding the challenging nature of making community food growing projects operate in a commercially successful way when the sales of fruit and vegetables are the only income stream. Many community food growing projects across Scotland and the rest of the UK operate on the basis of providing services related to education, training, health and wellbeing and received funding to cover staff costs aimed at delivering such services. They have also secured funding support to cover the costs of getting established.

An indicative estimate has identified a cost of over £50K to take forward a small-scale CFGP, with two polytunnels being at the heart of this. Three paid members of staff are considered in the analysis (two FTEs) and their salaries are modelled on the basis that these are covered by external grant funding, to deliver the wider range of services, with food sales then providing a profit on top of this. The sales model considered is based on the community buying fruit and vegetable boxes.

Relationships, partnership working and securing funding support

There are a number of community organisations working in Nairn, and the opportunities described in this report may be of more interest and value to particular organisations and groups. However, a key point that has to be recognised is that the opportunities for community food growing at Sandown Lands, on Common Good Land, very much chime with a key aim of having such land i.e. the aim being that it can connect the community and bring people together for individual and mutual benefit. There can be a tendency to push back against new initiatives in a community, but the land as currently used, is monoculture in nature, and although this provides a benefit to the farmer, and a rental income for the common good fund, there is potential for this to be developed and used in a way which engages more people and generates more income.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Next Steps for developing the options

A community organisation – whether an established one or one formed around the garden project - will need to take on the role of driving a project forward, following discussions and agreement on the vision and objectives e.g. will education, training and food growing/selling all be considered important elements of a project and is the organisation committed to securing funding support?

Because the Council is responsible for managing the Common Good lands, it will need to be a committed supporter and partner for any project to have long-term success. As part of this the challenges associated with operating complex projects have to be understood. To establish a project which delivers on the options described in this report, there will need to be an understanding that the margins that food growing projects operate to are very tight, but the potential benefits to a community are significant, and therefore the development of a trusted relationship between the council and partners should be an objective of future working arrangements. A key part of this is understanding that a community food growing project, that enables the community to utilise common good land, should be seen as a positive opportunity to develop Sandown lands as a community asset.

The Council also has the opportunity to support a CFGP if employability, training and community development are objectives, with the No-one Left Behind scheme providing employability support and Shared Prosperity funding (or its future replacement) providing community capacity building support.

Operational (business) plan For developing a CFGP in Nairn

An advisory group should be set up, facilitated by the council, to support the delivery of an engagement process involving parties interested in establishing a CFGP. Its role should be to confirm the preferred option for Sandown Lands, and establish a business plan, which describes the operational and implementation steps required. The plan would describe how local opportunities could maximise community capacity building, involving volunteering as well as job creation opportunities. A plan for engaging with service providers in the council should be developed, in education, employability and prosperity, economic development and community regeneration, to understand how a future CFGP would support their aspirations. This would then facilitate funding applications for the salaries of individuals to drive a project forward.

This report has described the potential of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, subscription-based, with members paying regularly for vegetable and fruit boxes. This financial support covers operational costs and mitigates the risks by providing an understood regular income, with members receiving regular shares of the farm's harvest throughout the growing season, e.g. weekly. Models such as this have the double benefit and impact of bring the local community into the project, engaging with it and providing support, as well as creating an income stream. A detailed business case would need to be prepared to demonstrate the anticipated financial performance of the CFGP.

PV Panels

The council should consider taking forward a PV installation on Sandown Lands that can provide a long term financial income for the Common Good Fund. Such an installation also has the potential to provide low cost electricity to a CFGP if there is demand.

Maximising socioeconomic impacts

The council should consider facilitating activities and actions that would support the establishment of a community food growing project that has the potential to provide local food growing opportunities, skills development and which may have the potential to improve connectedness around the west of Nairn.

The Council and the proposed advisory group should work with other agencies and departments to facilitate actions that would lead to the development of an action/implementation plan.

The local plan and engagement with the community

The community survey, one-to-one interviews and local place planning workshops have all identified that there is support for a CFGP in Nairn. However, it should also be noted that there are a number of concerns as well as objectors. In considering a future CFGP on the Sandown Land field the council is advised to consider what the purpose of common good land is. As discussed at the August 2024 Common Good Engagement meeting a key purpose is to bring the community together and collaborate.

The Sandown Land field is in close proximity to the Tradespark community and it is recommended that potential opportunities for engaging with the project should be explored with this community.

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview

This feasibility study has been carried out to consider the proposed idea of a community food growing project (CFGP) at Sandown Lands, in Nairn. The field earmarked for the study forms part of the Common Good Land, managed by the local authority for the benefit of the community. The study has considered and assessed the practicality and viability of this and identifies potential opportunities and issues. This report is provided to establish a basis for carrying out a business development case based on the recommendations and next steps identified, with the potential for the evidence gathered through this study to be used to support an application for further funding.

1.2 Scope of the study

This Feasibility Study looks at a number of opportunities and models for Nairn, considering the following tasks:

- Task A - Research into similar projects.
- Task B - Land and local geographic assessment.
- Task C - Local renewable energy and rainwater capture.
- Task D - Operational Models and Governance.
- Task E - Detailed cost model.
- Task F - Facilities
- Task G - Stakeholder engagement
- Task H - Legal/regulatory considerations
- Task J - Project benefits – environmental, socio and economic
- Task K - Communications
- Task L - Facilitators, funding and barriers

This research and stakeholder engagement work carried out aims to identify the following:

- How large are the projects (area of land, level of food growing, participation by the community).
- What impacts/benefits are being realised through the amount and different type of food being grown, the number of employees, volunteers, training opportunities etc.
- Opportunities for the future.
- What constraints and barriers are being faced.
- What are the drivers for growth, what are examples of innovation?

Typically it is more difficult to identify information related to financial turnover and growth plans associated with individual projects, however where available these are described, as well as information on:

- The nature of partnership working, including the third sector, local authorities, local farmers, shops.
- The type of any infrastructure including sheds, premises etc.
- Potential interactions with other local authority services (e.g. employment support).
- Scale of investment involved, and any data on operating costs and income streams.
- The settlement populations being served.

1.3 Overview of Nairn, the common good lands and growing projects

Nairn has a population of 10,190¹ or 11,613 including Auldearn² and in terms of the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2020 it has areas that fall into the highest and lowest categories, as derived from the Scottish Government tool which can be found [here](#). The Common Good lands in Nairn are an important feature of the town and the Sandown location is an area which has been debated and discussed extensively in the past, and which has formed a part of the 2024 local place plan considerations currently being developed through Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise (NICE).

The Common Good lands as a whole are shown in the figure below, and as can be seen these represent a significant area of the town. The target field at Sandown which is being considered in this feasibility study is highlighted in the map, and in the following figure, where the area (4.18 hectares) is given, along with those of the other fields making up all of the Common Good lands at Sandown, totalling 27.5 hectares – the target field is 15% of the overall area.

¹ Population data sourced from the Scottish Government [here](#).

² <https://www.hie.co.uk/media/5946/nairnplusandplusauldearnplusprofile.pdf>

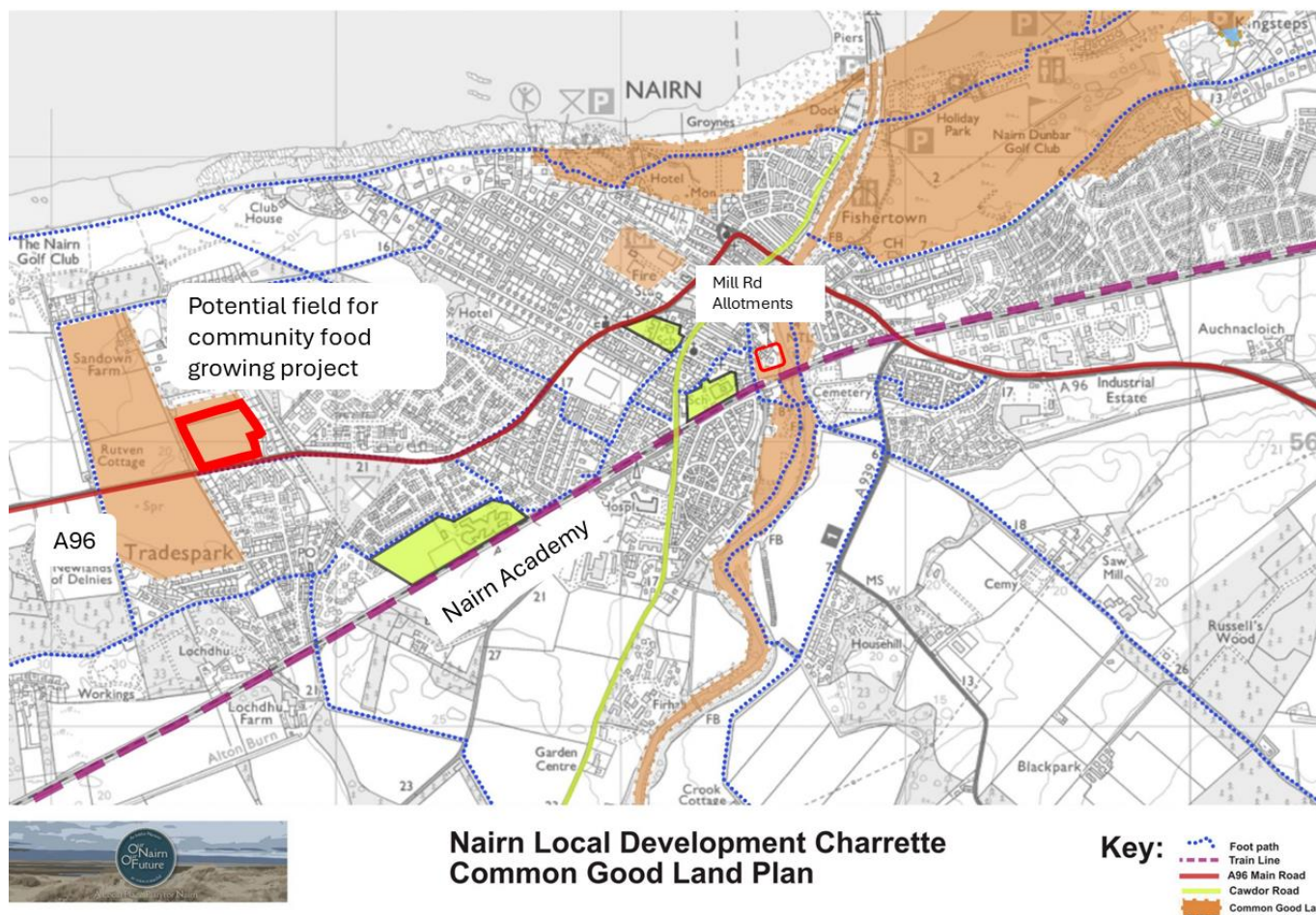


Figure 1. Map (adapted) showing the Nairn Common Good lands (coloured/filled in brown) and other locations referenced in this report. Source [here](#).



Figure 2. Map showing the areas of the different common good lands at Sandown

Nairn has been described in a number of stakeholder discussions as being a town which has significant growing expertise, with two allotments already, one at Sandown Lands (next to the target field being considered for the food growing project), the other at Mill Road (see **Figure 1**). The figure below shows views of the two Nairn allotments, along with other locations mentioned in this report e.g. the main road running through the town (A96) and the local secondary school (Nairn Academy) with an interest in growing projects.



Figure 3. The Nairn allotments at Sandown Road (left) and Mill Road

All of the common good fields at Sandown are currently being used, with one small area rented by the Nairn Allotment society and the other, 27.5 hectares (including the 4.13 hectares of the target field) being rented by a farmer, using it to grow barley or grass as animal feed (monoculture). The allotment society are being charged a small peppercorn rent of £398 per year until 2032, with the farmer charged £7,480 per year (£272 per hectare), renewed annually on the 1st November – referred to as a short limited duration tenancy (arable). The annual rental for the Mill Road allotments in Nairn is £1,645, leased on a rolling annual basis.

2.0 POLICIES AND LEGISLATION

The potential for developing community food growing projects is supported by a number of policies and strategies, at national and local authority levels. Common Good lands also have to be managed in line with the Highland Council policies. The following table summarises the key legislative, policy and strategic drivers for community food growing, with a wealth of additional, related legislation and policy derived from these. The 2024 Draft Good Food Nation plan provides details of these in Annexes A and B, available [here](#).

Table 1. Legislation and policies relevant to community food growing in Scotland

Legislation or Policy	Description of key points, aims and objectives
The Good Food Nation (Scotland) Act 2022 (here)	This Act places duties on the Scottish Government, local authorities and NHS Health Boards to produce Good Food Nation (GFN) Plans, which should outline the main outcomes related to food issues, necessary policies and measures to assess progress. The Draft Nation Food Plan was published on 24 January 2024 with consultation on it concluding in April 2024.
Draft National Good Food Nation Plan, 2024 (here)	Describes how the Scottish Government intends to work collectively with people, communities, businesses, agencies and organisations. It proposes a set of six national Good Food Nation Outcomes, and sets out how they were developed and how progress will be measured.
Scottish Government, Local Food for Everyone: Our Journey, 2024	Strategy that describes what the government wants to achieve and how it will get there, using the following three pillars for its vision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pillar One: Connecting people with local food. • Pillar Two: Connecting Scottish producers with buyers. • Pillar Three: Harnessing public sector procurement.

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 (here)	Commits the government to being open about what it is doing and to allow communities to be involved e.g. community councils and community bodies will be notified and invited to make representations. Proposals should be widely publicised and available for public representations to be made. The Act requires each local authority to prepare a food-growing strategy for its area, to identify land that may be used as allotment sites, identify other areas of land that could be used for community growing and describe how the authority intends to increase provision for community growing, in particular in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage.
National Planning Framework 4 (here)	local development plans should include opportunities for community food growing and allotments. The policy supports development proposals that will have positive effects on health which could include opportunity for community food growing or allotments;

Table 2. Strategy and policy relevant to community food growing in the Highlands and Nairn

Policy	Description of key points, aims and objectives
The Highland Council, - A Community Food Growing Strategy for Highland (here), 2022 - 2027	The aim of the strategy is to inspire, empower and support communities in the Highlands who want to grow their own food, through existing growing opportunities and new approaches to growing. The vision is that By 2027 Highland communities are resilient, empowered and supported to grow their own food. The strategy was developed through a number of community engagement events across the Highlands in 2019 and 2020, followed by two surveys and further public consultation.
The Highland Council, Disposal of or Change of Use of Common Good Property – Process (here)	The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 Part 8 came into force on 27 June 2018. It states that it seeks to increase transparency about the existence of common good assets and to ensure there is community involvement in decisions taken about their identification, use and disposal (disposal means to transfer out of the hands of the local authority). An example given of a disposal is a sale of an asset, although a lease or other arrangement giving a third party ascertainable rights of beneficial occupation may also qualify. The Highland Council will treat any lease of 10 years or more as being a disposal for consultation purposes. Two significant definitions in this respect are shown below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alienable common good property - this is property where there is no specific restriction or prohibition preventing disposal or change of use. In this case the Council can deal with the property as it would any other council property. • Inalienable common good property - where there is some specific restriction preventing disposal or change of use or if there is some question that there may be. In this case the Council must apply to the Sheriff Court or Court of Session to authorise the disposal or change of use. <p>Property is considered to be inalienable if the restriction or purpose is clearly stated in the deed or gift, it has been specifically dedicated for public use or it has been used in a certain beneficial way for a lengthy period of time.</p>

The Scottish Government’s “Local Food for Everyone” strategy mentioned in the table above provides information on financial support to deliver on the strategy:

“Over the last 11 years, over £1.2 million has been awarded to Green Action Trust to support community growing organisations. The ‘Growing Food Together’ grant provides funds to help establish growing sites, particularly in areas of social deprivation, actively increasing the land available for community food growing. The grant helps to improve food growing skills, empowering communities and individuals to grow their own food in their local area. In addition to this, since 2016, around £580,000 has been allocated to various community growing organisations in Scotland, helping to maximise local growing opportunities out with the traditional setting of allotments.”

More information on potential wider funding streams for a community food growing project are referred to in a later section of this report.

Consultation for the Draft Good Food Nation Plan referred to in the table above was concluded in April 2024, with the final plan to be produced at some point in 2024 (date not confirmed). The draft includes the six desired outcomes summarised below:

- Outcome 1 - Everyone in Scotland to eat well with reliable access to safe, nutritious, affordable, sustainable, and age and culturally appropriate food
- Outcome 2 - Scotland's food system to be sustainable and contributing to a flourishing natural environment. It should support net zero ambitions, and play an important role in maintaining and improving animal welfare and in restoring and regenerating biodiversity.
- Outcome 3 - Scotland's food system should encourage a physically and mentally healthy population, leading to a reduction in diet-related conditions.
- Outcome 4 – the country's food and drink sector should be prosperous, diverse, innovative, and vital to national and local economic and social wellbeing. It should be key to making Scotland food-secure and food-resilient, and create and sustain jobs and businesses underpinned by fair work standards.
- Outcome 5 - Scotland should have a thriving food culture with a population interested in and educated about good and sustainable food.
- Outcome 6- Scotland has a global reputation for high-quality food and the aim is for this to continue to grow. Decisions made in Scotland contribute positively to local and global food systems transformation.

The above outcomes reflect the aspirations of the project considered in this project and summarised in this report, as described in later sections.

3.0 RESEARCH INTO SIMILAR PROJECTS

This section summarises the outcomes of desk-based research and stakeholder interviews, to describe a number of community food growing projects in Highland region, as well as other locations in Scotland.

Highland region already has a number of thriving community growing initiatives, with the map below indicating the distribution of a number of these (a screenshot from the Highland Good Food website). The [Highland Community Composting](#) resource also shown in the figure (developed by Enscape for Zero Waste Scotland) provides guidance and case study examples in Highland region, with a focus on composting, but considering food growing as well as since the former is often carried out to support growing projects.

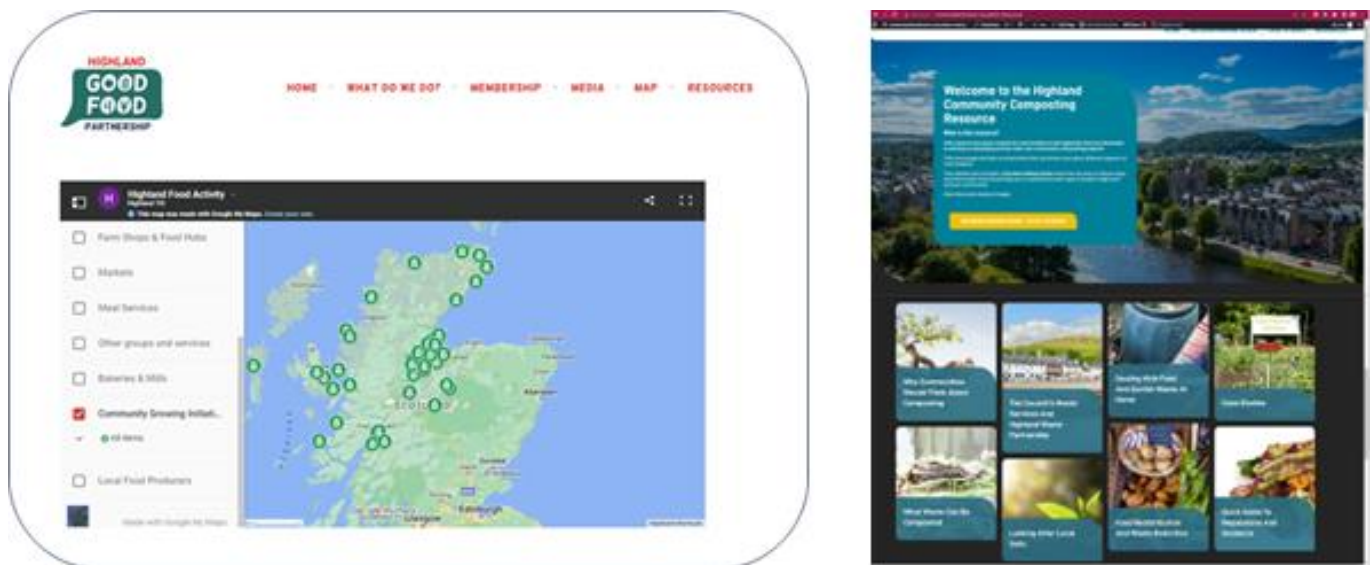


Figure 4. Screenshots of two Highland community resources: Good Food Partnership website (left) and the Community Composting website (right)

Highland Council's community food growing strategy, "Growing our Future" also describes a number of case studies which are relevant to Nairn. A number of these, plus other projects, identified through the stakeholder engagement process and desk-based research, are described in the table below.

Table 3. Highland (or Highlands-related) projects

Project	Key Outcomes
<p>Thurso Community Development Trust (TCDT) and Thurso Grows</p>	<p>The Trust started in 2018 and began the “Thurso Grows” project in 2019. It had no raised beds or space for growing at that point as all/any available space was completely overgrown. In addition, the focus previously had been wildflowers so ground was not fully suitable for growing produce. A community garden space of 1,000m² was developed and associated workshops on composting, gardening and food waste minimisation were held. In 2023 there was the asset transfer of the Highland Council Greenhouses in Thurso and the creation of a Zero Waste Refill Shop with commercial growing taking place in the greenhouses. The shop has had to close because it has not been financially viable, but may open later in 2024 under a different guise.. 1.8 full time equivalent members of staff are employed on the project. The aims are to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote local produce and encourage people to grow at home while taking a community aspect to sharing food. • Work with other groups including North Highland College and NHS Highland to provide green health activities in the garden space. • Hold regular garden sessions (e.g. weekly). <p>The weekly garden sessions involve 20-30 volunteers each week and, in addition, the Trust runs community meal sessions with around 20 weekly volunteers. With funding the organisation has been able to install a Polycrub® glasshouse, which in Caithness conditions vastly improves chances of success in growing: www.polycrub.co.uk.</p>
<p>Badenoch & Strathspey Therapy Gardens (here)</p>	<p>The group runs weekly gardening sessions throughout the growing season (March to October) with a variety of groups in Kingussie and Aviemore. All gardeners are adults, some have disabilities, some are isolated and all benefit from being in the garden, doing gardening activities, socialising and chatting. All gardeners are invited to become members of the therapy gardens (membership fee £3 per year). They can take home any produce that they can use –flowers, vegetable, fruit and herbs and from time to time excess plants.</p>
<p>Nairn Academy and Inverness High School Farms</p>	<p>Nairn Academy has a polytunnel on its land, an orchard, planted with the help of the town’s orchard group and local charity Greenhive. There are now 46 fruit trees, with some local varieties, which the pupils helped to graft. The academy developed a relationship with “For You Training” in Thain and The Farmer Jones Academy (Climate Challenge funded project), which resulted in foundation apprenticeships being developed and is supportive of partnerships with future community growing opportunities.</p> <p>Inverness High School Farm, increasing biodiversity, small-scale crop and food productions, developing practical gardening and enterprise skills, making and selling products such as bird feeders.</p>
<p>Knocknagael</p>	<p>A community not-for-profit organisation established to take over the "Smiddy Field" - one of the fields at the Scottish Government-owned Knocknagael Farm. Plans under consideration include a community garden, allotments, a community orchard, food growing areas, and outdoor walking paths. The long-term aim is to establish a community cafe to cook and serve the produce from the garden, from “fork to fork”.</p>
<p>University of the Highlands and Islands and Talladh a Bheithe Estate - Emiel’s food forest, Link here.</p>	<p>Under development at time of writing, food forest project as a field station for teaching and learning about food resilience in a changing climate. Euan agreed that UHI could assist with the design of the project and that there was potential for a field station provided funding could be secured.</p> <p>Fast forward to today. Here is the good news. The project is taking place! The Estate has cleared 1.3 hectares of land of weeds in readiness for tree planting which will take place during autumn 2024.</p> <p>Other partners have been recruited to the project by Earthself including the University of Sterling and Scottish Women’s Autistic Network (SWAN). The project is being supported by the Climate Engage Fund.</p>



Figure 5. Nairn Academy students (source, For You Training, [here](#))

To illustrate the wider movement and opportunities in terms of community food growing outwith Highland Region, the following table provides a number of examples of other projects that may have ideas and opportunities that are of value to a future Nairn community project. It should be noted that two of the examples described in the tables (Thurso Development Trust and Campy Growers) are also discussed later again in the report, in the **Funding** section, to illustrate how much has been raised and the sources – to illustrate how a future organisation in Nairn may be able to consider its options.

Table 4. Grampian (Moray, Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire)

Project	Key Outcomes
Transition Town Forres	The group has set up a community garden, as a place for the community to come and learn how grow its own food and meet other gardeners. The group works in pods that are shared spaces for about four people and also has polytunnels where gardeners can grow from seed and take cuttings. Currently (summer 2024) there are around seventy gardeners using the site. The Green Shoots project is funded by £23,198 from the People’s Postcode Trust (PPT) and £9,594 from the National Lottery Community Fund Awards for All programme (see more information here). The aim is to work with 16 schools and other organisations, enabling in-depth experimental learning, cultivating enthusiasm and upskilling staff.
Bonnymuir Green Community Trust (Aberdeen), link here .	<p>Bonnymuir Green Community Trust is a community-owned green space that revitalised an under-utilised bowling club, spurred by strong local interest and support. The site features a flourishing community garden, social hub, and café, all managed and sustained by local volunteers. The public is encouraged to participate in a range of educational and social activities, promoting fun, good health, well-being, and sustainable living.</p> <p>The project employs two staff members, including one full-time coordinator, who are instrumental in organising and supporting the efforts of over 100 regular volunteers. These volunteers are vital to the project’s success, contributing significantly to its operations. They are retained due to the excellent coordination provided by the staff, the social connections fostered within the community, and the satisfaction of helping to improve their local area.</p> <p>Income for the project is generated through the café, the sale of fruit and vegetables grown on-</p>

Project	Key Outcomes
	<p>site, and by hosting various events. The garden regularly draws in new audiences with creative events such as choir performances, classical music sessions, 'Sound Baths', herbal medicine workshops, and gardening and biodiversity workshops. The community is kept well-informed through regular newsletters that outline upcoming events and café opening times.</p> <p>In terms of sustainability, Bonnymuir Green is committed to eco-friendly practices. Alongside PV panels that power the café, they compost food waste, collect rainwater with a water butt, and actively encourage biodiversity. These efforts include beekeeping, maintaining a pond, and following wildlife-friendly gardening practices, all while avoiding the use of chemicals. These initiatives not only benefit the environment but also enhance the overall ecological health of the community space.</p> <p>Grampian Hospitals Art Trust (GHAT) extended its arts-based healthcare approach to Bonnymuir Green Community Garden during the COVID-19 pandemic. GHAT's work involved integrating art to enhance the garden's role as a calming and supportive community space. This initiative demonstrated how creative projects can contribute to holistic well-being and community connection. GHAT's efforts in the garden aimed to provide a therapeutic environment, improve community engagement, and maintain a healthcare focus in a more accessible and informal setting.</p>
<p>Campy Growers, Dundee</p>	<p>Campy Growers is the largest community growing space in Dundee with its 8 acres and community building, producing fresh food for local people. As well as gardening opportunities, it offers education and training, cooking sessions, outdoor activities and accessible produce. It is located in Camperdown Country park, and in partnership with Dundee City Council, it took over a derelict site (owned by the Council, and formerly used by it as a plant nursery) to turn it into a community growing space. They have two polytunnels with one for propagation. One was taken out during the autumn 2023/winter storms. They have just had a deer fence built. The council will keep the site for the next 5 to 8 years, with a peppercorn lease paid by Campy Growers.</p> <p>As well as growing vegetables they propagate seeds, growing plants for other market gardens in Dundee (the Dundee Growing Network is supplied with plants). They support 100 families, through the Maxwell Centre, with fresh fruit and veg.</p> <p>The council invested £1.2 million to regenerate and construct a new building on the site in 2023. In terms of employees, the council's allotment officer is based on the site, plus two employees, one full-time grower/co-ordinator (funding coming to an end soon) and a part-time handy man. They recently got funding for a full-time gardener. The board is made up of active volunteers.</p> <p>An important aspect of this project is how Community Regeneration Funding support has been secured to cover a number of costs for this project - discussed later in this report.</p>
<p>City of Edinburgh Council</p>	<p>The City of Edinburgh Council Thriving Green Spaces team (here), has been evaluating the potential for converting underutilised bowling greens (St Margaret's Park and Victoria Park) into allotments and community gardens amid a shortage of growing space in the city - comes after Edinburgh Leisure returned two greens to the council's ownership due to being underused. Following engagement with the public on re-purposing the spaces at two sites, plans are set to be progressed (here). The survey for the St Margaret's and Victoria site, updated on the 27 Jun 2024, showed that the Council received a total of 193 and 271 responses respectively, with results indicating strong overall support for the proposed redevelopment.</p>
<p>The allotment Market Stall (TAMS)</p>	<p>TAMS is a not-for-profit organisation that supports allotment holders in selling their excess produce and helps local residents access community-grown food through market stalls across Aberdeen. The initiative includes the use of solar-powered fridges at their market garden to refrigerate soft fruits on-site after harvest, complementing their work in collecting surplus produce from allotments.</p> <p>Having their own market garden allows TAMS to grow specific produce for the stalls and engage volunteers throughout the year, rather than just during market stall times. This year-round engagement helps retain volunteers by offering them a variety of activities, including gardening, social outdoor time, and workshops on topics such as fruit tree pruning and onion and garlic planting.</p> <p>TAMS has also hosted CFINE's Growing for Wellbeing and Growing Employability Skills courses at</p>

Project	Key Outcomes
	<p>their market garden, providing mutual benefits. CFINE participants gain access to a beautiful, nurturing garden and expert tutelage, while the market garden benefits from additional help with larger tasks. Some course participants go on to regularly volunteer with TAMS, aiding in volunteer recruitment and retention. For example, one course group worked together to build a large pond, which supports the garden’s commitment to wildlife-friendly gardening practices and biodiversity.</p> <p>The market stalls operate annually from July to October, with a standard schedule of one stall per week at two different public parks in Aberdeen. Additionally, TAMS participates in local events and markets throughout the summer. Any excess produce that isn’t sold at the stalls is donated to the CFINE Food Bank.</p> <p>In 2023, TAMS recorded the weight of harvests from their market garden, which amounted to a value of £1,100.15, equivalent to 3,140 meals and a total CO2 saving of 200kg. These figures were calculated using the Harvest-o-Meter available through Good to Grow. Proceeds from the market stalls are returned to the allotments that donated produce, helping fund upkeep such as mending fences and building compost bays.</p>
<p>CFINE Grow & Learn in Nature – Growing Employability Skills</p>	<p>The CFINE Grow & Learn in Nature course has been running successfully for two years, since its launch in March 2022, offering employability skills to vulnerable members of society. This course focuses on building confidence, learning new skills, and fostering a sense of routine among participants, many of whom face barriers to employment. The course is funded by the Scottish Government’s Investing in Communities Fund and Aberdeen City Council.</p> <p>Participants engage in gardening activities, which serve as a practical and therapeutic means of developing employability skills. Over 10 weeks, participants attend 3-hour weekly sessions at various community garden sites around Aberdeen, promoting wider access to these local sites. Upon completion, successful participants receive a certificate, which enhances their CVs and prepares them for future employment opportunities.</p> <p>The course is further supported by a Support for Learning Volunteer, who assist the tutor with course delivery, helps participants with their portfolios, and supports an inclusive and positive learning environment. This role also provides the volunteer with meaningful experience.</p> <p>Participants learn new skills such as propagating plants and preparing garden beds in a supportive and educational environment. In 2023 a total of 30 participants completed the course, reporting improvements in confidence, routine and employability skills.</p> <p>The course has become a vital stepping stone for participants, helping them to overcome barriers to employment and take meaningful steps toward their personal and professional goals.</p>
<p>Barnardo’s Young Carers Integrated Food Programme (YCIFP)</p>	<p>Supporting young carers in Aberdeen by offering practical gardening and cooking skills. Delivered in partnership with CFINE and Aberdeen City Health and Social Care Partnership (ACHSCP), the programme empowers young carers to improve their health and well-being while learning essential life skills.</p> <p>YCIFP combines gardening activities with cookery workshops, enabling young carers to grow their own produce and learn how to prepare healthy meals. The programme’s three main goals are to inspire healthy eating, build independent living skills, and enhance employability. Participants engage in activities like planting flowers, harvesting produce, and creating woodland wind chimes, followed by cooking sessions where they use the ingredients they’ve grown. These activities not only teach practical food skills but also provide a break from the pressures of caregiving, supporting social inclusion and confidence.</p> <p>The programme has significantly improved participants' practical food skills and knowledge of healthy eating. According to the July 2023 Evaluation Report, participants rated their satisfaction with the workshops at 9 out of 10, highlighting the programme's effectiveness. Young carers also reported increased confidence in cooking and a stronger sense of community, with many expressing a desire to continue similar activities.</p> <p>YCIFP aligns with local and national health priorities, supporting ACHSCP's goals of caring together, preventing ill-health, and achieving fulfilling lives. It also contributes to Scotland's public health objectives by promoting mental well-being and healthy eating habits among young carers.</p>

The Edinburgh organisation referred to in Table 4 supporting the delivery of community food growing projects, Edible Estates, made the comment (source: [here](#)) below, to indicate a wide range of benefits associated with community food growing:

"Community gardens are a valuable resource to communities, they support individual and community well-being, promote physical activity, create new connections between folk, and of course grow fruit and veg. They are a 'place' and an activity, and play an important role in the move towards establishing 20-minute neighbourhoods across the city. Amidst news of produce shortages and a cost of living crisis, community gardens provide skills and resources towards more resilient communities."



Figure 6. Bonnymuir Green Community Growing Project

Organisations set up in Scotland and the rest of the UK (RUK) more generally are summarised in the table below.

Table 5. Scotland and RUK supporting organisations

Project	Key Outcomes
Trellis Scotland – a horticultural Therapy Network	Support over 500 groups who create green sanctuaries in hospitals, care homes, schools, prisons and community spaces, using these gardens to help an average of 25 people to recover from ill health, overcome adversity, and increase their skills and confidence. Together, every week, more than 12,000 people are helped to improve their health and transform their lives through gardening
Social Farms and Gardens (formerly the Federation of City Farms (link here))	UK wide charity representing and supporting community gardens and social farms. The website states that it has over 3,000 members growing and providing nature-based activities for the health and wellbeing of people and planet.
Community Supported Agriculture (link here)	Mission is to help create a CSA (Community Supported Agriculture Project) within reach of every neighbourhood of the UK. CSA is subscription-based model where members (subscribers) commit to a seasonal or yearly subscription with a local farm, paying an upfront fee or instalments. This financial support helps the farm cover operational costs and mitigates the risks associated with agriculture. Regular shares of the harvest mean that members receive regular shares of the farm's harvest throughout the growing season, typically weekly or bi-weekly. Shares consist of fresh, seasonal produce, promoting a connection between members and the local agricultural cycles.
Oxford Real Farming Conference (link to archives here)	Brings the real food and farming movement together every January and provides opportunities for networking, exchanges of ideas and support.
Good to Grow (formerly the Big Dig. Link here)	An online platform to support food growing in the UK, run by Sustain. The Good to Grow Network is all about getting people involved in their local community garden.

4.0 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

4.1 Overview

Stakeholder engagement took place through meetings and interviews with local organisations, groups and individuals. The authors also took part in two of the local place planning workshops and developed an online survey. Details of this engagement are now provided in the following sections.

4.2 Local Place Planning

The local place planning (LPP) development, including stakeholder engagement, was delivered by Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise (NICE), a local social enterprise which describes its aim as being to “facilitate the regeneration of Nairn Town Centre and its surrounding areas”. The organisation ran the stakeholder engagement aspect of the LPP process from 2023 until May 2024. The last phase of engagement involved the delivery of five workshops in Nairn, with two of these, Green Space & Leisure and Sustainable Futures, attended by the authors.

There was a digital survey carried out with the closing date being the end of March 2024 which the authors also reviewed to understand where there may be opportunities to add value to the food growing eSurvey (results described later) as well as to understand where there could be the potential for crossovers or issues in terms of the LPP and this feasibility study. At a meeting with NICE in March 2024 it was discussed that there would be value in both the LPP and feasibility study being taken forward over the same time period, and for engagement and awareness of each bringing added value to the outcomes.

4.3 Interviews and Meetings

In total, 21 organisations and individuals were interviewed and met with to understand their views on the value or otherwise of a community food growing project. A full list of those engaged is indicated below.

Table 6. Summary of stakeholders engaged on a one to one basis

Stakeholders Interviewed/Met	Key Comments
Nairn organisations/people	Highland Organisations
Common Good Engagement Group (CGEG)	Highland Good Food Partnership
Green Hive	University of the Highlands and Islands
Highland Weigh (emails)	Knocknagael
Individuals (3)	Thurso Development Trust
Mandala Garden	Highlands and Islands Climate Hub
Nairn Academy	
Nairn Allotment Society	Organisations outwith the Highlands
Nairn Beekeepers	Bonnymuir Community Growing Project
Nairn BID	Campy Growers
Nairn Eco	
Nairn Improvement Community Enterprise (NICE)	
Nairn Orchard Project	

A number of additional businesses, including food retailers, eateries and farmers were contacted, who did not respond. The above engagement identified a number of options from the stakeholders, as summarised in the following figure.

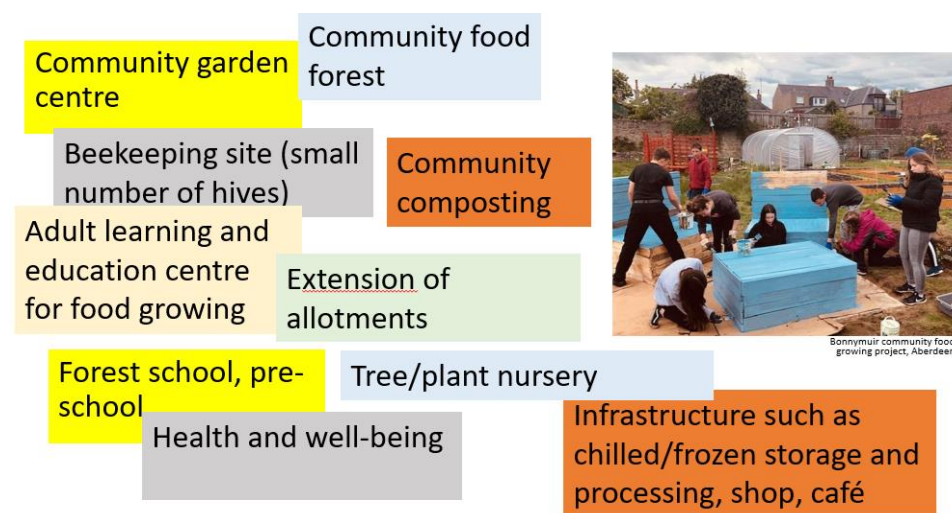


Figure 7. Ideas proposed and discussed by stakeholders engaged in the project

The options above were included in the digital survey, for wider engagement, as described in the following section.

4.4 Digital Community Survey

4.4.1 Overview

A digital survey was developed where there was the option for respondents to provide a completely free, unrestricted response, as well as to complete a number of closed questions (e.g. tick boxes expressing a range of views, from very positive to very negative - see the survey questions in Appendix A). The platform for this was SurveyMonkey, as used for a separate THC Nairn survey in 2023. SurveyMonkey provides an estimate of the likely completion rate and time for going through the questions, indicating that these were 78% and 7 minutes respectively. Experience suggests that those which take significantly longer than 5 minutes to complete have correspondingly lower participation levels, and questions which are completely open, rather than with tick boxes and/or multiple choice, also provide lower completion rates.

The analysis of the survey results is provided on the following basis:

- Quantitative results – responses and views expressed on the basis of answers to close questions.
- Qualitative results – each question provided an open comments box, with the opportunity for respondents to give more information on their response, comment on the question itself, etc.

Individual comments provided for the survey questions are shown in Appendix B.

4.4.2 Quantitative Results

The results achieved were a completion rate of 90%, taking an average of 5 minutes 35 seconds. A total of 166 people began the survey, with circa 150 responses (numbers vary depending on the question) for the survey as a whole. The key questions were those asking for views on the options being presented and for additional thoughts about the proposals as a whole. The most significant questions, with responses, is shown in the figure below, where views are asked for on the different options. Percentages are shown for the responses that provide either a positive or negative view in excess of 70% of answers.

Q4: How do you feel about the field at Sandown Lands being adapted to provide the following (a range of answers to be provided/clicked on, from negative through to positive):

Answered: 152 Skipped: 14

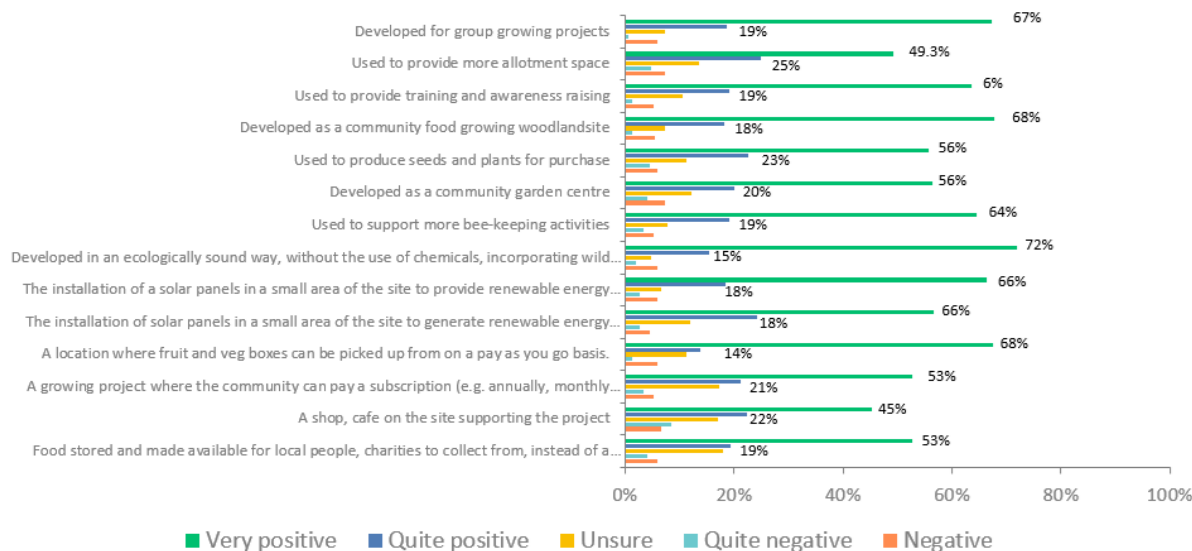
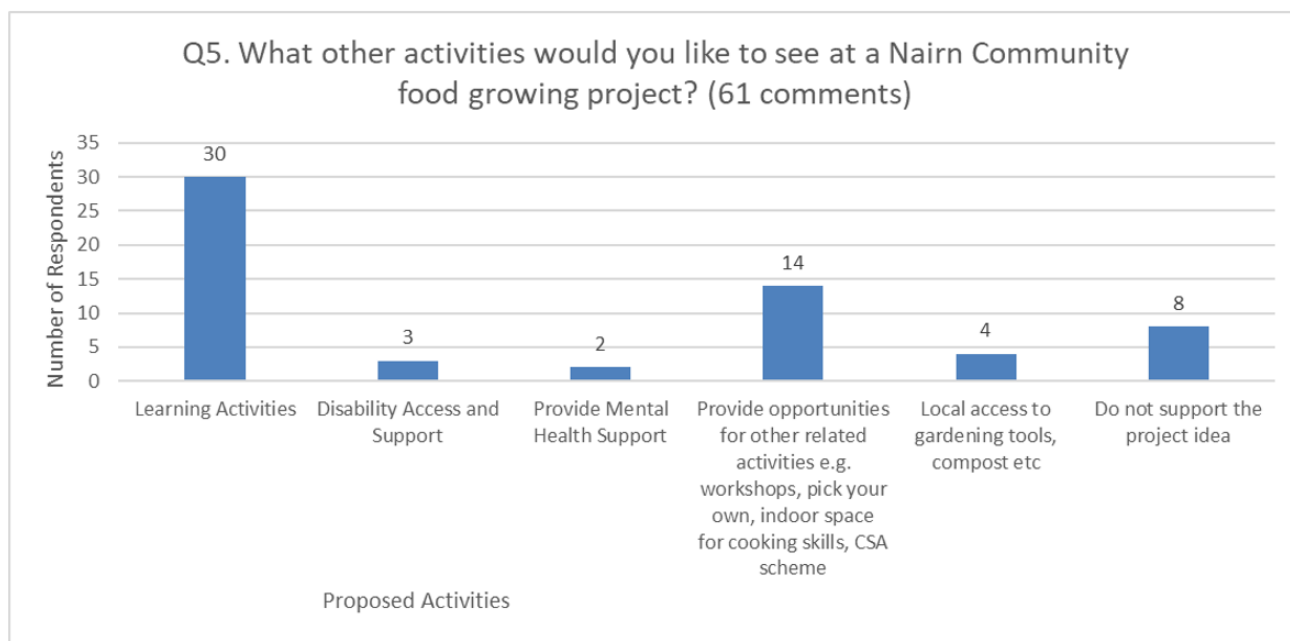


Figure 8. Questionnaire survey responses on options provided for a potential CFGP

86% of respondents indicated that they were either *very* or *quite* positive about the development of a group growing project (67% being *very* positive). All of the options listed received more than 70% *very* or *quite* positive responses. 7% of respondents indicated that they were either *very* or quite negative about a group growing project. In general, negative responses total between 7% and 12% of all responses.

An open question (Q5) was provided to ask what other activities people would like to see, with a comments box provided for those who would prefer to indicate something different. The response to this is shown below, with 61 comments provided.



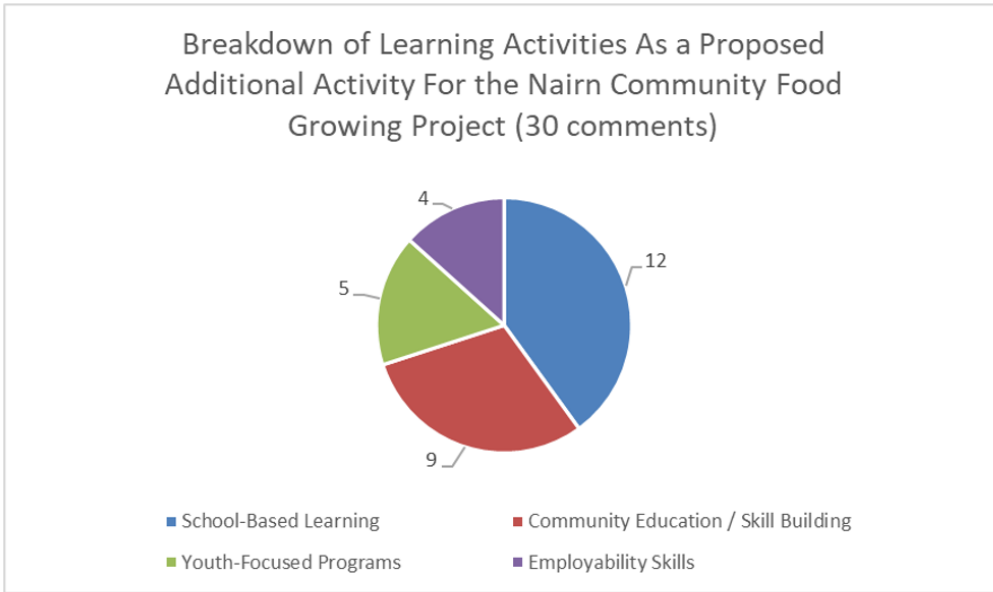


Figure 9. Question 5 – what other activities would you like to see at the Nairn community food growing project. Qualitative responses provided through comments – on other activities

The community was asked how they could personally benefit from a food growing with all of the options receiving significant levels of interest (varying significantly across each of the respondents). The results are shown for this (Q6) below.

Q6: How do you think you could personally benefit from a food growing project at the Nairn site. Please tick the relevant boxes below (as many as appropriate)

Answered: 130 Skipped: 36

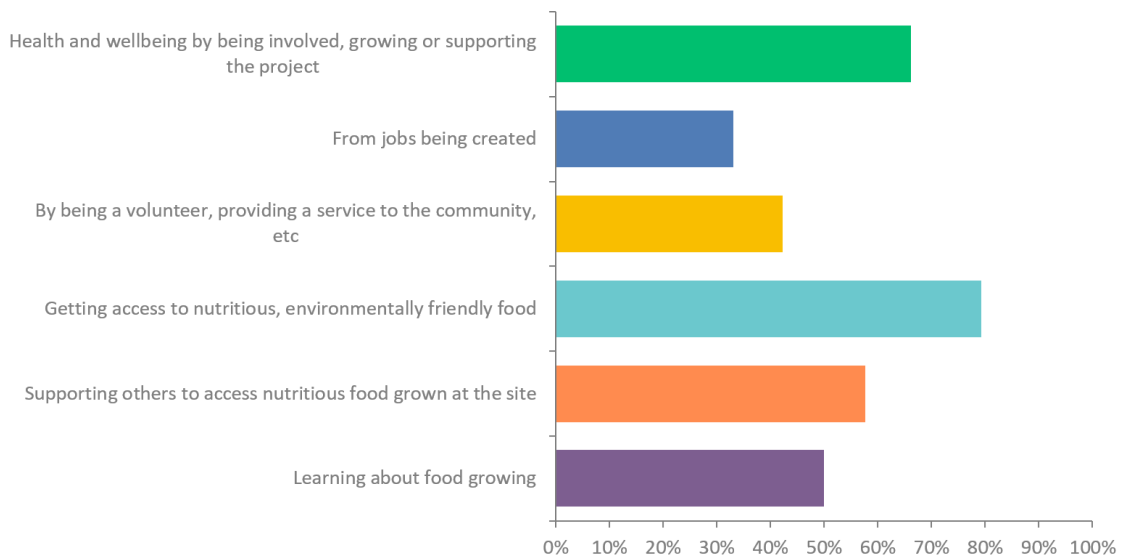


Figure 10. Questionnaire responses on potential opportunities to benefit from a CFGP

In terms of what type of organisation should run a CFGP the clear favourite was a local charity with 71% very positive (90% when combined with *quite* positive). A private sector business option secured the lowest *very positive* response with 8.5%.

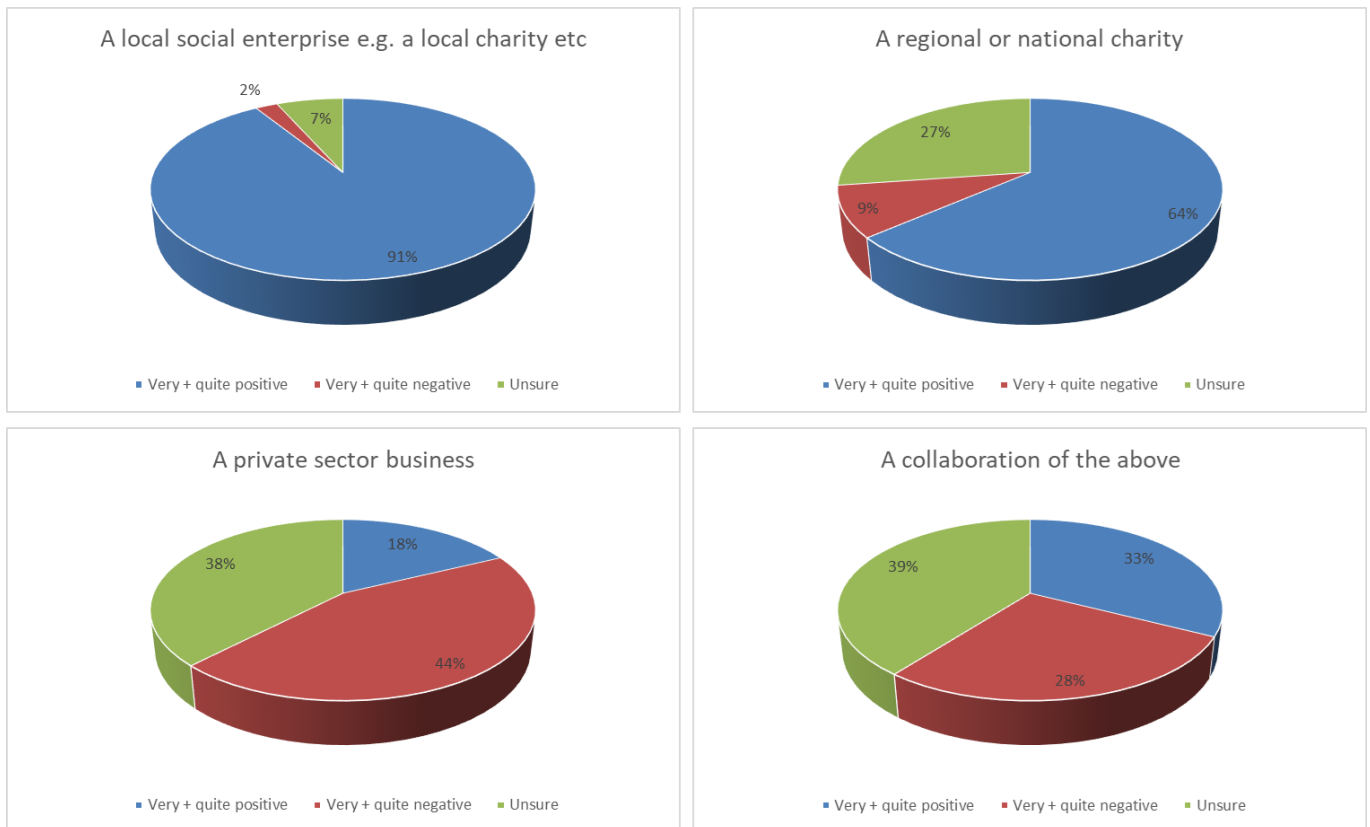


Figure 11. Preferences on different governance options for a CFGP

91% of respondents view a local social enterprise either very or quite positively, in terms of which type of organisation should run a CFGP. Only 2% of respondents favoured a private sector business. However, the idea of a collaborative approach, which could involve the private sector had 33 of people very or quite supportive, with 39% unsure.

4.4.3 Qualitative Results

Each of the questions had comment boxes for respondents to provide their views on the questions being asked. The following figures provide a summary of the results of analysing these comments. These were grouped into overarching categories considered to most accurately reflect the views being stated.

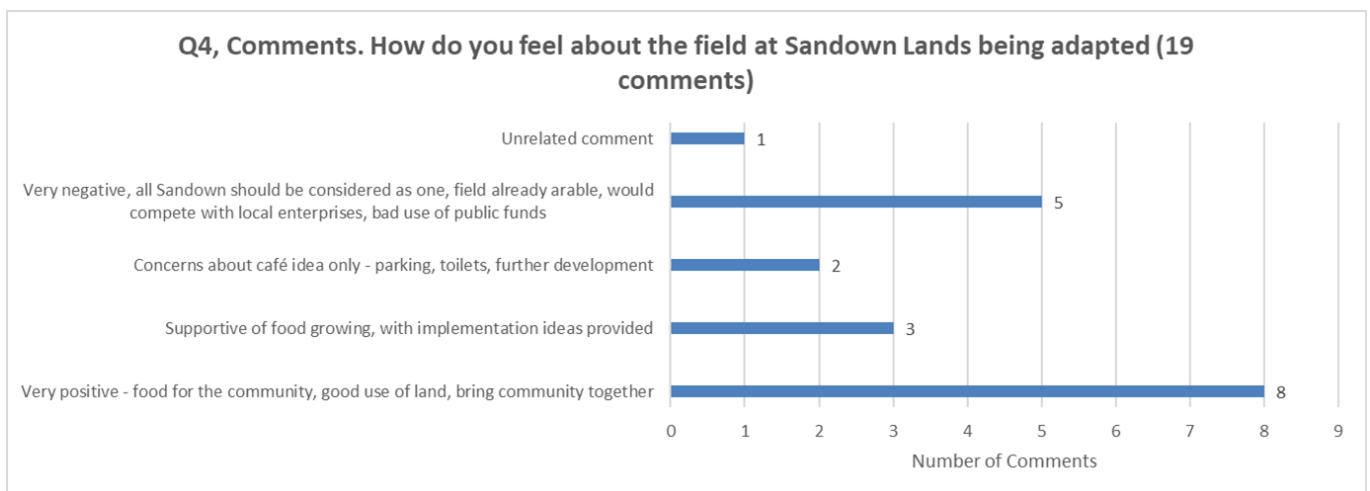


Figure 12. Qualitative responses provided through comments – on the adaptation of Sandown

A final question asked respondents if there was an aspect of a food growing project that had not been covered in the survey that they would like to comment on. The results are shown below.

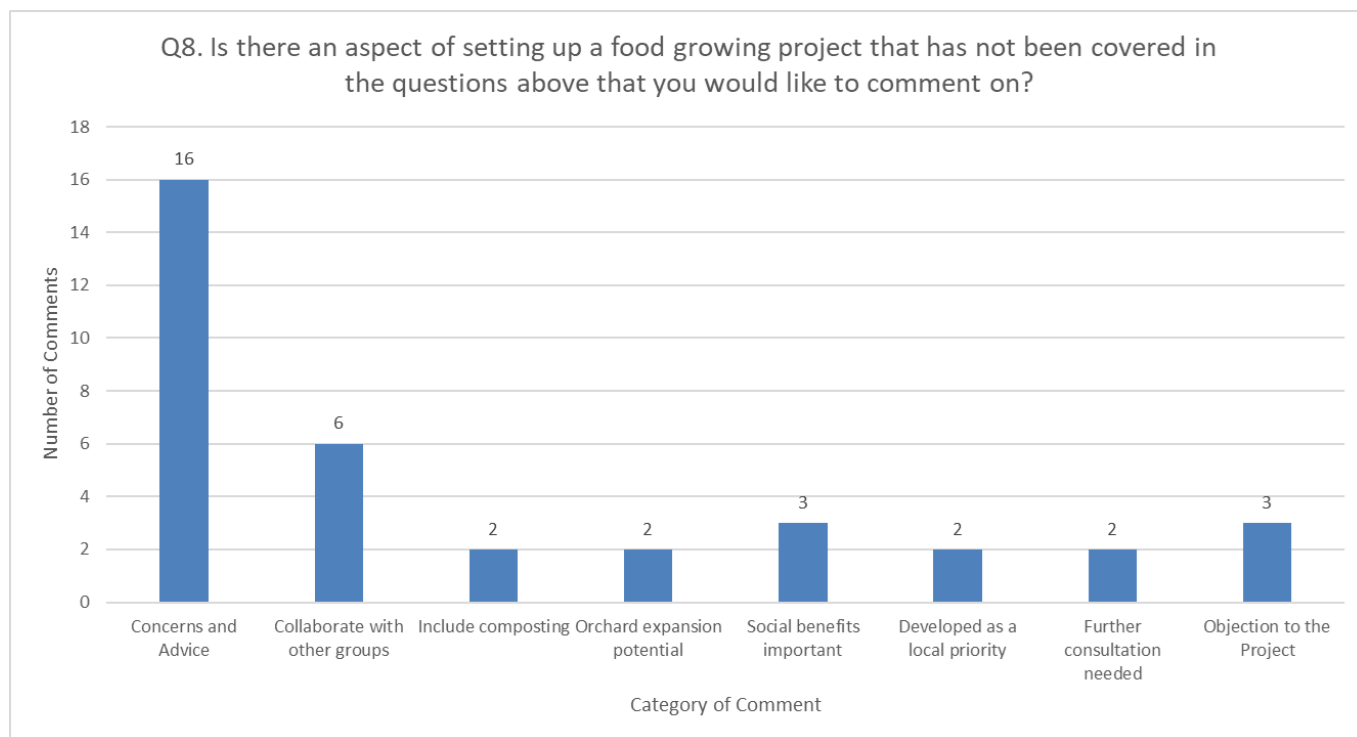


Figure 13. Question 8 - comments on aspects not covered by the questions

A total of 36 respondents gave their views (~24% of the respondents), with the majority supportive of a CFGP, and a number expressing their objection or raising questions and concerns to be addressed (Appendix B provides a summary of a number of the comments made relating to the above questions - text which identifies individuals is removed).

4.5 Discussion Points

A significant majority of the respondents to the survey are supportive of a community food growing project at Sandown Lands. The stakeholder engagement results indicate that respondents believe a people-centred approach (with socioeconomic benefits) should be an important element of a future development, that this should be fostered, since this creates opportunities for education, training and the development of local employability skills. This type of approach chimes with views discussed and expressed at the Common Good Engagement meeting in August 2024, where a key feature of common good land use identified was its potential to connect a community and bring local people together.

A small number of respondents have commented that they do not support a CFGP for the following reasons:

- The field is already arable and therefore food growing is not required.
- The project would compete with local food growing enterprises.
- The target field is located at the gateway to Nairn, and could present a negative view of the town if there is a collection of unmaintained, visually unappealing sheds.

The view that there is no need for further growing is considered here, and it should be noted that the field is currently planted on a monoculture basis, providing animal feed (cereals/grass) to a local farmer. This use runs against the idea of common good land being used to connect the community, to encourage people to come together. The Common Good Engagement meeting in August 2024 raised this as a central feature of such land. It seems evident that if a CFGP was already in place any proposals to replace this with a monoculture arable growing enterprise benefitting one farmer would be considered inappropriate. It should also be noted that the current farming arrangement applies to all of the common good fields at Sandown (other than the allotment) and if the target field was taken out of any future leasing arrangement this would reduced the land cover by 15%.

In terms of the concern expressed about competition with local enterprises this has only been raised in a couple of responses. It is likely that any CFGP would begin using a much smaller area of land than what is ultimately available (4 hectares). Local food growers have been contacted as part of the stakeholder engagement with one expressing support for the project, and another neutral about it. Another large-scale local farming business has not replied to attempts to discuss the project with them.). The quantity of fruit and vegetables produced will be

small compared to growers such as Wester Hardmuir farm, with the aim of the CFGP being a much wider community enterprise, with aims associated with delivering training, providing skills and community well-being.

Concerns about visual impacts from a CFGP can be mitigated by locating any structures far back from the A96, close to the existing allotment site, with screening through hedges, trees and the use of a buffer area contributing to this. More detailed are provided in the following section – land and geographic assessment.

There have been issues, historically, with the common good lands, and Sandown in particular, with criticisms of THC and previous development planning processes and stakeholder engagement approaches. However, the way in which both the council and community representatives provide views on different options for the future use of common good lands is important. It should be noted that the Scottish code of practice for community councils (available [here](#)) comments that councillors:

"have a duty to establish and reflect, through the Community Council, the views of the community as a whole, on any issue, irrespective of personal opinion."

Any group/organisation whose role is to represent the views of the community has to ensure that views presented are representative. Community cohesion and equitable outcomes are more likely to result from all parties engaging in a way that ensures the local community's views are being expressed following a transparent consultation process.

In terms of the LPP process, food growing at the Sandown field was not a specific option presented to the community in the 2024 online survey, however, when discussed at the May workshops there was a significant level of support from participants which should be reflected in the outputs from the process.

5.0 LAND AND GEOGRAPHIC ASSESSMENT

5.1 Overview

An assessment is provided here of what could be achieved with the land available with the potential for food production. The considerations in this assessment are:

- Potential outputs: community food growing projects and the illustration these provide for food production.
- Accessibility to the site: how this will impact on the land available for growing, composting, storage and any sheds required.
- Impact on neighbouring areas: consideration of any positive or negative impact on the immediate area, including, but not limited to, the local housing estate, its residents, and the neighbouring allotments.

5.2 Potential outputs

Interviews and desk-based research indicate that the outputs from community growing projects identified vary significantly, depending on the maturity of the project, the model adopted (and associated aims and objectives). Projects focussed mainly on learning, providing job experience and well-being development, with funding sources associated with these, may not generate the same level of turnover as those aiming to create an agricultural business where the focus is on providing sustainable food for a local community. Similarly other community food projects such as Bonnymuir in Aberdeen, where there is a café generating significant income do not focus on agricultural outputs as a core part of their financial model (at the time of writing). One of the projects identified from the 2024 Landworkers Alliance publication "Horticulture Across Four Nations" (available [here](#)) is summarised in the following tables, to indicate the potential productivity associated with a future project at Sandown Lands. Although much further south than Nairn, with a shorter growing season, the data can be used to inform a potential food growing project **e.g. 17 tonnes of fruit and vegetables harvested, with a 5-acre growing field for vegetables and six poly tunnels.**

Table 7. Illustration of the outputs from the Five Acre Farm, Coventry

Criteria	Description
Date started	2012
Size	8.5 acres (3.4 hectares)
Employees	Employs 2 FTE workers and has 58 members many of whom regularly volunteer at the farm (circa 15 per week), helping with planting, tending, weeding and harvesting.
Type of business and funding model	5 acre field growing vegetables in an organic crop rotation. Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model where members pay an annual subscription for a weekly share of harvest and produce is sold exclusively through the weekly box distribution. No produce bought in or sold elsewhere to supplement income.
Quantity of outputs	Approximately 17 tonnes of fruit and veg harvested in 2022.
Income (turnover) and costs	Turnover of £57,100 (2022) A full box share usually includes between 8 and 12 items (£45 for a half share per month, £72 for a full share).
Operational cost	£56K, including salaries



Figure 14. Five Acre Farm, with six polytunnels in the background

The example of Five Acre Farm is not presented as an option which a Nairn organisation should aim to emulate, but is provided for illustrative purposes, to understand what the potential could be for delivering a model focussed on growing significant quantities of fruit and veg for the local community. The following figure illustrates the contents of the veg box supplied by the growing project.



WE'VE LAUNCHED A NEW VEG BOX!
 The box will be our Farm Fresh box and will feature mainly produce from our own farm alongside a few other local producers and Riverford who grow produce on their South Devon Coop farms. The box will be super seasonal, will be predominantly vegetables, alongside local seasonal fruit when available.
 The box will be able to order online as long as the season lasts!
 We also deliver a range of groceries, milk, household items and compost.
<https://fiveacre.farm/news/august-newsletter/>

Figure 15. Five Acre Farm, photo showing new veg box (2024)

5.3 Accessibility

Accessibility was raised as an issue for the site by a number of individuals during stakeholder engagement interviews and the online survey. Road and pedestrian access to the target field at Sandown currently involves heading north from the main road, the A96, that runs through Nairn, or heading south from Altonburn Road down Sandown Farm Lane. There is currently no pedestrian pavement along Sandown Farm Lane and members of the Allotment Society typically drive to the site, where there is parking space. Sandown Farm Lane can be accessed on foot and bike, the latter without access to a pavement.

The 2019 Active Travel Masterplan ([here](#)) identified a route running alongside the A96 as a High Quality Active Travel Route/Cycle Street. Active travel developments for Nairn are being reconsidered as part of the LPP process and the draft LPP report comments that Nairn has some very good pathways and active travel networks and that these should be mapped, formalised and extended/joined up to provide a coherent network of active travel routes, indicating the time to travel to key locations. A number of areas are highlighted for particular attention:

- Improving connections by road and active travel routes between Lochloy and the town centre.
- Active travel between Auldearn and Nairn, with safe crossing of the A96 (including Bypass).
- Safe routes to schools.

None of the above routes would improve access around the target field at Sandown, however, a more holistic joining up of the network could provide opportunities for improved pedestrian and cycling access. Core paths (typically gravel or dirt) across Highland region can be found in an online resource ([here](#)) and for Nairn is shown below. None of the paths indicated connect the Sandown field with surrounding neighbourhoods.

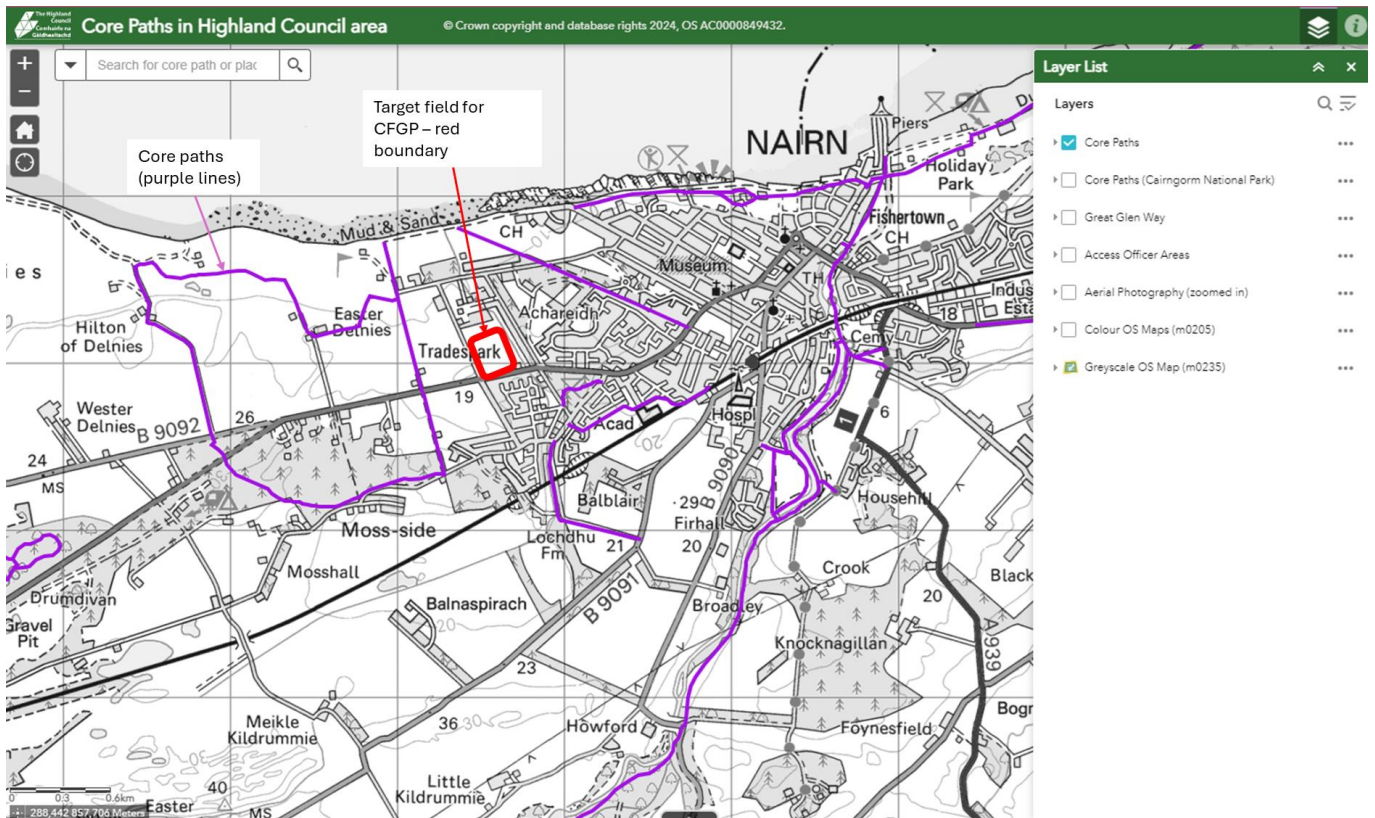


Figure 16. Map showing core paths in Nairn

The Sandown field provides significant opportunities for improving access through the development of paths for both cycling and walking, with access points along the southern edge of the field. The following birds eye view of the site (Figure 17) shows a particular opportunity which could have potential and which could merit further detailed consideration, this is at the south east corner of the site, adjacent to an existing bus stop, shown in Figure 18.



Figure 17. Aerial view of the target field with potential areas for access indicated.



Figure 18. View showing where pedestrian and bike access to the site could be achieved.

The figure above indicates where the pavement ends, looking to the west, with the target field shown next to the bus stop (separated by a fence). This opportunity to access the site at this point has been highlighted as a potential opportunity during stakeholder interviews.

Figure 17 above also indicates where a car parking area could be located, adjacent to the entrance to the allotments, where there is an existing parking space (see below), at a point which is furthest away from resident housing, and the A96 i.e. where there would be the least visual and noise impacts.



Figure 19. View of the existing entrance and parking area at the Sandown allotments.

5.4 Potential impacts and mitigations for neighbouring properties

The target field is located on the western edge of Nairn, with neighbouring residential properties located to the eastern and southern boundaries of the field. The neighbours to the south are separated from the field by the A96 and are circa 40 metres from the fence line. Those to the east have gardens that reach out to the common good fields. An approach to considering the potential impacts on neighbouring properties is to assess these with respect to statutory nuisance provisions. The Scottish Government, 2009, Guidance to accompany the Statutory Nuisance Provisions of the Public Health etc (Scotland) Act 2008, available [here](#), comment that there is no clear objective definition as to what constitutes a nuisance, that there is a scale between “mildly irritating” and intolerable and in each case the determination of whether a nuisance exists is a matter of judgement. The potential nuisance categories in the Scottish Government guidance are used in the table below, as a framework for considering the potential impacts of a future CFGP.

A buffer area and screening has been described in the table above as one of the potential mitigation measures. More information is provided on this in the Options section later in the report.

Table 8. Categories of potential impact and mitigation measures

Potential impact	causes	of	Potential source from CFGP	Comments or mitigation measures
i) The premises	state	of	Sheds, polytunnels etc, are the only likely infrastructure in the early stages of a CFGP.	Rental agreement will include conditions for how the site must be set up and maintained. A buffer area where there is no growing, with screening (involving tree and hedge planting) will reduce the visibility of any structures.
ii) Smoke from premises	emitted		Not applicable	Not applicable
iii) Fumes or gases emitted from premises			Not applicable.	Not applicable.
iv) Dust, steam, smell or other effluvia from industrial, trade or business premises			Not applicable	Not applicable
v) Accumulations or deposits			Not applicable	Not applicable

Potential causes of impact	Potential source from CFGP	Comments or mitigation measures
vi) Animals	Not applicable	Not applicable
vii) Noise from premises	The use of tools to build fences and manage the site.	A buffer area where there is no growing, with screening (involving tree and hedge planting) will reduce the visibility of any structures.
viii) Noise from vehicles or equipment in a road	Use of tools, tractor, vehicle parking, drop offs e.g. of compost, equipment	Current site is harvested using combine harvester, with the adjacent allotment visited by users. The CFGP would increase the frequency, but the numbers are very small. A buffer area where there is no growing, with screening (involving tree and hedge planting) will reduce the visibility of any structures.
ix) Artificial light pollution	Site will not be used in the evening in early development stages.	Not applicable
x) Water	Water will only be used for washing, irrigation and toilet	Not required
xi) Insect nuisance	Beekeeping is a potential use for a small part of the field	Bee hives will be located away from neighbouring gardens and houses.
xii) Any other matter declared to be a statutory nuisance by an enactment	Not applicable	Not applicable

6.0 Planning and Development Policy

6.1 Overview

The Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2 (IMFLDP2), adopted in July 2024, which will be used as a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. Alongside it, the main documents for making planning decisions will be the Highland Wide Local Development Plan (HWLDP), supplementary guidance and National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4). In the event of any incompatibility between provisions of these documents then the most up to date document (almost always the IMFLDP2) will prevail as the Council's policy for that site/issue. The IMFLDP2 makes reference to the local placing planning process in Nairn:

"The community organisations and Nairn and Nairnshire Community Partnership have recently been working well together to progress and build upon the existing masterplans and strategies for the town. This work could include the preparation of a Local Place Plan. The Local Development Plan, including Placemaking Priorities 27 'Nairn', set the framework for ongoing work and should be used to help shape the priorities for the place and people."

NPF4 states that local development plans (LDPs) should create healthier places, for example through opportunities for exercise, healthier lifestyles, land for community food growing and allotments (Policy 23). It describes six qualities of successful places, including how healthy and active lifestyles can be designed for through the creation of walkable neighbourhoods, food growing opportunities and access to nature and greenspace - local food growing, including allotments and community orchards, can benefit health and wellbeing and tackle inequalities as an integral part of placemaking. NPF4 also comments that food miles can be reduced over time with the help of local community-led food growing networks, by supporting locally driven public procurement and, from a land use perspective, protecting higher quality agricultural land.

To support the implementation of food growing activities (in line with the NPF4 policy above), the Scotland Land Guide ([here](#)), produced by Growing in the Community, for the Scottish Government, aims to support community groups, social entrepreneurs, landowners (public or private) and other potential enablers to understand the processes and practical steps involved in establishing a community growing project on a site. The guidance comments that planning permission is needed for all development, the definition of which covers both:

- Physical development (e.g. erecting sheds, polytunnels, etc); and

- Any material changes in the use of any buildings or land (e.g. using an agricultural field for anything other than purely agricultural purposes).

However, if land is used purely for agricultural purposes, then planning permission is not needed, with the definition of agriculture including:

"horticulture, fruit growing, seed growing, dairy farming, the breeding and keeping of livestock (including any creature kept for the production of food, wool, skins or fur, or for the purpose of its use in the farming of land), the use of land as grazing land, meadow land, osier land, market gardens and nursery grounds, and the use of land for woodlands where that use is ancillary to the farming of land for other agricultural purposes ..."

If a site is to be used purely for food growing, then planning permission should not be needed. However, the guidance goes on to say that where a site is to be used for more than just food growing (for example, for educational or social purposes), or where it is proposed to erect any structures, then planning permission is likely to be required. Some small-scale works such as the erection of fencing or some agricultural buildings may be carried out without having to apply for planning permission, if the works fall within the definition of 'permitted development'. In this respect, erecting an agricultural building as permitted development is allowed if:

- This would be erected on agricultural land, which is defined as "land in use for agriculture and which is so used for the purposes of a trade or business...". Many community growing sites do not fall within this definition even if they are otherwise used for agriculture. How this applies to a Nairn CFGP will depend on the nature of the activities e.g. will it be a community supported agriculture (CSA) project accompanied by education and training activities.
- Land also needs to be part of an agricultural landholding of at least 0.4 ha to qualify for agricultural permitted development rights. The extent of land to be adopted and leased by a community group will determine what happens.

6.2 Common Good Legal Requirements

The plans for developing a CFGP on common good land, Sandown lands including the Nairn allotment gardens are described as being "inalienable" as per the "Common Good Asset Register for the former Burgh of Nairn". In the Highland Council's publication "Common Good Fund, town and community planning - Process for disposal or change of use of property" (available here) this means:

"Property is considered to be inalienable if the restriction or purpose is clearly stated in the deed or gift, it has been specifically dedicated for public use or it has been used in a certain beneficial way for a lengthy period of time (time immemorial). Examples can be public buildings like town halls, markets, grounds set apart for the enjoyment of the inhabitants of the former Burgh."

Every situation is different so the question of change of use will depend on the particular circumstances. With a number of the options for the land involving what could be classed as continuation of farming and agricultural activities, these may not be subject to a change of use. However other options are likely to require the process to be followed that is defined in the document highlighted above. The guidance states that subject to the outcome of a formal consultation and approval in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation and governance procedures, the Council must apply to the Sheriff Court or Court of Session to authorise the change of use. It is possible for interested parties to respond to the development of a CFGP on common good land during the consultation process.

Similar considerations are required in the event of disposal of common good assets. The Highland Council will treat any lease of 10 years or more as being a disposal. This is also subject to a formal consultation process and approval in accordance with the Council's Scheme of Delegation and governance procedures.

7.0 RENEWABLES

7.1 Overview

The feasibility study covers the potential for establishing PV panels on the target field, to understand the income that could be generated, the options for use of the energy, and the resulting opportunities and impacts on a CFGP.

The Smart Export Guarantee (SEG), launched in 2020, enables small-scale low-carbon generators to receive payments from electricity suppliers for electricity. The SEG requires some electricity suppliers, known as SEG Licensees, to pay small-scale generators, known as SEG Generators, for low-carbon electricity which they export

back to the National Grid, providing certain criteria are met³. Current payment levels are £0.15 per kWhr which compares to £0.30 per kWhr charged for using electricity and therefore represents the amount that could be saved for onsite energy generation that does not involve export to the grid.

7.2 Potential power and energy generation

Importantly, for the Nairn site there are restrictions on energy that can be exported, currently limited by Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks (SSEN) to 50kWp generation. From the PV perspective, a larger PV array system can be installed e.g. 80kWp used along with an inverter that would restrict the maximum that could be exported to 50kWp to ensure that even on days of low sunlight levels, the power output is as close to 50kWp as possible – this maximises income generated, but has higher capital costs to do so. The following table summarises the key features of a ground mounted PV system, with the full details provided as Appendix C. It should be noted that energy generation and income payment is described for the first year, as there is a small reduction in efficiency every year after installation.

Table 9. Summary of PV data from AES Solar (part of the Enscape team)

Criteria	Data
Financial information	
£ capital cost	78,329
£ annual/operating cost	1,500
£ payment in first year (£0.15 per kWhour)	10,500
Site visits for technical issues	£1,000 every 3 years
Energy information	
Energy (kWhours) generated in first year	75,685
Energy (kWhours) available for export in first year	69,052
Energy per m2 (kWhours/m2) average over year	201
Size information	
No of panels	145
Area of individual panel, m2	2.6
Total area of all panels, m2	376

The implications of the energy generation potential described in the table above is that it could supply part/all of a local project’s needs and/or feed directly into the grid. For illustration, an average Scottish household uses 3,700 kWhours per year, and therefore the level of electricity generated overall (without considering seasonal changes) is equivalent to the demand of 20 households.

7.3 Potential of installing batteries

There could be value in providing energy storage for the CFGP in the future, and estimates of the cost associated with this, and the energy stored, is provided below (from AES Solar) for indicative purposes:

Battery cost estimates:

- £10K for a single phase battery
- £20K to £25K for three phase battery system.

Energy storage capacity for batteries is summarised below:

- Single phase: 13.5kWhours
- 3-Phase 40 kWhours total

³ More information on SEG is available [here](#).

7.4 Connection costs for the PV System

SSEN were engaged with to understand potential cost estimates for a grid connection (which also provides electricity to the site). Despite a Service Level Agreement (SLA) with AES Solar (part of the Enscape team) where a budget estimate should have been provided within two weeks this information has not been provided at the time of writing (request made early August 2024). However, for indicative purposes, AES Solar have provided costs for the connection of other PV projects in the area, as summarised below (the clients cannot be named for commercially confidential reasons), indicating the potential for a wide range of costs, depending on the location and circumstances:

- 17kW 3-phase system in Nairn - £0 (zero) connection cost. SSEN do not need to carry out any reinforcement of their network to allow the connection.
- 5kW single phase system in Nairn - £18,310 including VAT. SSEN overlays a section of existing mineral insulated metal sheath (MIMS) cable with a new 300mm Wavecon cable (high performance cable assembly), and reconnects existing customers.
- 50kW 3phase system in Cawdor- £4,983 including VAT. SSEN does not need to carry out any reinforcement of the network to allow the connection. The cost is based on a "2nd comer contribution to prior work⁴."
- 6kW single phase in Nairn – estimated range of £96,000 – £120,000. SSEN to overlay circa 400m of cable with 300m Wavecon cable.

7.5 Glint and glare considerations

The proximity of the growing project site to the A96 means that a future planning application may be required to provide a "glint and glare" assessment to identify the risk of causing issues with drivers and light reflecting off the panels.

The 2021 Scottish Power Solar Photovoltaic Glint and Glare Study (Technical Appendix 15.2) for a proposed development at Earraghail (near Campbeltown, [here](#)) comments that guidelines exist in the UK (produced by the Civil Aviation Authority) and in the USA (produced by the Federal Aviation Administration) with respect to solar developments and aviation activity, however a specific methodology for determining the impact upon road safety or residential amenity has not been produced to date.

Nottinghamshire County Council guidance indicates that many large (1MW+) solar installations are sited close to airports and other high traffic areas without significant issues with glint and glare this is due to the fact that the modules themselves are dark in colour to absorb light and all solar panels have at least one layer of anti-reflective coating to reduce light reflection this is because light reflected off the panels reduces the overall energy output. Solar panels have less reflectance than many other everyday things such as vegetation, concrete and snow⁵.

However, technical assessments are described as being routinely required for road users and observers in residential dwellings surrounding a solar photovoltaic development. The key receptors are:

- Road users on regional or national roads within 1 km of a solar panel.
- Residential properties within 1 km of a solar panel.

In terms of mitigation, where required, the aspects of a PV development design that should be considered include when the sun is at its highest and lowest angle of the year, when the more hazardous glint light should be reflected upwards and not towards the road or neighbours.

7.4 Location of PV panels

The figure in the options appraisal section shows a potentially optimal location for a PV array, at the point in the field furthest away from the A96 and residential dwellings, as well as being orientated south to maximise energy generation and close to where a toilet unit and, potentially, other infrastructure, may require electricity.

8.0 WATER

8.1 Overview of Scottish Water position

Currently, cereal/grass is grown on the target field, however, a project involving fruit and vegetable growing, the use of poly tunnels and education/learning activities, will require additional water supply. This can be provided through a combination of rainwater capture systems and a water supply provided by Scottish Water.

⁴ A definition of this can be found [here](#): "The current Second Comer regime requires payments to be made where an initial contributor has required a DNO to make a connection under Section 16(1) of the Act, and a subsequent connectee (also requiring a connection under Section 16(1)), uses some of the capacity paid for by the first customer."

⁵Nottinghamshire County Council, guidance on "Glint and Glare Environmental - Impact Assessment" available [here](#).

Provision for water on site is essential and the site does not have a spring or burn. The adjoining, existing allotment site has a piped supply of water, which may make further access less onerous than starting from scratch. A pre-development application to Scottish Water has indicated there are no issues currently identified within their water and wastewater network that would adversely affect the demands of the development. Scottish Water have also indicated that there is currently sufficient capacity in both the Inverness and Nairn Water Treatment Works to service the development if required. The following figure highlights where the water and wastewater treatment infrastructure runs with respect to the target field.

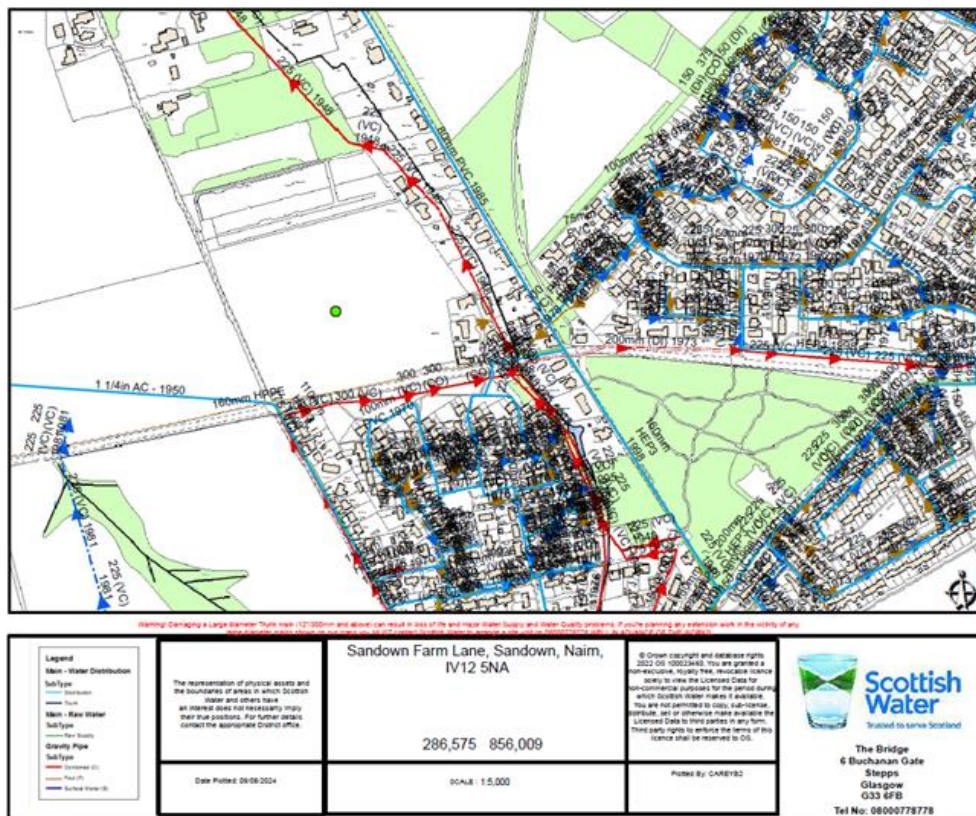


Figure 20. Layout provided by Scottish Water on infrastructure running next to the site

Discussions with Scottish Water have indicated that a cost estimate for providing a water supply would require a formal application, which is outwith the scope of this project. However, for indicative purposes, it was indicated that a typical cost for supplying water to a new dwelling house would be circa £1,200. If water is piped to the site from a private supply, the landowner may choose to install a meter and charge a fee. Business Stream is the primary water and waste water supplier. There is a different charging regime in place for unmetered outside taps, drinking bowls or field troughs, and the reduced charge for crofts and registered smallholdings is currently inapplicable for community growing. There are however exemptions for registered charities subject to meeting certain criteria. To qualify for the exemption scheme, the "Gross annual income" of the charity must be less than £200,000 to receive full exemption. Premises occupied by charities with gross incomes between £200,000 and £299,999.99 will have a 50% discount applied to the applicable wholesale water and sewerage charges.

If a charge is applicable, the following indicates the range of charges application for outside taps:

- Farm and other supply points: £137.70 per annum.
- Crofts and registered small holdings: £89.74 per annum.

8.2 Rainwater harvesting

Rainwater harvesting systems have been considered on the basis of the annual rainfall for Nairn, and the area of capture and storage infrastructure that could be used to capture this. Average rainfall for the Nairn area over a four-year period (2020-2023 inclusive) was 799.15mm, ranging from 686.6mm in 2023 to 919.6mm in 2022⁶. Over this four-year period, the monthly rainfall levels can be considered on the basis of:

- Average monthly rainfall of 66.6mm
- Highest monthly rainfall of 172.1mm

⁶ Calculated from Met Office monthly rainfall data for Nairn, available, [here](#).

- Lowest monthly rainfall of 12mm

British Standard 16941-1:2018 (previously BS 8515:2009+A1:2013) for guidance on rainwater harvesting gives recommendations on the design, installation, testing and maintenance of rainwater harvesting systems supplying non-potable water in the UK. The water demand for the site is difficult to estimate at this point in time, and as such an estimate is made to indicate what could be captured based on the average annual rainfall (as indicated above). Using a conservative assumption for a smaller growing option, that incorporates four sheds, a composting toilet and two polytunnels, with a total footprint area of 100m² this could capture 79.9m³ per year. The PV installation could also be adapted to capture rainwater, and it is assumed that 100m² could be the footprint that effectively captures water (example of such a storage system shown [here](#)). The table below summarises the potential water available on the basis of the above data.

Table 10. Categories of potential impact and mitigation measures

Volume of water collection, m3	Infrastructure such as sheds, composting toilet etc (100m2)	PV panels (100m2 footprint)	Total m3, for 200m2 footprint
Average annually	80	80	160
Average monthly	7	7	13
Maximum monthly	17	17	34
Minimum monthly	1	1	2

The above suggests that thirteen 1m³ storage tanks should be able to store water that is balanced with the amount that could be collected monthly from sheds and ground-mounted PV panels. There is a wide range of storage tanks that could be purchased for this storage, with one of the most practical and easily available being 1m³ IBC containers (intermediate bulk containers). A typical cost for individual containers (August 2024 prices) is £200 each.

8.3 Drainage and flooding

The Growing in the Community guide referred to previously comments that a waterlogged site is not attractive for growing purposes and, though raised beds and additional compost may improve the position, these have costs associated with them. The guide comments that a field drain should be considered where the growing area is limited, or alternatively (or as well as) a wet zone for wildlife could be considered.

8.4 Sewerage and toilets

In locations where participants may want to stay for longer periods of time, the provision of some services on a site, such as a septic tank, connection to the mains or a compost toilet, can be integral to a group's success and may therefore form part of a funding application by a group (subject to the group having sufficient security of tenure to support such an application). Composting toilets are an environmentally friendly and low-cost option.

At the Sandown lands allotments, there is both a composting toilet and another supplied by mains water (septic tank). The rules of the allotment society are that all piped water will be turned off at the end of October and reconnected in April of the following year. The toilet that require mains water will be also closed at the same time, although the compost toilet will remain open throughout the year. The latter is a NatSol system, with the figure below indicating the principles involved.

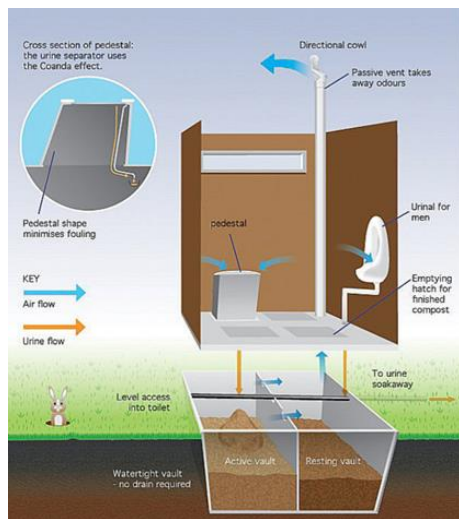


Figure 21. Example of the system used currently at Sandown lands.

A mains connected toilet will be the most expensive option. Somewhere in between the two, septic tanks can still be expensive to install, need to be emptied regularly (for which there will be charges), and must be registered with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA). There would be value in any future food growing organisation delivering the project having a discussion with the neighbouring allotment society to understand if they would be open to sharing their facilities.

9.0 OPTIONS APPRAISAL

9.1 Overview

A number of different options have been discussed with stakeholders and described previously in this report. All of these could be delivered together, operating in the target field with differing levels of collaboration associated with these.

However, describing the options and the potential for collaboration is not a proposal, but an indication of the potential. The locations indicated for options in the following figure are not proposed here as being fixed in any way and are instead shown to illustrate the variety of uses that could be introduced to support a community growing project. The figure shows a range of development/infrastructure opportunities e.g. sheds (storage areas for tools, produce, etc), access and parking, growth potential, renewable energy. Most of the options, if not all, could be delivered on the target field. It should be noted that a location is indicated for composting, which could provide valuable resources for both the community growing project and the adjoining allotment, providing synergies and opportunities for the wider Nairn community and existing composting projects.

This appraisal takes all of the options and organises them as indicated below. Options 1 to 5 can be compared with the baseline, or do nothing option.

Baseline. Do nothing. The field continues to be rented by a local farmer, along with the surrounding fields, to produce cereals/grass for animal feed.

Option 1. PV only. Installation of PV panels to generate income for the common good fund and to provide renewable electricity that can either be fed directly into the grid or other users of electricity nearby, now or in the future.

Option 2. Food growing woodland. In the figure these are shown in locations around the poly tunnels, plots and growing fields. In reality these could cover the whole of the field if the other options are not implemented. Forest gardening is a sustainable, low-maintenance method, created through layers with all plants edible or useful in some way.

Option 3. Small CFGP. Establishment of a small community food growing project based on two polytunnels. This has two sheds shown to store equipment and produce, with a parking area for cars and a toilet. Although there is already a polytunnel in the adjacent allotment, the polytunnel focus in this option is used to describe an option that extends the growing season, while at the same time offering a smaller, more manageable and profitable business model than the larger scale project.

Option 4. Large CFGP. Establishment of a large outdoor growing area, with more polytunnels potentially as a part of this. Communal growing plots and fields are shown, that deliver a model where groups of individuals work

together to deliver the project. Additional sheds added to reflect higher levels of activity. Although the figure shows a significant area of the target field being used, this is only illustrative, with any future project scale driven by the group or organisation delivering it.

Option 5. High capital investment. Establishment of larger scale, higher capital cost initiatives e.g. to develop a community garden centre; establishing a centre to support formal education and training, with a café. This could include collaboration with an organisation like the UHI.

9.2 Detailed Options Analysis

The following figure corresponds with the options above, provided for illustrative purposes rather than these being seen as proposals, or representing actual dimensions and specific locations of activities around the target field. The options are in the tables following this figure describe the potential strengths & opportunities, and weaknesses & challenges. Also shown in the figure is a deer fence and walking & cycling path. The fence would be required for any option that involves growing food, and the path is shown because of access limitations to the site on foot or by bike. However, the latter is not a requirement to make a CFGP feasible. **An area for beehives is also shown**, an aspect of a food growing project that is likely to have some interest (from local discussions) and which would provide pollinators that are important for the health of the local ecosystem.

A vision with recommended options, developed from the options analysis, for a CFGP at Sandown lands is then described in the next section of this report, followed by descriptions about the socioeconomic benefits and impacts of the options, and the potential governance models for a project. Funding opportunities/constraints are also described later.

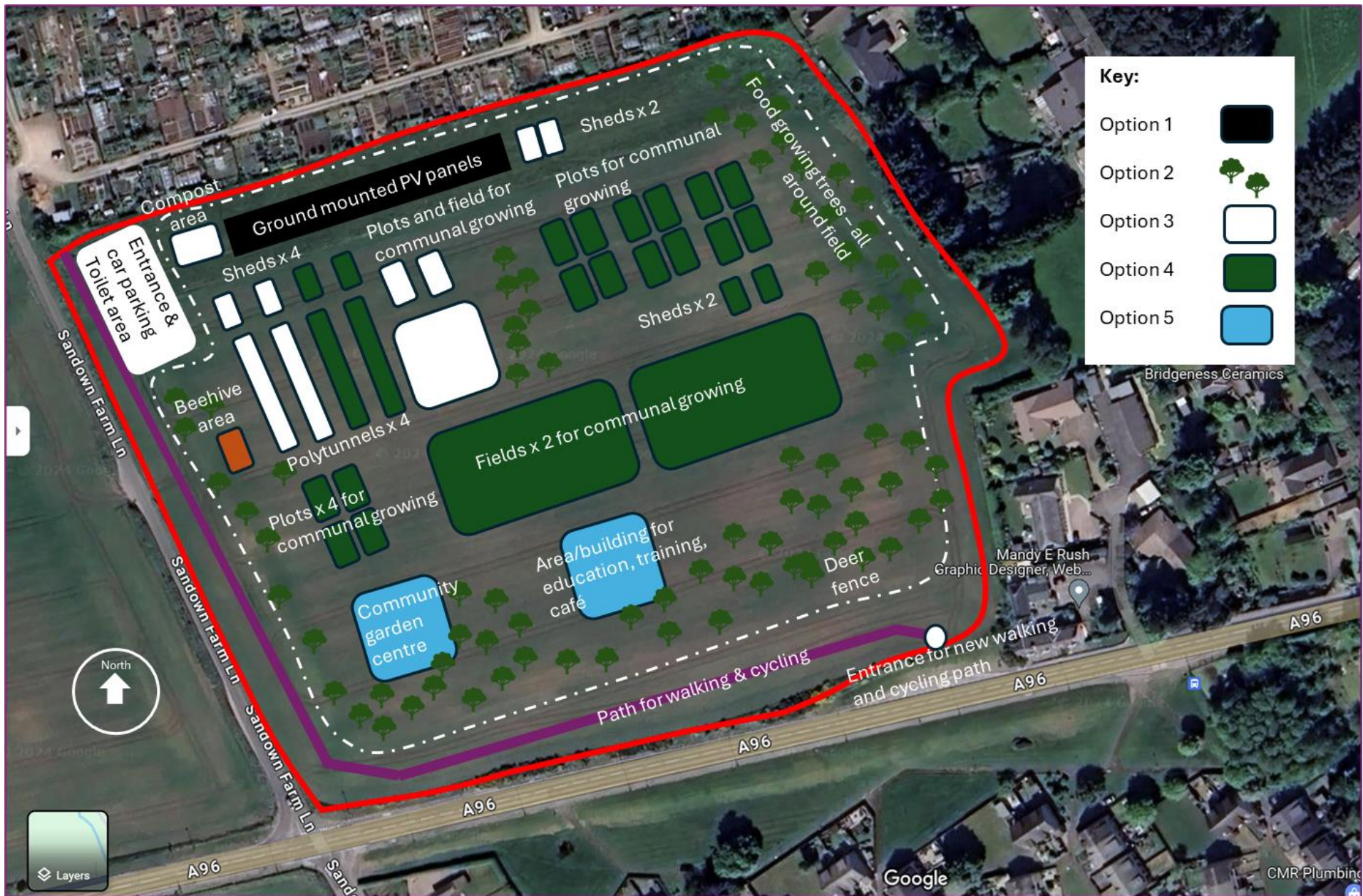


Figure 22. Illustration of potential options and distribution of these across the target field

Table 11. Baseline, do nothing option

Strengths & opportunities	Weaknesses & challenges
The current use generates a rental income for the common good land. At 15% of the overall Sandown lands area, this equates to £1,122 per year.	The current use runs counter to the objectives of common good land, which is to support and connect the Nairn community.
The current use provides and supports an animal feed supply for a local livestock farmer.	There is potential to generate a higher level of income from community food growing activities and associated developments – see the cost benefit analysis.
	The current use of the target field does not provide healthy, fresh food for the local community.
	The current monoculture use of the field limits the potential value of the land, to be more diverse, with greater biodiversity, supported by regenerative agriculture practices.
	The current use limits the potential for employment, education, awareness etc described for Options 2 to 5.

Table 12. Option 1 – PV only

Strengths & opportunities	Weaknesses & challenges
Provides a regular income for the CGF, which can be grown and replicated widely.	The option does not result in food growing activities
Provides an opportunity for the allotment or any CGFP to access lower cost electricity	Does not provide the activities associated with a CFGP that bring the community together, providing health and well-being benefits (in line with how common good land should be managed).
Provides low carbon electricity for potential users in the future.	The payback period is more than 5 years (beyond the payback that many commercial investments look for).

Many of the categories of strengths and weaknesses described for a food growing woodland compared to more traditional food growing (fruit and veg) are the same. Where there are clearly distinct differences this is highlighted using **blue font**, for emphasis. Options 3 and 4 are similar in terms of the categories used in the tables, differing in the scale of the land being used. These options are therefore considered together, with the later section on the vision and recommendations reflecting on how the scale of the development could be factored into the development of a CFGP.

Table 13. Option 2 – Community food growing woodland

Strengths & opportunities	Weaknesses & challenges
Involves a natural extension of the use of Sandown lands, but involving and connecting a range of people in the community – supporting a key objective of having common good land.	Significant initial costs to prepare land, plant trees and build deer fence.
Improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.	May require local volunteers, which has been identified as a significant issue/challenge in Nairn at the moment.
Improved access to fresh food, from apples, pears, plums, cherries, nuts (hazel and walnut) with the potential for herbs, berries and mushrooms to be grown amongst the trees in suitable areas.	The purpose for planting the trees, the ongoing responsibilities for their maintenance, and the final use and harvesting needs to be owned by a local group/organisation which needs ownership and commitment.
Creation of local jobs and volunteering positions	
Collaboration with the school (Nairn Academy and primary schools) and other education establishments e.g. UHI	
Biodiversity improvements from tree planting, providing good foraging opportunities for bees (beehives are a development option for the land).	
Once planted, ongoing work commitments are less than those required for community food and growing in polytunnels and on the land.	
A community woodland with paths for local people could be created in parallel with the project – for a range of activities, including walking, running, cycling etc.	

Table 14. Options 3 – community food growing project focussed on polytunnels (smaller scale project)

Strengths & opportunities	Weaknesses & challenges
Involves a natural extension of the use of Sandown lands, but involving and connecting a range of people in the community – supporting a key objective of having common good land.	Significant initial costs to prepare land, purchase and install polytunnels and build deer fence.
Improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.	May require local volunteers, which has been identified as a significant issue/challenge in Nairn at the moment.
Improved access to fresh food.	The purpose for developing the CFGP, the ongoing responsibilities, harvesting etc needs to be owned by a local group/organisation which needs ownership and commitment.
Creation of local jobs and volunteering positions	Being smaller in scale than option 4 the number of people who may benefit is reduced by comparison.
Collaboration with the school (Nairn Academy and primary schools) and other education establishments e.g. UHI	Less regenerative agriculture benefits than Options 2 and 4.
Viability may be enhanced, of a smaller scale, easier to manage, project – compared with the larger (option 4) CFGP.	

Table 15. Option 4 – large scale community food growing project

Strengths & opportunities	Weaknesses & challenges
Involves a natural extension of the use of Sandown lands, but involving and connecting a range of people in the community – supporting a key objective of having common good land.	Significant initial costs to prepare land, plant trees and build deer fence.
Improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.	May require local volunteers, which has been identified as a significant issue/challenge in Nairn at the moment.
Improved access to fresh food.	The purpose for developing the CFGP, the ongoing responsibilities, harvesting etc needs to be owned by a local group/organisation which needs ownership and commitment.
Creation of local jobs and volunteering positions – more than options 2 and 3.	
Collaboration with the school (Nairn Academy and primary schools) and other education establishments e.g. UHI	
Biodiversity improvements from regenerative agricultural practices	

Table 16. Option 5 - High capital investment project

Strengths & opportunities	Weaknesses & challenges
Establishing a high value collaboration with a suitable education partner on agriculture and food growing (e.g. UHI) could lead to a number of new jobs for Nairn.	Challenges – interest from some parties to be translated into a vision.
A new social and commercial enterprise to deliver a community garden centre could provide new jobs and services to Nairn.	High capital costs
An education and social/commercial undertaking could provide important markets for a CFGP on Sandown lands and improve viability.	Development of buildings on the land indicate a significant departure from the current use and therefore major planning and engagement work required.
New food growing developments could lead to Nairn becoming a hub for community food growing initiatives.	

To summarise, a community food growing project at Sandown lands offers significant opportunities to improve local health, biodiversity, and education, supported by strong community interest and potential partnerships. However, the project faces challenges including high initial costs, dependency on volunteers, and potential regulatory hurdles due to the land's "inalienable" status, which must be carefully managed to ensure long-term success.

10.0 POTENTIAL VISIONS AND RECOMMENDED OPTIONS

10.1 Overview

A vision for the Sandown land field being considered should be informed by the views of the community and the potential for adding value to Nairn, in terms of wellbeing which, depending on views expressed, could also be driven by the opportunities associated with learning, skills development and job creation.

As indicated earlier, the Community Survey highlighted that 86% of respondents indicated that they were either very or quite positive about the development of a group growing project (67% being very positive) and all of the options listed received more than 70% very or quite positive responses. The ranking of the options that received very + quite positive responses are listed below:

1. Developed in an ecologically sound way, without the use of chemicals, incorporating wild flowers, etc (87%).
2. Developed for group growing projects (86%).
3. Developed as a community food growing woodland site (85.9).
4. The installation of a solar panels in a small area of the site to provide renewable energy for a food growing project (84.9%).
5. Used to support more bee-keeping activities (83.6%).
6. Used to provide training and awareness raising (82.8%).
7. A location where fruit and veg boxes can be picked up from on a pay as you go basis (81.5%).
8. The installation of solar panels in a small area of the site to generate renewable energy that is fed into the local grid – generating income for the Nairn Common Good Fund (80.9%).
9. Used to produce seeds and plants for purchase (78.1%).
10. Developed as a community garden centre (76.5%).
11. Used to provide more allotment space (74.3%).
12. A growing project where the community can pay a subscription e.g. annually, monthly etc) for seasonally produced fruit, vegetables, saplings etc (a community supported agriculture model (74%).
13. Food stored and made available for local people, charities to collect from, instead of a shop being built on the site (72%).

The above options are incorporated within those considered in the previous section, and could all be taken forward as part of a plan to develop the target field, to maximise its potential. The options which generate most income and/or attract support funding are those which could generate the highest rental income. The options also need to resonate with the visions, objectives and aspirations of people and groups/organisations in Nairn.

10.2 The recommended options/models for Nairn

A vision for the target field at Sandown, that would chime with the vast majority of consultees, is to develop the land for a community food growing project such that the ecology and biodiversity is enhanced, supported by beekeeping and tree planting, as highly valued complementary activities. The comments provided by individuals in one to one conversations and in response to the community survey also highlights the interest and benefits in viewing any project as being one which supports learning and skills development.

The above vision is one which would very much deliver the aims of holding and managing common good land in Nairn, where connecting the community is seen as a key *raison d'être* for its existence. The governance model adopted by an organisation running the project is key to understanding the limitations and opportunities, with respect to whether the objective of the project is to focus on selling vegetables and fruit, or for this to be a subsidiary activity. This is discussed in detail in a later section, but it is important that the reality of trying to grow food in a community project for profit is an extremely challenging one. The organisation Trellis Scotland, set up to support therapeutic gardening comments, states in its factsheet "A beginners guide to growing and selling produce" (available [here](#)):

"Growing food for financial profit on any scale is hard work and should not be undertaken lightly."

A community food growing woodland, with significant support, has the potential to provide a shelter belt, as well as provide visual screening of the project from neighbours, while also creating an opportunity for the development of a path network, supported by creating an access point to the land, creating what is often a highly valued

outcome for local people. There would appear to be potential to consider a layout for tree planting so that opportunities for growing in poly tunnels and in plots/fields are not compromised.

The options analysis identifies the value and potential of installing a PV system on the land, which can feed electricity directly into the grid and generate an income for the Common Good Fund. Grid capacity limitations constrain how large this can be, but at an appropriate point in the future, there will be opportunities to build on this installation, to add more capacity. The learnings from this will be able to feed into considerations for similar investment and installations on other common good land, focussed on generating an income that can be used for community benefit.

The development of a food growing project in polytunnels and then in plots and fields provides a progressive approach to developing the land that is driven by the interests, competence and ambition of those involved in delivering a CFGP.

10.3 Next Steps

The guidance "How to set up a community led CSA" (available here) is useful in setting out the next steps for any group interested in leading the development of a CFGP in Nairn, regardless of whether it follows the CSA model or not. Based on this guidance, the key steps can be described as:

- Find land for the project e. Sandown Lands in this case.
- Recruit members and volunteers.
- Decide who does what.
- Have or employ people with necessary growing/farming skills and experience.
- Promote and market your project.
- Raise funds to get started.
- Decide on a legal structure.
- Draw up a business plan.

The people responsible for carrying out the above actions would be the interested parties (individuals, groups, organisations and/or any combination of these) in Nairn and it is anticipated that a number of these would be those engaged with during the delivery of this feasibility study. Because this project has initially been driven by THC, the next initial steps should involve:

- THC contacting the interested parties to discuss the above.
- The council being prepared to indicate its support, or otherwise, and what this could amount to, for example if this could be a time commitment from specific officers/departments, policy/strategy support, financial support etc.

11.0 SOCIOECONOMIC, ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS AND BENEFITS

11.1 Overview

The socioeconomic benefits and impacts of a CFGP are many and have been referenced in part by describing the feedback from stakeholder engagement work, involving interviews, surveys and desk-based research. Building on this data, this section considers the potential for socioeconomic benefits/impacts in the following areas:

- The health and well-being benefits associated with outdoor activity and exercise.
- Integration with local services.
- The value that can be added in terms of supporting other local food initiatives e.g. farmers' and seasonal markets.

Demonstrating the social and economic impacts of options and operational/governance models means that employment, earnings and accessible training / experience are considered, as well as the affordability and access to nutritious fresh food. From an environmental perspective, a CFGP has the potential to provide a wide range of benefits, from reduced food miles (carbon benefits), the value of a locally managed site with respect to biodiversity and the sustainable use of garden and food waste associated with a community composting element to the project.

While Nairn has strong natural capital in access to beaches and rural surroundings, and areas of high socioeconomic outcomes, the areas of Nairn that are most vulnerable to aspects of low income, employment, health and education are close to the site (approximately 500m away).⁷ The following figure shows this area in red, representing those who may be most able to benefit from the project (the project would be closer than the town centre).

⁷ Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2020: [SIMD \(Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation\)](#)

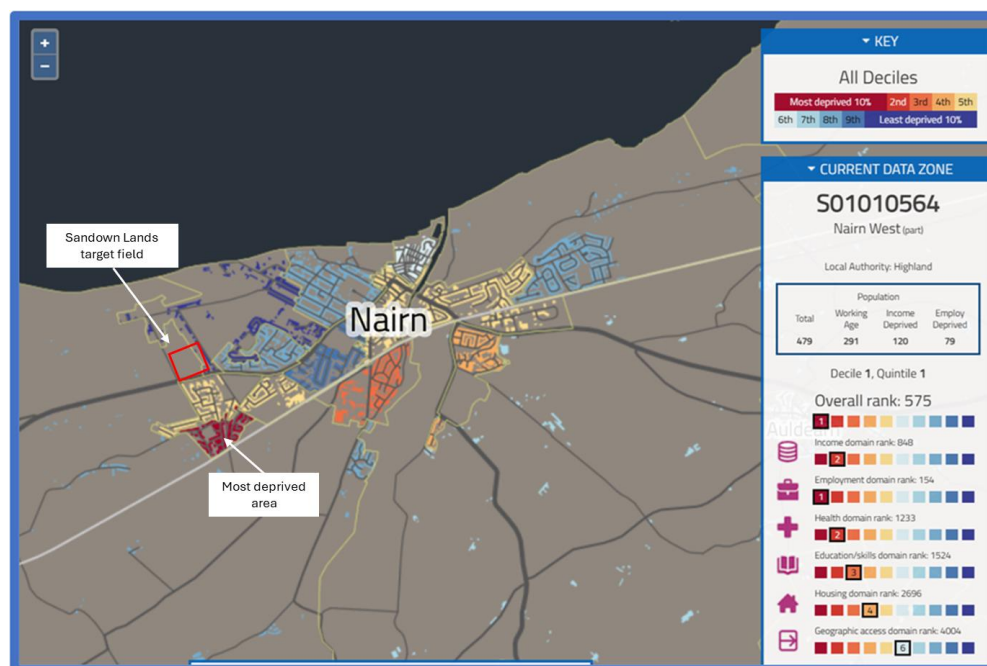


Figure 23. Map showing areas with deprivation categories

11.2 Connecting the community for health and well-being

Nairn Connects BID comments that in terms of sustainability priorities:

"Nairn seek to build on tourism and sustainability themes – these are compatible with the food and drink, and hospitality options set out in the scenarios."

Nairn has EV charging points which assist in delivering sustainability efforts. It may be possible to link the amount of solar PV energy production with the use of EV charging points to demonstrate the value of solar PVs in clean energy use for Nairn.

In terms of health and well-being impacts associated with the opportunities, a CFGP may have the potential, through improved access to the target field, to enhance leisure opportunities associated with improving connectivity. This is outwith the scope of this project, however, it may be worth noting there is a route from the centre of Nairn (including Nairn Academy pupils) to the beaches to the west of the town (via Tradespark Road), and the addition of a woodland walk/pathway at the CFGP (and possibly café) would give an opportunity to create a loop for activity where people could stop off at the café and toilet facilities before heading to the west beaches and back into town, or vice versa. Loops like this, with multiple points of interest, could enhance the enjoyment of the natural environment, provide active health benefits and generate presence for the café and food products. Such benefits could be complementary to health and recovery programmes supported and funded by a number of public bodies⁸.

11.2 Socioeconomic benefits and impacts

Earlier examples in this report describe how a number of CFGPs are providing socioeconomic benefits for the communities associated with them. Another example is Tagasa Uibhist (Uist, Western Isles) where initiatives are integrated with social care provision to provide access to local food through "Meals on Wheels", along with food cooperatives, local food boxes, and so on. A recent report⁹ found that food prices in the region were 28% higher than mainland Scotland. The Tagasa Uibhist 2022-2025 strategy^{10,11} describes how local insights and action can help to meet socioeconomic goals.

⁸ [Communities Mental Health and Wellbeing Fund: year 1 - national fund guidance - gov.scot \(www.gov.scot\)](https://www.gov.scot/publications/communities-mental-health-and-wellbeing-fund-year-1-national-fund-guidance/pages/10.aspx)

⁹ See <https://www.tagasa.co.uk/how-we-help/small-is-beautiful/>

¹⁰ <http://185.216.77.122/~tagasa/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/81888-Tagasa-Strategy-for-Printing-A5.pdf>

¹¹ <https://www.tagasa.co.uk/how-we-help/uist-local-food-development/>



Figure 24. Uist community food growing project

The Landworkers Alliance publication, "Horticulture Across all Four Nations" ([here](#)), recommends that support should be provided for sustainable farm apprenticeships and entry level grower jobs, with a range of funding measures to support this happening. The Scotland Growers Training Network is a peer-to-peer training programme for new entrant growers, staff and trainees on small-scale market gardens and vegetable farms in Scotland, funded by the Scottish Governments' Knowledge Transfer and Innovation Fund. Coordinated and facilitated by the Landworkers' Alliance, it was run for the first time in 2023 to spread the load of training between multiple farms, pool resources and offer a greater diversity of learning experiences at different farms and market gardens for trainees. Fifteen growers took part in monthly visits to 6 market gardens and vegetable farms. Each host farm offered an on-farm training on one or two key topics, planned and coordinated within the network ahead of time, complimented by monthly online sessions in business planning and marketing.

The most likely economic impacts of these options would be the opportunity for training, either jobseekers or pupils from Nairn Academy seeking skills in farming, tourism and hospitality sectors (all relevant for the local area). It would also offer small numbers of jobs, perhaps a manager job with part time positions, that can offer flexible employment for those with family commitments (likely compatible with school hours for parents).

However, Caberfeidh Horizons, a community initiative in Kingussie, also demonstrates that in addition to formal employment, there is high value in offering a place of productive activity for those who are retired, seeking community, managing mental or physical health, for whom this would be an opportunity for daily or weekly engagement.

In any economic activity, employment on the direct activity is just part of the overall impact. In the options considered in this report, the levels of formal employment might be low, but the jobs would be flexible, accessible and impactful. Salaries paid for formal employment would likely be very local, while some investments (potentially in the future), such as the construction of a café and toilet, or sourcing of polytunnels and equipment, would be spread more diversely across the economy.

The spend on suppliers is an indirect impact and the overall benefit of all these activities rippling out into both the local and national economy is called an induced impact. These impacts would be different in a local growing model than, for example, if the same £1 were spent in a national supermarket.

For Nairn, the benefits of the produce from a Sandown Lands CFGP local sourcing 'club' model, like the Five Acre Farm in Coventry, would provide a direct supply-demand relationship, generating 2 FTE jobs, with 58 members receiving local, nutritious food, and many gaining benefits from volunteering and engagement (10 to 15 per week, similar to Bonnymuir in Aberdeen). This is a significant return in social benefits from a relatively small area of land and investment, with around a 5:1 ratio of formal employment to volunteering. This is the type of scale of benefit seen in Caberfeidh Horizons (though not based on food growing).

With Nairn Academy engagement, the reach of direct activity would be higher still and this is consistent with the social and human health ambitions of community food growing set out in the strategies described in this document, connecting people with food and connecting Scottish producers with buyers. The following table summarises the impacts using a "sustainable livelihoods template that considers human, social, financial, physical and natural capital as he criteria for assessment.

Table 17. Sustainable livelihoods assessment summary

Livelihoods Dimension	Assessment	Does this meet the objectives stated in survey results?
Human Capital	<p>Nairn Academy, jobs training, locally relevant agriculture - opportunities for youth at Nairn Academy to get work experience in core regional sectors of high-value agriculture, food and drink, and hospitality.</p> <p>The proximity of the site to those who may benefit most from access to training and employment options would be an advantage in improving livelihood outcomes (see SIMD map).</p>	<p>Yes, squarely in remit from survey that state respondent objectives of training and employability.</p> <p>Strong interest in health and wellbeing.</p>
Social Capital	<p>Strong opportunity to apply a collective use for common good land. It would especially benefit the areas of Nairn that need it the most by being close and accessible, being closer even than the town centre.</p> <p>Accessible work experience for jobseekers and daily interaction opportunity for vulnerable adults and carers.</p> <p>Opportunity to mix groups in Nairn including youths and older people.</p> <p>Enhance access and footfall around allotments, with potential spillover effect of new social capital growth, learning.</p>	<p>Yes, objective to use land for the common good, enhance Nairn Academy pupil access and experience.</p> <p>Strong support for group growing sites.</p> <p>Strong support for focus on health and wellbeing.</p>
Financial Capital	<p>Potential to pilot financing models for local energy production; additional income from the hectareage beyond current rent.</p> <p>Opportunities for youth at Nairn Academy to get experience in core regional sectors of high-value agriculture, food and drink, and hospitality.</p> <p>Impact on Wester Hardmuir farm as local supplier considered negligible or possibly complementary. May be positive with the farm or allotment occupiers if option of a buying cooperative was explored as Joint Venture local sourcing model.</p>	<p>Yes, local economic activity and enhancing experience of Nairn Academy youth.</p>
Physical Capital	<p>Potentially valuable strategic energy asset (solar PV); pathway to access Common Good Land and allotments. Potentially improve road user experience as well as cyclists and walkers.</p> <p>Could be advantageous to have walkway through woodland to connect with the existing allotment and a future CFGP.</p> <p>Help create a loop of activity and walking routes off the main road to link up with coast at West End of Nairn.</p>	<p>Yes – positive about solar PV; and</p> <p>Access improvements highlighted as an opportunity in the survey.</p>
Natural Capital	<p>Biodiversity inherent in the project would move away from monocropping, access to land / nature. The project, ideally with a café, would help create a walking route of interest on the west side of the town and supporting a loop to the west beaches.</p> <p>Income from woodland grants schemes (information here).</p> <p>Strong focus / interest in accessible, environmentally appropriate and nutritious food of good (local?) provenance.</p>	<p>Strong focus on health and wellbeing</p> <p>Strong focus on nutritious and environmentally sustainable local food.</p>
Risk / vulnerability factors	<p>Possible requirement to cross main trunk road between school and site for any academy participants, though the school will regularly manage such crossing risks.</p> <p>Improve access to knowledge of locally grown food.</p> <p>While volumes may be small, they would not be negligible (comparators can produce up to 17 tonnes) and this could be</p>	<p>Food accessible for charities or vulnerable groups had an overall positive response of 72% (53% very positive, 19% quite positive).</p>

Livelihoods Dimension	Assessment	Does this meet the objectives stated in survey results?
	included in schemes for those experiencing food poverty (for example, providing a food bank style 'free box'), though this would require funding to cover costs of production.	

Appendix D provides a quantified analysis of the socioeconomic impacts. It gives estimates of employment, the magnitude of revenue and possible value addition to the economy, and salaries, to show the range of benefits emanating from the different development options for the initiative. The project activity would be expected to be very local in its impacts with much of the income focused on a small number of paid roles that would in turn support large levels of volunteering and engagement. Some wider impacts would be created by providing demand for products and services that are appropriate, for example polytunnels that are suitable for the Highland climate (an example of a Shetland supplier is given).

This project is aligned with the Highland Council's "Growing Our Future" strategy, as indicated previously, which emphasises community empowerment, health improvement, and local food resilience. The strategy envisions a future where every Highland community has the opportunity to grow its own food by 2027, building resilience and empowerment. The proposed CFGP directly supports these strategic goals by:

- Empowering local communities: The project provides the tools and opportunities for residents to grow their own food, aligning with the strategy's goal of ensuring food-growing opportunities for all.
- Supporting health and wellbeing: The CFGP's focus on outdoor activities and access to fresh food contributes to the strategy's broader aim of improving community health and well-being.
- Improving food security and resilience: By increasing local food production, the project contributes to the strategy's objective of improving local food resilience, reducing dependency on external food sources, and addressing climate change through reduced food miles.

By embedding the principles of "Growing Our Future," the CFGP not only supports local socioeconomic goals but also plays a role in the Highland Council's long-term vision for sustainable community development.

11.3 Environmental Benefits

There are a number of potential environmental benefits of a CFGP associated with moving from monoculture farming to regenerative farming. The Scottish Government Rural & Environmental Science and Analytical Services (RESAS) 2021 publication "Evidence for the Farmer-Led Arable Climate Change Group" comments that

The use of monoculture is also linked to environmental disadvantages and can have adverse effects on the productive capacity of the land. Crop rotation can also result in potential emission savings, Crop rotation can also result in potential emission savings.

Scotland's Farm Advisory Service (FAS) is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP) funded by the Scottish Government. In its publication "Regenerative Farming - Maximising crop diversity - Practical Guide" available [here](#), it states:

Regenerative Agriculture is a set of farm management principles which put soil health at the centre of agriculture practise. Putting soil health at the centre of farming practices has many benefits including ecosystem service such as water filtration, nutrient cycling and increased biodiversity. In a natural ecosystem, it is very uncommon to see a monoculture (when a single crop is sown in a field rather than multiple crop species). Modern agricultural practices rely on monocultures as they are simple to manage.

The advantages of regenerative farming are:

- It builds and enriches healthy soil
- Improves water quality and water system
- Increases biodiversity
- Enhances ecosystem health and ecosystem services
- Helps reverse climate change by capturing (sequestering) carbon in the soil

This was an important aspect of a CFGP that the Nairn community survey identified and is an important opportunity for future development at the target field at Sandown lands.

In addition, although small scale in terms of direct benefits at the field, local food growing with the products sold or given away locally means that food is being consumed with a lower carbon footprint, by avoiding food miles, the

term used to describe the impact of transporting food over longer distances, with the carbon footprint associated with this. The learning and skills development will also result a far higher impact than achieved on the field, as people apply regenerative practices elsewhere.

12.0 GOVERNANCE MODELS FOR PROJECT OPTIONS

12.1 Overview

The governance model adopted by an organisation running a CFGP is key to understanding the limitations and opportunities, with respect to whether the objective of the project is to focus on selling vegetables and fruit, or for this to be a subsidiary activity. The CFGP being considered for the Sandown lands field is one where the benefit of the community and environmental stewardship are at the heart of the proposals. As such a privately run organisation, focussed on profit for shareholders is not considered appropriate. The options therefore include:

- A social enterprise, following a not for profit model, which could be a company limited by guarantee, potentially a Community Interest Company (CIC) which has further stipulations in terms of demonstrating community benefit.
- A charity, meaning that it must be established exclusively for what is known as public benefit. Charities cannot make profits and all money raised has to go towards achieving its aims. A charity cannot have owners or shareholders who benefit from it. However, there is some leeway on this, as explained below. In addition, a charity can set up a trading subsidiary, a separate company that is usually owned by the charity, and donates the bulk of its profits (to the charity) via gift aid.

The stakeholder engagement work described earlier has identified potential parties (individuals, groups and organisations) who could be interested in the delivery of a CFGP, but in terms of the governance models that would best fit the Nairn context further work and engagement is required with local stakeholders. The preferred organisation, from the community survey, to deliver a CFGP was a local social, with a charity given as an example of this. Examples of CFGP governance structures are provided for three projects in Aberdeen, in the box below.

Box 1. Examples of governance arrangements for CFGPs

Some examples are provided below of community food growing projects in Aberdeen and how they are governed:

- Bonnymuir Green who purchased land, and now have 1 full time, and 2 part time staff members. The group make income by running a café, and selling produce. The board of trustees is made of 8 voluntary members and there are over 100 people who regularly volunteer in areas such as the café, the garden, beekeeping and more. Annual community survey is distributed to continue to inform the decisions of the Trust.
- Springhill Community Garden, who have an agreement with the council to use the land for the past 5 years, and are considering community asset transfer. They are a constituted group with governance going through change which will mean that anyone can sign up to be a member and members vote in an annual AGM. The group partner with the Sports Centre next door, who support the garden project, linking with local schools for outdoor learning projects in the garden.
- Sunnybank Park, run by a Scottish Charitable Incorporated Organisation (SCIO - Friends of Sunnybank Park), the land is leased from the city council. Managed by an informal group of residents with no official structure. A SCIO an optional legal form for registered Scottish charities created in 2011. As the transactions of the SCIO are undertaken by it directly, rather than by its charity trustees on its behalf, the charity trustees are in general protected from incurring personal liability. However, as with any other type of corporate body, this protection is not absolute.

If an organisation managing the CFGP is a charity, or social enterprise different considerations need to be made. For a charity selling its own produce the income is classified as "trading income". Charities can raise funds (including through sale of produce) to support their charitable objectives, known as small scale trading. They can also raise up to 25% of turnover by trading, up to a maximum of £50,000, if the income is then used for charitable purposes. The Trellis Scotland factsheet referenced previously, on growing and selling produce, comments that any group considering selling fruit and vegetables for the first time should be clear about the following:

- What is the primary objective of the organisation? i.e. is this community food growing, work based training, therapeutic outcomes (health and well-being) etc?
- Is the group looking for ways to specifically generate income or find a viable outlet for surplus produce?
- How does generating income fit with the organisation's objectives, especially if they are charitable?
- Can income generation support the objectives or might it clash with them? Does the constitution permit the organisation to engage in trading activity?

Organisations calling themselves social enterprises have to be trading in some form (i.e. generating income through selling products and services). They are set up for social or environmental benefit and invest any profit back into their work.

A model for delivering a CFGP that a charity or social enterprise may want to consider is that of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, as described earlier in the report. Based on a direct, active partnership between a growing project and the local community, this partnership creates benefits for both, as well as helping reconnect people with the land where their food is grown and would therefore very much be in harmony with the principles of managing common good land in Nairn.

The most common legal structure for community-led CSAs is a community interest company (CIC)¹² as this allows organisations to apply for grant funding while getting income from trading. A CIC may be a useful organisational structure to follow, regardless of whether the model being followed is a CSA or not. In the case of Nairn where there are organisations interested, as well as other groups and individuals, there may be benefit in taking advantage of an existing organisational structure in Nairn, if the objectives and project can be agreed on by the interested parties, and a positive collaboration developed.

Another potential opportunity, but more complex, could be the creation of a Community Benefit Society (CBS), particularly if planning to launch a community share offer. This is a legal structure that benefits a wider community, regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA). It has a cooperative membership structure that adheres to the principle of "one member, one vote" and is allowed to raise finance generally through the sale of community bonds or community shares.

12.2 Legislative Considerations

There are several main ways of selling produce, for example through a local market stall or farmers market. A box scheme requires planning and has operational costs associated with staffing and transport, and considerations need to be made in terms of whether this will be seasonal, or on a full-time basis, and will it meet market demand, cover costs and make a profit. There also needs to be careful consideration in terms of ensuring that legal requirements are being met. These are summarised below.

Potential need for a street trader's licence. If selling directly from site: In this instance 'the community comes to you'. This can be done in a number of ways through an on-site stall, a help yourself donations system, on request or at an open event. On site sales can be a great way of promoting a project, stimulating local support and educating people about how/where food is grown but it can be time consuming for staff/volunteers. The Highland Council's licensing officer- you may require a street trader's licence.

Selling produce/surplus to local shops, cafe or restaurants. Non-retail sale is less prescriptive than retail selling, but still be subject to trading standards guidelines. The local authority officer should again be consulted. For fresh produce the purchaser may need to prove traceability (an invoice or delivery statement) and be sure of provenance.

Processed goods e.g. jams and chutneys. These will need to meet food labelling guidelines. Any form of processing requires tighter regulation than produce sold direct from the field. Pre-packed goods for direct sale to the consumer means minimal labelling (a name and its provenance) is required for the sale of chutney. Jam however needs to state the name, any additives (for e.g. food colouring) and its compositional requirements (i.e. fruit to sugar content). Food Standards Scotland provides guidance on requirements, including labelling, with more information on this available [here](#).

Selling plants and compost? Similar to rules on edible produce- this depends on how and where to sell them. The local authority's Trading Standards Officer should be contacted to discuss this further. Zero Waste Scotland developed an online resource (available [here](#)) for community composting projects in the Highlands. This provides a step-by-step *Decision-Making Guide* to help develop a project, as well as links to help, information on legal requirements. Because of the complexity that can come from making compost from kitchen waste, before undertaking any project there should be consultation with the regulators SEPA and/or the Animal and Plant Health Agency to ensure that a project complies with legal requirements.

12.3 Skills Requirements for Operating a Project

Formal qualifications are not a requirement for people involved in running a community food growing project, however, where individuals have followed training and learning pathways they will be in a stronger position to coach and facilitate others involved in projects, including volunteers. There are many training opportunities available on farming and food growing, delivered through existing community food growing projects, at colleges, gardens, etc (see [here](#) for more details). An element of this involves horticultural skills development and national qualifications in horticulture are available through the SQA (information available [here](#)), which includes SCQF levels

¹² <https://communitysupportedagriculture.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2021/04/Setting-Up-a-Community-Led-CSA.pdf>

4 to 8, with Higher National qualifications (HNCs, HNDs), National Qualification Group Awards, Professional Development Awards and Scottish Vocational Qualifications.

The Landworkers Alliance, a union of farmers & land-based workers, has a mission which involves improving the livelihoods of members and creating a better food & land-use system. It does not currently provide formal accredited education and training programmes and instead comments that it works closely with its members to "improve the coherency of agroecological training opportunities, and to ensure that they are of high quality."

Some information/links on UK courses and apprenticeships are available on the Ecological Land Cooperative website ([here](#)), however, it should be noted that a number of those described are now out of date.

13.0 FUNDING, FACILITATORS AND BARRIERS

13.1 Overview

The options appraisal section of this report describes different types of development opportunities, all of which will require investment and/or funding support for both operational and capital costs. Capital investment requirements will be those associated with the design and configuration of a site - to incorporate infrastructure (hard standing, utility set up, sheds, parking, fencing, equipment, water storage tanks etc). A number of capital costs, if support was provided from a third party, could be paid back through a rental agreement for an organisation operating the site. Operational costs will be those associated with salaries and farming supplies, materials etc.

Both capital and operational funding support can be provided for a range of activities and developments for a CFGP, including:

- Employability support funding, to assist people back into employment.
- Support funding to deliver more regenerative farming practices
- Funding to deliver on climate change and net zero opportunities.
- Support for managing volunteers on a site.

Project information provided earlier in this report (e.g. Transition Town Forres, Thurso Community Development Trust and Campy growers) have all provided examples of how external funding has supported a wide range of activities and there are local Highland funding streams available to a Nairn organisation taking forward a CFGP. There are hundreds of organisations that provide funding to charities in Scotland and the rest of the UK, with the Funding Scotland website providing a searchable data base for this, available [here](#).

Two case studies are illustrated in the following sections for Thurso and Dundee, which describe the range of specific funding approaches to funding that could have relevance to the Nairn context. The Dundee case study is provided more as an illustration of the potential for the future in Nairn, rather than representing what is in place at the moment.

13.2 Case Study Illustration - Dundee

Dundee's Voice launched in 2023 along with the Dundee Climate Fund which allocated £0.75 million (£0.5 million capital funding and £0.25 million revenue funding) to support community-led climate change projects. Following the first round of voting, funding was approved for 12 local projects totalling £0.385 million based on the votes of 4,376 respondents. These included money for the Dundee Heritage Trust Green Verdant Works (0.09 million), Campy Growers food for the future (£0.06 million) and Heart Space Yoga and Bodyworks Fit for the Future (£0.05 million) programmes (information [here](#)).

Community Regeneration Forums are in place in six of Dundee's eight Wards; Colside, East End, Lochee, Maryfield, North East and Strathmartine and are made up of local people, elected from the ward in which they live, with a key role in allocating funding within that area. Funding for the West End and The Ferry is dealt with through the Local community Planning Partnerships Camperdown Growing Hub - the £1.2 million project to transform an area of Camperdown Park into a functional food growing area was realised in 2023, with the completion of a 'climate friendly' building. The project is being run in partnership with The Campy Growers and

"employs regenerative food- growing practices including no-dig, on-site composting, agroforestry and chemical free production as an example of good stewardship of the land. The group are actively creating habitat and growing with nature, fruit trees have already been planted and plans to create wetland habitat have begun (information available [here](#))."

Dundee Partnership funding is managed through the structure shown in the figure below.



Figure 25. Illustration of the Dundee Partnership Structure, Themes and Communities

The above partnerships administer three funding streams:

Common Good Fund. This funding is available for one-off awards that support the common good. Approximately £75k is available each year, with all applications assessed on their individual merit.

Festive Fund. Funding was made available to community-based organisations and groups to assist them in hosting a festive winter event or putting in place a festive installation for their community.

Dundee Partnership Community Regeneration Fund. funding is available on a Ward by Ward basis for projects that aim to reduce deprivation and provide additional opportunities to close the gap for those living in Community Regeneration Areas (incorporating places in the 15% most deprived data zones in Scotland). Applications fall into three types;

- Youth inclusion: focussing on work with children & young people, and providing activities and opportunities for them
- Physical & environmental improvements: used to make improvements to buildings, playparks, green spaces, etc. These awards have a minimum spend of £6k. Please note applications for Physical & Environmental Improvements are currently closed, likely to reopen in late Summer 2024
- Small grants: A catch-all category for smaller applications, up to £5k.

Applications are assessed and awarded on a monthly basis, with a turnaround of approximately 8 weeks from application to award. In the six Wards with Community Regeneration Areas (CRAs), recommendations on funding are made by a Forum of elected local residents.

13.3 Case Study Illustration - Thurso Community Development Trust (TCDT)

TCDT were offered former Highland Council Greenhouses in the centre of Thurso which TCDT took on as a community greenspace and project. Run down and in need of extensive repairs, since early 2022 these have been getting refurbished to create a “thriving” growing space ([here](#)). Launched in 2023 the Greenhouses project is described as offering “locally grown food and plants to the community and the opportunity for people to learn about growing, sustainable food production as well as promoting a safe, green space for people to come to.” TCDT comments that its focus for the project is:

- Build community and work with other partner organizations in the county to support our town.
- Celebrate volunteers and help them learn skills and gain new knowledge.
- Grow the plants and food for Thurso.

It is an example of where a community has been extremely active, trying and piloting a number of different kinds of initiative. The Trust works with Social Care, local schools and the University of the Highlands and Islands (North West Highland) and Community Payback i.e. accepting community justice placements for payback hours. The growth in income and spending since 2020 is shown in the figure below (available from OSCR) – trebling in the period shown.



Figure 26. Growth of income and spending at TCDT since 2020.

The organisation as a whole secures grant funding from many different sources, with income from food growing itself minimal. In providing produce from its projects a key outcome is the community cohesion, well-being and training benefits provided to people. The TCDT received £89K in 2021 from SSE Renewables in support of its Thurso Grows project, which included support for a community shop and for commercial growing at the greenhouses. As of 2022, SSE Renewables had awarded more than £1.5 million to twenty projects across the Highlands, to help communities respond to the climate emergency ([here](#)). Funding for TCDT has also come from¹³:

- North Highland Initiative Funding (£12,000).
- Highland Third Sector Interface (£9,986).
- Caithness & North Sutherland Fund (CNSF) – established by the Nuclear Decommissioning Authority and Dounreay Site.
- Community Regeneration Funding.
- Highland Coastal Communities Fund derived from the net revenues of the Crown Estate marine assets in Scotland.

During 2019/20 and 2020/21 the Scottish Government for the first time made this money available as allocations to Local Authorities to fund projects delivering economic regeneration and sustainable development in coastal areas.

13.4 Summary of Potential Funding and Support Opportunities

Government Funding Support

There are a number of funding opportunities available for organisations of different sizes, stage of development and type of activities. For projects with an employability objective the Scottish Government’s No One Left Behind or job creation scheme are important opportunities for funding. In 2023/23 the Scottish Government’s allocation to THC was:

- No One Left Behind: £0.63 million
- Young Person’s Guarantee: £0.639 million
- Long-term unemployed: £0.79 million

To facilitate a new/existing social enterprise, establishing and running a CFGP, to access support (human resource and funding) from a scheme such as No-one left behind the following steps would be required for a social enterprise delivering the CFGP and THC:

- The social enterprise meets with the Council (Employability and Prosperity) to discuss placement opportunities/potential. This may be for paid members of staff or for people that are looking to volunteer their time and gain work experience. There can be variations between different funding sources, however No One Left Behind, for example can fund a member of staff at the Real Living Wage (£12 per hour) for between 16 – 25 hours per week, for placements typically lasting between 6 – 9 months. The funding excludes pension and national insurance contributions, which are self-funded through the organisation.

¹³ Information available from [here](#).

- For the past three years there have been opportunities through the Shared Prosperity Fund again for paid staff or for specific project work, which could include upskilling people. This fund is scheduled to finish in March 2025, but it is anticipated that additional funding for this may commence in 2025.
- Other Council teams for example, Social Work, may be able to fund people to work for the social enterprise and it is recommended that the social enterprise makes connections with Employability and Prosperity, Social Work, Education and local schools and colleges to find out what funding or support is available.

The UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) mentioned above is the UK Government's replacement for the European Structural and Investment Programme (ESIF), a 3 year plan. The fund's aims are to improve "pride in place" and increase life chances across the UK, and THC was allocated £9.44 million to invest in local projects until March 2025, with a plan provided by the council on how the allocation would be invested to deliver improvements in the region. A n Investment Plan for Highland set out a vision which was developed with input and comments from the wide range of partners within the Highland region. The four main strands to this plan are Community and Places, Supporting Local Businesses, People and Skills, and Multiply. A continuation or replacement scheme should provide opportunities for a future Nairn CFGP, which if the same as the current system (as an example) could come under the following themes¹⁴:

- Community Led Solutions and Action.
- Supporting Communities to Develop Assets and Infrastructure.

Experience with other local authorities in Scotland suggests that the above processes are less competitive than those (funding schemes) described in the following section because they are more local. It should be noted that THC also has a number of other funds that could be applicable, as described at the council's webpage [here](#), a significant number of which do not appear to be applicable to Nairn or a CFGP. However, it should also be noted that there are increasing risks associated with some potential funding streams, for example, in a period of public sector cuts.

Third Party Funding Support

The table below is provided to summarise a number of these, pulling together a number already mentioned in case studies and the desk-based review. They cover a wide range of activities, with community capacity building (skills development, training, health etc) a part of this, as well as projects which deliver environmental and sustainable development benefits.

THC also provides information on its website of a range of other external funding sources ([here](#)) which could also be considered – those of particular relevance to Nairn and a CFGP are described/included in the table.

Table 18. Summary of funding sources of potential relevance to a Nairn CFGP.

Fund	Description of Eligible Organisation, Project Type, Funding Amount etc
Scottish Government and Green Action Trust	The Scottish Government announced eight community growing projects across Scotland to funding through the 'Growing Food Together' Fund 2023/24. A total of £100,000 has been distributed to successful projects in Aberdeenshire, Inverclyde, ETC, many of which are located in some of Scotland's most disadvantaged areas. The closing date for 2024/25 was July (2024). A Nairn organisation could therefore aim to submit an application for the next year/round of funding.
Crown Estate Scotland Sustainable Communities Fund	<p>£1.4 million has been provided for community projects since the fund started in 2020. The two funds of relevance to Nairn are shown below:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community Capacity Grants, which provide early stage financial support for community enterprise projects. This programme is open to all communities up to five miles from Scotland's coastline or within five miles of rural estates. • Environment Grants, which provide funding to Crown Estate Scotland tenants only, for projects which can deliver demonstrable environmental benefits within 18 months of award of funds. <p>Expressions of interest for the above close in September and October 2024, therefore opportunities for development in Nairn would involve applications being made in 2025.</p>
Firstport Start It	<p>This is funding that can help new social entrepreneurs cover up to £5,000 in start-up costs. These costs can include legal fees, rent, website design, marketing materials, etc.</p> <p>Social enterprise applicants should operate primarily for the benefit of people or communities within Scotland and be in the early stages of development i.e. the 'start-up' phase – and is not</p>

¹⁴ https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20014/economic_development/1088/highland_uk_shared_prosperity_fund

Fund	Description of Eligible Organisation, Project Type, Funding Amount etc
The Robertson Trust	<p>trading on a regular basis.</p> <p>During the course of its 2020-30 strategy, providing at least £200 million in funding to third sector organisations that help people and communities in Scotland living with poverty and trauma. Projects should deliver against one of the four key themes: education pathways, financial security, work pathways and emotional wellbeing and relationships.</p> <p>At the time of writing the next funding scheme opens in September 2024. Details, with funding covering revenue (operational costs) or capital costs (e.g. equipment) to support projects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maximum “Wee Grant” award increases from £2,000 to £5,000. For constituted community groups and charities with an annual income of less than £25,000. • The maximum “Small Grant” increases from £15,000 to £20,000. It is for registered charities with an annual income of between £25,000 and £100,000 and therefore would not be suitable for a start-up in Nairn. • Large Grants - for registered charities with an annual income of between £100,000 and £2 million. Revenue funding of between £15,000 and £50,000 per year for up to five years.
National Lottery Awards for All Scotland	<p>This offers funding from £300 to £20,000 to support “what matters to people and communities”, for example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bringing people together to build strong relationships in and across communities. • Improving the places and spaces that matter to communities. <p>Eligible organisations are voluntary or community organisations, as well as public sector organisations.</p>
Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI)	<p>Funding is available for third sector organisations in Highland to promote adult mental health and wellbeing, aimed at grassroots community organisations. The Communities Mental Health & Wellbeing Fund for Adults is divided into two separate funds that can be applied for, depending on plans and eligibility.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Small Grants up to £10K for grassroots activities. • Development and Collaboration Grants up to £50K (opened 9 September 2024). <p>Projects should support greater collaboration between one or more organisations in meeting the underpinning priorities or provide investment where a community has already consulted with and prepared an action plan against identified needs in their community, to progress activity with particular impact for the mental health and wellbeing of the community.</p>
Co-operative Crowd Funder	<p>Start a new project on Crowdfunder, tell us the basics and a rough outline of your story. Then we can show you funds that you may be eligible for.</p> <p>Apply for funding You can then choose to make an application for a relevant fund. If a partner likes your project, they may agree to support it.</p> <p>Start crowdfunding - Start raising money from the crowd and once you reach an agreed percentage of your target, one of our partners could boost your total. A number of community growing projects are currently listed on the website.</p>
Highland Climate Action Fund	<p>Offers its members small grants for new community organisations or to launch a new climate action project. This comes from a small funding pot available for funding applications up to £500. Applications are assessed on a rolling monthly basis - can be used to cover the costs of delivering a project and/or to carry out community consultation research around a project idea.</p>

14.0 OUTLINE COST BENEFIT ANALYSIS

The Outline Cost Benefit Analysis (CBA) is provided for the smaller CFGP option described previously, with costs and income streams shown in the following tables. The Excel spreadsheet used for these tables is available as Appendix E where details can be found, the sources used for indicative costs and incomes. Key aspects of the approach to this CBA are:

- Income stream includes circa half of the salary costs (55%) being funded by external sources associated with supporting community capacity building, health and wellbeing and training/skills development – see funding section.

- Income from food growing activities uses the Five Acre farm example, with 35% of their income used in Year 1, 50% in Year 2 and 80% in subsequent years. The 80% of based on four acres of the Sandown land field being used for growing purposes (compared to five acres in the example above).
- Cumulative rental costs over five years would broadly be in line with the pro rata rent being paid for the target land at the moment. This provides a grace period of two years where the project does not pay any rent, to facilitate it to become established.
- No income is included from the PV installation, since it is assumed that this would be developed as a stand alone project.

It should be noted that the provision of formal training (e.g. apprenticeships), if not funded through third parties would need to be considered in terms of the cost of salaries paid, with any additional costs not covered by support or grant funding coming off the bottom line (the cashflow is shown in the financial model).

Table 19. Capital items and indicative cost estimates

Capital Item	£ Cost
Water storage containers (£250 each x 13)	3,250
Sheds	5,888
Sheds purchase	4,768
Sheds installation (2 days per shed, £20/hr per person - 2 people)	1,120
Polytunnels	19,964
Polycrub purchase and delivery to Nairn (£7,842 each inc VAT) - 4m x 12.7m	14,964
Polycrub installation (100 hours per crub, £20/hr)	5,000
Land preparation	24,850
Water supply installation	1,200
Compost toilet materials and delivery	1,500
Compost toilet labour & tractor £50 per hour - 2 days (14 hours)	700
Tractor hire, £50 per hour - 7 days (49 hours)	2,450
Preparation of parking area	10,000
Deer fencing - 600 metre length (whole field, with one side at allotment already done)	9,000
Second hand tractor for ongoing operations (As per 5-Acre Farm)	5,000
TOTAL	58,952

Table 20. Indicative operational income and cost streams

Income	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Food outputs	19,985	28,550	45,680	45,680	45,680
Salary funding	28,541	37,459	37,459	37,459	37,459
Manager, grower & education/training support	19,622	19,622	19,622	19,622	19,622
Grower & education/training support	0	8,919	8,919	8,919	8,919
Volunteer co-ordinator	8,919	8,919	8,919	8,919	8,919
Other	6,662	9,517	15,227	15,227	15,227
Processed foods, assumed to generate 25% of veg box income	6,662	9,517	15,227	15,227	15,227
TOTAL	55,187	75,526	98,366	98,366	98,366
Operational Costs	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Food growing costs	3,266	4,510	6,223	6,223	6,223
Fertilisers (£500 per £5,000 of produce)	1,999	2,855	4,568	4,568	4,568
Composts - bulk	0	0	0	0	0
Other costs - unspecified	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
Water charge (see notes) - exemption may apply for a charity	138	138	138	138	138
Electricity (see notes and worksheet)	129	518	518	518	518
Salaries:	51,892	68,108	68,108	68,108	68,108
Manager, grower & education/training support	35,676	35,676	35,676	35,676	35,676
Grower & education/training support		16,216	16,216	16,216	16,216
Volunteer co-ordinator	16,216	16,216	16,216	16,216	16,216
Rental - first two years rent free (over 5 years cumulative is comparable with current arrangement)	0	0	2,000	2,000	2,000
TOTAL	55,157	72,619	76,332	76,332	76,332

Table 21. Cashflow for operational income and costs

Operational Costs	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Net cashflow £	30	2,908	22,035	22,035	22,035
Cumulative cashflow £	30	2,937	24,972	47,006	69,041

Table 22. Cashflow including capital costs

Operational Costs	Yr 1	Yr 2	Yr 3	Yr 4	Yr 5
Net cashflow £	-58,922	2,908	22,035	22,035	22,035
Cumulative cashflow £	-58,922	-56,015	-33,980	-11,946	10,089

The tables above indicate that a positive cashflow would be achieved after four years without support to cover the capital costs. However, very few social enterprises would be in a position to invest more than £50K in capital assets and run at a loss over a number of years (the cumulative cashflow shown above) and therefore financial support will be required from a third party.

It is important to note that many community garden projects often start with little to no funding, relying heavily on donations and free resources. This approach will often form the backbone of new community growing initiatives. A number of the capital costs shown in this section therefore have the potential to be much lower than would be the case in practice. It should also be noted that a cost for Polycrubs rather than polytunnels is used in the table of capital items. These are a more expensive item than standard polytunnels, chosen for their robustness and potential for being able to withstand bad weather, however a future organisation running the project may prefer to go with a lower cost option (as with other items listed).

15.0 COMMUNICATIONS

15.1 Overview

The audiences for future communications campaigns in Nairn are the community itself, residents, businesses, organisations of many different kinds and those going through the education system (including those delivering this). Each of these audiences has different needs, motivations and levels of interest, and the community survey has identified many of these, as described earlier in this report.

Potential approaches for delivering future communications campaigns are described in this section, informed by the experiences of two charitable organisations engaged with, successfully involved in delivering services to their local communities:

- CFINE - CFINE supports community food growing projects across the North East of Scotland by providing resources such as a tool library, training, and volunteer management, while promoting sustainable practices like composting and material reuse. Their initiatives aim to improve access to fresh produce, enhance community well-being, and build connections among local gardening projects.
- Transition Stirling – runs a community food project that redistributes surplus food, a tool Library an IT project, wood reuse project and reuse hub focussed on providing refurbished products.

Positive, imaginative and clear communications are vital to delivering any project. The channels for campaigning are not specific to the options set out in Section 8 of this report. and in the case of the Nairn CFGP there are many positive opportunities that can be communicated through social media, traditional press and media channels, including local radio.

Specific examples of engagement events that advertise projects, the outputs and services are described below:

- Selling local food as part of a local food and drink initiative e.g. a "Taste of Nairn" is an annual event that showcase the town's food & drink.
- Delivering open days, harvest days and community meals. The latter is practised at CFGPs such as Bonnymuir Gardens in Aberdeen and Thurso.

Community meals can provide an important income stream, as well as advertise the activities and quality of food produced, and engender community spirit and collaboration associated with a CFGP. Harvest days have also been adopted in places such as Blairgowrie (Perth and Kinross) where the community is provided with boxes for collecting blueberries from a local farmer's field (moved to importing rather than selling local fruit), with awareness of local food greatly enhanced, and significant levels of income generated at the same time. In 2022, as part of Thurso Grows, over 180 children were hosted at the gardens, teaching cooking in the cob oven, making their own pizzas. Activities such as these are both educational and awareness raising.

15.2 Example Communication Strategy

This communication strategy draws upon the insights from previous CFINE (Community Food Initiatives North East) communication strategies, ensuring a cohesive and effective approach to reaching and involving all stakeholders, with a focus on giving residents, businesses, local organisations, and educational institutions a sense of ownership and responsibility for the success of the initiative.

Aim

To create a strong, collaborative community growing project by engaging a wide range of stakeholders and sustaining their interest over time.

Objectives

1. Raise awareness by informing the community about the new growing project, its goals, and the benefits it offers.
2. Promote community ownership through encouraging residents, businesses, and organisations to take active roles in the planning, decision-making, and implementation of the project.
3. Promote a safe and inclusive environment. To integrate the health and wellbeing aims from the outset, ensure that the project is accessible and welcoming to all, with a strong emphasis on safety, inclusivity, and wellbeing.
4. Promote participation by encouraging community members to participate in gardening activities, workshops, and events.
5. Collaboration - build partnerships with local businesses, schools, and organisations to support and sustain the project.
6. Sustain interest and involvement through regular updates, events, and success stories that highlight the community's role in the project's success.

Target Audiences

1. Residents: Local community members, including families, individuals, and vulnerable groups.
2. Businesses: Local businesses interested in corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives or community engagement.
3. Organisations: Nonprofits, community groups, and local organisations that align with sustainability, health, and community development.
4. Educational institutions: Schools, colleges, and universities, including students, teachers, and administrators.
5. Local Authorities and policymakers: Key stakeholders who can support the project through policy and funding.

Identify Key Messages

Examples could include:

1. Community empowerment, "Grow your community, grow your future."
2. Sustainability, "Together, we can cultivate a greener, more sustainable environment."
3. Health and wellbeing, "Gardening for a healthier, happier community."
4. Collaboration, "Join forces to create dynamic green spaces for everyone."
5. Educational impact, "Nurturing the next generation with hands-on learning experiences."

Communication Channels

1. *Social media:* Decide on relevant social media platforms and post regularly about e.g. providing event announcements, gardening tips, success stories, and live updates. Enhance engagement by using interactive tools like polls and live stream Q&A sessions. Respond to community comments and let that inform future content.
2. *Email newsletters:* Available to residents, businesses, organisations, and schools, this is for project updates, upcoming events, volunteer opportunities, and more.
3. *Community meetings:* In-person and virtual meetings to keep the conversation going, gather feedback, share updates and plan collaborative activities.
4. *Press:* Create a press release(s) for local newspapers and radio stations for big announcements such as the launch of the project and key milestones.
5. *Flyers and posters:* Display in community centres, local businesses, schools, libraries, and public spaces to spread the word and invite people to participate. A flyer drop to neighbours can be effective too.
6. *Partnership with educational institutions:* Work together to create initiatives in the garden that link in to the school curriculum, volunteer awards such as Duke of Edinburgh and nationwide gardening programmes such as the One Seed Forward Garden Schools programme.

7. *Local business:* Meet with local businesses, to discuss sponsorship, volunteer days, and CSR activities. The Highland Council could provide support through Common Good and community benefits team member to liaise with businesses about their CSR then collaborate with them to identify where support is on offer.
8. *Community events:* A regular (e.g. weekly/ monthly) volunteering session open to the public can provide consistency and reliability, encouraging residents to participate. Create in advance an engaging and varied programme of events such as garden open days/ fun days, themed planting events, harvest festivals, and workshops e.g. tree pruning, propagation techniques.

It should be noted that it is important to create a comprehensive timeline for a communication strategy, to ensure continuity (of communication) and to ensure that monitoring is ongoing so that elements of the strategy can be reviewed and modified as needed.

Evaluation

The evaluation of how successful a strategy has been can take place through the following:

- Social media engagement (likes, shares, comments).
- Newsletter open and click-through rates.
- Attendance at events and workshops.
- Number of partnerships formed.
- Community feedback through surveys and meetings.

16.0 CONCLUSIONS

Community engagement and desk-based findings

Community engagement has taken place through a digital survey and more than twenty one to one discussions and interviews, and identified that there are many ideas and opportunities for developing a food growing project at Sandown Lands in Nairn.

The initial options identified this report through one to one discussions and desk-based research informed the community survey which returned 150 completed responses. Circa 90% expressing their support for the majority of the food growing options, identifying that a key area of interest is the development of a project that provides educational and training opportunities, bringing people together and supporting collaborative working across many different activities. The local place planning (LPP) process has been undertaken at the same time as delivering this feasibility study in Nairn, and although not a key feature of the LPP, where renewable energy and food growing were discussed at workshops in May 2024 the majority of responses were positive about the potential.

If the target field at Sandown Lands is to be used purely for a community food growing project, then planning permission should not be needed. However, if it is to be used for more than just food growing, to include educational or social purposes, then planning permission is likely to be required. Some small-scale works such as the erection of fencing or some agricultural buildings may be carried out without having to apply for planning permission, if the works fall within the definition of 'permitted development'.

The options

The options considered are all possible either in their own right, or as complementary or cumulative in terms of developing a CFGP. The cumulative feature applying once a project has been established in the first place.

The PV option is not a food growing one, but could supply low cost electricity to a project at lower rates than are commercially available. Investment in PV offers a payback within 11 years, with a capital cost of £78K required and provides a long term income generation opportunity for the Common Good fund, which could be replicable elsewhere.

The small and larger scale growing projects are described to include polytunnels, growing areas (plots and fields) with sheds for storage of tools and other items. The size of the land (4 hectares) is such that infrastructure (polytunnels, sheds) could be located a significant distance from the A96, adjacent to the existing allotment. A larger option would mean scaling up, to provide larger growing areas and more poly tunnels. Irrespective of these options, there are opportunities to also create a community food growing woodland, with tree planting opportunities around the four hectare site, which has the potential to not only provide nutritious food in the future, but could provide a shelter belt for other growing elements taken forward, provide a foraging habitat for bees etc. A community food growing woodland could be planted at a scale that works with the small and large growing options. Trees could be planted that have ecological, nutrition, commercial, health and well-being value. In terms of the final point, if a wholistic viewpoint is taken a woodland could be planted that provides a space for people to use the field for exercise, dog walking etc. This would require access to the site and the construction of pathways inside the boundary, following a planting design outwith the scope of this project.

Regardless of this community access, there is the potential to improve walking and cycling access both to a future food growing project and the existing allotments by creating an entrance to the Sandown Field from the pedestrian pavement, where this ends on the A96.

There may also be potential to take forward more ambitious and related opportunities, to support a community food growing project, involving the development of a community garden centre. Collaboration with the University of the Highlands and Islands may be of value exploring, to understand where collaboration opportunities exist, to connect community growing in Nairn with academic research and education.

Socioeconomic benefits and opportunities

The development of a community food growing project at Sandown Lands would provide a direct supply-demand relationship with food grown locally, generating 2 FTE jobs (3 employees), and if created using a community supported agriculture model could potential results in circa 60 members receiving local, nutritious food, with many gaining health and wellbeing benefits from volunteering and engagement.

The development has the potential to improve connectedness in Nairn if a pathway to access the Common Good Land and allotments could be developed as part of a CFGP. This could improve the road and pedestrian user experience for cyclists and walkers. This could help to create a loop of activity and walking routes off the main road to link up with coast at the West End of Nairn.

Nairn Academy has indicated that a community food growing project would be used extensively by the school and this is an element of potential benefit that could have significant positive impact for children, for example providing education and training linked to the curriculum, providing a land-based opportunity for children that may be in line with their interests/preferences.

Funding and cost benefit analysis

A number of funding opportunities have been identified which would be applicable, in particular for a social enterprise taking forward a CFGP in the future. Opportunities will be available for both council support, through back to work/employment schemes, community capacity building funds. In addition, there are a range of third party funding opportunities for either a start-up or existing social enterprise interested in developing a CFGP. However, it should also be noted that there are increasing risks associated with some potential funding streams, for example, in a period of public sector cuts.

A cost benefit analysis (CBA) carried out on the smaller scale growing option has identified the parameters for a successful project, and an important aspect of this involves understanding the challenging nature of making community food growing projects operate in a commercially successful way when the sales of fruit and vegetables are the only income stream. Many community food growing projects across Scotland and the rest of the UK operate on the basis of providing services related to education, training, health and wellbeing and received funding to cover staff costs aimed at delivering such services. They have also secured funding support to cover the costs of getting established.

An indicative estimate has identified a cost of over £50K to take forward a small-scale CFGP, with two polytunnels being at the heart of this. Three paid members of staff are considered in the analysis (two FTEs) and their salaries are modelled on the basis that these are covered by external grant funding, to deliver the wider range of services, with food sales then providing a profit on top of this. The sales model considered is based on the community buying fruit and vegetable boxes.

Relationships, partnership working and securing funding support

There are a number of community organisations working in Nairn, and the opportunities described in this report may be of more interest and value to particular organisations and groups. However, a key point that has to be recognised is that the opportunities for community food growing at Sandown Lands, on Common Good Land, very much chime with a key aim of having such land i.e. it can connect the community and bring people together for individual and mutual benefit. There can be a tendency to push back against new initiatives in a community, but the land as currently used, is monoculture in nature, and although this provides a benefit to the farmer, and a rental income for the common good fund, there is potential for this to be developed and used in a way which engages more people and generates more income.

17.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

Next Steps for developing the options

A community organisation will need to take on the role of driving a project forward, following discussions and agreement on the vision and objectives e.g. will education, training and food growing/selling all be considered important elements of a project and is the organisation committed to securing funding support?

Because the Council is responsible for managing the Common Good lands, it will need to be a committed supporter and partner for any project to have long-term success. As part of this the challenges associated with operating complex projects have to be understood. To establish a project which delivers on the options described in this report, there will need to be an understanding that the margins that food growing projects operate to are very tight, but the potential benefits to a community are significant, and therefore the development of a trusted relationship between the council and partners should be an objective of future working arrangements. A key part of this is understanding that a community food growing project, that enables the community to utilise common good land, should be seen as a positive opportunity to develop Sandown lands as a community asset.

The Council also has the opportunity to support a CFGP if employability, training and community development are objectives, with the No-one Left Behind scheme providing employability support and Shared Prosperity funding (or its future replacement) providing community capacity building support.

Operational (business) plan For developing a CFGP in Nairn

An advisory group should be set up, facilitated by the council, to support the delivery of an engagement process involving parties interested in establishing a CFGP. Its role should be to confirm the preferred option for Sandown Lands, and establish a business plan, which describes the operational and implementation steps required. The plan would describe how local opportunities could maximise community capacity building, involving volunteering as well as job creation opportunities. A plan for engaging with service providers in the council should be developed, in education, employability and prosperity, economic development and community regeneration, to understand how a future CFGP would support their aspirations. This would then facilitate funding applications for the salaries of individuals to drive a project forward.

This report has described the potential of a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) model, subscription-based, with members paying regularly for vegetable and fruit boxes. This financial support cover operational costs and mitigates the risks by providing an understood regular income, with members receiving regular shares of the farm's harvest throughout the growing season, e.g. weekly. Models such as this have the double benefit and impact of bring the local community into the project, engaging with it and providing support, as well as creating an income stream. A detailed business case would need to be prepared to demonstrate the anticipated financial performance of the CFGP.

PV Panels

The council should consider taking forward a PV installation on Sandown Lands that can provide a long term financial income for the Common Good Fund. Such an installation also has the potential to provide low cost electricity to a CFGP if there is demand.

Maximising socioeconomic impacts

The council should consider facilitating activities and actions that would support the establishment of a community food growing project that has the potential to provide local food growing opportunities, skills development and which may have the potential to improve connectedness around the west of Nairn.

The Council and the proposed advisory group should work with other agencies and departments to facilitate actions that would lead to the development of an action/implementation plan.

The local plan and engagement with the community

The community survey, one to one interviews and local place planning workshops have all identified that there is support for a CFGP in Nairn. However, it should also be noted that that there are a number of concerns as well as objectors. In considering a future CFGP on the Sandown Land field the council is advised to consider what the purpose of common good land is. As discussed at the August 2024 Common Good Engagement meeting a key purpose is to bring the community together and collaborate.

The Sandown Land field is in close proximity to the Tradespark community and it is recommended that potential opportunities for engaging with the project should be explored with this community.