

SUTHERLAND DEVELOPMENT AND ACTION PLAN

JUNE
2010



SUTHERLAND – STRONGER – TOGETHER

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This report has been prepared by Rural Analysis Associates.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A Vision for Sutherland

“ Our vision is for a confident Sutherland, fit for future generations; where the population is stable and healthy; where people have places to live and work; where there are opportunities for learning, business and leisure; a place that is attractive to visitors and values its environment; a place where people of all ages can thrive.”

This Action and Development Plan for Sutherland sets out a framework for delivery: the Scottish Government and all its agencies combining with strong and committed communities, resilient and entrepreneurial businesses and a robust voluntary sector for the future of Sutherland to deliver a vision for the sustainable development of Sutherland.

The reality of Sutherland's status as the most sparsely populated area of the UK demands an exceptionally robust and efficient coordination of its far-flung communities of place and fragile communities of interest. Recognising this, a significant exercise in community consultation, led by the voluntary sector and significantly funded by LEADER, took place in the autumn of 2009, seeking to identify and prioritise actions for securing the sustainable economic growth of Sutherland. The process of refining and developing these actions involved the commitment of an ever-increasing partnership of public, private and voluntary sector organisations, whose commitment to the future sustainable development of Sutherland gives considerable grounds for optimism.

This document is a both culmination of that work and a starting point from which to move forward. There is much to be done. The actions identified in this plan - organised in themes - are for adoption, development and delivery through public, private and voluntary sector activity over a ten year period.

The nature of this plan and its approach to fostering partnership between sectors means that this is not a guarantee of actions that will be taken forward but rather a living document that reflects current desires and aspirations and sets out actions that are likely to go forward in the short to medium term, but importantly, one which will change as the priorities of partners change.

Because these sectors plan, develop and organise projects in differing ways, this plan combines a number of approaches.

It sets out strategic projects most likely to be developed or led by public sector organisations in addition to measures for development over 3-year, 5-year and 10-year timeframes. This document animates and subsumes the current Sutherland LEADER plan, the priorities from which are set out in Annex 2. Hence this development and action plan also contains broad, enabling headings to allow a project to come forward in a way which suits the development needs of the organisation proposing them.

Many of the actions are challenging, particularly in light of the current difficult economic conditions and ambitious climate change targets and will require a continuation and extension of the significant cross-sector engagement, cooperation and partnership working which brought about the Sutherland Summit and the creation of this document.

1.1 Strategic projects and priorities

Identification of strategic projects has combined the priorities developed through a scenario planning exercise and SWOT analysis and those coming from the Sutherland Summit and follow-up meetings. Given the influence of global economic factors and global action on climate change, the highlighted strategic actions are those required in a number of different scenarios to support the sustainable economic growth of Sutherland.

The strategic actions that we have identified are;

- Information exchange
- Business-to-business cooperation
- Collaboration within the tourism sector
- Signage improvements
- Low-carbon tourism infrastructure
 - „North West Frontier „ – development and promotion of outdoor activities
 - Promotion and marketing of the East Sutherland mountain bike trails as a package
 - Development of surfing infrastructure on the north coast

- o Linking paths around Sutherland coasts to the developing Scottish Coastal Way
- o Development of a cross-Sutherland Clearances trail
- Local food supply chain development
- Resourcing of the NW Highlands Geopark
- Sutherland Archive Development project
- Development of Strathnaver Heritage site
- Delivery of actions in the Transport Vision for Sutherland
- Supporting community aspirations for sports, leisure and community facilities
- Promotion of a greater role for communities in service design
- Development of local solutions to housing need
- Supporting development of new crofts
- Exploring the potential for „the Hydrogen Highway“ - hydrogen and renewably-generated electric transport in Sutherland

1.2 Implementation and resources

The strategic actions listed above are not insignificant and they in themselves form only a small proportion of the total actions identified in this plan. Delivery of the scale of activity outlined in this plan requires enormous commitment and engagement of the people of Sutherland, the hugely-important voluntary sector, the agencies of government and the Scottish Government itself.

Importantly, it will require a continuation of the process of dialogue and ever-widening engagement which has led to the identification of the actions in this Plan.

For this reason, we identify a need to increase the human resource available to assist in the delivery of actions in this plan. Three distinct roles are recognised: that of representation and advocacy for Sutherland; that of supporting and facilitating community-led development and finally, that of strategic level development and coordination of the actions and actors involved in the delivery of this plan. Without this increase in resource or increase in focus from partner

organisations, we suggest that the capacity to deliver these actions could be compromised.

We have highlighted a number of sources of significant resources potentially available for the delivery of actions highlighted. Foremost among these are the European Structural Funds, the Northern Periphery Programme, LEADER and the Scotland Rural Development Programme.

Monitoring and evaluation of the plan is critical to ensuring its success and allowing for its iterative development. We recommend that a monitoring group be established to carry out a six-monthly review of actions initiated under this plan. At least every 18 months a more significant review should be carried out to refresh the actions in the plan and measure progress against the outcomes sought in this plan.

This Action and Development Plan is innovative in its genesis and approach – setting out, as it does, work which might be taken forward by government and by the public sector but also by the private and voluntary sectors. From the outset it has involved Scottish Government Ministers, political representatives of all levels and all parties, public sector organisations tasked with delivery of services in the area and the people, businesses and voluntary organisations of Sutherland. As such, it has a big constituency and has generated a lot of interest and a lot of expectation. The Plan, the outcomes desired from it and the actions which subsequently take place and develop under its banner need to be communicated to Government, to the people of Sutherland and at every level between to show how working together can deliver positive outcomes for this exceptional corner of Scotland.

2. INTRODUCTION

2.1 Déjà Vu?

The focus of this plan is not unprospected territory.

Sutherland stakeholders, besides being committed champions of the area, have an impressive record for serious reflection on the threats and opportunities the area faces and for organising to address these.

Already in 1997 a strategic framework document „A Platform for Growth“ had been published and in 2000 this was updated by the Sutherland Partnership to become „A Strategy for the New Millennium“. This in turn was superseded by „A Strategy for Sutherland“ in 2005.

2.2 More of the Same?

There were no flaws or oversights in these previous analyses and indeed, not unexpectedly, most of the text of the 2005 Strategy would not be out of place if transported *en bloc* to this document.

But there are significant differences between then and now. The context has changed far more between 2005 and 2010 than it did from 1997 to 2005. A simple update is not appropriate or adequate.

Since 2005 the significance of global warming has emerged and, with it, an acceleration in the retreat from fossil fuels and stimulation of the pursuit of carbon free growth. The credit crisis has struck with its clearly adverse impact – exacerbated by the fiscal response – on the availability of public funds. European development funding is moving away from old Western Europe to new Eastern Europe and the focus is shifting onto innovation and research.

All these challenging new circumstances have to be managed to best advantage, but the changes in governance since 2005 have been almost as profound and perhaps have the more radical effect on the nature and positioning of this document.

Against this background the formulation of improved means of securing practical progress is essential.

What is now required, we are convinced, is a document that is not simply a strategy or a „road map“ – although it must be both – but the frame work for a methodology. This must be a guide that does not just point the way but that

describes a system by which action and actors can be identified, and resources explored and committed, to ensure that strategic objectives are delivered and their relevance reviewed in a cyclical way.

This reality was recognised from the outset and explains the Steering Group's choice of the description „development and action plan“ and the decision to major on the consultation involved in its preparation, built round the Sutherland Summit and the associated satellite meetings - the biggest popular consultation exercise conducted in Sutherland in living memory.

Attended by two Scottish Ministers, Jim Mather and Roseanna Cunningham, the summit held in Lairg on 14 September 2009¹ also effectively engaged the Scottish Government in a strategic reflection that will be completed only with the presentation of this plan to Ministers.

Together with the four subsequent satellite consultations held in Lochinver, Bettyhill, Golspie and Bonar Bridge, and two meetings with Agencies and other stakeholders, the Summit has provided the inspiration and reality tests upon which this plan is founded.

2.3 A Brief Snapshot of Sutherland aspirations

Some „headline“ aspirations provide a flavour of the discourse at the Summit and in subsequent meetings.

- Capitalise on excellent natural, cultural and human resource of Sutherland
- Support increased employment, prosperity and a stronger private sector economy, social enterprises and business start-ups
- Improve population demographics, retain or attract young people, and address apparent constraints to this - availability of housing, good jobs, services, training and education
- Improve the „package“ - connect tourism, food & drink, culture music and arts, outdoor recreation, environment - and create a stronger regional identity for Sutherland
- Improve and develop transport and social infrastructure and services, as a partnership between service providers and communities
- Support changes in pattern of land and asset ownership
- Resource and support the voluntary sector

The further development and concretisation of these aspirations gave rise to a list of actions, which were analysed against strategic priorities and discussed with partners to give rise to this development and action plan.

¹ A full report of the Summit is available at www.cvsnorth.co.uk

3. CONTEXT AND STRATEGIC FIT

3.1 The Broad Context

There can be few 5-year periods that have witnessed the emergence of as many extreme issues as the period since 2005

3.1.1 Climate Change

In 2007 the 4th assessment report of the International Panel on Climate Change projected anything from a 1.8C to a 3.4C rise in global temperature and a sea level rise of between 7" and 20" by the end of the century. The fact of global warming is not in dispute only its degree.

This serious situation has to be mitigated at macro regional and global level and so has permeated national and EU strategy in pursuit of sustainable resource management in a low carbon economy. This carries implications for Sutherland that are not all negative. International tourism might be threatened but promotion of the areas carbon sequestration capacity and alternative energy resources offers a new comparative advantage to the county.

3.1.2 Fossil Fuel crisis and Renewable Energy

Low carbon economy strategies have simply reinforced the pressure for renewable energy generated by the reality of finite fossil resources. In the last 150 years the world's population has increased 7 fold and each individual's use of fossil fuel has increased 7 fold.

The EU Climate Action and Renewable Energy Package 2008 targets a reduction of overall emissions to 20% of 1990 level by 2020 and an increase in the share of renewables in energy use to 20% in the same time-frame.² The UK and Scottish governments have both published ambitious strategies to increase the share of energy produced by renewables - in electricity generation, for transport and for heat.³

² EU Renewable Energy Directive 2008 (*reference*)

³ UK Renewable Energy Strategy, launched in July 2009 seeks to increase the UK share of energy produced by renewables by 15% by 2020, 30% of electricity production, 10% of transport energy, and 12% of Heat. The Scottish Climate Change Bill sets targets of

3.1.3 Biodiversity and the reform of the Common Agricultural Policy

The slow but inevitable progress towards reform of the CAP has gained pace not only because of the certain prospect of severe budgetary constraint but also because of the decoupling from production of agricultural support payments. The rationale of the policy is now likely to rely more heavily on the linking of payment to the environmental side - products of farming - the „public goods“ produced by farming as environmentally friendly and biodiversity stimulating land management. CAP changes are a threat to Sutherland because here farming is marginal and economic trauma is likely to provoke land abandonment whereas elsewhere it will simply produce rationalisation of farming activity. On the other hand farming in Sutherland is extensive and extensive farming has been demonstrated to have a positive effect on biodiversity beyond the level of that of unfarmed land.

3.1.4 The Global Financial and Economic Crisis

Public finances, businesses, employment and households will suffer. The pattern may be being set however by the European Union which recognises that cutting public expenditure is inevitable but cuts in forward looking areas like education and research would be counter productive. Support is expected therefore to be concentrated on climate change, mitigation and adaptation, innovation and training.

In the UK and Scottish context reduced public expenditure is inevitable and polarisation of economic activity the most likely feature of a policy in pursuit of a low carbon, knowledge based economy.

The impact of the crisis is already painfully clear in public sector budget cuts and this constraint on public spending is forecast to continue for some years irrespective of the rate of economic recovery. Public sector cuts tend to be more damaging in fragile rural areas because of the typically higher proportion of the economy based on public services and the high cost of public service delivery in rural areas.

By contrast, in the medium term it can be expected that the prolonged lack of funding will encourage local authorities to seek lower cost delivery of services, possibly by delegation to social enterprises thereby raising the prospect of an added stimulus to local economies benefiting from the multiplier impact.

3.2 Strategic Fit

This Plan is not starting with a blank page. In addition to the previous strategies mentioned initially it is informed by and, to be effective, must be consonant with, several existing strategic documents.

In the National Performance Framework⁴ the Scottish Government sets out fifteen National Outcomes for Scotland.

These are:

- We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place for doing business in Europe.
- We realise our full economic potential with more and better employment opportunities for our people.
- We are better educated, more skilled and more successful, renowned for our research and innovation.
- Our young people are successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens.
- Our children have the best start in life and ready to succeed.
- We live longer, healthier lives.
- We have tackled the significant inequalities in Scottish society.
- We have improved the life chances for children, young people and families at risk.
- We live our lives safe from crime, disorder and danger.
- We live in well-designed, sustainable places where we are able to access the amenities and services we need.
- We have strong, resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.
- We value and enjoy our built and natural environment and protect and enhance it for future generations.
- We take pride in a strong, fair and inclusive national identity.
- We reduce the local and global environmental impact of our consumption and production.
- Our public services are high quality, continually improving, efficient and responsive to local people's needs.

The main framework for delivery in Highland is the Highland Single Outcome Agreement (SOA2) which ties the whole area in with the Government's National Outcomes and, perhaps more significantly for Sutherland, provides the means by which the Community Planning Partners agree their strategic priorities. It is with these partners - the Highland Council, NHS Highland, Scottish Natural Heritage, Northern Constabulary, Highlands and Islands Fire & Rescue Service, University

⁴ www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/11/13092240/9

of the Highlands and Islands, Highlands & Islands Enterprise⁵ - and within the parameters of the Single Outcome Agreement that - in the immediate and medium term - this Action and Development plan must be delivered.

Single Outcome Agreement 2

The following local outcomes have been agreed by Community Planning Partners.

1. People across the Highlands have access to the services they need
2. People are, and feel, safe from crime, disorder and danger
3. Our communities take a greater role in shaping their future
4. Public services are delivered effectively, efficiently and jointly
5. Our natural heritage is protected and enhanced enabling it to deliver economic, health and learning benefits
6. Carbon emissions are reduced and communities are protected from the consequences of changing weather patterns
7. The impact of the recession is limited and sustainable economic growth is supported
8. Growth in the knowledge economy is supported by achieving university title for UHI in 3 years
9. To support the economy access is improved to housing, transport and high speed broadband
10. More people are supported into employment
11. Healthy life expectancy is improved especially for the most disadvantaged
12. The health and independence of older people is maximised
13. Attitudes and behaviours towards alcohol and other drugs are changed and those in need are supported by better prevention and treatment services
14. The impact of poverty and disadvantage is reduced
15. The cycle of deprivation is broken through intervention in early years

If the SOA provides the strategic structure within which the plan must nest, the Sutherland Leader Plan for 2008 – 2013 is the operational partner that the plan

⁵ “The Agreement relies on the contributions from other public sector bodies through alignment of strategy and delivery, namely: the Northern Community Justice Authority; Job Centre Plus; Skills Development Scotland, HITRANS; and the Cairngorm National Park Authority.” (The Highland Council, SOA 2)

must accommodate, complement and animate in order to kick start the process of turning aspirations into action.

Similarly, this plan has been prepared in contemplation of the strategies of the principal partners.

The Council's role as the facilitator of the Community Planning Partnership and coordinator of the Highland LEADER Programme makes liaison a priority. The plan must be consistent with the Council's Programme for 2009-2011 and the related Corporate Plan.

Of equal importance is respect for HIE's key strategies. This is particularly important, perhaps, in the case of the critical Fragile areas strategy, where understanding the flexibility of HIE's innovative Community Account Management strategy will be vital. Given the analysis upon which this plan is based, recognition of opportunities presented by the recently launched Integrated Innovation Strategy and HIE's whole suite of new key sector strategies - creative industries, energy, finance and business services, food and drink, life sciences, tourism and universities - is also important. Each of these fields is significant to the medium and long-term delivery of the objectives.

Other public sector partners who have been consulted and whose strategies are relevant include Scottish Natural Heritage, Forestry Commission Scotland, the Crofters Commission, NHS Highland, Skills Development Scotland, Visit Scotland and UHI.

3.2.1 Local Strategic Fit

In addition to the previous strategy documents prepared by Sutherland Partnership, it must also be recognised that other community-based and partnership strategies and plans either pre-date or run alongside this plan.

In the first category are a number of area development plans: Duthchas - North Sutherland Area Strategy (2001), Kinlochbervie Development Plan (2004), A Strategy for Caithness and North Sutherland (2006). These strategies have frequently highlighted development potential which has been picked up in future actions and strategic plans.

Current plans and strategies which fit with this document include the North West Highland Geopark Development & Action Plan 2009-12 and the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership Action Plan 2007-10.

In addition there are numerous local action plans in place and initiatives underway which are relevant to the direction of the Sutherland Development and Action

Plan. These include development initiatives under MacKay Country and the Durness Development Group, the East Sutherland Woodland Project, the Lairg and District Initiatives, the Kyle of Sutherland Initiative as well as many groups working on local development issues right across Sutherland.

4. AREA PROFILE

4.1 Population

The statistics for the area were well-discussed in the LEADER Development Plan for Sutherland 2008-13 from which some of the analysis below is drawn.

The area covered by the Sutherland Partnership is slightly bigger than the former County of Sutherland and is made up of two administrative Highland Council wards. These are the North, West & Central Sutherland ward and the East Sutherland and Edderton ward. For ease, we will refer to Sutherland throughout this plan and unless otherwise stated, this will be taken to mean the combined area of the two wards.

The total population of Sutherland is 13,401⁶. This is approximately 6% of the total population of Highland and 0.26% of the population of Scotland. Sutherland covers an area of 6376 sq Km, which is roughly one quarter of the Highland area or 8% of Scotland. It is a sparsely populated area with the population density being slightly over 1 person per sq km in the north west⁷, making it one of the most sparsely populated areas of Europe.

Sutherland has an ageing population with a low proportion of children and high proportions in the over-50 age group. Despite the ageing population, the total population has been stable in the North West and has increased slightly in the East since 2001. Many of the older members of the population are very active and involved in community life, and much is being done to enhance the quality of life of older people in the area⁸. However, in spite of this there are risks and demands on services springing from the fact that the proportion of the Sutherland population over 65 is 32% - double the Scottish average.

Population profiles show that the 19-45 age group is under-represented in Sutherland as compared to other parts of Scotland.

4.2 Employment and economy

⁶ Highland Council. Based on GRO(S) estimates, 2008

⁷ Population density in North, West and Central Sutherland is 1.2 persons/sq km and in East Sutherland and Edderton is 5.1 persons/sq km. This is against a Highland figure of 8.3 persons/sq km or a Scottish figure of 66.3 persons/sq km

The public sector and tourism dominate the economy of Sutherland, with the primary sector also particularly important in North, West and Central Sutherland, where agriculture, fisheries and forestry account for 8% of employment.

This ward also demonstrates the highest proportion of self-employed people in Highland, at 24%. The figure is similarly high in East Sutherland and Edderton where 19% of people are self-employed.

The private sector is dominated by micro-businesses. The voluntary sector and social enterprise play a significant role in the economy of Sutherland.

There are a handful of major employers in Sutherland, most of whom are public sector; these include the Highland Council, NHS Highland, HIE, SNH and Forestry Commission Scotland. Public administration, education and health comprise a significant proportion of all jobs – 39% in North, West & Central Sutherland and 37% in East Sutherland and Edderton.

Major private sector employers in Sutherland include Skibo Castle, Essentia and Loch Duart. Harbours in Kinlochbervie and Lochinver provide employment and Dounreay and spin-off industries are major employers of people in North Sutherland and to a lesser extent, the northern part of East Sutherland.

Income from tourism is important in the economy of Sutherland although the seasonal nature of industry gives rise to seasonal unemployment increases in the winter.

The proportion of people classed as employment deprived and income deprived is above the Highland average. Average household incomes⁹ are below the Highland average.

4.3 Fragility

The Highland Council has identified many parts of its area as “fragile”, indicating that they may be in danger of long term decline due to their remoteness, an ageing population, lack of economic opportunity and access to essential services. Seven key indicators have been identified:

- Population decline between 1991 - 2001
- Population decline in 0-15 age group, between 1991 - 2001
- Population density, 2001
- Long term Unemployment Rate, July 2003
- Income Support Claimant Rate, August 2000

⁹ £27,729 in North West and Central Sutherland and £26,964 in East Sutherland and Edderton as against a Highland figure of £30,510 or a Scottish figure of £32,118

- Population outwith 10 minute drive time of 5 key services: Post Office, Primary school, Food shop, Doctor's surgery, Petrol filling station
- Population outwith 1.5 hours drive time of Inverness (main employment and service centre)

The Highland Council does not classify areas as either fragile or not fragile, and all areas of Highland are classified on a sliding scale of 1 (least fragile) to 7 (most fragile).

HIE use different criteria to define fragility (see map). These are:

Geographic

- Islands which lie off other islands and are not linked by a causeway
- A distance of more than 50 miles from a population centre of 5000
- Over 70% of roads are single track

Demographic

- Islands with a population of less than 2,500
- Population density less than the HIE area average (9 persons per sq km)
- More than 20% of the population is of pensionable age
- Population loss between last two censuses
- In-migration of economically active below the HIE average



Economic

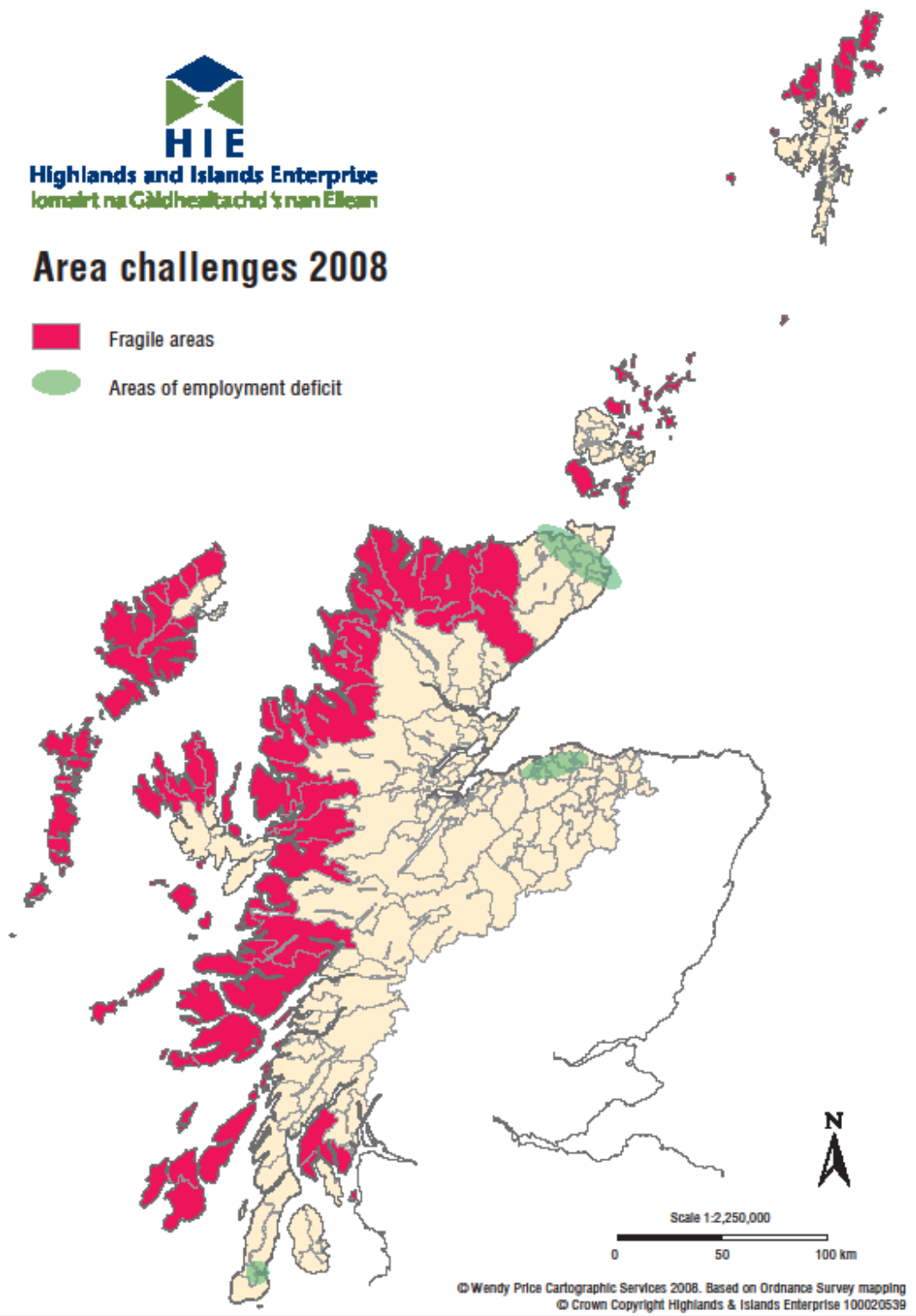
- Economic activity rate below the HIE area average
- High average and/or seasonal unemployment
- Long term unemployment more than 25% above the HIE average
- High dependency on primary sector employment



Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Ionaid na Gàidhealtachd 's nan Eilean

Area challenges 2008

-  Fragile areas
-  Areas of employment deficit



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5. SCENARIO PLANNING

Scenario planning as a technique is often used as a means to make flexible long-term plans or to determine options and priorities for a project, business or region. The study team carried out a scenario planning exercise in an attempt to assess a range of potential options based on our assessment of the key drivers of the economy in the medium term namely :-

- a) The relative strength or weakness of the economy itself and
- b) The extent to which the region responds to the challenge of climate change.

Using these criteria as two “axes” it is possible to create four “worlds” within which the characteristics of Sutherland are described, opportunities and threats are identified, potential priority actions are evolved and the roles of various partners can be highlighted. This particular scenario planning exercise was carried out prior to any of the formal and informal consultation meetings.

The results of the exercise are shown in the table below.

Strong economy/rapid climate change	Weak economy/ Rapid climate change
<p>What does Sutherland look like? - This is a localised economy with a greater awareness of the whole climate change agenda and willingness to address the carbon impact of local actions. Renewable energy and its generation and carbon trading and sequestration become much higher on the agenda. New business opportunities arise from that and there is in-migration of economically active people. Because of water deficits predicted in the rest of Scotland, there is pressure to create and supply water to the rest of Scotland and to generate hydro-power as a result of that. With higher disposable income in a strong economy, the area is still attractive to discerning visitors who recognize the environmental uniqueness of the area and combine</p>	<p>What does Sutherland look like? - This is also a more localized economy although this time because the climate change issues are being addressed for “poverty” reasons; local energy supply chains are developed to satisfy local demand without significant concern for other areas. There is a self sufficiency approach to life and a trend towards growing your own produce, repair and re-use rather than disposal and buy new and this leads to economic opportunities in recycling and repair and maintenance. Tourism polarizes into two extremes. Those who prefer the “cheap and cheerful” approach and who will make the effort to get to a more remote location despite the real high cost of fuel to get there. Those who still have a high disposable income will invest in the</p>

support from public agencies overtly moves	
<p>What are the opportunities and threats in this world?</p> <p>Opportunities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Renewable energy self-sufficiency. Net exporter of energy <input type="checkbox"/> The Lake District of the north-west. Water for all. <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor recreation with joined up routes and experiences to increase visitor stay and spend whilst in the area. <input type="checkbox"/> Up market accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Strong local food presence <input type="checkbox"/> Self help and self sufficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Targeted inward investment 	<p>What are the opportunities and threats in this world?</p> <p>Opportunities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Renewable energy and local self sufficiency <input type="checkbox"/> Value for money accommodation for visitors <input type="checkbox"/> Local food economy but primarily for local consumption
<p>What are the priority actions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration between businesses both within and outwith their immediate sector <input type="checkbox"/> Stronger more collaborative communities <input type="checkbox"/> Renewable energy and water has a strong role to play <input type="checkbox"/> Carbon neutral economy <input type="checkbox"/> Strong development of niche visitor experiences <input type="checkbox"/> Better connected broadband to support new, economically active migrants and existing thriving community <input type="checkbox"/> Shout loudly about the 	<p>What are the priority actions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration between businesses both within and outwith their immediate sector <input type="checkbox"/> Stronger more collaborative communities <input type="checkbox"/> Strengthen and support the volunteer infrastructure to prevent fatigue <input type="checkbox"/> Enable the community to empower local decisions - self-sufficiency issue.
<p>What is the role of the Public Sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate business to business local support group - Chamber of commerce or similar <input type="checkbox"/> Provide marketing support to promote the area within the UK <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure best available broadband technology <input type="checkbox"/> Promote inward investment 	<p>What is the role of the Public Sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate business to business local support group - Chamber of commerce or similar <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure best available broadband technology <input type="checkbox"/> Provide support to enable volunteer structures to continue and deliver

Strong economy/ slow or limited climate change response - World 3	Weak economy/ slow or limited climate
<p>What does Sutherland look like? There is still high disposable income in this world coupled with a slow recognition that climate change is important. Energy is still treated as a disposable commodity and transport is still relatively cheap. The public sector is still the predominant employer in the area and it continues to support the rural infrastructure of schools, medical care and so forth. Those businesses in the area producing niche products are still finding a strong market both in the UK and overseas. As energy costs are relatively low, the area is a destination for visitors from both the UK and overseas, principally by road but also increasingly from cruise vessels in the locality. Those visitors are</p>	<p>What does Sutherland look like? - With low disposable income and a relatively slow response to climate change a higher proportion of residents' incomes would still be diverted to energy costs. Those visiting the area would still do so but would be looking for low cost options in terms of accommodation or eating out. Value for money would be the watchword. The public sector would have limited ability to respond to wider pressures and would concentrate resources where most needed. This would bring general service provision under threat in terms of schools and healthcare and more and more reliance is placed on the voluntary sector to make up for an ineffective "market". The wider environment is not being</p>
<p>What are the opportunities and threats in this world?</p> <p>Opportunities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Outdoor recreation with joined up routes and experiences to increase visitor stay and spend whilst in the area. <input type="checkbox"/> Up market accommodation <input type="checkbox"/> Strong local food presence <input type="checkbox"/> Stronger promotion of the area as an area of outstanding environmental value, but with positive recreational opportunity <input type="checkbox"/> Promotion of the area to overseas visitors <p>Threats:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Energy costs still relatively more expensive than elsewhere 	<p>What are the opportunities and threats in this world?</p> <p>Opportunities:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Value for money accommodation for visitors <p>Threats:-</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Visitor numbers dry up as disposable income reduces and fuel costs still disproportionately high <input type="checkbox"/> Age profile rapidly increases as economically active leave to hub areas

<p>What are the priority actions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration between businesses both within and outwith their immediate sector <input type="checkbox"/> Better connected broadband to support new, economically active migrants and existing thriving community 	<p>What are the priority actions?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Collaboration between businesses largely within the tourism sector <input type="checkbox"/> Provide support to enable volunteer structures to continue and deliver services
<p>What is the role of the Public Sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Facilitate business to business local support group - Chamber of commerce or similar <input type="checkbox"/> Provide marketing support to promote the area within the UK and overseas <input type="checkbox"/> Ensure best available broadband technology 	<p>What is the role of the Public Sector?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Provide support to enable volunteer structures to continue and deliver services <input type="checkbox"/> Fight hard to retain basic services in the area in the face of budget pressures

6. PRIORITIES FOR SUTHERLAND

The scenario planning described in section 5 above can be used to determine strategic priorities for Sutherland's Action and Development Plan. It is reasonable to assume that climate change and the economy will be key drivers for the development of Sutherland in the next decade. If we look across all the "worlds" described in the scenario planning, we can find opportunities and priority actions common to all. These can be considered as the highest priority issues for Sutherland and in practice represent issues that need to be addressed irrespective of which "world" is chosen.

These actions include:

- More effective business to business collaboration
- More collaboration within and between communities

If we assume from the scenario planning that we wish to move from a weak economy with slow climate change response (World 4) to a strong economy with rapid climate change response (World 1), then we need to look to the opportunities, priority actions and role of the public sector in the top left quadrant. These activities will assist the transition to a strong economy with rapid climate change response and form the next level of priority actions for Sutherland:

- Renewable and carbon neutral economy
- Development of niche visitor experiences
- Better connected broadband
- Promotion of Sutherland and all its assets

Moving from these strategic priorities to identification of particular actions involved analysis of the findings of the Sutherland Summit and workshops process and subsequent discussion with the partners of the Sutherland Partnership. Themes were identified and actions developed under each theme, which are discussed in Chapter 7. Key, strategic actions from each theme were highlighted following further discussion and are outlined below.

6.1 Strategic Actions

The strategic actions that we have identified following this process are;

- Information exchange
- Business-to-business cooperation
- Collaboration within the tourism sector
- Signage improvements

- Low-carbon tourism infrastructure
 - „North West Frontier „ – development and promotion of outdoor activities
 - Promotion and marketing of the East Sutherland mountain bike trails as a package
 - Development of surfing infrastructure on the north coast
 - Linking paths around Sutherland coasts to the developing Scottish Coastal Way
 - Development of a cross-Sutherland Clearances trail
- Local food supply chain development
- Resourcing of the NW Highlands Geopark
- Sutherland Archive Development project
- Development of Strathnaver Heritage site
- Delivery of actions in the Transport Vision for Sutherland
- Supporting community aspirations for sports, leisure and community facilities
- Promotion of a greater role for communities in service design
- Development of local solutions to housing need
- Supporting development of new crofts
- Exploring the potential for „the Hydrogen Highway“ - hydrogen and renewably-generated electric transport in Sutherland

7. KEY THEMES

This section sets out key areas for action identified through the consultation process. Some themes contain significant numbers of actions for further development, others only one or two. A key point to note, however, is the interconnectedness of these themes and the actions within them.

7.1 Information Exchange

It is clear that many of the actions sought by participants in the Summit and follow-up meetings are already underway, delivering or coming close to delivering the outcomes sought. It is also clear that many people are unaware of the scope and scale of what is already going on and there is no completely clear overview of who is doing what. Opportunities to collaborate and share both resources and good practice may be being missed.

Action to improve communication and information exchange is a priority to encourage the exchange and publicising of information on projects and initiatives.

7.2 Business Development and connectivity

Significant support already exists for business advice, start-up guidance and mentoring. The current economic climate makes the provision of physical infrastructure difficult to achieve in the short / medium term. A focus on business-to-business collaboration and networking across and within sectors will provide scope for development of initiatives. Development of skills, the availability of mentoring support and promotion of apprenticeships in all sectors, including creative industries, were felt likely to have positive outcomes.

The need for development of local tourism networks to feed into regional marketing and promotion was particularly highlighted as a way to enhance the tourism offering.

7.3 Tourism Development

Actions under this theme aim to increase visitor numbers and spend through the development of an increasingly sophisticated approach to tourism, recognising the role of special interest niche markets and the importance of high-quality well-targeted provision, particularly in the shoulder months.

Against a backdrop of rising fuel prices, the development of low carbon tourism infrastructure is particularly important in this very rural and dispersed area. The focus on the natural assets of the county for tourism – a world-class environment, exceptional geology, walking, surfing, mountain biking, seas and coasts, history,

music and heritage – must be allied with measures to improve and promote public transport and facilitate access on foot and by bicycle to attractions in Sutherland

7.4 Food and Drink

Sutherland has a fantastic natural larder – beef, lamb, venison, salmon, sea fish and shellfish produced here can compete with the best. Increasing interest in the provenance, health and quality of food offers great potential for Sutherland producers to capitalise on the attributes of food production in the area. In an era when livestock farming is struggling in much of Sutherland the need to boost returns by local value-adding has never been more timely, or in fact, more in tune with the times.

7.5 Natural Resources

Sutherland has a wealth of natural resources on which to build. The geological richness of the Geopark offers significant tourism potential while woodland and timber resources can contribute to low-carbon housing and renewable heat energy as well as enhancing landscapes and biodiversity. Tides, waves and wind and water offer a range of opportunities for renewable energy generation. Collaborative development of markets for high quality agricultural produce has the scope to support and retain land use activity in Sutherland.

7.6 Education, Training and Lifelong Learning

The importance of access to locally-provided education and training was raised throughout the consultation. The provision of adult education through the Learning Centre Network and the increasing range and scope of courses available through UHI were highlighted as having potential to bring people to the area as well as enable local young people to gain skills and knowledge while remaining in their own communities. New developments under this theme relate to specialist provision – a gaelic learning centre, development of forest and environmental skills and potential for varied residential courses to attract people to the area.

7.7 Culture, Heritage and Arts

Sutherland has a rich culture and heritage and a thriving, though relatively small-scale arts and crafts industry. Measures under this theme aim to build on the historical and pre-historic and cultural richness of the area, increase opportunities for learning and playing music, and support the arts and craft network. The potential to bring visiting artists, actors, musicians and craftspeople to Sutherland to learn, teach and inspire was highlighted as an opportunity with well-being as well as economic and employment benefits.

Development of a centre for Sutherland archives and the connected development of the Strathnaver heritage were identified as priorities under this theme.

7.8 Community Facilities and Services

Several years ago, the Sutherland Partnership Transport Group published a Transport Vision for Sutherland, almost of all of which remains current and suggests solutions for the many transport infrastructure issues raised during the Summit process. Support for the development of actions in this Vision, recognising the long-term nature of some, is a priority action under this theme.

The empowerment of communities – of place and interest – to design public services to suit their needs has current strong political support. Measures to facilitate this process are underway in some sectors. This approach offers scope for significant further development.

Almost every community in Sutherland has views and plans on the types of facilities needed in their immediate area. From multi-use sports halls to youth cafes and cinema/performance space, each community should be supported in their aspirations.

Housing need, particularly in some smaller communities, may be addressed in the short/medium term by local processes bringing together housing specialists, the community and those with access to and control over land. This approach has worked on an *ad hoc* basis in some communities and may merit wider use.

7.9 Young People

A key component of this plan is to improve the age structure of Sutherland's population and encourage young people to stay, return or settle in the area. This requires access to facilities, services, employment and housing opportunities. The development of outdoor recreation facilities and connecting transport builds on the strengths of the area and has the potential to benefit young and old, local and visitor alike. Access to crofts and to affordable homes is another key strand developed under this theme.

7.10 A Greener Future

Exploration of an innovative idea to power vehicles from purely renewable sources is a top priority in this theme along with development of greater community benefit from renewable energy. Enhancement of habitat networks and enjoyment and celebration of the natural heritage also feature in actions under this theme.

7.11 A Voice for Sutherland

This element of the Action Plan does not contain actions *per se* but rather issues on which representation of Sutherland's interests to policy makers is of significant importance. The list is far from exhaustive and will be subject to regular as policy evolves and develops.

8. TIMESCALES FOR ACTION

Through the process of wide consultation with communities and agencies a long list of projects and actions emerged. This section describes the process of identifying those projects of strategic importance, those which would take off in the short term and should be prioritised for immediate action and those which will take longer to develop.

The Action Plan forms Annex 1 of this document. Actions are listed by theme – there are 11 in total – which demonstrate, as is to be expected, considerable overlap. Within these 11 themes, we have identified actions as follows:

- Strategic projects
- 3year – viable short-term projects
- 5 year – priority projects to be adopted and actioned over the next 5 yrs
- 10 year – longer term aspirations
- initiatives that are already underway

A number of the issues raised during the consultation process are those that lie out-with the control of communities and agencies, but where developments and changes may impact on Sutherland to varying degrees. Examples are Scottish Government and European decisions on future agricultural support, local taxation and fuel policy and major road projects. We have reflected these as issues on representation from Sutherland stakeholders will be important.

8.1 Strategic Projects

As outlined above, strategic projects were arrived at through a combination of our scenario planning and analysis, a review of strategic context and actions discussed with stakeholders throughout the Summit process. Many of these actions are challenging and may take some significant time to accomplish.

8.2 Viable Short-Term Projects - 3 year time-frame

Further strategic analysis and distillation of the projects provided a short list of priority actions that had a good strategic fit and were desired by the communities of Sutherland. The next step was to identify ownership of individual projects and tasks to ensure delivery was not only possible but probable within the 3 year period set as the short term vision for the plan.

These projects and actions are listed at the beginning of each theme. These are projects which have

- Community support

- Strategic Fit
- Ownership to drive delivery

8.3 Priority Projects to be Adopted and Actioned - 5 year timeframe

It is important at this point to highlight that there are other projects and issues which are viewed as community and strategic priorities, but at this moment do not have individual ownership or the required level of key partner buy-in to guarantee delivery at least in the short term. These medium term priorities are listed next and will be revisited regularly with a view to progressing as soon as practicable.

8.4 Longer Term Aspirations - 10 year timeframe

As mentioned there is a long list of „wished for“ projects that emerged from the consultation exercise and it is important that they are properly captured and recorded and stay within the consciousness of those charged with delivery and implementation of the Plan. These appear next in each theme in Annex 1.

8.5 Initiatives already underway

It became clear through discussion that many of the potential projects and actions highlighted were already under discussion, the subject of a funding bid, or substantially underway. Rather than lose sight of these it was decided to reflect them at the bottom of each theme.

9. RESOURCES

The majority of projects and actions identified within this plan require some level of resourcing. This section highlights some of the main funding opportunities available, without attempting to include all possible sources. Likewise this section does not attempt to reflect the budget allocations of Sutherland Partnership partner organisations.

Besides investment in the area under the Highland Council's principal budget heads and the ward allocations, elements of the main stream budgets of Highlands and Islands Enterprise, and other agencies such as Scottish Natural Heritage, Sutherland has access to truly additional finance from several EU funded sources including perhaps most significantly from the county's perspective:

Structural Funds

The Scotland Rural Development Plan

LEADER

The Northern Periphery Programme (Interreg)

Examples of further relevant funding avenues include other Interreg Programmes – the North Sea Programme¹⁰ the Atlantic Area Programme¹¹ and the North West Europe Programme¹² – and the Seventh Framework Programme for research and technological development (FP7) – that can be accessed through e.g. UHI, other public or private research institutes and private companies.

9.1 Structural Funds

Sutherland can access support from the Highlands and Islands European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) Programme¹³ and the European Social Fund (ESF) Programme¹⁴ which have economic development as a primary focus. Large amounts of funding committed to date have been on regional or national priorities.

Eligible applicants (voluntary organisations or charitable trusts or an organisation that receives more than 50% of its revenue from public sources) can bid into any one of the three priorities of the ERDF or ESF Programmes.

¹⁰ www.northsearegion.eu/ivb/home,

¹¹ www.interreg-atlantique.org/eng

¹² www.nweurope.eu

¹³ www.hipp.org.uk/programmes-erdf.asp

¹⁴ www.hipp.org.uk/programmes-esf.asp

ERDF funds have been allocated to HIE Strategic Delivery Body Programme- from Priority 1 - and to UHI Strategic Delivery Body Programme from Priority 2.

Within its eligible activities, Priority 2 provides support to enable the regions cultural, linguistic and historical heritage to be developed and marketed in support of the regions cultural industries and tourism. There is also support available for projects that develop new products and services based on the regions natural heritage that benefit key sectors, including tourism; and support for projects that enhance visitor experience, e.g. interpretive facilities.

There are a number of activities identified in this Plan that could potentially be supported under this priority, e.g. heritage management, footpath & cycle trails, potentially some of the North Highland College UHI projects and local interpretation and promotion of natural & cultural heritage.

From Priority 3, the programme has allocated substantial funding over a 4 year period for Community Planning purposes in the Highland Council Area from Priority 3 - „Enhancing sustainable growth of peripheral and fragile communities.“

In respect of Priority 3 a relaxation of the eligibility rules is possible allowing local projects of sufficient scale that do not necessarily coincide precisely with the detailed provisions of a measure nevertheless to be approved if they are community supported and demonstrate community regeneration potential.

Any eligible applicant can bid into the ERDF programme to access residual funding. Bids need to be led by an eligible authority: groups can be sponsored or under the umbrella of a bigger project. Projects of a reasonable size, i.e. requiring a funding commitment from Structural Funds of at least £100K, are sought. Projects can be funded up to 40% to 45% - in exceptional circumstances possibly more -with match-funding from public or public-like sources. Applications for renewable energy and tourism related projects are particularly encouraged.

Outcomes, rather than activity, determine eligibility for funding support.

Structural Funds

Projects have to demonstrate the extent to which they will add value without requiring long term support from a reducing public purse.

Funds not only support Capital investments, they can be used to support business activities and provide Revenue assistance over two to three years. Opportunities are also available to support training, retraining and up-skilling using ESF.

Consideration should given to how a package might be established that allows one element to build on and support the other.

For example the Island of Coll, a young and dynamic community with a demand for pre- school accommodation, training facilities and other community amenities. The community is currently developing a “village hub” which is being made sustainable by the addition of bunkhouse accommodation providing a revenue stream for nine months of the year. Or on Orkney where ERDF is supporting redevelopment of key buildings of local historic importance to stimulate the local economy, with a parallel ESF project supporting training for local contractors to develop additional skills in traditional building practices to allow them to carry out work on these sensitive buildings.

~~The process can be quite challenging but the benefits are significant and long term. From small beginnings - the environmental research institute and North Highland College, a small, one person and building project in 1997, now the most prestigious research facility in the Highlands and Islands.~~

9.1.1 Support to SMEs

HIE SDP Programme covers a selection of the measures set out at Priority 1 of the H&I ERDF Programme - „Enhancing business competitiveness, commercialisation and innovation“

In principle SMEs must demonstrate their capacity to grow in order to achieve account managed status at their local Area office. This can cover commercialisation of research and development.

Prima facie a group of local SME s working together on an innovation would be more attractive than a single company.

9.1.2 Support to Social Enterprises

HISEZ (Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone) act as the delivery agent for HIE's action on Social Enterprise which is the main plank of their Strengthening Communities Strategy

HISEZ has an existing allocation of ERDF funding to assist building Social Enterprise capacity and is seeking more for delivery.

9.2 Scotland Rural Development Programme 2007-2013.

The Scotland Rural Development Programme (SRDP)¹⁵ is a £1.6 billion outcome-focused programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland. The five principal outcomes supported by the SRDP are business viability and competitiveness; water quality; adaptations to mitigate climate change; biodiversity and landscapes and thriving rural communities.

The SRDP brings together a wide range of formerly separate support schemes including those covering the farming, forestry and primary processing sectors, rural enterprise and business development, diversification and rural tourism. It includes measures to support and encourage rural communities and delivers the LEADER initiative for local innovation in rural areas. Measures are delivered through:

- Crofting Counties Agricultural Grant Scheme
- Food Processing, Marketing and Co-operation Grant Scheme
- Forestry Commission Challenge Funds
- The LEADER initiative
- Less Favoured Area Support Scheme
- Rural Development Contracts – Land Managers Options and Rural Priorities
- Skills Development Scheme

Individuals and groups may seek support to help deliver the Government's strategic objectives in rural Scotland.

Of these, CCAGS, the Less Favoured Areas Support Scheme and RDC-Land Managers Options are available only to land managers. The Skills Development Scheme and the Food Processing, Marketing and Co-operation Grant Scheme are, as their names suggest, focused on particular outcomes for rural development.

¹⁵ www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/farmingrural/SRDP

The principal integrated funding mechanism, covering a broad range of activity, is the RDC-Rural Priorities. It delivers support under three axes:

- Axis 1 - improving the competitiveness of agriculture and forestry by supporting restructuring, development and innovation.
- Axis 2 - improving the environment and the countryside by supporting land management.
- Axis 3 - improving the quality of life in rural areas and encouraging diversification of economic activity.

The scheme contributes to the delivery of the Scottish Government's strategic objectives through regional priorities, agreed with stakeholders for each of the 11 regions, of which Highland is one. Applications in Highland are assessed by the Highland Regional Proposal Assessment Committee (RPAC). The scheme is delivered jointly by SGRPID, SNH and FCS through area offices.

9.3 LEADER

The LEADER Programme is the European Commission's model for bottom up delivery of local integrated rural development and has passed through three free standing generations - LEADER I, LEADER II and LEADER + - to its present position as the principal delivery system identified under Priority 4 of the EC Rural Development Regulation and as such it is part of the Scotland Rural Development Programme. The principle aims of LEADER are

- *to revitalise communities and*
- *to promote progressive rural economies.*

The LEADER Development Plan for Sutherland prepared by the Sutherland Partnership which this Action and Development will subsume within it, is clearly the most relevant LEADER document, and that in turn sits within the Highland LEADER Programme¹⁶ overseen by a single Highland LAG.

9.4 Northern Periphery Programme

The Northern Periphery Programme is an EU transnational co-operation programme embracing the Highlands and Islands and Dumfries and Galloway in Scotland, Greenland, Iceland, Faeroes, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Northern Ireland, Western Ireland. This programme provides a real opportunity which however requires the establishment of a project including partners from at least

¹⁶ www.highlandleader.com/content/download/17505

two of the other participating States. The recommended starting point, however, is an application for a preparatory project which requires only a partner from one other participating State. This can provide up to €30K funding to explore the feasibility of a project, collect partners and develop content.

Northern Periphery Programme

Currently emphasised aspects of the Programme which might fit with projects identified in Sutherland include;

- In Priority 1, in the Objective "To promote competitiveness by increasing and developing the capacity for innovation and networking in rural and peripheral areas" the theme:

- i) exchange of best practice and establishment of cooperation networks between R&D institutions and SMEs to increase the capacity for innovation, facilitate the design of innovation systems (i.e. design of support mechanisms) and strengthen competitiveness in collaboration between different stakeholders

Recent interpretation makes it clear that innovation in this measure can include the identification of good examples of practice elsewhere and the „import□ of these existing solutions into the programme area

- In Priority 1, in the Objective " To facilitate development through the use of advanced information and communication technologies and transportation in the programme area" the theme:

- i) increased use of ICT to overcome distance

For example a service currently delivered face to face may be delivered in a distributed way by ICT – i.e. using ICT to deliver not only new but existing products and services.

In Priority 2, in the Objective " To improve sustainable development in peripheral regions by strengthening urban-rural relations (*towns and their neighbouring rural areas*) and enhancing regional heritage" the themes:

ii) Urban -rural partnerships for new service solutions

This is about small towns which have different kinds of service solutions to their surrounding population - Post, Bank, Pharmacy, Health care provision, Children day care and other public services. Is there a request for a better provision of this service to different target groups? Have the demographic challenges and changes demand other ways of providing the services to different target groups?

iii) private, public and voluntary sectors cooperation and networks to develop new and innovative service solutions for remote and peripheral regions

Here it is suggested that Scotland has much good practice to share in Voluntary sector delivery that could also be a models for developing service provision in fields which are not currently considered their province.

iv) promotion of natural and cultural heritage that supports the development of sustainable industries

Preference is given to projects which include partners from academic institutes, the public sector and the private sector.

10. IMPLEMENTATION STRUCTURE

10.1 A word from the floor

Participants at the Sutherland Summit identified, in the Minister-led mind-mapping exercise, a number of principles for the implementation of the Development and Action Plan and delivery of the actions contained within it.

Principal among these were the recognition that a partnership approach is vital. That partnership must include Government and all its agencies in a concerted and sustained effort to revitalise the economy of Sutherland. Green principles must be at the heart of all actions.

These efforts should harness and value the passion of those who care about Sutherland and in recognition of the existing good work – much of it on a voluntary basis - taking place in many fora, should value, support and build upon actions already underway.

It should also be acknowledged that Sutherland is not alone and that „cross-border“ collaboration, to avoid duplication and share resources is imperative. Care must be taken to avoid a loss of Sutherlands identity.

In an area as large and diverse as Sutherland, the spread of development effort across the area must be a fundamental principle to enable each area to take advantage of different opportunities and address different challenges in each locality.

10.2 Internal Coherence - external collaboration

The theme that pervades this plan is quality: the exceptional quality of Sutherland’s assets – world-class geology, archaeology, ecology, and outdoor sports environment and the quality of the people of Sutherland evidenced by the commitment of its third sector and the enthusiastic response from all to the extensive consultation which has provided the plan’s foundation.

Without doubt Sutherland has sufficient distinctive attributes, culture and history to sustain an independent identity and generate a brand that could itself become a significant asset. But the reality of Sutherland’s status as the most sparsely populated county of the UK demands an exceptional robust and efficient coordination of its far-flung communities of place and fragile communities of interest.

The parallel reality that Sutherland must face as a result of this uniqueness is the imperative to collaborate with interests outside its boundaries in order to achieve

almost any of its objectives. It is a simple fact that parts of the county are within the Dounreay travel-to-work area and to that considerable extent the futures of Sutherland and Caithness are bound together. The situation has been tellingly acknowledged by the establishment of the Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership and the North Highland Initiative – both initiatives that offer real opportunities for Sutherland. Looking in the opposite direction, undoubtedly a major current vehicle for sustainable development in the West is the North West Highland Geopark that straddles Wester Ross and North West Sutherland. It can be seen therefore that this variable geometry of Sutherland is not only inevitable but presents considerable benefits.

The success of this plan will in consequence depend heavily on the adoption of reinforced internal coordination and the determined pursuit of external collaboration opportunities as the major priority of the partners.

The practical arrangements required to secure this are discussed next.

10.3 Tripartite Delivery

The effective delivery of the plan entails three distinct but interdependent tasks.

First in time and priority is the provision of project animation, development and community facilitation expertise to ensure that precious deserving initiatives are brought forward correctly and not then lost for want of formal design and presentation. HIE proposals for a network of Local Development Officers, development officers supported by wind-farm funds and Highland Council proposals to create a Community Development Scheme on top of the existing support role played by VG-ES and CVS North may, to a significant extent, satisfy this need.

Then there is the quite different and fundamentally important role of providing leadership and strategic coordination of the flagship projects of the area.

Finally the task of promotion and articulation of the Sutherland perspective must be addressed. Often described and sometimes condemned as the „lobbying“ role, this function is nevertheless essential, particularly to legitimately influence and inform the formulation of the range of public authority/agency strategies reviewed earlier in the plan that affect most directly Sutherland’s prospects of sustainable prosperity.

It seems clear that the Sutherland Partnership have resource that can very effectively be directed to performance of these tasks, but it is our judgment that additional resource must be found if all three actions are to be adequately addressed - in particular the major project leadership and lobbying roles. This

augmented effort might be secured by appointment, secondment or assumption of responsibility by identified staff of a Partner agency/authority.

We would also recommend that the Sutherland Partnership be extended to include those key stakeholder entities not currently represented but whose participation is essential to the effective delivery of the Action and Development Plan or that some reformulated alliance involving the Sutherland Partnership be devised to achieve this more comprehensive vehicle for delivery of this plan.

10.4 Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation arrangements for this Plan must be effective, not unduly onerous and sufficiently regular to address any emerging problems. At the same time, there must be scope for this plan to grow and develop iteratively, through periodic review.

We therefore recommend that a review takes place every six months, to monitor the progress of new actions undertaken through this plan and only once they have been adopted and progress is being made. „Sleeping actions“, i.e. those which have not currently been adopted will be not be subject to this 6-monthly review. Existing actions, i.e. those identified in this document as „already underway“ are subject to the internal monitoring processes of the organisations responsible for them and likewise should not be subject of this 6-monthly review.

At least every eighteen months, there should be a review to revisit and refresh all the actions in the plan – including those currently unstarted or „sleeping“ and those which are identified as being already underway in this plan.

A monitoring group should be established with representatives of delivery partners.

11. COMMUNICATION

This Action and Development Plan is innovative in its genesis and approach – from the outset it has involved Scottish Government Ministers, political representatives of all levels and all parties, public sector organisations tasked with delivery of services in the area and the people, businesses and voluntary organisations of Sutherland.

As such, it has a big constituency and has generated a lot of interest and a lot of expectation. The Plan, the outcomes desired from it and the actions which subsequently take place and develop under its banner need to be communicated to Government, to the people of Sutherland and at every level between to show how working together can deliver positive outcomes.

ANNEX 1

THEME 1 - INFORMATION EXCHANGE

3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	<p>Consider and scope demand for interactive map-based resource to identify and provide information and links to projects and initiatives which are under way.</p> <p>Consider and discuss with private sector and other organisations the extent to which this could or should also highlight facilities, businesses, attractions and services.</p>	<p>CVS North, VG-ES</p>	<p>Online audit and mapping resource makes information on projects & initiatives already underway accessible and easily updatable</p>	<p>Scottish Rural Network website lists info about projects / events Caithness.org has business listings THC has Council services Community websites provide some local info VS and NHT websites links to accommodation / attractions Sutherland Partnership website has info on key sectors and partner initiatives CVS North and VG-ES websites connect to voluntary sector services</p> <p>Other relevant websites with information - FES/ FSB / SCF / NFUS / Hi-Arts Facebook groups in existence - „Sutherland" and „Mackay Country"</p>	<p>3,4,7</p>

THEME 2 - BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support the creation or development of groups and networks to stimulate business-to-business co-operation.	Caithness Chamber, Business Gateway, THC,	Greater networking and co-operation between Sutherland businesses leads to increase profitability	Caithness Chamber is keen to make a presentation to the business community in Sutherland to discuss what the Chamber is doing in Caithness and what it can be doing in Sutherland to help Sutherland businesses.	7
	Support the creation of networks of local tourism operators, to provide a local focus to connect with regional and Scottish tourism promotion through Visit Scotland and North Highland Tourism.	THC, VS, NHT, SP	Local character and uniqueness is better reflected in larger campaigns. Very local collaboration allows for local development of events, signage and information provision	Ullapool Tourism Business Association may offer a potential model. Fife Council recently commissioned work to identify the structures required to facilitate local tourism associations which would feed into larger structures. North Highland Tourism operates across Caithness, Sutherland and Ross-shire and works closely with Visit Scotland.	7
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Encourage businesses to benefit from availability of p/t UHI students available for work placements	UHI, SP	Collaboration benefits business and provides experience for student		7, 10

5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Develop skills register – to highlight locally available skills		Good knowledge of skills available locally	Highlighted in particular in relation to IT and web-design services.	7
	Consider training and apprenticeship needs and aspirations in the creative sector		Skills for the creative sector can be gained in Sutherland	The desire of creative industries to provide training places was highlighted.	7, 10
10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support the provision of industrial units/sites, incubator units and workshop space		Local availability of business / industrial units and sites	Whilst demand is evident, resources to implement this action will be an issue for the foreseeable future.	7
	Promote interests of small businesses in the public tendering process and encourage consistency in evaluation criteria across all public bodies	Caithness Chamber, FSB	Public tenders accessible to small businesses and evaluation criteria consistent	Framework agreement for small businesses agreed by the Highland Council	7
	Work to encourage the locating of computer servers and data centres in Sutherland		Energy is used close to where it is generating, increasing economic activity	Caithness and North Sutherland Regeneration Partnership have this as longer term aspiration, connected to development of marine energy in Pentland Firth	7
	Support light and heavy engineering and industrial development through assistance with premises, skills & plant		Existing businesses in this sector are supported to expand. Start-ups are facilitated.		7
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit

	Continue to monitor and review the availability of land zoned for industrial development - action as required.	THC	Sites available for heavy and light industry	This forms part of the statutory planning process. Regular opportunities exist to input to the development of local plans.	7
	Review opportunities for re-development of unused and underused building.		Local availability of business / industrial units and sites	Highland Council has information on this.	7
	Continue the promotion of Sutherland to business investors and entrepreneurs	HIE	More businesses operating in Sutherland, providing more jobs	HIE supports business growth in Sutherland.	7
	Continue to support and mentor existing businesses and start-ups	Business Gateway, HIE	Resilient, well-informed businesses and new starts.	HIE is focusing on a number of businesses and social enterprises in Sutherland. This focused effort is intended to support growth in the companies and social enterprises in the county and deliver economic growth. Business Gateway provide advice and support to smaller and growing businesses. Inverness Chamber of Commerce provides a mentoring scheme. View expressed that mentoring is particularly important in the hospitality sector	7
	Promote availability of modern apprenticeships		Young people have an opportunity to train in Sutherland		10

	Continue to improve access to IT and VC equipment and facilities	THC, UHI,	IT and VC equipment readily available locally for business and for learning	Access to VC facilities through UHI hubs. SEARS offices provide access to IT facilities for online applications & submissions Highland Libraries provide public access to IT facilities	7, 9
	Continue to improve IT connectivity right across Sutherland	HIE	Faster broadband available to all. Bi-directional broadband allows web-based businesses to locate in the area.	North Coast exchanges in the process of being upgraded	9

THEME 3 – TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Develop and improve signage through community process to identify key sites and routes. Improve information on brown signs, especially the John o' Groats to Ullapool route		Better information and promotion of Sutherland to visitors	THC working on Iconic Signage Examples of number of groups working with VS, THC to update brown sign information relevant to a particular place / attraction	3, 7
	Promote East Sutherland Mountain Bike trails as a linked package (Highland Wildcat Trails at Golspie and FES trails at Balblair and Carbisdale)	Highland Wildcat, FES, VS, NHT	Network of MTB trails provides sufficient interest to encourage committed and recreational bikers to the area.	VS produces Scottish Mountain Biking Guide FES promotes MTB trails via website and literature Highland Wildcat stimulates articles and reviews in specialist and general media	7, 5
	Support exploration of development of Scottish Coastal Way routes - connecting walks and paths along Sutherland coasts	SNH	Sutherland promoted as a walking location Connect to national networks and routes	SNH leading a partnership developing the Scottish Coastal Way THC priority for assistance where committed local support exists	3, 5, 7
	Explore development of low-carbon tourism – travel, food, activities, off-setting.		Low carbon tourism decreases dependence on fossil fuel and puts Sutherland tourism industry in strong position	Bike Bus runs daily Inverness – Lochinver. Interreg project TARGET, ran in Yorkshire and Humber and focused on low carbon tourism	5, 6, 7
	Support development of a Clearances/genealogy trail, (e.g. Badbea, Ceann a Beinne, Rossal, Strathnaver, Croick, Ben Bhraggie,	MacKay Country, UHI, Timespan,	Build on historical and cultural resources of Sutherland to attract Highland diaspora.	Strathnaver Museum & NSCFT proposing links between museum and Rossal forest. Timespan has interpretation &	3, 5, 7

	Timespan, Peat & seaweed roads). Develop interpretation, art and events based round trail. Facilitate use of trail by public transport, those walking and on bikes	Strathnaver Museum, NSCFT.		information. Durness DG provided interpretation at Ceann a Beinne MacKay Country archive will be based in Strathnaver Scope for collaboration with UHI History Centre in Dornoch	
	Support provision of basic facilities for surfers along North Coast - changing cabin, hot shower, car park		Increased number of surfers boosting the economy of North Sutherland	Log cabin at Strathy is used as changing shelter and appreciated by surfers. Lack of car parking can cause tensions at some breaks	5, 7
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support development of MTB facilities and networking of existing routes, including development of skills area; provision of „basecamp" hub; linking, waymarking and mapping existing paths and tracks	Highland Wildcat, Sutherland Estate, FES	Network of MTB trails and cycle paths provides sufficient interest to encourage committed and recreational bikers to the area.	Opportunities exist to connect up existing MTB trails with cross-country tracks and to develop woodland and coastal cycling Local youngsters training with Scottish and GB MTB teams	3, 5, 7
	Encourage increased facilities for bike transport on Far North railway line	FES	Greener travel by visitors to the area	Current transport options allow 2 bikes per train	6, 7
	Investigate interest in provision of a „bike bus" to connect with Golspie MTB trails from villages across Sutherland		Access to facilities is enhanced for local residents. Travel is greener		5, 6
	Support local promotion and servicing of „virtual" long-distance walking routes through Sutherland		Sutherland promoted as a walking location	Cape Wrath trail is promoted on www.capewrathtrail.co.uk Sutherland Trail (Lochinver to Tongue) is promoted on	3, 5, 6, 7

				www.sutherlandtrail.co.uk	
	Support re-development of the Fisherman's Mission in Lochinver.		The development of all-weather visitor attraction would provide economic benefit.		7
	Tall Ships 2011 - support Ullapool bid to be host port for the Cruise in Company and if successful consider opportunities for Sutherland to benefit - tours, walks, events, farmers market, accommodation provision		Large visitor numbers over several days	Shore side facilities need to be developed and provided if bid successful. Scope for additional bid from Kinlochbervie or Lochinver if community support would deliver programme of events.	7
5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Develop new MTB trails to add to network in East Sutherland	Highland Wildcat, Sutherland Estate, FES	East Sutherland becomes a national centre for mountain biking	Highland Wildcat has routes surveyed and costed for development of further trails in the Golspie area	3,5,7
	Promote and develop long distance cycle routes and support provision of accommodation along route		Increase number of cyclists making use of Sutherland routes	National Cycle Network / HiTrans have identified route on Lairg - Tongue road LEJoG website promotes route and takes advertising	5, 6,7
	Develop or support development of outdoor events and competitions		Increased use of outdoors for recreation. Visitors attracted to the area, particularly in shoulder months	Cape Wrath Challenges are successful in attracting people to visit and in some cases settle in Durness. An Assynt Triathlon is being developed	5, 7
	Support development of camping/caravan sites where		Visitors have a range of accommodation options	Demand was highlighted particularly in Tongue.	7

	appropriate				
	Support further and collaborative development of wildlife tourism - bird watching, walking, angling, sea fishing		Natural environment of Sutherland is recognised as a fantastic asset for tourism	Opportunities for cetacean watching on north coast Angling opportunities in stocked lochs across Sutherland RSPB promote Forsinard reserve as a visitor attraction	5, 7
	Support improvement of information for visitors - TIC facilities, touchscreen kiosk, online information and signage in settlements - building in local knowledge.		Visitors are more aware of places to go, things to see and availability of activities and accommodation.	Ullapool group piloted touchscreen Some information on NHT and VS sites Some local and village websites provide good tourist information	7
10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Develop harbour and marina facilities, including shore-side, for leisure craft.		Development of shore-side facilities for yachting increases cruising around Sutherland coasts	Melness & Tongue DG proposing development of Melness pier THC / HIE assisted with provision of facilities at Lochinver, Helmsdale, KLB	5, 7
	Explore potential for re-development of old Migdale hospital		Facility benefits Bonar / Ardgay area	Development as a Spa was one suggestion	3
	Consider potential for development of themed trails, based around food, music, crafts, archaeology, history.		High quality tourism experience based round particular interests	Wealth of pre-historic and historic remains at various locations throughout Sutherland, potential hubs in Assynt & Strathnaver	5, 7

				Visual Arts Suther occasionally have Open Studio trail and have developed an innovative virtual trail	
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Mod 2010 - expand potential for Sutherland to benefit	NHT, THC, VS	Sutherland is showcased to visitors from across the Gaeltachd and benefits from autumn tourism boost	Work ongoing to develop fringe events and links into Sutherland	7
	Continue to promote Sutherland along with Caithness and Ross-shire as a single tourism destination, highlighting the special characteristics and attractions of each	NHT, VS, THC	Greater awareness of what Sutherland has to offer, a stronger identity and a better developed tourism product	North Highland Tourism is a membership organisation.	5, 7
	Encourage development of facilities & services desired by MTB and cycling visitors, especially provision of bunkhouse accommodation	Highland Wildcat	Improved package encourages greater use	HIE and Highland Wildcat have run workshops to highlight types of accommodation and storage etc facilities sought	7
	Promote North Highland ports and develop Sutherland „package" to the cruise ship market.	THC, NHT, Geopark	Increase visitor numbers and spend in Sutherland	Work underway to attract ships to Ullapool and at Scrabster harbours. Geopark are working to encourage visitors to come north of Ullapool	5, 7
	Develop and promote linked pass for Sutherland golf courses	THC, NHT, VS	Improve ease and attractiveness of golfing package	THC employ a Golf Development officer	7
	Encourage continuous improvement in quality of accommodation and	VS, UHI, THC,	High quality tourism offering raises reputation	UHI facility in Dornoch provides hospitality training	7

	dining, through training, quality assurance, encouragement of entrepreneurship, and provision of information on market trends & expectations	NHT	of Sutherland and encourages repeat business	NHT and THC working with UHI to promote training opportunities. VS provides trend information at regional level SRDP contains measures for accommodation development, connected to activities.	
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THEME 4 -FOOD AND DRINK

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support and encourage development of local food supply chain - through farmers and village markets, producer groups, online sales & farm shops		Local producers are supported to add value to their produce and sell direct to consumers. Food travels less far.	Strong strategic fit with National Food and Drink Policy East Sutherland Producers run Dornoch Farmers Market. NW Food Link co-ordinate supply of local produce in NW Sutherland. Individual food and drink businesses have online presence. Scottish Association of Farmers Markets & SAOS supports the co-ordination of farmers markets. Scottish Crofting Federation are developing the Crofting Mark and the crofting produce supply chain	5,6,7
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Convene expert stakeholder group to consider and highlight the development needs & potential of the aquaculture sector in Sutherland		Growth of Sutherland aquaculture sector.	Number of significant businesses operational in Sutherland providing significant employment	5,7
	Explore ways to increase involvement of eligible Sutherland producers with Mey Selections brand		Value-added to local produce through connection with premium label		7

5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Promote and develop local food festivals - connect with Scottish Food & Drink Fortnight		Focus of festival boosts returns of food and drink producers	Durness Food Festival already operating successfully Scotland Food and Drink promoting & supporting events	7
	Consider development of network of „Food Villages" in Sutherland.		Villages became „food destinations", raising value of food and drink sector to the local economy	Slow Food UK promote concept of Food Towns	7
	Support development of allotments/ community gardens		Increased ability to grow your own fruit and veg connects people with food and makes healthy food more affordable		3, 6, 7, 11
	Support and develop connections between food, farming, growing, cooking and health		Everyone has access to affordable healthy food	Scottish Government National Food and Drink Policy encourages connections between food, health and environment. Royal Highland Education Trust promote connections between food production and cooking to children Soil Assoc / SCF working with schools through Crofting Connections project NHS Health and Change4Life campaigns aim to encourage healthier eating for positive health	5, 6, 11
10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS					

Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support development of food tourism through creation and promotion of networks of food-focused businesses		Food tourism is a niche that enhances Sutherland's tourism industry	VS EatScotland assurance scheme highlights „foodie“ experiences	7
	Consider scope for „Taste of Sutherland“ project to develop regional product identity, network, distribution capability		Food tourism is a niche that enhances Sutherland's tourism industry	Support through SDRP for collaborative processing and marketing projects	7
	Support exploration / development of micro-brewery		Economic benefit derived from natural resource		7
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support provision of appropriate processing facilities for meat, fish, shellfish, game		Initial processing in Sutherland increases returns to food and drink business	Assynt Foundation developing new deer larder DCS undertaking work on wild venison supply chain HIE/ THC study underway into future of Dornoch abattoir	7

THEME 5 - NATURAL RESOURCES

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom?	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Maintain sufficient resourcing of Geopark staff e.g. Geo_Ranger, Geopark Officer		Long term sustainable funding for the Geopark accolade is maintained		5, 7
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom?	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Increase the exposure of the film industry to the landscape of Sutherland through hosting a tour of Sutherland by THC film unit and their suggested invitees		Landscape of Sutherland promoted to film industry		5, 7
	Create national competition for short film or film script for Sutherland-based story, with advice from THC film unit		Increased national profile for Sutherland		5, 7
	Co-ordinate Sutherland input to policy and SG stakeholder discussions on support for crofting and farming to support active agricultural use and halt decline in livestock		A Sutherland view informs policy decisions	NFUS, SCF, STFA, THC and HIE all regularly input to agricultural policy discussions	3, 5, 7
	Consider actions from the Local Geodiversity Action Plan - outputs from the Geopark Geodiversity		Geopark Conservation Strategy is supported		5

	audit				
	Support implementation of the Geopark Interpretation strategy e.g. development of Pebble routes		Geotourism is supported and developed		5, 7
	Implement actions in the Geopark Marketing Strategy Plan		The Geopark accolade attracts visitors to the area		7
	Implement Geopark youth development programme including children's events, training opportunities and exchanges with other geoparks		Benefits of the Geopark accolade are experienced by young people in Sutherland		5, 7

5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED

Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Encourage and facilitate creative and collaborative use of SRDP funding to stimulate agricultural activity		Access to SRDP funding is facilitated to support rural and land-based businesses	SAC and independent advisors assisting with SRDP applications	5, 7
	Explore potential for Dark Skies Park/Reserve in the Geopark		Additional accolades add to appeal of the area	Galloway Forest Park is first place in the UK to be awarded Dark Skies Park status	5, 7
	Support Lairg Eco-Croft demonstration project		Land use skills are enhanced and local land use is interpreted for visitors		

10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS

Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA
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					fit
	Work with UHI - CRRS and other academic partners to create opportunities for researching issues of rurality and promote opportunities for social science research		Economic benefit derived from rurality		7, 8
	Support creation of more broadleaved short rotation forestry		Greater forest cover for landscape enhancement, biodiversity and carbon sequestration		5, 6
	Support enhancement of integrated land use through development of agro-forestry, looking at Norwegian, US, other EU models		Integrated land use provides benefits for farming system in addition to carbon sequestration and landscape function		5, 6

ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY

Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Develop short „taster" film for cruise liner passengers, with advice from THC film unit and Ullapool Harbour Master	THC	More visitors are encouraged ashore to explore for the day		5, 7
	Support and encourage community woodland development and local timber utilisation through purchase of woodland	NSCFT / RSPB	Value added to local timber	North Sutherland Community Forest Trust run Forsinain sawmill	7
	Encourage use of local timber in building through addressing	FCS	Value is added locally to timber and local		7

	barriers to increased use and facilitating use through mainstreaming of design		sawmilling and building businesses are supported		
	Support and encourage private & community woodland sector.	NHFT CWA NSCFT FCS	Communities have enhanced role in management of woodland resources		3, 5, 7
	Improve local woodfuel supply chain		Timber miles are reduced. Woodfuel available locally at cost-effective prices	FES working on timber transport FCS working on woodfuel chain Sawmills using local timber	5,7
	Explore and develop potential for geotourism	Geopark	Increased awareness of natural and archaeological heritage		5,7
	Develop feasibility study for creation of Geo-centre in the Geopark. Create project plan to implement outcomes of Geo-centre feasibility study	Geopark	Geo-Centre based in the Geopark, incorporating exhibitions, cafe, Geopark offices, library/information centre and outreach hub		3,5,7,
	Develop integrated Crofting and rural skills training courses		Provide skills to help address issue of unused/underused land	SCF leading partnership developing Crofting Skills practical courses HBS Ring considering rural/farming apprenticeships Culag Community Woodland train people in rural skills Rural skills is part of the curriculum in some High Schools	3,5 10

THEME 6 - EDUCATION, TRAINING AND LIFELONG LEARNING

5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Provide training 13-25 - bridge to employment in forestry and land-based skills		Young people have skills and training to equip them for work		10
10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Establish the feasibility of development of a Gaelic education centre, possibly connected to UHI Sabhal Mor, providing courses for adults		Increased use and understanding of gaelic. Use of cultural resource to bring economic benefit		3, 7
	Consider feasibility of a forest education centre in East Sutherland		Environmental skills and knowledge highlighted	East Sutherland Woodland project has a programme of work 2009-12 Embo Trust are developing woodland-based activities	5,10
	Support development of residential courses- geology, rural skills, gaelic, crafts - to bring people to the area		Sutherland benefits from local knowledge and skills		5, 7
	Consider development of craft skills as part of the curriculum			Farr High School Young Enterprise Project was based around craft skills	7, 10
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Continue to develop and strengthen	UHI,	Wide awareness of	STEM project in schools highlighting	7, 10

	outreach work and widen access to UHI courses,	High Schools, STEM	opportunities to study through UHI network	importance of science and maths with a view to maximising on potential of Pentland Firth renewable energy developments	
	Increase access to, scope, range and awareness of locally-provided adult education	Sutherland Learning Centre Network	Wide awareness of all opportunities for adult education		10, 14

THEME 7 - CULTURE, HERITAGE & ARTS

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support Sutherland archive development project - development of Strathnaver Museum as a one of number of hubs for the Highland Archive centre		Sutherland archives accessible in Sutherland	Partnership with MacKay Country	3, 7
	Develop Strathnaver Heritage site		Museum at the heart of an initiative linking landscape, environment, archive, prehistory, walking/cycling, archaeology, clearances sites at Rossal	MacKay Country has local archive to be based in Museum Museum proposing to become research hub and centre for training and genealogy investigation NSCFT propose to connect Rossal developments with Strathnaver Museum	5, 7
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Explore funding and create opportunities for the visiting artists/residencies		Creative skills provide economic opportunities for young and old and promote wellbeing		5, 7, 12
	Support improvements „Scotland"s people" genealogy website		Genealogy tourism is supported by accessible information		7

	Support Visual Arts Sutherland ground-breaking virtual studio, gallery and teaching project.		Arts and crafts contribute to economy and wellbeing		7
	Support drama work with young people in Sutherland		Opportunities for personal development through drama	North Highland Connections planning drama workshops	10
	Support music and arts outreach programmes to schools across Sutherland		Access to music and arts promotes learning and wellbeing	North Highland Connections proposing outreach programmes	10
5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support the development of the arts and crafts network in Sutherland, through understanding the development and marketing needs of the sector		Arts and crafts businesses in Sutherland are supported to develop their enterprises	VASu run virtual studio tour and Highland Open Studio Trail Scope to collaborate with Caithness Arts	7
	Support residencies for musicians		Skills are improved and culture strengthened		3, 10
	Support process of identifying aspirations and use of vernacular buildings across Sutherland, in order to facilitate their regeneration		Built and cultural heritage safeguarded and put to new use	North Highland Connections propose an audit of buildings	5, 7
10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Explore the scope to build on VASu work - potential for workshops, trails, exhibitions		Build on Highland Open Studio Trail to create North Highlands		7

			trail		
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support development and promotion of musical heritage		Work of Feis Cataibh & Feis an Oir is valued and developed		3
	Work with Caithness Mod 2010 to attract people from areas where gaelic is growing		Gaelic is spoken and used more regularly		7

THEME 8 - COMMUNITY FACILITIES AND SERVICES

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	<p>Support measures identified in Transport Vision for Sutherland - including</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - dual tracking of key single track roads, - lobbying on transport and fuel costs, - increased rail freight and provision of sidings - innovative transport solutions for bicycles - seek expansion of public transport initiatives where required 		<p>Transport solutions support a healthy economy and sustainable rural communities</p>	<p>SP Transport Group published a Transport Vision for Sutherland</p> <p>T2E provides access to workplace in East Sutherland</p> <p>Assynt and Bettyhill areas have subsidised taxi service</p> <p>Tongue has T4T initiative</p> <p>Services are provided by the NW Community Bus Association</p> <p>FES project at Rossal/Kinbrace transported timber from Rossal Forest</p>	1,4,9
	<p>Support community aspirations to provide and improve community and sports and leisure facilities</p>		<p>Communities are served with the facilities they need and desire</p>	<p>A project to develop an all-weather pitch and multi-use games area/sports hall/community centre is being researched in Bettyhill</p> <p>Provision of a theatre/cinema/performance space was raised in Golspie</p>	1
	<p>Support a process bringing communities with housing need, together with housing specialists,</p>		<p>Access to housing, particularly in smaller settlements is</p>	<p>Developments at Stoer and Armadale are examples of the success of this process</p>	9

	planners and land holders / clerks of common grazing to identify sites to address local need		increased.	Highland Small Communities Housing Trust support housing development in response to local need	
	Support processes whereby communities and service providers work together to design services and prioritise according to needs		Community-based decision making		3
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support provision and development of more and better activities and facilities for older people, e.g. lunch clubs		The health and wellbeing of older people is promoted	Levels of public sector funding for some initiatives is uncertain in the short/medium term. Voluntary sector provision could become increasingly important	1, 12
	Support local provision of long-term residential care for the elderly		Provision is made for people to live in their own communities until the end of their days	Hospital-based care is provided by NHS Highland at Migdale and Cambusavie. Assynt Centre continues to support residential care services provided by Assynt Centre. Caladh Sona Action Group continue to campaign for the retention of the Caladh Sona Care facility in Melness	1, 12
	Support provision of daily contact service for elderly living alone		The health and wellbeing of older people is promoted		12
5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit

	Seek provision of cycle paths during further trunk road improvements, particularly along the A9 in Sutherland		Cycle infrastructure encourages active travel and low-carbon tourism	Transport Scotland and Hi-trans are developing cycle paths along certain parts of A9 Paths for All and NHS Highland are promoting active travel	6, 7
	Monitor, learn from and apply relevant findings of O4O project		Appropriate support and services are provided for older people	O4O project being led by UHI	12
10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Explore demand for social banking		People have local access to loan finance and savings provision		1
	Support provision of free public transport for under 18s		Young people have affordable access to services and facilities	Transport to school is provided by the Highland Council	1, 4
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Support provision of services for people affected by domestic abuse and drug and alcohol misuse		Access is provided to necessary services	Services are provided by Caithness & Sutherland Woman"s Aid and Sutherland Drug and Alcohol Forum	1, 13
	Support voluntary sector groups with information and assistance on grant availability and application		Voluntary sector provides services and support sustainable economic development	VG-ES support the voluntary sector in east and central Sutherland and CVS North provide this support in NW Sutherland	1, 3, 7
	Support and encourage networking between voluntary		Voluntary sector provides services and	VG-ES and CVS North create networking opportunities across Sutherland	1, 3, 7

	groups		support sustainable economic development	HIE-CLU supported the creation of a network of community land initiatives	
	Continue and enhance post - acquisition support for communities acquiring assets		Sustainable economic development of community assets is promoted	HIE-CLU provide an aftercare service for communities purchasing assets	3, 7

THEME 9 - YOUNG PEOPLE

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Develop and support outdoor activities for young people, making use of excellent natural resources - sea & surf, caves, mountains, rivers		Better use made for recreation of outdoors, improving health and wellbeing	NW Sutherland Youth Project is proposing activities and experiences for young people	1,5
	Support creation of new crofts, including woodland crofts and other (non-crofting) opportunities to provide access to land.		Access to land for a home, a business and chances to provide food / timber for own use are improved	A woodland croft creation project is under development at Embo	5, 9
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Ensure that every young person has the opportunity to take part in an international youth exchange		Young people experience new cultures and places	Young people have taken apart in overseas exchanges through the European Geopark network	10
	Support developments by communities to create rented housing on crofts or common grazings		Young people and people on lower incomes can remain in their own communities	A woodland croft creation project under development at Embo proposes a number of options for provision of housing	9
10 YEAR - LONGER TERM ASPIRATIONS					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Disperse centralised public sector		More good quality jobs	Public sector finances likely to be	7

	jobs to Sutherland		available in Sutherland	constrained in short/medium term.	
	Support visits, residencies and workshop by artists of all types to support creative development opportunities		More drama and acting opportunities for young people		10
	Support provision of facilities for more specialist outdoor activities - potential for a MTB track on the north coast		Use is made of outdoors for recreation, improving health and wellbeing		5, 7
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Facilitate involvement of young people in citizenship		Confident, self-assured young people have a role in decision-making	Highland Youth Forum and Sutherland Youth Voice & Youth Parliament facilitate engagement of young people	3
	Support and encourage traditional and competitive sport in Sutherland		Opportunities provided for competitive outdoor recreation	Highland Football Academy provides coaching at a high level Active Schools Co-ordinators encourage sporting activity. Caithness & Sutherland Shinty Committee reviving the sport locally	5
	Support provision of mobile health and dental services		Services available locally	NHS Highland	1
	More help for those with special needs		Services available to support personal development	FES are involved in projects involving learning disabled youngsters in forests	1, 10
	Monitor Fusion@Golspie - pilot project - consider roll out to other areas if successful		Facilities are connected with transport to enable participation by young people		1

THEME 10 - A GREENER FUTURE

STRATEGIC PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Investigate potential for a renewable power project to provide electric and hydrogen power for vehicles- the „Hydrogen Highway" - based around renewable generation in Sutherland.	UHI, CES	Innovative use is made of renewable resources to reduce carbon consumption	The Unst PURE Project model offers important guidance The Swedish island of Gotland has significant renewables-based development CES can provide information and technical knowledge	5,6,7
3 YEAR - VIABLE SHORT TERM PROJECTS					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Assist VG-ES to develop a wind turbine as an income source for voluntary sector initiatives		Use of renewable resources generates economic benefit	CES delivering HIE and SG assistance for community renewables development	6
5 YEAR - PRIORITY PROJECTS TO BE ADOPTED					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Work in partnership to develop identified aspen habitat networks and increase aspen plant resource		Enhanced biodiversity		5
	Support development of access opportunities woodlands, paths, trails, all-abilities trail		Connection made between natural environment and recreation with health	Highlighted particularly in Assynt	5

			and wellbeing		
	Support development and/or improvement of family nature trails		Children are encouraged to enjoy the natural heritage	Highlighted particularly for the Big Burn, Golspie	5
	Support development of festivals, events and publications celebrating the natural heritage of Sutherland		The natural heritage is interpreted to a wide audience, promoting enjoyment and understanding		5
ACTIONS ALREADY UNDERWAY					
Ref.	Action	By Whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
	Increase scope for community benefit from renewables through increased ownership/other options		Sustainable economic benefit from renewable energy	CES delivering HIE and SG assistance for community renewables development	3,6
	Connect all Sutherland schools with work of North Highland College in creating centre of excellence in marine technology / tidal power		Young local people at the forefront of renewable technology development	STEM project provides science and maths outreach in Sutherland schools	8,10
	Support Native Tree Seed Project- sourcing and growing on seed from remnant populations		Mitigate possible effects of climate change through preserving strong local provenance stock	North Highland Forest Trust involved	5
	Support measures that assist the development of a lower carbon economy - Public buildings to set an		Carbon emissions are reduced	VG-ES and CVS North working with CES to carry out audit of all community halls in Sutherland	3, 4, 6

example in use of green technology - Funds provided for energy efficiency and adaptation of private dwellings			New public sector offices in Golspie make use of green technology	
Increase carbon sequestration through woodland creation		Carbon is captured. Landscape and biodiversity benefits delivered	FCS have targets and incentives for increasing woodland area	5, 6
Protect and enhance native woods and riparian habitat		Biodiversity benefits	Living Rivers Project.	5
Support and encourage development of local micro-hydro		Carbon emissions are reduced and economic benefit delivered to local community	CES supporting Vision Golspie exploratory project	3, 6
Increase in local recycling		Waste to landfill is reduced, carbon emissions reduced	GREAN delivering kerbside recycling in East Sutherland THC delivering recycling facilities in all other parts of Sutherland	1,5,6
Support „Kids out of classroom projects“,		Raise awareness of environment in young children		5

THEME 11 - A VOICE FOR SUTHERLAND AND ITS PEOPLE

Representation - actions desired					
Ref.	Action	By whom	Desired outcome	Other relevant information	SOA fit
11.1	To seek to ensure that funding formulae address peripherality and remoteness		Recognition of the challenges and costs of service delivery in supersparse rural areas		1,3,4
11.2	To make statistics work better for the Highlands		Decisions are based on good information		1,4,7,9
11.3	To create greater appreciation of the importance of the development plan process to increase public engagement with it		Everyone is aware of the opportunity to feed into local planning		1,3
11.4	To prioritise upgrade of transmission system to allow export of power		To allow the area to benefit from significant renewable resources		6, 7
11.5	To continuously improve communication between public agencies and the people they serve		People feel increasingly connected to government		1,3,4
11.6	To strengthen the role of communities in decision-making		Communities have a greater say in delivery of services	Community Councils feed in to THC	1,3

ANNEX 2 – LEADER PRIORITY THEMES
LEADER Development Plan for Sutherland 2008 -13

Culture and Heritage

- Visitor centres / museums
- Arts promotion
- Community Arts projects
- Feisan / local culture
- Events

Learning Opportunities

- Community based adult learning
- Youth learning opportunities
- Improving access to learning opportunities
- Youth projects, including national and local youth organisations
- Improving communication across the generations
- Maximising use of local talents and skills
- Training in capacity building

Access to Facilities, Activities and Services

- Village halls and community facilities (indoor and outdoor)
- Day care facilities for elderly and disabled people
- Sports facilities, including synthetic pitches
- Youth facilities and projects
- Community transport and community

Land, Environment and the Countryside

- Promotion and interpretation
- Environmental education opportunities
- Skills and training

- Access and recreation facilities
- Local produce
- Habitat improvement, notably woodland

Renewables

- Renewable energy projects for community facilities
- Community renewable generation projects

Tourism

- Tourism infrastructure, including accommodation and tourist information areas
- Advertising and marketing of local tourism assets and activities
- Wildlife/outdoor/cultural tourism
- Projects to tackle seasonality

Social Enterprise and Micro-businesses

- Access to improved IT facilities, e.g. community toolkit enhancement
- Access to training in business planning (e.g. for expansion)
- Support and promotion of locally-produced food
- Support for access to local community facilities