



Sutherland
Soaring to Success

Sutherland Partnership

**The community planning
partnership for Sutherland**

Annual Report & Financial Statements 2008-9

The Sutherland Partnership is an area-based organisation whose aim is to secure the economic and social well being of Sutherland by tackling the problems of rural disadvantage. It is registered with the Scottish Government as a Community Planning Partnership and comprises Sutherland's key public, private, community and voluntary sector partners. Sutherland Partnership is a company limited by Guarantee -company no. SC186690.



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Introduction

The Sutherland Partnership is an area-based organisation whose aim is to secure the economic and social well being of Sutherland by tackling the problems of rural disadvantage. It is the natural home of community planning in Sutherland. Formally registered with the Scottish Executive in 1998 as a local rural partnership, it comprises the key public, private, community and voluntary sector partners within Sutherland.

The Sutherland Partnership is a company Limited by Guarantee registered in Scotland (No 186690). Registered office is Sutherland Partnership, Main St., Lairg, Sutherland IV27 4DB. Telephone is 01549 402646. Fax is 01549 402957.

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Chairman's Report

COUNCILLOR ROBBIE ROWANTREE



Now approaching the end of my second year as Sutherland Partnership chairman, I am pleased to introduce this report of the Partnership's achievements at a time of great challenge and opportunity.

Sutherland Partnership is pleased to record its gratitude to those whose generous funding has permitted our activities over the past year: Highland Council, HIE, SNH, Big Lottery, Highland Opportunity and, this year, NHS Highland and the Scottish Government also. Following a one-year funding round in 2008-9, clarification of the "big picture" and confidence in Sutherland Partnership have permitted us to plan on a three-year future funding round to 2012, and it is gratifying to note continuing financial support from funding partners.

This year, Sutherland Partnership has continued to attract attention for all the right reasons. As before, SP forums have done good work in energising and lobbying for Sutherland's communities, and enabling agency and community organisation representatives to meet. I sincerely thank the chairs and members of the Biodiversity Group, Community Development Forum, Tourism Forum and Transport Group for all their hard work over the year.

SP subordinate organisations New Futures Sutherland, Working for Families and North-West Highlands Geopark have also had a successful year, as their reports below make clear. Mary Macleod and her team of NFS/WfF project workers deserve our thanks and congratulations for their continuing success. Geopark Officer Dr Fiona Mackenzie, ably assisted by Evelyn Mackay, has done a great job of preparing the Geopark for a new era, with an excellent Development Plan written in double-quick time. I am grateful also to the Geopark and NFS/WfF Steering Groups for their wise guidance to Mary and Fiona and their teams.

SP's profile has been raised, also, by the highly successful February visit of Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead. Mr Lochhead's letter of thank to me made clear that he had gained a first-hand insight into Sutherland's environmental and transport difficulties – and the dynamism and imagination of Sutherland's people.

Importantly, SP has this year been successful in bidding for the new role of the Local Area Partnership for administration of the LEADER funding programme in Sutherland, a funding stream which has the potential to bring over £1M into Sutherland as long as match funding is identified. SP's LEADER LAP status was secured on the basis of Sutherland's LEADER Development Plan, a major piece of work which was drafted by Manager William Sutherland and Ward Managers Phil Tomalin and Andy Mackay using inputs from SP partners and the wider community of Sutherland.

Building on the LEADER work, we now look forward to the Sutherland Summit and the Development and Action Plan which will spring from that.

In conclusion I thank all the members of the Partnership Board who give so freely of their time and expertise to help maintain and improve life in Sutherland's communities.

Robbie Rowantree
23 June 2009



Partnership Manager's Report

www.sutherlandpartnership.org.uk



WILLIAM SUTHERLAND

Introduction

Last year, my report commented on the rapid pace of change in Sutherland, the Highlands and Scotland. This year, the pace of change has been just as hectic - and the ramifications for Sutherland Partnership (SP) have been considerable.

A year ago, SP was embarking on just a single-year funding round, a situation made necessary by the high-level turbulence in the political background against which we all work. This year, we have the clear guidance set out by the Single Outcome Agreement (SOA), the second iteration of which has recently been published as I write this. We also have the stability made possible by a three year SP funding package, which has been put together for the future to 2012. We do, however, now have financial strictures resulting from loss of some funding (meaning that I have recently reduced to four days a week working). Partly in consequence of this, we also have new thinking on how, in future, SP will direct its efforts – and remain solvent.

SP stands at something of a crossroads. Activities over the last year have included some notable profile-raising and lobbying highlights, such as the impact on the debate on VHF bandwidth last autumn and the visit of Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead in February. This kind of initiative, largely conducted as a result of SP subgroup work, may not be SP's focus henceforth. Sutherland Partnership Board meeting last month (May) gave strategic direction to SP's future work, and suggested that SP activities may move more into the area of "hands on" assistance to community groups. To validate this thinking, the Board commissioned further work on how, in future, SP activities will be channelled. This work will include the outputs of a new Short Life Working Group and September's Sutherland Summit, and I expect that in my report a year from now I shall be telling you the outcome of that work.

But in the meantime, I am happy to present the following summary of the highlights of the past year's work – by SP partners, by my colleagues and by me.

Sutherland Community Planning – Present and Future

LEADER in Sutherland. A year ago, SP was being mooted as the local delivery body – the Local Area Partnership (LAP) – for the new LEADER funding stream in Sutherland. I and my close collaborators, Ward Managers Andy Mackay and Phil Tomalin, had already turned our thoughts to the task of drafting the LEADER Development Plan (LDP) for Sutherland, the document which would establish SP's credentials as Sutherland's LAP. During the late summer and autumn of 2008 we worked on this drafting task, engaging closely with SP Board members and Sutherland Communities to ensure that the LDP reflected as broad a range of views as possible. Happily, and after much valuable input from partners, ward forums and a questionnaire, our LDP was submitted to Highland LEADER in November, and was approved early this year – leading to SP's approval as Sutherland's LAP. It has now held its first meeting, at which we received Highland LEADER training, worked on our operating procedures, and took the first two funding decisions on applications before us. These were both successful, I am happy to report. As I write, our second meeting is planned. It is already becoming clear that the main impediment to disbursement of this large sum of money will be

the availability of match funding, but I continue to offer use of Funderfinder software to help remedy this by identifying potential trust funding sources.

Sutherland Partnership Forums, and Related Working Groups.

Until any future direction dictates otherwise, SP will continue to deliver some of its outputs through the work of its various thematic sub-groups, which bring together the public, private and third sector in Sutherland. These forums provide opportunities for networking and information sharing, and they also facilitate project development. Keeping the SP Board informed, the Subgroups can also supplement the lobbying work done by the Partnership Manager under the direct control of the SP Board.

My work in various thematic forums falls into two parts: those groups which are led by SP – Biodiversity, Community Development, Tourism, and Transport – and those forums run by others in which I participate. The work of the various SP Forums is detailed in the following paragraphs. As for those other groups, following the turbulence I reported a year ago stemming from the ending of the Local Economic Forum and the Sutherland Housing and Community Safety Forums, changes this year have been much more evolutionary. Now that NHS Highland is a funding partner, I have maintained and increased my involvement with health groups, and now regularly attend the Sutherland Mental Health LIG, the Health Improvement Group and the Sutherland Drug and Alcohol Forum. My work with these has centred on the work of seeking to draw additional funding into the health agenda, and, recently, work to raise SDAF's profile.

Work of the various SP Forums has been as follows.

The Biodiversity Group. The Sutherland Partnership Biodiversity Group (SPBG), which I chair, has had a busy and fulfilling year, following the previous year's rather quieter time. SPBG attendance levels have continued to rise, with SEPA and John Muir Trust now always attending, and interesting guest speakers attending from time to time.

The highlight of this year has been the securing of a generous grant from SNH, which will be disbursed to community groups in support of locally-generated biodiversity initiatives. The programme will be known as the Sutherland Partnership Environmental Fund (SPEF). Clearly, similar previous SP successes - such as the sixteen biodiversity projects SP oversaw from 2005 to 2007 - have helped give SNH confidence in SP as an umbrella organisation for such projects. Moves are also afoot to enhance this new £20,000 SNH funding stream with a cash injection from LEADER. This, if successful, would nearly double the size of the available cash – but there are still some administrative obstacles to be overcome before LEADER funding is secured. Although we have deliberately not given the SPEF scheme any publicity until completion of the funding package, it is significant that some community groups have already enquired about possible funding from it. Word is getting out, and there is certainly a repressed demand in Sutherland for such a financial support scheme.

SPBG has also remained engaged on a wider front. It has participated in, or remained in close touch with, the four strands of the Highland Biodiversity Partnership – the Management Group, Scientific and Technical Advisory Group (STAG), the Marine Group and the Invasive Species Group). SPBG has been represented at virtually all meetings of the Highland Biodiversity Partnership and Highland Biodiversity Forum. SPBG members are adept at sharing this workload, and our various representatives have been to the fore in giving presentations on their ongoing projects to such Highland-wide forums. At time of writing, SPBG members expect to be involved in work to take stock of the Highland Biodiversity Action Plan and identify priorities for the next three years

Other project work has been discussed and progressed via SPBG meetings, notably work by Assynt Field Club's representative on SPBG, Ian Evans, who has collaborated in compiling an informative document updating his previous work on the wildlife of Scourie. This work has been presented to SPBG, and placed on the SP website. Other projects have include those on Wax Cap Fungi, Aspens and Wood Pasture.

The Community Development Forum. Ann Keatinge of Voluntary Groups East Sutherland, an SP Director, has continued as the capable chair of the Sutherland Partnership Community Development Forum (SPCDF). It has delegates from the public sector and a wide range of community and voluntary groups. It has met four times in the last year, and talks from interesting guest speakers have been interspersed with hard, and largely successful, lobbying on a range of matters of community interest.

SPCDF continues to tackle a wide range of community development issues. Over the current period, there has been a successful outcome to SP's efforts to preserve the local telephone callbox network. BT's plans would have seen almost all Sutherland callboxes deleted, but thanks to an online "SurveyMonkey" survey by SP and partner organisation VGES, whose results were relayed to Highland Council, all but a very few had been saved. The preservation of the famous black-and-white callbox in Achfary, and SP's role in that, had been featured prominently in the Press and Journal and the Daily Telegraph. I had responses to the story from as far away as South Wales!

SP lobbying on the restructuring of Highland Community Care Forum, in order to prioritise the "front line" has also been reflected in the preservation of both Sutherland CCF posts (albeit part time.) New postholders have also been appointed – Brian Macleod in the North and West, and Carol Summers in the East. Both have joined SPCDF, and have contributed strongly at their early meetings.

Late in 2008, SP responded to a consultation by the Office for Communications (OFCOM), and protested strongly at new proposals for VHF bandwidth charging which seemed likely to result in steep increases in charges for voluntary lifesaving groups such as the Royal National Lifeboat Institution (RNLI) and mountain rescue teams. The SP campaign notified a wide range of stakeholders, including MPs, MSPs, Highland Councillors and others, and quickly resulted in a "clarification" by OFCOM, conceding that charges to such organisations would be cost neutral, or might even save them money. There was an avalanche of reaction to this SP campaign, good publicity for our organisation, and a very successful outcome.

The Tourism Forum. Having had one meeting just before last year's AGM, and having suffered two meeting postponements (one due to bereavement) SPTF has met just twice since last year's SP AGM. Despite this, we have continued to attract good levels of trade representation – no easy task since trade members are naturally busy running their businesses. Attendance at our January meeting was at a record level, with sixteen delegates.

The agenda of our October meeting in Durness was one of the busiest on record, with delegates learning from, and engaging in discussion with, no fewer than three guest speakers. First, Licensing Standards Officer David Inglis briefed on the impact of the full implementation of the new Licensing Act 2005 – giving some reassurance on a subject which had been causing much disquiet among SPTF trade members. Then, Sally Dowden, of consultants Wild Scotland, engaged with the group on the wildlife tourism investigation her organisation is currently carrying out for North Highland Tourism. It was agreed that such tourism, whilst rarely the main attraction for those visiting Sutherland, is usually a strong supporting attraction, and should be supported.

Finally, our former chair Joan Campbell briefed on her current work to instigate an honours degree course in Tourism and Hospitality at UHI/NHC's new Dornoch Burghfield campus. SPTF members, especially trade members, were interested in the synergy of this work with their current tourism activities and were particularly impressed by UHI/NHC's intention to take learning opportunities out from the campus into trade members' premises. It was agreed that this would present opportunities for SPTF members once the new course starts in September 2010, following up on UHI/NHC's current "Community Empowerment" initiative.

The Transport Group. Building on last year's "Transport Vision for Sutherland" document, Sutherland Partnership Transport Group (SPTG) has met on three occasions over the past year.

The matter of motor fuel has continued to exercise the Group: with prices rising still further during the year, SPTG had been featured in a front page article in the "Northern Times", drawing attention to the difficulties faced by trade members (SPTG member John Macleod of Rogart was pictured and quoted.) Also, SPTG chairman Ian Ross had written both Scotland's First Minister Alex Salmond and Chancellor Alistair Darling pointing out the disproportionately-adverse effect of Britain's tax regime on motor fuel prices in the Highlands, and asking for the matter of VAT, in particular, to be revisited. The Chancellor, within whose gift this matter lies, had been unreceptive. Since then, fuel prices have been on a roller coaster ride. This makes life even more difficult for small traders: they already have to cope with low volumes and margins, and also now have to deal with problems caused by wild price fluctuations. Motor fuel availability itself is a growing problem: HC TEC officer Cameron Kemp came to talk to SPTG about threats to the Highland fuel distribution network, and at time of writing SPTG awaits the opportunity to respond to a formal consultation on the recent Experian report on this subject.

A new Stagecoach timetable for the 25X route caused community anger when introduced late in 2008. SPTG wrote Stagecoach in protest, and our action – part of a concerted campaign across Caithness and Sutherland – had had the desired effect. Stagecoach proved good listeners, and introduced an improved timetable.

This year, SPTG has joined "Friends of the Far North Line" – FOFNL. We have, however, recently lost the valuable input from Mike Lunan, FOFNL chair. Having resigned from his chairmanship, Mike has also withdrawn from other forums, including SPTG. Rail travel has, however, taken less SPBG attention this year.

It was a disappointment that Transport Minister Stewart Stevenson was once again unable to take up SPTG's offer to visit Sutherland to see our transport situation for himself. SP did have a visit from Rural Affairs Cabinet Secretary Richard Lochhead, however, and his visit centred, in part, on timber extraction transport issues.

SPBG has disbursed, or approved disbursement of, remaining SP Transport funds. A transport-related socio-economic study of North-West Sutherland received £4000, whilst the North-West Community Bus Association was successful in its bid for £3000 towards purchase of a new minibus. No significant SP transport funds now remain.

My sincere thanks to all those who chair and support the various Partnership Forums.

The Work of Our Project Organisations

The two Sutherland Partnership project organisations are New Futures Sutherland/Working for Families, and the North-West Highlands Geopark. Elsewhere in this Annual Report you will find detailed reports from New Futures Sutherland Project Leader Mary Macleod, and from

Geopark Officer Fiona Mackenzie. NFSWfF has continued to meet and exceed its targets, and to do so under budget. The Geopark now has the benefit of Fiona's excellent work to produce a new Development and Action Plan. Whilst the complete future Geopark funding package is not yet in place, we have nonetheless made major strides towards doing so, and we look forward to completing the process in the near future.

SP Services, and Work with Community and Voluntary groups and Other Agencies – Present and Future.

Following previous direction, Sutherland Partnership has deliberately kept its involvement with individual community groups at a relatively low level in order to take a more strategic approach to community development. Only occasionally, and only under direction of SP chairman and partner representatives, have I participated in administrative support to community groups.

The signs are that this is about to change, and that my involvement with community groups will increase. A paper by Highland Council officials on the SP Board was presented to the Board's most recent SP Board in May. This paper recommended that SP revert to a much more "hands on" approach to working with community groups. The driver for this change has been the advent of the Single Outcome Agreement, and an increased focus on community planning strategic thinking at the Highland-wide level. Also, there is recognition that the complication of application procedures for funds means that there is a role for an agency to give a "helping hand" to community organisations which have a genuine need for funds but which lack the means to articulate that need to agencies which might help. Reduction of the SP Manager job to four days a week means that to make way for new tasking some existing tasking will have to be reduced or rationalised. Existing small peripheral tasks like maintaining the SP website and the SP Biodiversity Photo collection can carry on at their previous modest level; but some reduction in my time devoted to SP forums seems inevitable. The SLWG will consider this matter.

Even in the current year, there are signs that my "hands on" involvement with communities is increasing. In the past year I have engaged with Kyle of Sutherland Initiative (KOSI) and with Dornoch and District Community Association (DADCA) in helping progress their aims. I have also participated in moves to set up an East Sutherland Regional Woodland Park (ESRWP), but following loss of Northern Periphery Project funding this may now take a different format. With a new RWP project officer, Julie Paton, now in place we may see early future developments on this – as long as the RWP can identify its own unique role and add value through it. My increased involvement in the health agenda has seen my participation in an exciting new project – that of providing a "green space" in the grounds of the Lawson Memorial Hospital, Golspie. In addition to engaging with Golspie Community Council on this initiative, other partners are Forestry Commission Scotland and NHS Highland. Also this year I have organised two successful visits by HMS SUTHERLAND personnel. The more recent of these was a routine ship visit to Invergordon, whose programme I helped compile. More significantly, SP worked with Helmsdale Community Council on a visit by a SUTHERLAND work party last July. This resulted in the creation of a new community path in Helmsdale – a popular and worthwhile outcome.

Conclusion

In closing, may I pay tribute to the other partner organisations which support SP work – especially VGES and also CVS North. My sincere thanks, too, to my fellow employees – the NFS/WfF and Geopark teams, and SP Treasurer Graham Jones, for their fine work.

William Sutherland
23 June 2009

New Futures Sutherland & Working for Families

Annual Report for Sutherland Partnership 2009

Mary Macleod, NFS/WfF Project Leader



Mary Macleod

Funded by BIG Lottery, HIE and Highland Opportunity Ltd, New Futures Sutherland and Working for Families Projects have both had another busy year. The successful affiliation between these two projects continues to provide a unique resource within the county of Sutherland. New Futures Sutherland project was established 10 years ago in February 1999 and has during that time has seen 304 clients come through the door. Since taking over the Working for Families Project in April 2006, we have separately recorded and worked with another 91 clients. This is a huge achievement given that all the project staff apart from myself work on a part time basis. We have a strong and dedicated team of 11 Project Workers who carry out all the one to one work with clients and it is them who deserve the credit for their understanding and innovative approach to the wide variety issues and needs that our clients can present with.

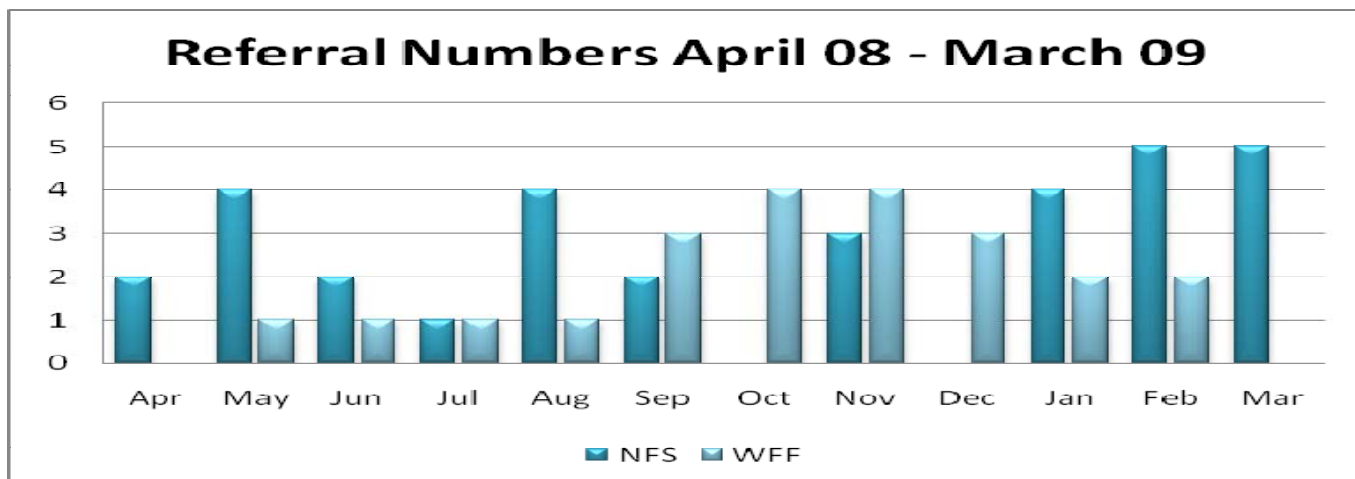
Two project Workers left during the year and we bid fond farewells to Sandy Chalmers and Fiona Fisher. Sandy had been with the project from the very beginning and left to take up full time work with SACRO. Fiona decided to return to her family home in Yorkshire. Because referral numbers were so steady and indeed some clients were on a waiting list, the decision was taken to recruit new staff and in March Julia Campbell from Dornoch, James Sutherland from Golspie, Roz Summers from Clachtoll and Trish Matthews from Rogart were welcomed to the team.

New Futures Sutherland

63 clients participated in the New futures Sutherland Project during the period 1st April 2008 – 31st March 2009. 32 new clients have been taken into NFS since 1st April 08. We currently have a waiting list of 9 clients.

Working for Families

45 clients participated in the Working for Families project during the same period and 22 new clients were registered during that time.



Outcomes

19 clients left NFS during the year and of those, 9 moved into employment and voluntary positions. Of the 19 who left, 4 moved into training and no longer requested support; 3 clients chose to relocate outwith Sutherland to more densely populated areas where the opportunity to find employment is greater. 1 client left having decided he would manage to find work or training without help. 1 client left to concentrate on detoxification and 1 client suffered a major addiction relapse resulting in it no longer being considered possible to offer appropriate support, hence the project withdrew the support until such time as the client's situation becomes more stable. 2 clients returned to the project having for various reasons not sustained the progress made.

Working for Families Transitions and intermediate activities were again strong and of the 21 who exited the project during the period, 12 moved into employment and the other nine had participated in training which enhanced their skills and would hopefully lead to employment in the near future.

Clients who are engaged with the projects are always encouraged to participate in both local training courses, which can be sourced at any of the Learning Centres or at other venues throughout the county, and distance learning which is accessed online. Given the varying levels of educational achievement that our clients come to us with, we try as best we can to find courses and training events which suit each individual's needs.

At the moment, I am pleased to report that a high percentage of active clients from both projects are participating in work, work experience or training and further education. The courses they are participating in are diverse in both subject and complexity. They include First Aid, ECDL and advanced ECDL, Basic Cookery, Travel & Tourism HND, Theology at degree level, Dog Handling, Maths and English higher, Crystal Healing, Adult Basic Education and photography, driving instructor training, nursing, equestrian HND, Sign Language, and teacher training. We also have clients who are attending keep fit classes and Martial Arts Classes. Clients who are on work placements or work experience are engaged as shop assistants, waitresses, horticulture worker, slaughterhouse worker, computer repair person, language teacher, nursery assistant and agricultural assistant. It is hoped that some of these temporary positions will lead to something more permanent. We continue to support our clients through the difficult initial stages of settling into employment so that they can always have an impartial person to discuss any issues that may arise during the settling in phase.

Referrals

Our clients have been referred to us from 18 different sources, by far the biggest source being self referrals. Other referrals come via Jobcentre Plus, health visitors, TYKES (young carers), North West Advice Service, Careers Service, community psychiatric nurses, Family First, Mental Health Drop In Centre, Working for Families, SWD, Children 1st, Lairg Learning Centre, Brora Learning Centre, Assynt Leisure & Learning Centre, Alcohol Counselling, 20/20 Training and Women's Aid. It is clear that our services are well-known and well thought-of among our partner agencies

Activities

We held a team-building weekend in the autumn. We shared our own skills and areas of expertise and learned a lot from one another. Also, the weekend gave us the chance to find out about how we each spend our spare time and what our clients could gain from that. This brought a whole new dimension to the team and is an exercise we intend repeating once the new members of staff have settled into their new roles.

All clients who are active in the project are participating well and have been encouraged to take part in organised events such as an outdoor activity day at the Fairburn Activity Centre, Muir of Ord. This was to encourage clients to try new activities which moved them out of their

comfort zone and encouraged them to cooperate with one another in team settings in order to win a prize – a bar of chocolate!



Team Building at Fairburn



Client Activity - The Winners!

We also organised a Confidence and Communication event which was aimed at encouraging clients to learn appropriate communication methods which employers would look for in a workplace and how to put their point of view across clearly and concisely when challenged or under stress. This provided an excellent platform for clients to share experiences both good and bad and learn from each other in a safe environment. We are happy to report that from both of these events, new friendships have formed and clients who did not know each other before are now mutually supportive and encouraging of one another.

We had a HMle Inspection recently under the Community Learning heading and the comments were positive in that the project provided 'Some effective destinations for New Futures participants'.

Looking at the achievements made by our clients during the past year, I feel proud that they have made such great progress and clearly our clients have felt the benefit of our support. I know that the secret of our success is due partly to the regularity of the contact we have with clients, but mainly because we see the person as a whole, treat them as equal and let them see that we believe in and respect them. Maintaining a routine and taking an active interest in all areas of our clients' lives helps them to feel they are less of a burden and strengthens their own self belief. Our network of contacts throughout the organisations which refer clients to us is strong and healthy the understanding of the support we can provide has grown. We have good open lines of communication and share relevant information at a professional level for the benefit of all concerned. Our reputation in Sutherland stands high and there is a strong demand for our services, as our current waiting list testifies.

Mary Macleod



Highland Opportunity



Supported by
The National Lottery[®]
through the Big Lottery Fund





Geopark Report

FIONA MACKENZIE

Introduction

The European Geopark Network has continued to strengthen to 34 geoparks, 58 in the Global Geoparks Network and 2 in Scotland. Last year, Shetland applied for Geopark status and the decision for its acceptance into the family of Geoparks will be made in September 2009 potentially joining us and Lochaber as Scotland's Geoparks. Sincere thanks from myself go to our funding partners, to the members of the North West Highlands Geopark (NWHG) Steering Group (chaired by Iain Muir), and to the intrepid Highland Council Rangers who have led so many walks. Not least, I thank Sutherland Partnership Manager William Sutherland and Treasurer Graham Jones for providing the underpinning organisation and support.

NW Highlands Geopark Development & Action Plan 2009-12

From April 2008 to date, my role has focused on the creation of the North West Highlands Geopark Development and Action Plan 2009-12 and securing long-term funding. The development and action plan identifies projects and initiatives that will be carried out by the Geopark working in conjunction with stakeholders and partners over a three year period spanning from 2009 to 2012. It aims to recognise and include all the aspirations of North West Highlands Geopark and bring them together into one document for deliverable action. The plan recognises the valuable input made by participants of the Geopark "Land and Economy" Seminar, Strategy and Roadshow workshops including pupils of Achfary, Durness, Kinlochbervie, Scourie, Stoer, Lochinver and Coigach; and responders to the Seabridge Consultancy Telephone Survey. Lastly, input from public consultation at five Geopark forums in September 2008 held at Durness, Kinlochbervie, Scourie, Achiltibuie and Lochinver. At this juncture, I would like to take the opportunity to thank all contributors to the plan. The plan also takes into account other strategies and policies in existence at a national, regional and local level. It will take the collective effort from all stakeholders to make the plan happen and to make a positive difference to the North West Highlands of Scotland and to realise our vision "The North West Highlands Geopark, in Scotland, will be a world-class geological must-see and a leading example of successful, sustainable, economic and community development underpinned by the area's status as a UNESCO geopark."

As for funding, the Geopark has successfully gained awards from the Scottish Rural Development Plan (SRDP), Awards for All, The Highland Council Ward 1 and Ward 6 Discretionary Funds. It has been a daunting task to secure funding in these economically turbulent times especially for core funding and overhead costs. Fortunately, at time of writing, there is hope that the intervention rate for SRDP rural priority HIG 32 "community services and facilities" to support community projects will be increased from 50% to 90%. If such a change were to be applied to our approved proposal, it would greatly enhance our chances of achieving matching funding. We await confirmation with great trepidation and excitement! Also, the Geopark has applied to LEADER and SNH for an exciting innovative role of Geopark Community Georanger specialising in geology and geomorphology in Scotland's first Geopark.

Geopark Projects

There has been further progress on the key aims of the Geopark: to advance the causes of tourism promotion, information and community engagement

- Tourism Promotion The new website with interactive map is up and running. Our set of four leaflets and updated core leaflets produced in English, French, Gaelic, German, Italian and Spanish were/are distributed to outlets throughout the Geopark and its gateways. The challenge is get our marketing materials further afield. The NWHG has a display in Edinburgh's "Our Dynamic Earth" in an obvious position which is also a photo capture opportunity targeting 100,000 visitors from central Scotland. We also have a display in Fort William Visitor Information Centre targetting visitors for Lochaber and the central belt. In addition, we attended the British Geological Survey (BGS) Open Day attracting geologists and central belt visitors to the NW Highlands. The Geopark has been the focus in many articles in a variety of publications from Sunday supplements to geological papers to mountaineering magazines. We were highlighted in the televised "The Sutherland Trail" production.
- Events & Community Engagement We had healthy community and visitors' participation at our May EGN fortnight and September Scottish Geological Festival of big walks, fascinating talks and coastal jaunts to celebrate our geological heritage. The biggest turnout was for the talk on the new scientific discovery - evidence of a meteorite strike in the Geopark at Stac Fada. This is only the 5th such meteorite ejecta blanket found on planet Earth. To raise our profile on a local and visitor level, we attended all the Highland Gatherings and Games in the Geopark. This allowed people (local and visitors) the opportunity to put forward their thoughts on what they want to see in the Geopark. Pebble painting was very popular with local and visitor children at all Games – we even had to raid a couple of beaches for more pebbles.

Validation

North West Highlands Geopark was reviewed by the European Geoparks Network (EGN) in August 2007 and received a yellow card. The fundamental reason for the yellow card was lack of sustainable resource and long term funding. EGN and UNESCO (United Nations, Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation) wish to see that local, regional and national level government are committed to the Geopark status and concept in the long term. The North West Highlands Geopark will be re-validated this summer. Securing long term funding will ensure that the Geopark is recommended for a green card. Otherwise the Geopark will be recommended for a red card and consequently be ejected from the network.

Staffing

Owing to other work opportunities, Evelyn Mackay left the post of Assistant Geopark Officer at the end of March 2009. I would like to take this opportunity to give a vote of thanks for her efficient organisational and administrative skills which are sorely missed when it comes to ordering ink for printers notably when an application needs to be printed and its deadline is looming.

Networking in the Geopark Networks!

I attended the Global Geoparks Fair at the historic market square in Osnabrück, promoting the NWHG to the German Market and other geoparks. The Global Geoparks fair was opened by Prof. Dr Hans-Gert Pöttering, President of the European Parliament and Walter Hirche, President of German UNESCO Commission which demonstrates the strength of political support for the European and Global Geoparks Network across the EU. Having developed a close working relationship with Lochaber Geopark on marketing initiatives, we attracted more visitors to our shared display with the talents of the British Legion Osnabrück Pipe Band. I attended the 3rd International UNESCO Conference on Geoparks. Keynote speakers included Klaus Liedtke, editor in chief of National Geographic Deutschland, Eduardo F.J. de Mulder Executive Director of the IYPE Secretariat (International Year of Planet Earth) and Prof. Ross

Dowling organiser of the Inaugural International Geotourism Conference held in August 2008 in Perth, Australia. Meet your Geopark – youth development project was a success with involvement from schools from Slovenia, Czech Republic, Greece, England, Portugal, Germany and Scotland. Four pupils from the Geopark took part. They participated in an assortment of workshops including nature photography, dyes from stones, sand painting, rock climbing, forging metal etc. They also presented at the Global Geoparks fair to the other pupils and presented to conference delegates on the last day of the conference “NW Highlands Geoparks - Not just a pile of rocks”. Asked whether they would recommend the experience to fellow pupils was met with a resounding “YES”. Thanks to Murdo MacPherson for supervising and ensuring that this project went ahead (especially as it overlapped with the school holidays). I also attended two EGN Coordination Committee meetings throughout the year.

Our Key Aims for 2009-2010.

Key aims for the forthcoming year are as follows.

i) The objective is to promote the Geopark to visitors from Scotland, GB & I, and abroad and to local people; and to geologists, academics and interested others.

Outputs

- Development of marketing toolset – banners, rollups, revised leaflets
- Development of Geopark merchandise
- Attendance at identified tourism & consumer fairs and geological and geographical conferences promoting the NW Highlands

ii) The objective is to raise awareness and encourage sensitive interpretation of our geological heritage

Outputs

- Further development of shoulder events – May EGN week and Scottish Geology Festival
- Development of geo-tourism initiatives including geotours
- Development of harbour and viewpoint interpretation
- Geocaching initiative

iii) The objective is to promote conservation of our geological heritage

Outputs

- Geodiversity audit and Local Geodiversity Action Plan
- Promotion of Scottish Fossil Code and Geological Code

My view is that North West Highlands Geopark’s existence is on a knife-edge. If the core funding is not in place by the validation in Summer 2009, the Geopark will receive a red card and be ejected from the European Geoparks Network. The accolade of “European Geopark” status and its use as an international promotional tool of the area will be lost. Re-attainment of “European Geopark” status will be extremely difficult and costly in terms of energy, time and monies. It would be a shame to lose such an accolade in spite of the North West Highlands Geopark being specifically cited in the inquiry into the Future of Scotland’s Hills and Islands (p115). Such initiatives as ours were supported from which stemmed the environmental tourism recommendation 39: “Public authorities and local communities around the Hills and Islands should work together to prepare proposals for the designation by UNESCO of Geoparks, Biosphere Reserves and World Heritage Sites in the Hills and Islands.” Here’s hoping that the quest for matching funding is successful as time is running out fast.

Fiona Mackenzie
18th June 2009

ANNEX A

Company Number 186690

Financial Statements

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

31 March 2009

MACKAY & CO

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

FINANCIAL STATEMENTS YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

CONTENTS	PAGE
The Directors' Report	A - 1, A - 2
Accountants' Report to the Directors	A - 3
Income and Expenditure account	A - 4
Balance Sheet	A - 5
Notes to the financial statements	A - 6

The following pages do not form part of the financial statements

Detailed Income and Expenditure account and Balance Sheet	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Sutherland Partnership – Core Account- New Futures (incorporating Working for Families)- Geopark- Other Projects- Community Transport
--	---

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

Office Bearers:

Chairperson	Robert Rowantree
Treasurer	Graham Jones
Secretary	William Sutherland

Directors:

Ann Keatinge
Ian Ross
Robert Rowantree
Russell Rekhy
John McMorran
Alex Murray
George Farlow
Deirdre Mackay
James McGillivray
Linda Munro

Reporting Accountants:

Mackay & Co
Main Street
Golspie
Sutherland
KW10 6RH

Registered Office:

New Buildings
Main Street
Lairg
Sutherland
IV27 4DB

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

DIRECTORS' REPORT

The Directors submit their report and accounts for the year ended 31 March 2009.

GOVERNING DOCUMENT

The governing documents of the company are the Memorandum and Articles of Association of the company which was incorporated on 11 June 1998.

CONSTITUTION

Sutherland Partnership is a company limited by guarantee of £1 per member and has no share capital. Permission has been obtained from the Registrar of Companies to omit the word 'limited' from the company's name.

REVIEW OF THE OBJECTIVES OF THE COMPANY

The principal aim of the company is to secure the economic and social well-being of Sutherland by tackling the problems of rural disadvantage.

DIRECTORS

The Directors who served during the year ended 31 March 2009 are shown on the previous page.

The company is limited by guarantee and, therefore, no director had any interest in the company.

STATEMENT OF DIRECTORS' RESPONSIBILITIES IN RESPECT OF THE ACCOUNTS

Company law requires the directors to prepare accounts for each financial year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company and of the profit or loss of the company for that period. In preparing these accounts, the directors are required to:

select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;

make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;

prepare accounts on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.

The directors are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the accounts comply with the Companies Act 1985. They are responsible for safeguarding the assets of the company and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

REPORTING ACCOUNTANTS

A resolution proposing the appointment of Mackay & Co as reporting accountants will be put to members at the Annual General Meeting.

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

DIRECTORS' REPORT continued

SMALL COMPANY PROVISIONS

This report has been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under Part V11 of the Companies Act 1985.

Registered Office

New Buildings
Main Street
LAIRG
Sutherland
IV27 4DB

Signed by Order of the Directors

Company Secretary

Approved by the Directors on 1 July 2009.

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

ACCOUNTANTS' REPORT

Accountants' report to the members on the unaudited financial statement.

We report on the financial statements for the year ended 31 March 2009 set out on pages A-4 and A-5.

Respective responsibilities of directors and reporting accountants

As described on page A-5 the company's directors are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements, and they consider that the company is exempt from an audit. It is our responsibility to carry out procedures designed to enable us to report our opinion.

Basis of opinion

Our work was conducted in accordance with the Statement of Standards for Reporting Accountants, and so our procedures consisted of comparing the financial statements with the accounting records kept by the company, and making such limited enquiries of the officers of the company as we considered necessary for the purposes of this report. These procedures provide only the assurance expressed in our opinion.

Opinion

In our opinion:

- (a) the financial statements are in agreement with the accounting records kept by the company under section 221 of the Companies Act 1985:
- (b) having regard only to, and on the basis of, the information contained in those accounting records:
 - (i) the financial statements have been drawn up in a manner consistent with the accounting requirements specified in section 249C(6) of the Act; and
 - (ii) the company satisfied the conditions for exemption from an audit of the financial statements for the year specified in section 249A(4) of the Act and did not, at any time within that year, fall within any of the categories of companies not entitled to the exemption specified in section 249B(1).

Golspie
1 July 2009

Mackay & Co
Reporting Accountants

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

	Restricted 2009	Unrestricted 2009	Total 2009	Total 2008
	£	£	£	£
INCOME				
Grants received	55100	190327	245427	209609
Geopark EGN Conference	-	-	-	125575
Bank interest received	-	688	688	2700
Other	<u>-</u>	<u>3346</u>	<u>3346</u>	<u>5071</u>
	<u>55100</u>	<u>194361</u>	<u>249461</u>	<u>342955</u>
EXPENDITURE				
Staff costs	61737	122187	183924	114091
Administration	3611	16033	19644	52938
Geopark EGN Conference	-	-	-	106867
Bus operating costs (overprovision)	-	-	-	(4500)
Geopark launch costs	-	5768	5768	2113
Client costs	12025	10909	22934	12317
Direct project costs	-	25665	25665	66508
Other	<u>-</u>	<u>2854</u>	<u>2854</u>	<u>5367</u>
	<u>77373</u>	<u>183416</u>	<u>260789</u>	<u>355701</u>
DEFICIT OF INCOME OVER EXPENDITURE	<u>(22273)</u>	<u>10945</u>	<u>(11328)</u>	<u>(12746)</u>

All restricted funds are from the Big Lottery Fund

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

BALANCE SHEET - 31 MARCH 2009

	Note	2009 £	2008 £
CURRENT ASSETS			
Debtors	2	452	18942
Cash in Bank		<u>122344</u>	<u>133050</u>
		122796	151992
Creditors	3	<u>50750</u>	<u>68618</u>
NET CURRENT ASSETS		<u>72046</u>	<u>83374</u>
TOTAL ASSETS LESS CURRENT LIABILITIES		<u>72046</u>	<u>83374</u>
RESERVES	4	<u>72046</u>	<u>83374</u>

The directors are satisfied that the company is entitled to exemption from the provisions of the Companies Act 1985 relating to the audit of the accounts for the year by virtue of Section 249A(1) and that no notice requiring an audit has been deposited pursuant to Section 249 B(2) of the Act.

The directors acknowledge their responsibilities for:

- (i) ensuring that the company keeps proper accounting records which comply with section 221 of the Act, and
- (ii) preparing accounts which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the company as at the end of the financial year and of its surplus or deficit for the financial year in accordance with the requirements of Section 226, and which otherwise comply with the requirements of the Act relating to financial statements, so far as applicable to the company.

These accounts have been prepared in accordance with the special provisions for small companies under part V11 of the Companies Act 1985 and with the Financial Reporting Standard for Smaller Entities.

These financial statements were approved by the directors on 1 July 2009 and are signed on their behalf by:

.....

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS - 31 MARCH 2009

1 ACCOUNTING POLICIES

BASIS OF PREPARATION OF FINANCIAL STATEMENTS:

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with applicable accounting standards.

REVENUE GRANTS

Revenue grants are accounted for when receivable.

2 DEBTORS	2009	2008
	£	£
Grant receivable	-	18456
Other debtors	<u>452</u>	<u>486</u>
	<u>452</u>	<u>18942</u>

3 CREDITORS	2009	2008
	£	£
Funds received in advance	<u>50750</u>	<u>68618</u>

4 RESERVES	2009	2008
	£	£
Balance brought forward 1 April 2008	83374	96120
(Deficit)/Surplus for year	<u>(11328)</u>	<u>(12746)</u>
	<u>72046</u>	<u>83374</u>

5 STATUS OF THE COMPANY

The company is limited by guarantee and does not have a share capital. The liability of the members is limited but is not to exceed £1 per member.

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

CORE ACCOUNT

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

	2009	2008
	£	£
INCOME		
Grants Received - Highland Council	22750	20000
- S N H	5000	5000
- H I E	10000	5359
- Highland Opportunity	1280	1250
- N H S Highland	5000	-
Bank interest	154	230
Other	<u>-</u>	<u>862</u>
	44184	32701
EXPENDITURE		
Staff costs	36573	34177
Administration	3173	2815
Other	<u>998</u>	<u>1550</u>
	40744	38542
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	<u>3440</u>	<u>(5841)</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2009

	£		£
RESERVES			
Brought forward	8426	Cash at Bank	32616
		Debtors	10000
Surplus for year	3440	Less Sundry Creditors	(30750)
	<u>11866</u>		<u>11866</u>

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

COMMUNITY TRANSPORT

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

	2009	2008
	£	£
INCOME		
Other (transfer from SIP account)	-	6022
Bank interest received	<u>29</u>	<u>71</u>
	<u>29</u>	<u>6093</u>
 EXPENDITURE		
Administration	-	64
CVS North – sponsored study	4000	-
Other	<u>-</u>	<u>47</u>
	<u>4000</u>	<u>111</u>
 (DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR YEAR	 <u>(3971)</u>	 <u>5982</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2009

	£		£
RESERVES			
Brought forward	7066	Cash at Bank	3095
Deficit for year	<u>(3971)</u>		<u> </u>
	<u>3095</u>		<u>3095</u>

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

NEW FUTURES (INCLUDING WORKING FOR FAMILIES)

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

	Unrestricted	Restricted*	Total	
	2009	2009	2009	2008
	£	£	£	£
INCOME				
Grants - Big Lottery Fund	-	55100	55100	67588
- H I E	10000	-	10000	10000
- Highland Opportunity	45493	-	45493	42423
Interest received	237	-	237	473
Other	<u>100</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>100</u>	<u>250</u>
	55830	55100	110930	120734
EXPENDITURE				
Staff costs	29465	61737	91202	68902
Administration	3175	3611	6786	6842
Client costs	5480	12025	17505	12317
Driving lessons	5429	-	5429	5125
Other	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>-</u>	<u>2923</u>
	<u>43549</u>	<u>77373</u>	<u>120922</u>	<u>96109</u>
(DEFICIT)/SURPLUS FOR YEAR	<u>12281</u>	<u>(22273)</u>	<u>(9992)</u>	<u>24625</u>

* Most funds provided to Sutherland Partnership are restricted by funders in the uses to which they may be put. In these accounts, however, the word "Restricted" is used solely with reference to funds provided by the Big Lottery Fund, and in response to Big Lottery Fund requirements.

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2009

	£		£
RESERVES			
Brought forward	36176	Cash at Bank	25732
Deficit for year	(9992)	Debtors	452
	<u>26184</u>		<u>26184</u>

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

OTHER PROJECTS

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

	2009	2008
	£	£
INCOME		
Grants received - H I E	-	1847
- Other	-	4000
Other	2875	3959
Bank interest received	<u>90</u>	<u>970</u>
	2965	10776
EXPENDITURE		
Direct project costs	-	20864
Administration	<u>327</u>	<u>729</u>
	<u>327</u>	<u>21593</u>
SURPLUS/(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	<u>2638</u>	<u>(10817)</u>

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2009

	£		£
RESERVES			
Brought forward	18622	Cash at Bank	51260
Surplus for year	<u>2638</u>	Sundry Creditors	<u>(30000)</u>
	<u>21260</u>		<u>21260</u>

SUTHERLAND PARTNERSHIP

GEPARK

INCOME & EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2009

	2009	2008
	£	£
INCOME		
Highland Council	15000	-
Other	371	6645
H I E	46346	4706
S N H	23000	-
Scottish Executive	5275	-
Bank interest received	<u>159</u>	<u>880</u>
	<u>90151</u>	<u>12231</u>
Geopark projects -		
- Highland Council	-	20000
- CASE	-	13291
- S N H	<u>-</u>	<u>7500</u>
	<u>-</u>	<u>40791</u>
Geopark EGN Conference	<u>1201</u>	<u>125575</u>
	91352	178597
EXPENDITURE		
Geopark Officer -		
Staff Costs	56149	11012
Administration Costs	9358	42488
Launch Costs	5768	2113
Other	<u>1856</u>	<u>778</u>
	<u>73131</u>	<u>56391</u>
Geopark Projects -		
Tourism promotion	14089	22251
Information	6248	10534
Community engagement	1327	130
Business support	<u>-</u>	<u>7604</u>
	21664	40519
Geopark Conference	<u>-</u>	<u>106867</u>
(DEFICIT) FOR YEAR	(3443)	(25180)

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31 MARCH 2009

	£		£
RESERVES		CURRENT ASSETS	
Brought forward	13083	Cash at bank	9640
Deficit for year	(3443)		
	<u>9640</u>		<u>9640</u>