

Community Asset Transfer Request for Saraig & Ratagan

Joint response to representations: KLCT, Communities Housing Trust, Loch Duich Community Council

The responses appear to mostly concentrate on the Saraig proposals. These fall under these main headings:

A. Lack of consultation and publicly available information, survey engagement insufficient or not representative

There have been 4 levels of consultation which commenced in 2020 to 2024 and involved multiple opportunities for community engagement and extensive press coverage and promotion using a wide range of print, online, film and festival methods.

1. 2020-2021 Lochalsh Community survey

- a. A wide range of communication tools were used to publicise the survey including articles in a regular free community newsletter hand delivered to every permanently household during Covid, then available free in outlets throughout Lochalsh, large roadside banners, posters, flyers, Facebook posts, website news, the production of 3 short films and a Window Wonderland Festival to promote the survey.
- b. The 35-question survey was hand delivered to every permanently occupied residence in Lochalsh.
- c. 600 responses were received from an adult population of 2000 = 33% of the adult population. This is a very high percentage response to a long 35 question community survey in comparison to most other similar community surveys.
- d. Mick Doyle, Head of Programme of the Scottish Community Development Centre has described the community consultation undertaken in Lochalsh as the most comprehensive and imaginative he has seen in 40 years of involvement in community development and the engagement the highest for such a long survey.

2. 2022 Community Action Plan

- a. 4,000 individual comments from survey responses were collated and analysed
- b. Affordable housing and keeping young people and families in the area were identified as top priorities. Access to land for growing, access to business units or land for business units and tourism developments to keep tourists in Lochalsh were all identified as important priorities.
- c. The Lochalsh Community Action Plan was developed in close consultation with the Lochalsh Collaboration, a forum with representatives from every community council and community trust in Lochalsh, and endorsed by the Collaboration
- d. The Lochalsh Community Action Plan was launched at a widely publicised public event in Dornie Hall in September 2022

3. Oct 2023 – Sep 2024 Lochalsh Local Place Plan – incorporating Saraig & Ratagan plans

- a. Involved public consultation at a well-publicised all-day event in Kyle in February at which the **plans for Saraig & Ratagan** were incorporated into the local place plan. 75 people attended from all over Lochalsh, from all 7 community council areas. The furthest travelled was from Glen Beag in Glenelg.
- b. The draft Lochalsh Local Place Plan invited comment in an online survey during May and June, publicised in Facebook posts, CommUnity News and the WHFP
- c. The Lochalsh Local Place Plan was signed off by all 7 Lochalsh community councils and 6 community trusts and registered with Highland Council in September 2024.

4. 2022-2024 Plans for Saraig and Ratagan FLS sites - publicising developments

- a. The development of the plans for Saraig and Ratagan have been widely publicised throughout the process using a wide variety of different methods.
- b. The principal source of information has been through the **free** CommUnity News, available in shops throughout Lochalsh, including Inverinate Filling Station (Kintail Crafts were unable to stock it due to lack of space).
- c. CommUnity News is also available as a digital version, on request, emailed to over 30 subscribers.
- d. Development of the plans as they progressed has been covered in issues in
 - i. December 2022
 - ii. February 2023
 - iii. April 2023
 - iv. September 2023
 - v. December 2023
 - vi. February 2024
 - vii. September 2024.
- e. Facebook posts and website stories
- f. Stories and photos in the West Highland Free Press (WHFP)

5. September + Oct 2023 Community consultation and housing needs survey publicity

- a. The public consultation event and community survey in October 2023 was publicised using:
 - i. Adverts for 2 weeks in the WHFP and a story with photo
 - ii. Posters throughout Lochalsh, including Inverinate Hall, Glenshiel Chocolates, Kintail Crafts, Inverinate Stores
 - iii. Facebook post of the poster, on KLCT's Facebook page, Loch Duich Community Council's page, Community Heart page.
 - iv. An A-frame at Inverinate Hall
 - v. The link to the housing needs survey was widely promoted at the event and a laptop available for those who wanted to fill it in at the event.

6. Saraig & Ratagan Community consultation & survey - evidence of need

- i. The community consultation event in Inverinate Hall attracted 40 people. Attendees were almost all from the Loch Duich Community Council area with a few from Dornie. Comments were supportive – there were numerous questions and constructive suggestions.
- ii. Attendees included Saraig residents who clearly had heard about the event and who were very supportive of the plans.
- iii. The housing needs survey gained 135 responses from local residents, 16 from people living away, mostly with local connections and 10 from local businesses.
- iv. A response of 27 people interested in a woodland croft when only 5 will be available and 28 people interested in a business unit in Ratagan when only 2 will be available suggest the proposals are wanted, needed and in considerable local demand. 78% of all responses support the proposals.
- v. The Community Housing Trust commented that this was a very encouraging response at both the community consultation event and to the survey.
- vi. Most survey respondents were from Loch Duich followed by Dornie

Site at Saraig for affordable housing?

By Susan Walker

In 2021 Loch Duich Community Council put a note of interest in an old forestry workers campsite in Saraig (near Ratagan) to prevent Forest and Land Scotland selling it on the open market. At a site visit with FLS and Communities Housing Trust, it was agreed that KLCT would take forward a feasibility study into the site for mixed use: affordable houses for sale and rent, house sites and possibly business units and growing land.

Donald MacIntosh, chair of Loch Duich Community Council commented: 'The community council is delighted the proposal is going ahead. It would make a lovely development for housing and we look forward to getting an update from Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust as it develops.'



Representatives of Forest and Land Scotland, Communities Housing Trust, Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust and Loch Duich Community Council on a site visit to Saraig.

Making local food together

By Emma Bennon



Earlier this year, Emma Bennon, the Community Grower with Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust, organised a range of workshops around Lochalsh. The feedback was so good we decided to hold some more. Now funded by Hubbub, the focus of these workshops is to link the Community Fridge with the Community Garden we are creating on the Plock. We were very lucky that some of the growers from the Spring workshops agreed to host some of these Autumn ones. It was so nice to be able to see what had been harvested and see how they processed the food.

Colin and Jackie Parsons ran a fabulous apple pressing workshop in Achmore Hall with many types of apples to taste from their orchard and other local growers. They showed us how to use their press and we made some delicious juice with everyone getting stuck in. It was so interesting to see how the juice differed between varieties.



Kate and Jake from Cosaig Growers in Glenelg kindly had us back and we harvested lots of their wonderful produce, cooked it up and sat by a bonfire to enjoy it. Kate had also made some soda bread to share. We were very lucky that we avoided most of the rain.

Our Community Grower ran a couple of workshops herself sharing soup made with veg from the Community Fridge and cooked over a fire.

More workshops will be held in the local primary schools and in the New Year there will be some more on the Plock as the Community Kitchen is being built.

We very much enjoyed the workshops and thank you to everyone who attended. The biggest thanks of all goes to Colin, Jackie, Kate and Jake for sharing their invaluable knowledge, equipment and food with us.

The Lochalsh Collaboration What have we achieved in 3 years?

By Susan Walker

- We have achieved a lot!
- The Lochalsh Collaboration met weekly then fortnightly throughout the Covid lockdown.
- We coordinated an incredible voluntary community Covid response in every community in Lochalsh. Lots of outside agencies said it was the best they had seen.
- We had a helpline, free food vouchers, blessing boxes, virtual events, online videos, volunteers delivering food, meals, medicines, art packs for children, dog walking and more.
- KLCT started a community newsletter when the WHFP shut down during lockdown and it is still going. We have now produced 25 issues.
- We looked at other community surveys and designed a 35-question survey.
- There was a great, creative response to the Window Wonderland festival on themes from the community survey with lovely windows throughout Lochalsh.
- The community survey was hand delivered to every household by volunteers.
- The survey was available online, in English and Gaelic.
- We made a short film introduction to the survey.

- We received almost 600 survey responses, including almost 4,000 comments!
- The results were analysed by a Scottish Government analyst and the Community Development Officer.
- A full survey report and a condensed survey report were written.
- A small writing group wrote the Lochalsh Community Action Plan based on the priorities identified in the survey responses.
- We made 3 short films with local people talking about the priorities in the action plan.
- The films and all the documents are available on www.lochalsh.uk
- The Lochalsh Community Action Plan was launched in September 2022.
- There were displays and/or representatives from 15 community trusts, community councils and other organisations.
- The launch was attended by representatives of Highland Council, HIE, and Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association.
- The Lochalsh Collaboration wrote to the NHS expressing concern about the loss of dental provision in Lochalsh. This is ongoing.

Partners of the Lochalsh Collaboration and organisations throughout Lochalsh are working very hard to address the priorities in the Lochalsh Community Action Plan

Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust (KLCT)

Housing Business. Land for growing

The need for affordable housing, particularly for under 40s and families was identified as the top priority in the Lochalsh Community Action Plan. KLCT has recently secured £11,250 from the Scottish Land Fund which is part of the funding needed to conduct a feasibility study into a Forest and Land Scotland (FLS) site in Saraig, near Ratagan. As a result of this funding the trust is now invited to apply to the Rural and Islands Housing Fund to complete the feasibility funding package.

After a tendering process, the Communities Housing Trust was chosen to conduct the feasibility study. The study will investigate the suitability of the site for housing and will consider different tenure options, including social rent as well as some affordable house sites.

The study will ask whether any potential householders would be interested in business units or land for growing. There will also be community consultation to explain about the



The site at Saraig

project and ask for opinions.

The feasibility study is expected to take approximately 6 months once funding is secured. If the results look promising, the next stage will be making a community asset transfer request to FLS, and seeking funding to purchase the land as well as securing funding to get full planning permission, and services and build costs.

The proposal has the full support of Loch Duich Community Council. Contact susan.walker@lochalsh.uk 01471833274

CommUnity News



Issue 24

February 2023

Healthy Homes for Skye & Lochalsh

By Anne MacLennan

Skye and Lochalsh have a windy, damp maritime climate and many homes leak heat, so they are difficult and expensive to keep warm and dry. Poorly managed humidity can cause damp and mould. All of this leads to high energy costs, worrying fuel poverty levels, and adverse health consequences.

It also means that too many homes are vulnerable to an increasingly wet and windy climate, while high energy use and inefficiency contribute to climate change.

For all of these reasons, there is a compelling need to improve our housing stock to deliver warm healthy homes and opportunities to encourage and develop locally based solutions.

Over the past few months, a small group of people drawn from the Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association (LSHA), Skye Climate Action (SCA), and the environmentally-concerned construction sector have been working together with input from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) and The Highland Council (THC) to work out the scale of the problem and how to tackle it cost-effectively and sustainably.

We want our homes to be healthier and more affordable to run, and we want to grow local employment prospects in the retrofitting, insulation and renewable heating sectors along

with improved access to information, local solutions, DIY support and funding. All of this while moving to net zero carbon emissions.

Household survey on housing
There will be a survey of house construction, condition and energy use across Skye, Raasay and Lochalsh in March. All resident households are invited to participate. Survey responses will be anonymous. Although mainly online, there will be some print copies available.

Survey results will give up-to-date data on our housing stock—where people live. The more people who participate, the better we will be able to demonstrate the extent and nature of problems with home heating and ventilation. It will also help to identify any barriers you face in fixing those problems. Good data facilitates engagement with Government, HIE and other agencies—and there is accessible funding for developing local solutions.

Watch out for more details over the coming weeks. There will be information online and in print, with opportunities to have a chat about it and tell us what you think. Get in touch if you'd like to be involved in the project or for more information. Contact Anne MacLennan HealthyHomesSL@gmail.com

Saraig site feasibility study out to tender

The work to investigate the site at Saraig has gone out to tender. The feasibility study will look at the potential of the site for housing, as well as exploring use for business units and food growing, alongside the housing. Once the tender bids have been received, an application will be made to the Scottish Land Unit and the Rural Housing Fund. Housing was the top priority for the Lochalsh Community Action Plan. For more information, contact susan.walker@lochalsh.uk



Mapping the future of Lochalsh

Children and young people throughout Lochalsh have been busy creating maps showing what they would like to happen in Lochalsh.

The sessions were organised by local artist Sarah Longley and town planner Nick Wright, who is working with local communities to produce a Lochalsh Local Place Plan. They took place in the 5 Primaries (Kyle, Plockton, Glenelg, Lochalsh, Auchtertyre) and with S1+S3 in Plockton High. The idea was to make sure that children have a meaningful influence over their future.

Nick explains more: "We asked each class a simple question: if you had a million pounds, what would you do to improve your community?" For the Plockton High School students, the top suggestions included cinema, more gyms, more cafes and places to meet, more shops, a museum, and better play facilities for all ages. Other ideas from the Primary schools included trampolines, indoor soft play for wet days, museum, piers out into the lochs for jumping into the water, cat cafes, after-school mini-racetrack and gaming in village halls, a museum, homeless shelter, getting rid of litter, more trees, a dirtbike track and of course a McDonalds and (for the girls) a Burger Queen.

Children in Kyle had lots of good ideas for the Plock, like an adventure playground, community gardening and outdoor activities.

"These ideas are a great starting point for making a plan. We're not going to rustle up new shops or a Burger Queen overnight, but some impossible-sounding ideas might not be as impractical as they first seem. For example, rather than building a new cinema, we could look at making more use of village halls for film nights."

"And the children simply love Sarah's arts approach - lots of them remembered her fondly from arts sessions when they were younger. The highlight for each class was to create a giant map from scratch using charcoal. It was great to see them enjoying expressing themselves together with such simple black and white materials in so many different ways. And by doing these arts sessions in the schools, we've been putting the Community Action Plan into practice - by providing young people with more activities and opportunities, and there aren't any dedicated arts teachers in Lochalsh."

"I'm looking forward to seeing the pride on the children's faces when they show their artwork to their parents on the 24th February!"



Kyle Primary pupils' map, created with artist Sarah Longley

For more on the Lochalsh Local Place Plan see p 2

How can we get a better dentist service in Lochalsh?

By Susan Walker

A meeting took place on Friday 2nd February between John Lyon, the Head of Dentistry in NHS Highland and nine representatives from the Lochalsh Collaboration. The meeting was chaired by MSP Kate Forbes, and organised by her office. There was a wide-ranging discussion covering the impact on individuals of all ages, with a special mention of the impact on children's dental health, and on family finances when the only available emergency dental services involve long distances to Portree, Dingwall or further afield.

John Lyon clarified that a health board is not legally required to provide a full range of dental services, although many people believe

everyone should have a right of access in the same way as to health services. He agreed, however, that poor dental services are resulting in hospitals having to treat dental emergencies that could have been prevented with better access to dentist services.

He also clarified that NHS boards must seek approval from the Scottish Government to be allowed to appoint salaried dentists for General Dentistry - which is the name for dentist services provided to the general public, rather than specialist services. The Scottish Government has a policy that General Dentistry services can and should be delivered by private businesses, with government grants to support set up of dentist businesses and ongoing financial support for treatment of NHS patients also available. The meeting agreed that this model is clearly not working in Lochalsh or in other rural areas within Highland Region. Other ideas included using communities' networks to help to attract dentists to advertised posts and making adverts more attractive.

John Lyon has agreed to ask the Scottish Government at one of his regular meetings with them whether NHS Highland can appoint salaried General Dentists to increase access to NHS dentist services in rural areas.

Kate Forbes commented: "Access to dental services are one of the most frequently raised issues with me and I am in regular dialogue with both NHS Highland and the Scottish Government. We are all acutely aware of the challenges with provision on the west coast at present, and I am continuing to pursue this matter."

"I was glad to be able to secure the recent meeting between members of the Lochalsh Collaboration and John Lyon, Director of Dentistry & Clinical Dental Director (Public Dental Service) at NHS Highland. It was a helpful discussion and I hope we can make further progress."

Lochalsh Local Place Plan
 Finding space for our aspirations

Saturday 24th February 2024 11am to 3pm
 The Lighthouse, Station Rd, Kyle IV40 8AE

During lockdown, communities across Lochalsh came together to create a 10 year Community Action Plan.

Now, to put that plan into action, we need you to say what should happen where.

From Glenelg to Plockton, our young people have been mapping their priorities: housing, gyms, cinema, shops, cafes, places to meet, play areas & more.

Now it's your turn.
 Tell us what your priorities are, and where they need to happen.

Check out the kids' maps and have lunch & a hot drink on us!

FREE LUNCH!

More details: Susan Walker, Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust
 www.lochalsh.uk 01568 534609 info@lochalsh.co.uk
 Thanks to Highland Council for supporting this additional work

Help us to map the future in Lochalsh

By Susan Walker

Anyone interested in how Lochalsh could look in the future is encouraged to come to the public event on 24th February in the Lighthouse Centre, 11am-3pm. You will be able to look at an exhibition of artwork and maps created by school pupils throughout Lochalsh. You will be encouraged to contribute your ideas on big maps for Lochalsh.

This is part of a project to produce a Lochalsh Local Place Plan which will strengthen and map the priorities identified in the Lochalsh Community Action



May 2024

September 2024 report on survey results

Local Place Plan - please comment!

After hard work and lots of input from hundreds of community members, and many local organisations since 2021, the Lochalsh Local Place Plan is the final step in making sure every public agency and service, as well as every organisation and community member has a clear picture of the vision for Lochalsh. Using a visual map that records what needs to be done to make Lochalsh a better place to live and work for every age group, organisation and business, the Local Place Plan will strengthen the Community Action Plan launched in September 2022.

This is the chance to make sure the Local Place Plan accurately reflects everyone's aspirations. It is open for comment from 20th May to 20th June.

See p7 for more information

Lochalsh Climate Fairs

An exciting programme of events is taking place from 20th-24th May in Lochalsh, focusing on sustainability and action on climate change. From pretlowed clothes and furniture markets, a repair cafe, a bicycle repair workshop, an e-bike come and try day, an eco and sustainability day and a guided walk, there is something for everyone. The events are taking place throughout Lochalsh, in Achmore, Dornie, Plockton, Kyle and The Plock. And the week starts off with a fun Crofting Games day on the Plock on 18th May.

For more information on the Climate Fairs and the Crofting Games, see pages 10, 11 and 12.

Progress with Saraig + Ratagan plans

Representatives of Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust will meet Loch Duich Community Council on 16th May to explain the latest updates on the plans to develop affordable housing, business units or plots, community growing and woodland crofts on the two sites of Forestry and Land Scotland-owned land.

The Trust has recently received a draft Feasibility Plan, written by the Communities Housing Trust who were commissioned to explore the potential of the Saraig site. The Ratagan site was added to the scope of the feasibility when FLS decided it wanted to sell the land. The sites have been investigated by engineers, a woodland crofts expert, designs drawn up by an architect, and a request for pre-planning advice has been submitted to Highland Council.

Maggie Byrne (Chair) and Susan Walker (Development Officer) will explain what the feasibility study has found out, the options, how each of the different elements of the proposal might work, what the next steps are and the timetable for the rest of the project.



The view from the Saraig site. Photo: Communities Housing Trust

78% support for Saraig + Ratagan plans

A community consultation event organised by Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust about the Saraig and Ratagan sites attracted over 30 people in Invernate Community Centre on 26th October. It was heartening to see all ages there, including a number of young people and families represented. Architect, Ian Livesley, had created a display of three concept plans for each site. Communities Housing Trust had materials about other community housing projects and different forms of housing tenure, and Jamie McIntyre attracted a lot of interest with his explanations of woodland crofts and how other communities are developing them. Mike Shucksmith and Lowri Richards were also present, explaining the role of Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association.

This interest in the proposals is backed up by very positive results from the housing needs survey, which also asked whether there was interest in land for business, for community growing and for woodland crofts. All of the proposed elements received good support.

By the deadline at the end of October, 135 responses had been received, with 78% in support of the proposals and 14% against (with 9% other). 45 respondents who already reside in the area wish to move home, but stay in Lochalsh. 47% or 21 respondents want to live in the Loch Duich area, with the next biggest group wanting a home in Dornie & District area. In addition, 16 respondents who currently live outwith Lochalsh would like to live in Lochalsh, of which 44% used to live in the area. Of those most want to live in Kyle (25%), followed by Loch Duich (19%).

28 respondents are interested in a workspace within the home, land to build business premises or a business unit to rent. 29 respondents would like to see the Saraig/Ratagan sites used for community growing, orchard or polytunnel, and 27 people expressed an interest in Woodland Crofts as a possible housing option. These figures as a proportion of the numbers expressing housing need are higher than the Communities Housing Trust has seen in other similar surveys.

Community respondents were strongly in favour of more affordable housing for rent being provided and that local applicants should get priority for any new housing in the area. There was also support for more homes for families. Most respondents agreed that there is an issue with people having to leave the area because they cannot find suitable accommodation. 10 business respondents replied, with 86% respondents believing that it more affordable housing is not provided, there will be a detrimental impact on their business. The full report will be available on www.lochalsh.org

Lochalsh Local Place Plan

With funding from the Community Regeneration Fund, KLCT is working with its Lochalsh Collaboration partners to create a Lochalsh Local Place Plan which will be registered with Highland Council Planning Department. This is a very important piece of work which will ensure the council considers local plans and aspirations not just in making their planning decisions, but could have a positive impact on budget and resource decisions, as well as in discussions with other public agencies and funders. More information in the next issue. Contact susan.walker@lochalsh.uk for more info.

Lochalsh paths focus group

Mapping active travel routes in Lochalsh. See P10-11 for more information



Advert in WHFP for 2 weeks in October 2023, on Facebook, produced as posters displayed throughout Lochalsh, including Inverinate Hall, Inverinate Filling Station Stores, Kintail Crafts, Glenshiel Chocolates and on an A frame at Inverinate Hall



7. Advertising the Community Asset Transfer Request to Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS)

- a. KLCT was informed by FLS when the Community Asset Transfer request had gone live on the FLS website and that notices had been posted on the Saraig and Ratagan sites.
- b. KLCT was not asked to publicise the request.
- c. Communities Housing Trust recently confirmed that they would not expect a community body to publicise the community asset transfer request.
- d. Posting the application or link on the KLCT website could have caused confusion in a legal process about where comments should be sent.

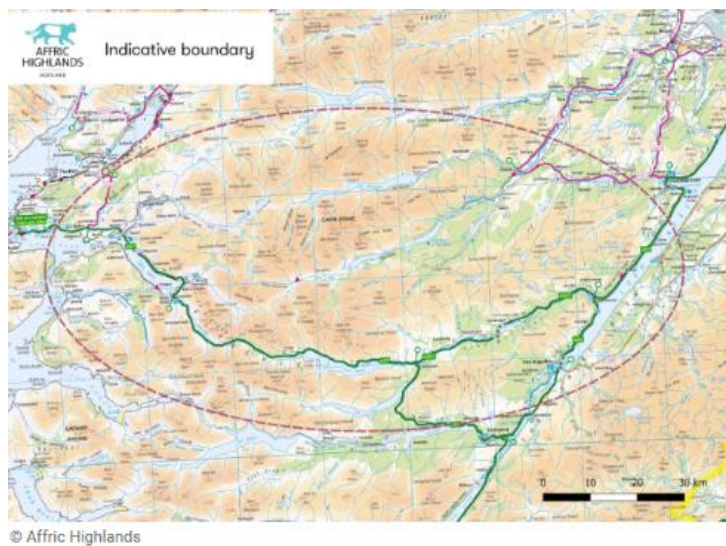
Conclusion

- It is hard to understand how any permanent residents of the area with an interest in what is happening at a community level could have missed such a wide range of communication methods which have charted the development of the proposals over 3 years
- It is hard to understand how any permanent residents of the area with an interest in what is happening in the area could have missed invitations to attend various community consultation events and take part in surveys from 2020-2024.
- Responses to surveys have been at a higher or considerably higher level than comparable community surveys or housing needs surveys.
- The 78% endorsement by the community of the proposals and the high level of interest in affordable housing, woodland crofts, community growing area and business units suggest a considerable level of community support for the proposals at Saraig and Ratagan

B. Environmental impact – Trees for Life/Affric Highlands designation

There were multiple comments about the potential environmental impact of the plans for Saraig, and in particular, references to the fact that Trees for Life has designated the area as part of their Affric Highlands Rewilding proposals as well as about the release of red squirrels in the area.

1. Any construction or infrastructure proposals which reach planning permission stage will be required to produce an environmental impact statement and assessment.
2. To date, the forested areas have been commercial non-native soft woods which have been clear felled, leaving a landscape that currently is not conducive to supporting wildlife and biodiversity.
3. A Forest Plan will need to be submitted by KLCT to Scottish Forestry for how the woodland crofts will be planted and managed [Scotland's Long Term Forest Plans - The Institute of Chartered Foresters](#) *A Long Term Forest Plan is a 20 year plan that brings together the management objectives, the environmental, economic, and social functions of the forest, and the silvicultural prescriptions into a comprehensive plan to deliver long term benefits through sustainable forest management.*
4. KLCT's aims for the forest plan is to ensure that the forestry areas are replanted, not with monoculture Sitka spruce or other non-native softwoods, but with native hardwoods, which will never be clear felled but will be managed sustainably to ensure environmental outputs on the site are enhanced rather than diminished.
5. The plans for replanting in Saraig and in Ratagan will therefore improve the habitat for red squirrels and other woodland species.
6. Trees for Life is part of a rewilding initiative called Affric Highlands which appears to have started as a coalition of landowners.
7. **It is not clear that any consultation has been done with the communities** within the "indicative boundary" they have decided to draw on a map of the area, however they do say they wish to work with communities.



© Affric Highlands

8. A small piece of community-owned land in Ratagan and Saraig, managed by the community (community growing area and campsite area) and woodland crofters, has the opportunity to join that coalition if there is community support to do so.
9. However, it should be noted that no responses to community consultation in Lochalsh since 2020 have, until these representations, raised this as a proposal that the community wants.

C Objection to creation of woodland crofts

Some objections related to the creation of woodland crofts, with opinions that the forest land should be managed by the community rather than leased to crofters for individual use.

1. Crofting law provides that land under crofting tenure is more highly regulated than any other form of land tenure, allowing for action by the landlord, Crofting Commission and Land Court in the event of absenteeism, failure to cultivate and maintain or misuse of a croft.
2. The Forest Plan provides another layer of management guidance and checks.
3. The crofts will be set up under the crofting legislation of 2003 which allows the landlord to remove the right to buy the croft, or to assign the croft, meaning that speculation on the land is not possible.
4. A crofting lease under the 2003 act can allow for a croft house site to be decrofted to allow the tenant to get a mortgage, however a Rural Housing Burden can be placed on the site.
5. These safeguards and checks ensure that the community retains considerable control over use and tenure of the woodland crofts and house sites while at the same time ensuring the land is managed at no cost to the community landlord.
6. The two pieces of forestry land in Saraig and Ratagan are not large enough to generate income to allow KLCT to employ someone to replant and manage the land for the community and it is unrealistic to expect volunteers to undertake this challenging task.
7. Affric Highlands is a coalition of landowners rather than a land management organisation. It needs landowners that are already able to manage their land to join their coalition.

D. Geohazard risks

1. The geohazard risks have been considerably increased by the clear felling of trees.
2. The imperative is therefore to get it planted with a mix of slow and quick growing (alder, silver birch, hazel, willow etc) native hardwood to stabilise the hillside as quickly as possible and ensure that it is never clear felled again. KLCT's proposals fulfil this need.
3. Flooding and geohazard risks will be considered and studies produced as part of the planning permission process for any construction or infrastructure proposals.

E. Local services/infrastructure insufficient to cope with new developments

1. The proposals have received no contra indications to date following pre-planning advice from Highland Council planning department.
2. However, availability of services and impact on road infrastructure and services will be considered at the planning permission stage with opportunities to make comment
3. An increase in population in the area and a new development such as proposed which has the backing of the community can strengthen approaches to public bodies to improve infrastructure and services.
4. In recent years, the populations of Killilin and of Knoydart (30 people at the time) received broadband through a community project/funded by the Scottish Government

F. Traffic, disturbance, disruption, safety hazards during construction phases

1. It is likely/possible that the 3 croft houses planned for the site will be built at different stages. These issues will be considered at planning stage with opportunities to make comment.
2. It is hoped that residents will be able to tolerate any fairly minor and short-lived disruptions during construction phases in order to achieve the number one priority for the community of stemming demographic decline and increasing resilience by proposals that aim to keep children, young people, families and working people in the area.

G. Impact on local residents and the very local community around Saraig

Some comments referenced detrimental long term community impact for Saraig residents, and that developments are very close to rural properties.

1. Proposals will be open to comment and representation at the planning stage.
2. Some residents in Saraig are very supportive of the proposals and see it as an opportunity to acquire new neighbours who will be available to create a greater sense of community and offer support and neighbourliness as residents get older
3. The wider community of Loch Duich and further afield have shown interest in and clear support for the project (78% support in the housing needs survey)
4. The proposals are the result of 4 years of community consultation and seek to address significant priorities for the community which, if not addressed could lead to an increasingly elderly community, the possible closure of the local school and other detrimental developments.
5. The aim of the project is to enhance community life and inject a sense of renewal into the Loch Duich community council area, which has the most stark demographic imbalance of any community council area in Lochalsh.

H. Objections to campervan / campsite proposal

1. This proposal is a possible Phase 2 development that still needs a detailed feasibility study which will consider the viability and any impact on other commercial operators
2. If it is decided to proceed with the proposal, the planning permission stage will consider the impact on the road infrastructure and provision of services and will offer opportunities for comment.
3. Keeping tourists in Lochalsh, to support local businesses, as well as providing services to reduce likelihood of layby parking and illegal disposal of chemical waste in waterways were two priorities of the Lochalsh Local Action Plan.

I. Objections to sale of open market plot (plots sic)

A number of comments objected to the sale of open market plots and one commented that it was in breach of the legislation.

1. Only one open market plot is being proposed with the sole purpose of raising sufficient capital for KLCT to be able to invest in its proposals of building 6 affordable houses as a partnership project in Ratagan, 2 business units in Ratagan and possibly services to the affordable croft house plots in Saraig.
2. It is for FLS to determine whether it will permit the open market sale of one plot and to ensure that the legislation is adhered to.

J. Confusion about what the proposals are

A number of responses appear to have misread the proposals or conflated what is proposed for Ratagan with that proposed for the Saraig site. Responses referred to 5-8 houses proposed for Saraig or referred to the "industrialisation" of the Saraig site and objected to business units.

The Saraig site will have (subject to funding):

1. 3 croft house sites with a Rural Housing burden
2. One open market plot
3. The possible development of a small scale campervan hook up site – subject to a favourable feasibility study.

The Ratagan site will have (subject to funding):

1. 6 affordable houses
2. 2 business units
3. 2 croft house sites with a Rural Housing Burden
4. A community growing area with up to 2 polytunnels.

K. Challenge to the legitimacy of KLCT to request a CAT

One comment challenged KLCT's legitimacy to apply for a Community Asset Transfer under the terms of the legislation.

1. FLS has checked KLCT's Articles to ensure it complies with the legislation
2. KLCT is a community trust with articles that allow free membership to all permanent residents in the 7 community council areas of Lochalsh. As such it is compliant.

K. Protection of historical and spiritual treasures

One comment suggested any developments would damage important archaeological remains near Ardearg Cemetery.

1. As can be seen on the map below, the Saraig site is approximately 500m from Ardearg Cemetery. The Ratagan site is approximately 1+km from the cemetery.
2. Neither of the sites therefore have any possibility of impacting on the archaeological site referenced.
3. Investigation of possible impact on archaeology is an essential part of the planning process and must be considered as part of drawing up a Forest Plan, therefore if there is any as yet undiscovered archaeology within the sites of Saraig or Ratagan, plans will be made for their protection.

