

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust

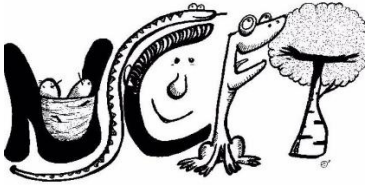
Rosal Feasibility Study & Business Plan

3 August 2022



Rosal forest (from Google maps)

Jon Hollingdale, Community Woodlands Association



Contents

1	Executive Summary	7
1.1	Key benefits of ownership	8
2	Introduction.....	9
2.1	North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust.....	9
2.2	Rosal clearance village and forest.....	9
2.3	Feasibility Study remit and outline	10
3	Community & Policy Background	11
3.1	National and regional policy	11
3.1.1	Community Ownership and the National Performance Framework.....	11
3.1.2	Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029	11
3.1.3	Highland-wide Local Development Plan.....	12
3.1.4	Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy	12
3.2	North Sutherland.....	13
3.2.1	Demographics.....	13
3.2.2	Economic activity.....	14
3.2.3	Employment.....	14
3.2.4	Land use.....	15
3.2.5	Windfarms.....	16
3.2.6	Tourism	16
3.2.7	Tourist accommodation.....	17
3.2.8	Local schools and community facilities	17
3.2.9	Outdoor Recreation	18
3.2.10	Transport	18
3.3	Rosal Clearance Village.....	18
3.3.1	Strathnaver Museum	19
3.3.2	Archaeological investigation.....	19
3.4	North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust.....	20
3.4.1	Community area, membership & directors	20
3.4.2	Company purposes	21
3.4.3	Community assets and activity	21
3.4.4	Community communications	22
3.5	Rosal acquisition process	22
3.5.1	Community consultation	23
4	Rosal Forest.....	24
4.1	Ownership and management history	24
4.1.1	Grazing.....	24
4.1.2	Land Registration with Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (RPID)	25

4.2	Geology.....	25
4.3	Soils.....	26
4.4	Topography.....	26
4.5	Climate and site suitability for forestry.....	26
4.6	Fauna.....	27
4.6.1	Deer.....	27
4.7	Flora.....	28
4.7.1	Invasive species.....	28
4.8	Environmental designations.....	28
4.9	Ancient and/or native woodland.....	28
4.10	Archaeology.....	29
4.11	Boundaries and fencing.....	29
4.11.1	Internal fencing.....	30
4.12	Access for timber harvesting.....	30
4.12.1	Timber transport.....	31
4.12.2	Roadstone.....	31
4.12.3	Services.....	31
4.13	Access for public recreation.....	32
4.13.1	Paths.....	32
4.13.2	Signage and interpretation.....	34
4.13.3	Strathnaver Trail.....	34
4.13.4	Rosal forest.....	34
4.13.5	Landscape character & value.....	35
4.14	Neighbouring land use.....	35
4.15	Forest cover.....	35
4.15.1	Tree species and age classes.....	35
4.15.2	Yield Class.....	38
4.15.3	Timber breakout & quality.....	38
4.15.4	Standing volumes.....	39
4.15.5	Plant health.....	39
4.16	FLS Land Management Plan.....	39
4.16.1	Felling plans.....	40
4.16.2	Restocking plans.....	40
5	Future Forest Management Options.....	42
5.1	Management systems and governance.....	42
5.1.1	Governance.....	42
5.1.2	Forest planning.....	42
5.1.3	Forest certification.....	43
5.2	Timber harvesting.....	44
5.2.1	Local timber utilisation.....	45

5.3	Restocking	45
5.4	Deer management and fencing	45
5.5	Forest management proposals and costs	47
5.5.1	Inherited liabilities.....	47
5.5.2	Future management of mature stands	47
5.5.3	Restocking felled areas	48
5.6	Indicative costings	49
5.6.1	Full perimeter fence	50
5.6.2	Replace existing fences.....	50
5.6.3	Repair existing fences	51
5.7	Analysis.....	51
6	Development Projects.....	52
6.1	Community Development Manager	53
6.2	Rosal clearance village and other historic sites.....	53
6.2.1	Survey and project development	54
6.2.2	Maintenance of site	54
6.2.3	Access	54
6.2.4	External signage.....	54
6.2.5	Interpretation	55
6.2.6	Events	55
6.2.7	Education.....	56
6.2.8	Reconstruction of buildings.....	56
6.3	Recreation	56
6.3.1	Signage.....	56
6.3.2	Access road.....	57
6.3.3	Car parks	57
6.3.4	Path works	57
6.3.5	Seating, benches and shelter	57
6.3.6	Compost toilet.....	57
6.3.7	Promotion	58
6.3.8	Art.....	58
6.3.9	Camping.....	59
6.3.10	Volunteering	59
6.3.11	Skills training.....	59
6.4	Economic development projects.....	59
6.4.1	Woodland crofts.....	60
6.4.2	Tourism accommodation.....	60
6.4.3	Hutting	61
6.4.4	Commemorative trees	61
6.5	Environmental projects.....	61
6.5.1	Pond, wetland area and wildlife hide.....	61
6.5.2	Red squirrel introduction	62
6.5.3	Foraging, berries etc.	62
6.6	Other project ideas not to be progressed.....	62

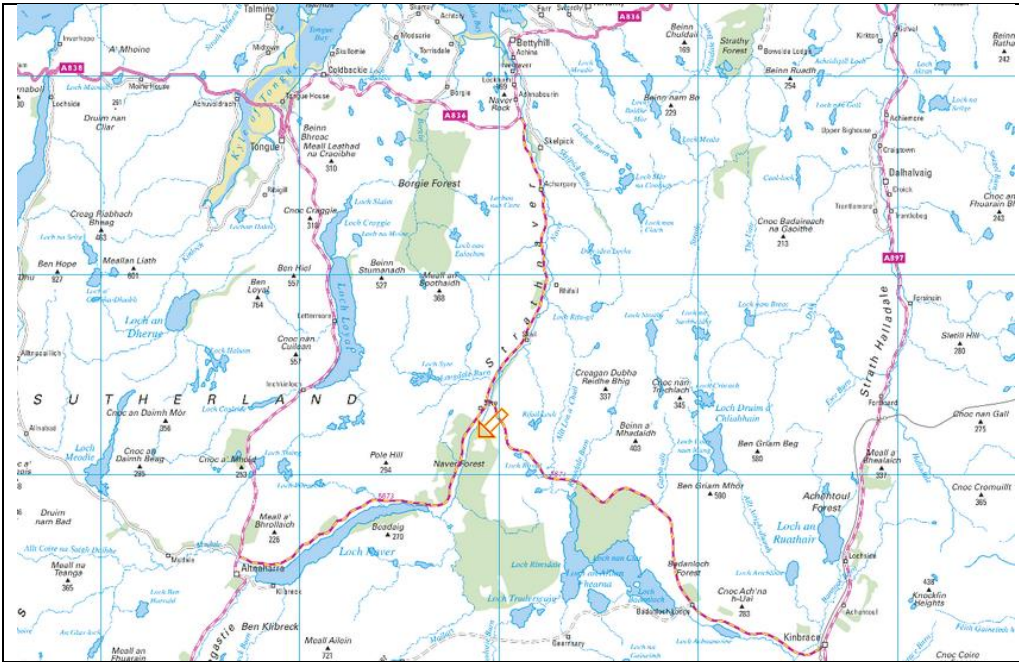
6.6.1	Woodland playpark and/or gym.....	62
6.6.2	Specialist mountain biking facilities	62
6.6.3	Other sports.....	63
6.6.4	Green burials.....	63
7	Alternative acquisition and tenure options	64
7.1	Acquisition of entire site	64
7.2	Partial acquisition	64
7.3	Lease	65
7.4	Management agreement	65
7.5	Analysis.....	66
8	Community Acquisition	67
8.1	CATS application timetable	67
8.2	Valuation	67
8.2.1	Valuation for partial acquisition.....	67
8.2.2	Calculation of discount.....	68
8.3	Community consultation.....	68
8.4	Funding for acquisition.....	68
8.5	Post-acquisition	69
9	Business Plan for partial acquisition	70
9.1	Land purchase.....	70
9.1.1	Acquisition costs.....	70
9.2	Community Development Manager	71
9.3	Land management.....	72
9.4	Recreation infrastructure.....	72
9.4.1	Path works	72
9.4.2	Signage and waymarking.....	73
9.4.3	Compost toilet.....	73
9.4.4	Shelter	73
9.4.5	Events and educational visits.....	73
9.5	Volunteering.....	74
9.6	Clearance village development project.....	74
9.7	Other community development projects.....	75
9.8	Calculation of discount for partial acquisition.....	75
9.8.1	Employment.....	76
9.8.2	Recreation.....	76
9.8.3	Volunteering	76
9.8.4	Total discount applied for.....	77
9.9	Five year budget for partial acquisition	78

10	Business Plan for full acquisition.....	79
10.1	Land purchase.....	79
10.1.1	Acquisition costs.....	79
10.2	Community Development Manager	79
10.3	Land management.....	79
10.3.1	Forest manager	79
10.3.2	Long Term Forest Plan.....	80
10.3.3	Timber harvesting.....	80
10.3.4	Restocking.....	80
10.3.5	Fencing.....	81
10.3.6	Environmental enhancement.....	81
10.4	Recreation infrastructure.....	81
10.5	Volunteering.....	82
10.6	Clearance village development project.....	82
10.7	Other community development projects.....	82
10.8	Calculation of discount for full acquisition.....	82
10.8.1	Employment.....	83
10.8.2	Recreation.....	83
10.8.3	Volunteering	83
10.8.4	Total discount applied for.....	83
10.9	Five year budget for full acquisition.....	84
11	Analysis of major risks.....	85
11.1	Table of risks.....	85
11.2	Areas of major uncertainty.....	86
11.2.1	Impact of COVID-19	86
11.2.2	Timber price	86
11.2.3	Grant aid and investment capital.....	86
12	Abbreviations	87
Appendix 1	NSCFT Director Biographies	88
Appendix 2	Rosal Community Survey	90
Appendix 3	Potential funders for community development projects.....	100
Appendix 4	Historic sites at Rosal.....	104
Appendix 5	FLS Rosal leaflet.....	109
Separate file	Map A: Rosal Infrastructure, Stand Types & Proposed Community Acquisition Area.	

I Executive Summary

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust (NSCFT) is a well-established, community-led organisation which owns and manages a range of assets for community benefit.

Rosal Forest covers ~160ha and is situated in the upper reaches of Strathnaver, on the east side of the River Naver. It includes the Rosal clearance village, which is one of the best-known sites of the period, largely due to the writings of evicted resident Donald MacLeod.



Map I: Rosal location map

This study examines the feasibility of NSCFT acquiring the Rosal clearance village site and surrounding forest area from Forestry and Land Scotland (FLS) to manage, preserve and develop for community benefit. It outlines the background to community involvement, describes the current disposition of the site, details potential forest management options and assesses a suite of possible development projects that the community might take forward after acquisition.

The study suggests that there is great potential to sensitively and sympathetically enhance and promote the cultural value of the clearance village and the other historic sites within the forest, whilst developing recreational use of the forest and surrounding areas, enhancing the environmental value of the site, and initiating a range of small scale development projects to provide income streams to contribute to management costs.

However, the current condition of the surrounding forest presents several considerable financial liabilities: ~20ha of largely failed restock, ~10ha of catastrophic windblow and ~2,500m of ageing deer fence requiring replacement, which would be a significant impediment to the viability of a community acquisition. The study demonstrates that addressing these liabilities would effectively require the complete harvesting of the remaining woodland, which would undermine community aspirations for the site. The study therefore recommends that NSCFT seek to mitigate or avoid the liabilities presented by the forest area, and presents two options for doing so:

- That NSCFT acquire the entire site, on condition that FLS retain responsibility for the restocking of areas already felled until such time as the establishment of these is deemed successful by Scottish Forestry.

- That NSCFT acquire the clearance site and a small area of land between the clearance site and the main forest road. This study identifies an acquisition area of ~40ha, (as shown on the accompanying Map A) although the exact boundaries of the area to be acquired would be subject to negotiation with FLS. Rights of access along the forest road would also be necessary. If FLS retain ownership of the remaining area, NSCFT could seek to acquire this at a later date, once the current liabilities have been addressed.

Preserving and enhancing the historic environment is the key driver of community aspirations for ownership of Rosal. NSCFT, with other stakeholders, will develop a comprehensive project plan to research, preserve and enhance the clearance village and other historic sites, with work to be funded through the National Lottery Grants for Heritage programme.

Successful community management of the site will depend on the development of strong partnerships with Strathnaver Museum, the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership (who own the adjacent forest land) and other local stakeholders.

1.1 Key benefits of ownership¹

Our communities will achieve more sustainable economic, environmental and/or social development through ownership of land and buildings.

- The acquisition of Rosal will bring an iconic local asset into community ownership and enable NSCFT to develop and manage it to contribute fully to the sustainable development of the area.
- Employment of a Community Development Manager will increase the local economic benefit of the forest and build community capacity and resilience.
- Ownership of Rosal will allow NSCFT to attract investment to enhance and promote the clearance village site to increase public enjoyment and understanding of the history of the area.

Our communities will have a stronger role in and control over their own development.

- Ownership of Rosal will allow the community to lead and control the management of the site, bringing new opportunities for volunteering and broadening community use of the forest through school visits, guided walks, family events and arts/musical events.
- Improvements to paths, provision of seating and a shelter, and the installation of a compost toilet will widen access to the site for all abilities, helping to ensure that all of the community can get involved and benefit from Rosal.
- Community ownership will enable the community to showcase the breadth of archaeological history and Gaelic heritage within and around Rosal; telling the story of our history and hopes for the future.

Our communities own well managed, financially sustainable land and buildings.

- In the short term, income from grazing and commemorative trees will contribute to the costs of community management.
- In the longer term, income from tourist accommodation and paid-for volunteering opportunities will support ongoing management costs.
- (Full acquisition only) If NSCFT acquire the whole forest area, income from timber harvesting will support management and provide additional match funding for development initiatives.

¹ The three sub-headings in italics are the Scottish Land Fund outcomes

2 Introduction

2.1 North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust (NSCFT) is a company limited by guarantee, (SC161610)² and charity (SC034731)³ with a membership of almost 300 drawn from the local community. The NSCFT community area is defined by the four community council areas of Tongue; Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra; Strathy and Armadale; and Melvich.

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust owns and manages a log cabin at Borgie, 37ha of Forsinain forest and the Forsinain drying sheds which have been fitted out as a wood processing facility. NSCFT has a management agreement with FLS over Borgie Forest, and a management contract with the RSPB for harvesting work in the Dyke and Forsinain forests, and has delivered or co-delivered a range of other activities with and for schools, local community and the general public⁴.

NSCFT is now investigating the potential of acquiring the Rosal clearance village site and surrounding woodlands. The site is currently owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. It is the last portion of a once very substantial (~6,600ha) land holding covering 5 separate forest blocks in the Strathnaver / Strath Halladale area which were first identified for disposal in 2008. At that time NSCFT investigated the potential for community acquisition of the entire holding but concluded that this was unlikely to be financial feasible.

NSCFT have identified the following broad objectives for community ownership of Rosal:

- Cultural: preservation and enhancement of the setting of the Rosal clearance village and other historic sites;
- Social: maintaining and enhancing the amenity and recreation value of the site;
- Economic: sensitive management and development of the site to contribute positively to local economic regeneration;
- Environmental: restructuring and stewardship of the forest stands and open habitats to enhance biodiversity and increase resilience.

2.2 Rosal clearance village and forest

The Rosal clearance village is one of two scheduled ancient monuments on the site, and comprises the remains of a once thriving Highland township, which was cleared of its inhabitants to make way for sheep in 1814. Rosal is one of the best-known clearance sites thanks to evicted resident Donald MacLeod who wrote extensively about the village and his experience of the clearances in a series of letters to the Edinburgh Chronicle in 1840, later bound together as the book *Gloomy Memories*.

Despite the high profile, current footfall is very low: perhaps less than 100 visitors a year, and there is significant scope to increase this whilst not swamping local capacity and infrastructure. The preservation and interpretation of the site for locals and visitors is a primary driver for community interest in the site, which whilst remote from local population centres remains an important component of local cultural history.

² <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC161610>

³ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=34731>

⁴ See section 3.4 below for more detail.

2.3 Feasibility Study remit and outline

NSCFT has commissioned the Community Woodlands Association (CWA) to produce a comprehensive feasibility study and business plan for community ownership and management of Rosal to support an application for acquisition of the site through FLS's Community Asset Transfer Scheme

The required outcomes of the study are:

- Business plan for community ownership and management of the woodland, showing viability over a 25-year period and including indicative cash flows for the first 5 years.
- Community development opportunities and resultant social, economic, and environmental outcomes identified.
- Identify ways to preserve the unique habitat and the array of wildlife that thrives here, including mapping the extent of invasive species and priorities for natural regeneration or potential tree planting to improve biodiversity and the age structure of the woodland.
- Identify ways to encourage everyone to be able to explore and enjoy the woodland as a leisure resource by increasing access through path improvement and wildlife and heritage interpretation.
- Identify ways to bring the forest to life for all ages and to increase understanding of the importance of this woodland habitat.

The feasibility study and business plan will:

- Form the basis for NSCFT's application to the Forestry and Land Scotland Community Asset Transfer Scheme
- Support NSCFT's fundraising for the costs of acquisition and subsequent management and development of Rosal.

3 Community & Policy Background

3.1 National and regional policy

Community ownership and management of Rosal is supported by various national and regional policies.

3.1.1 Community Ownership and the National Performance Framework

Community ownership of land and built assets has been encouraged in Scotland by a range of policy initiatives and legislation, and is recognised in the Scottish Government's National Performance Framework⁵ which includes "Increasing the number of land and built assets in community ownership" as an indicator to measure progress against the national outcome "We live in communities that are inclusive, empowered, resilient and safe".

Legislation including the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2003⁶, the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015⁷ and the Land Reform (Scotland) Act 2016⁸ has introduced a range of community rights to buy land and other assets. Community asset acquisition is facilitated by the Scottish Land Fund, which has an annual budget of £10 million⁹ to provide technical assistance to community bodies and support capital costs (and some revenue costs) of community acquisitions.

Part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 gives eligible community bodies the right to make requests in relation to purchase, lease or other rights over land owned or managed by Scottish public authorities. Forestry and Land Scotland has developed the Community Asset Transfer Scheme¹⁰ (CATS) to meet their obligations under the Act. As of 14 July 2022, eighteen asset transfer requests have been completed, one has been refused and two have been withdrawn by the community. A further five asset transfer requests have been agreed by FLS and the respective community bodies are at various stages of fundraising and conveyancing.

3.1.2 Scotland's Forestry Strategy 2019–2029

Scotland's Forestry Strategy presents a long-term framework for the expansion and sustainable management of Scotland's forests and woodland. There are three objectives for the next ten years:

- Increase the contribution of forests and woodlands to Scotland's sustainable and inclusive economic growth;
- Improve the resilience of Scotland's forests and woodlands and increase their contribution to a healthy and high quality environment; and
- Increase the use of Scotland's forest and woodland resources to enable more people to improve their health, well-being and life chances.

The Strategy has 6 priorities, including:

- Enhancing the environmental benefits provided by forests and woodlands (which includes identifying and managing the cultural and historic value associated with our forests and woodlands);
- Engaging more people, communities and businesses in the creation, management and use of forests and woodlands.

⁵ <https://nationalperformance.gov.scot/>

⁶ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2003/2/contents>

⁷ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2015/6/contents>

⁸ <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/18/contents>

⁹ The Programme for Government 2021-22 includes a commitment to double the Scottish Land Fund from £10 million to £20 million per year by 2026

<https://www.gov.scot/publications/fairer-greener-scotland-programme-government-2021-22/documents/>

¹⁰ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme>

3.1.3 Highland-wide Local Development Plan

The Rosal area is covered by the Highland-wide Local Development Plan¹¹ and the Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan¹² (adopted 2018).

The vision outcomes of the latter plan are “growing communities”, “employment”, “connectivity and transport”, and “environment and heritage” and there is a commitment to “take a flexible approach to support communities that are either dispersed or clustered together in settlements offering varying services and facilities. This includes enabling community-led sustainable growth and development as well as growth through inward investment, a particular focus being the Area for Flexible Community-led Development in the north-west.”

Safeguarding and promoting appreciation of valued historic environment assets is a key element of the spatial strategy of the Caithness & Sutherland Plan. The Highland Council also has adopted Supplementary Guidance on Highland Historic Environment Strategy¹³ to ensure that Future developments take account of the historic environment and that they are of a design and quality to enhance the historic environment bringing both economic and social benefits.

3.1.4 Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy

The Highland Forest and Woodland Strategy, published in 2018, is based around eight key themes that not only cross cut with those of the Scottish Forestry Strategy but also respond more specifically to the issues and opportunities for the future of forests and woodlands in Highland. These themes include:

- Encouraging community engagement and empowerment;
- Protecting and enhancing Highland’s natural capital;
- Integrating with development and tourism;
- Strengthening connections with health, access and recreation and learning;

Relevant policies under these themes include:

Theme 4 – Community Empowerment

- Continue to support asset transfer, community woodland ownership and management within Highland;
- Support accessible access and recreational facilities, local employment, rural skills and community energy projects;
- Opportunities for the creation of new Woodland Crofts and woodland crofting communities should be identified in order to encourage a locally focused approach to forestry which delivers benefits to local and often remote communities.

Theme 5 - Environmental Capital

- Ensure that woodland expansion proposals and long-term management plans protect and promote Highland’s historic environment and cultural heritage, including gardens and designed landscapes and heritage trees.

Theme 6 - Development and Tourism

- Support sensitive development in woodlands in accordance with Scottish Planning Policy and Highland-wide Local Development Plan and Supplementary Guidance on Trees, Woodland and Development;

¹¹ https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/199/highland-wide_local_development_plan

¹² https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/19712/casplan_adopted

¹³ https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11047/highland_historic_environment_strategy

- Support opportunities for linking accessible and active outdoor access/recreation and tourism in and between Highland forests and woodlands, including hutting developments, mountain biking, walking and activities such as orienteering and eco- tourism;

Theme 7– Health and Wellbeing

- Promote the role of woodlands in providing a resource for physical activity close to where people live and work;
- Encourage and promote the use of Highland forests and woodlands for outdoor learning through Forest School and Highland OWL¹⁴.

3.2 North Sutherland

North Sutherland is one of the most sparsely populated areas in the UK; only the northern parts of Sweden and Finland are less densely populated in Europe. The population of Sutherland (area 5,250km²) is 12,650, but the majority live in settlements along the east Sutherland coast and much of the north and west of the county has a population density below 1 person per square kilometre.

Whilst the average age of the population is older than the national or regional average this is by no means a retirement community: there is a large working age population, many with practical skills and experience of land management.

3.2.1 Demographics

Highland Council has produced profiles for community council areas based on the 2011 census¹⁵. All figures in tables in this section are drawn from this source. These figures are now >10 years old and it likely that some demographic factors (age, low density) may have become more pronounced.

The Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra Community Council area is one of 11 Highland Community Council areas with a population density below 1 person per square kilometre. The 4 community council areas that collectively make up NSCFT’s community area have a population of 1,520 in 1,492km².

	Area km²	Population	Pop/km²
Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra	596	436	0.7
Highland	25,659	232,132	9.0
Scotland	77,925	5,295,403	68.0

Table 1: Area, population and density cf. Highland and Scotland

The Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra CC area has a notably older population than either Highland Council or Scotland. However, this is by no means unusual in rural areas and the area ranks 43rd/157 across Highland, where 5 Community Councils have >30% of the population in the 65 and over bracket. There is also a slight preponderance of males, in contrast to both the Highland Council area or Scotland (again this is not unusual – a third of Highland Community Council areas have more males).

	B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Under 16	62	14.2%	17.8%	17.3%
16 to 64	279	63.9%	63.6%	65.9%
65 and over	96	22.0%	18.5%	16.8%

¹⁴ OWL = Outdoor Woodland Learning. See e.g. <https://www.owlscotland.org/local-groups/north-highland-owl-group>

¹⁵ https://www.highland.gov.uk/downloads/file/11093/profiles_for_community_council_areas

Males	223	51.1%	48.9%	48.5%
Females	213	48.9%	51.1%	51.5%

Table 2: Age and sex of residents

3.2.2 Economic activity

Whilst the higher proportion of over 65s is reflected in the higher % of retired people, overall levels of economic activity are comparable with the rest of the region and country, with 233 of the 333 people aged 16-74 (70%) classed as economically active.

	B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Employees - part-time	52	15.7%	15.2%	13.3%
Employees - full-time	112	33.6%	39.5%	39.6%
Self-employed	45	13.5%	11.0%	7.5%
Unemployed	17	5.1%	4.0%	4.8%
Full-time student - employed	6	1.8%	1.5%	2.9%
Full-time student - unemployed	1	0.3%	0.3%	0.8%
Total	233	70.0%	71.5%	69.0%

Table 3: Breakdown of economically active persons

	B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Retired	64	19.3%	16.0%	14.9%
Student	10	2.9%	3.2%	5.5%
Looking after home or family	10	3.0%	3.8%	3.6%
Long-term sick or disabled	11	3.4%	3.9%	5.1%
Other	5	1.5%	1.7%	1.9%
Total	100	30.0%	28.5%	31.0%

Table 4: Breakdown of economically inactive persons

3.2.3 Employment

Employment patterns show a wider than average distribution, with higher than average levels of people working either part-time (1-15 hours) or very long (>48) hours

	B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Part-time 1 to 15 hours	23	10.7%	7.2%	7.0%
Part-time 16 to 30 hours	46	21.3%	21.4%	21.0%
Full-time 31 to 37 hours	36	16.6%	17.8%	21.2%
Full-time 38 to 48 hours	64	29.9%	37.9%	39.1%
Full-time 49 hours or more	46	21.5%	15.8%	11.7%
Total	215	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 5: Working hours

Health and social work is the most important employment sector for the area, as it is across Scotland, followed by education and construction. As might be expected the Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra CC area has a much higher % of those working in “Agriculture, forestry and fishing” than Highland or Scotland, however this only ranks as the fifth most important sector locally¹⁶.

¹⁶ This may reflect the use of external contract labour for many forestry operations.

	B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
A Agriculture forestry and fishing	19	8.9%	4.3%	2.0%
B Mining and quarrying	2	1.1%	1.2%	1.4%
C Manufacturing	6	2.8%	5.7%	7.7%
D Electricity gas steam and air conditioning	5	2.1%	0.8%	0.8%
E Water supply/sewage waste management	6	2.9%	1.3%	0.8%
F Construction	25	11.4%	9.8%	8.0%
G Wholesale and retail trade	12	5.8%	14.9%	15.0%
H Transport and storage	7	3.2%	5.0%	5.0%
I Accommodation and food service activities	18	8.5%	9.1%	6.3%
J Information and communication	4	1.7%	2.4%	2.7%
K Financial and insurance activities	1	0.7%	1.3%	4.5%
L Real estate activities	7	3.1%	1.3%	1.2%
M Professional scientific and technical activities	9	4.3%	4.5%	5.2%
N Administrative and support service activities	4	2.0%	4.0%	4.3%
O Public administration and defence	19	9.0%	6.6%	7.0%
P Education	25	11.5%	7.6%	8.4%
Q Human health and social work activities	33	15.3%	15.2%	15.0%
R S T U Other	12	5.7%	4.9%	4.9%
Total	215	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 6: Employment sectors

The area has a higher proportion of people in skilled trades and caring occupations, and a lower proportion in professional or administrative occupations, than Highland or Scotland. Although the population is very dispersed there is a wide range of skills and experience available within the community.

	B, S & A		Highland	Scotland
Managers, directors and senior officials	23	10.6%	9.7%	8.4%
Professional occupations	34	15.9%	14.6%	16.8%
Associate professional and technical occupations	21	9.7%	11.0%	12.6%
Administrative and secretarial occupations	16	7.3%	9.7%	11.4%
Skilled trades occupations	47	22.0%	16.9%	12.5%
Caring leisure and other service occupations	31	14.3%	10.3%	9.7%
Sales and customer service occupations	6	2.7%	8.2%	9.3%
Process plant and machine operatives	19	8.9%	8.2%	7.7%
Elementary occupations	19	8.7%	11.4%	11.6%
Total	215	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 7: Occupational types

3.2.4 Land use

Crofting agriculture, forestry and game management are the primary land uses in the area. Agriculture is primarily sheep and cattle husbandry, with very occasional arable cropping: predominantly for stock feed or potatoes.

Stock numbers have fallen considerably across north Sutherland in last two decades, but the decline has been uneven, with some areas losing more stock than others.

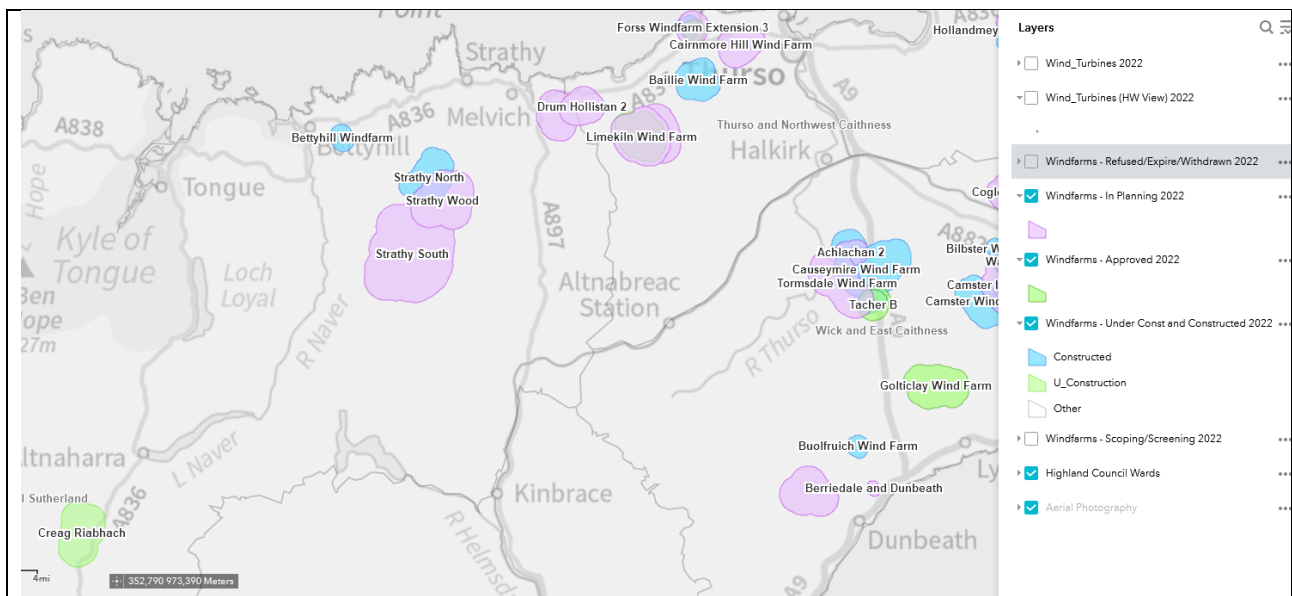
3.2.5 Windfarms

Caithness and Sutherland have seen very substantial windfarm development in recent decades (blue and green on the map below), with many more sites currently in planning (mauve). The cost of grid connection and the presence of the Kyle of Tongue and North-west Sutherland National Scenic Areas has constrained development to the north and west of Rosal.

Currently the nearest windfarm is the 33 turbine site at Strathy North, which entered commercial operation in June 2015, The site, which is operated by SSE Renewables, has a total generation capacity of 67.65MW.

The Strathy North Community Benefit Fund¹⁷ provides around £225,000 per year for community and charitable projects and could be a significant funder for projects at Rosal.

As the map below shows additional developments are planned to the south of the Strathy North site.



Map 2: Windfarm developments¹⁸

3.2.6 Tourism

Tourism has been an important component of the local economy for many years, however, absolute visitor numbers have historically been low¹⁹, and provision of accommodation and tourist services correspondingly limited. This has changed in recent years following the launch in 2015 of the North Coast 500²⁰ route which includes the A838/A836 north coast road from Durness through Tongue and Bettyhill to Thurso and the very substantial growth in domestic tourism as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Whilst increased visitor numbers have undoubtedly brought some economic benefit, there have also been some very well documented disbenefits²¹ and a number of the responses to the Rosal

¹⁷ <https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/strathy-north/>

¹⁸ Data from <https://highland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=5ec04b13a9b049f798caddb5055f1787>

¹⁹ Compared say to Skye or John O'Groats.

²⁰ <https://www.northcoast500.com/>

²¹ See e.g. <https://www.pressandjournal.co.uk/fp/news/inverness/2356148/highland-communities-in-despair-as-dirty-camping-spirals-out-of-control/>
<https://www.heraldsotland.com/news/18604246.villages-around-nc500-being-ruined-litter-vandalism/>

community consultation referred negatively to the North Coast 500 and the need to manage visitor numbers.

The history and culture of the area is a significant strand of the tourism “offer”, with the Strathnaver museum, based in the former Parish Church of Columba in Bettyhill, which opened in 1976, a key centre. Whilst the Highland Clearances, the history of Clan Mackay and the story of crofting are the main interest for many, Strathnaver has a long record of human occupation stretching back at least 6,000 years.

The Strathnaver Trail, which starts at the museum, links and interprets 29 archaeological sites including the remains of Neolithic horned chamber cairns, Bronze Age cairns and hut circles, Iron Age brochs, Pictish carved stones and pre-Clearance townships. The sites include 12 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, one listed building (the museum), and several other monuments that provide good examples from different periods²².

3.2.7 Tourist accommodation

There are various tourist accommodation providers, predominantly along the north coast road. Many are only open for part of the year.

Hotels include the Altnaharra Hotel, the Bettyhill Hotel, the Farr Bay Inn (Bettyhill), the Borgie Lodge Hotel, the Melvich Hotel, the Strathy Inn, the Tongue Hotel and the Ben Loyal Hotel (Tongue).

Youth Hostel & Holiday Park: The Kyle of Tongue Hostel and Holiday park includes a 36 bed hostel, a new, fully equipped campsite and caravan park for tents, motorhomes and caravans plus a couple of self-catering options.

There are various B&B / Guesthouses in Strathnaver and elsewhere along the north coast road, and glamping pods at Wee Hoose Glamping (5km from forest). There are also camping and pod facilities at Halladale Inn, Melvich.

Caravan sites: The Caravan Club has a site beside the B873 on the NW side of Loch Naver approx. 15km from the forest entrance. The Craighdu Caravan Camping Site in Bettyhill has basic facilities.

3.2.8 Local schools and community facilities

Farr High School in Bettyhill serves the parishes of Tongue and Farr (roughly the NSCFT area). The School roll is 74²³, while there are primary schools at Farr (30 pupils), Tongue (18) and Melvich (31).

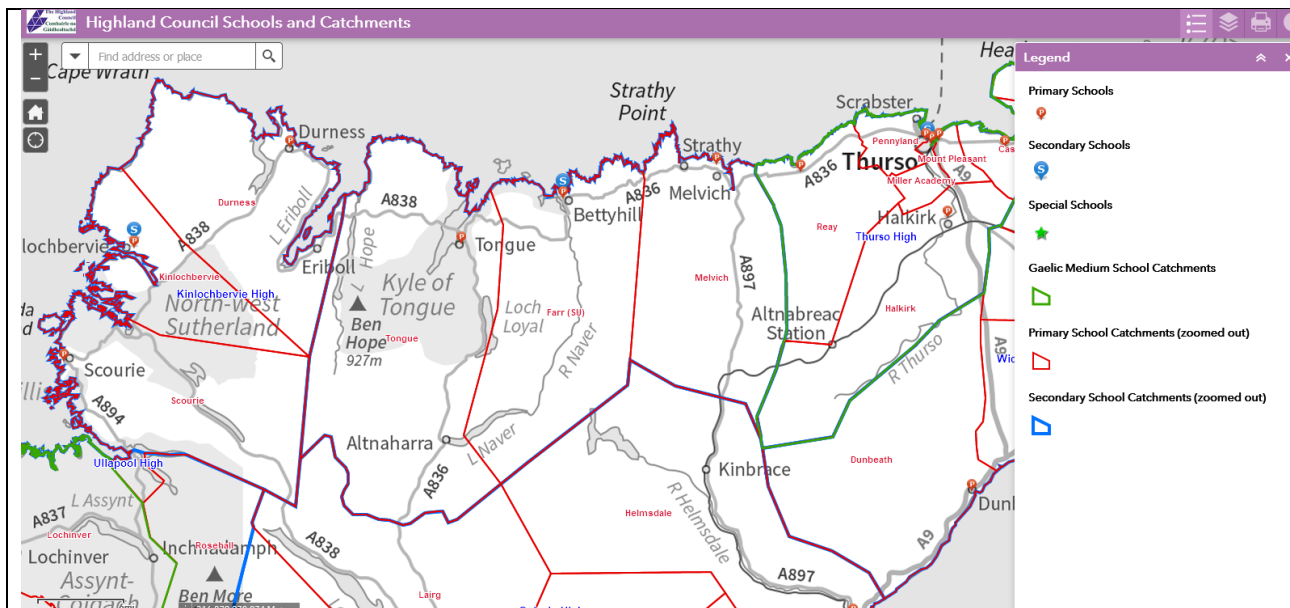
Former Primary Schools at Altnaharra (2019) and Kinbrace (2017) have closed in recent years. Altnaharra Primary School had been “mothballed” since February 2017. At the time of closure there was only one child in the catchment within the P1-7 age group, who attended Tongue Primary School.

Medical services are available at the Tongue Health Centre and the Armadale medical practice (Bettyhill). The North Coast Leisure Centre²⁴, Bettyhill, includes a swimming pool. Strathnaver has a small post office but the nearest shops are in Bettyhill.

²² Strathnaver Trail map available for download at <http://www.strathnavermuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/StrathnaverTrailMap.pdf>

²³ https://www.highland.gov.uk/directory_record/1463956/farr_high_school/category/542/secondary

²⁴ <https://www.highlifehighland.com/nclc/>



Map 3: School catchments

3.2.9 Outdoor Recreation

The (relatively) nearby Munros of Ben Hope and Ben Klibreck, and the lower (but by no means lesser) Ben Loyal attract some hill walkers to North Sutherland, but numbers are generally low. The two recognised long distance trails in the north of Scotland, the John O’Groats Trail²⁵ and the Cape Wrath Trail²⁶, stick largely to the east and west coasts respectively.

North Sutherland has significant potential for development of outdoor recreation, with iconic mountains, rugged coastline and a considerable inland network of estate and forestry roads, however it is largely undeveloped. Often only relatively limited work is required to link up roads to create through-routes or circular trails, as has happened at Borgie Glen²⁷.

3.2.10 Transport

Public transport is very limited / non-existent and the area is very car-dependent: the average number of cars or vans per household is 1.38, compared to 1.23 for Highland and 1.04 for Scotland²⁸.

3.3 Rosal Clearance Village

The Rosal site appears to have been utilised as a village or hamlet since the Iron Age. That means that the village site saw continuous human occupation for roughly 2500 years, and that continuous occupation was only interrupted by the Highland Clearances. That makes Rosal one of the oldest and continually occupied human habitation sites in the British Isles, contemporary with or slightly older than London. Rosal had been a village for at least 700-800 years before Rome was founded.

Rosal was one of many thriving settlements in Strathnaver until 1814, when Patrick Sellar, the notorious factor working for the Duke of Sutherland, began forcibly to clear it of people to make way for a sheep farm, with the last tenants evicted in 1816. Many of those who were moved to the barren coastline were unable to grow crops and were forced to move to rapidly developing

²⁵ <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/john-o-groats-trail.shtml>

²⁶ <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/cape-wrath-trail.shtml>

²⁷ <https://www.trailforks.com/trails/borgie-glen-forest-road-trail/>

²⁸ Figures from HC community council profile

industrial areas or emigrate to the Americas or Australasia in order to find employment as a means of survival.

The remains of the ruined village are a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and is at the heart of the parcel of land currently being proposed as a Community Asset Transfer. Around 70 buildings can be identified, but apart from a few low walls, most are an outline or bump in the ground.

While described by several people during discussions as ‘not the best Clearance site’ in terms of its visible remains, it is universally recognised as one of the best-known sites for its stories, thanks to evicted resident Donald MacLeod who wrote extensively about Rosal in a series of letters to the *Edinburgh Chronicle* in 1840, later bound together as the book *Gloomy Memories*, which remains one of the most authentic (if not objective) accounts of the Clearances.

Seismic though the clearance story is for Rosal, it represents only a fraction of the human timeline of this fertile patch of land close to the River Naver. There is great enthusiasm for unlocking the wider story of Rosal, which lies in a hotspot of built heritage and landscape features dating from the prehistoric period onwards, going right through the medieval period to the rigs and furrows of the early modern crofting landscape from which the local population was evicted. Rosal is a site with a long, but largely undiscovered, history.

3.3.1 Strathnaver Museum²⁹

Strathnaver Museum at Bettyhill tells the story of clearance and has various relevant objects in its collection. Outdoor implements include hammers, scuffer, harrow, wooden cart, peat cutting tools, potato planter, flail, scythe, thatching tool, hay knife, quern stones, riddles, wooden wash tub, washing dolly, washboard, milk churns. Indoor objects include box bed, small wooden chairs (from cleared houses), tacksman chair, pots, kettles, girdle, flat irons, poker/tongs, butter churns. There are also models (made by school pupils) of a blackhouse and the layout of a Rosal croft pre-clearance.

The museum has recently secured a large package of funding to redevelop the museum: building work should be completed by the end of summer 2022 and the museum is scheduled to reopen in April 2023.

3.3.2 Archaeological investigation

Horace Fairhurst carried out an archaeological investigation of Rosal in the 1960s. He wrote: “The remains of township of Rosal whose lands are first on record in 1269 and which was cleared 1814-18, since when it remained relatively undisturbed until in 1962 excavation and survey by Fairhurst made it a type-site for clearance depopulation. The arable lands of township extended over 60 acres and were enclosed by a dry-stone dyke, the plough rigs surviving as a green island in the rough moor. Seventy structures were recognised of which 15 to 18 were long-houses, the remainder being barns, outhouses, stackyards and corn-drying kilns. The barns were rectangular with one rounded end. A few of the buildings had bowed walls and rounded ends and it is suggested that these may be earlier than the others. Selective excavation was undertaken on a typical complex consisting of long-house, barn, stackyard, outhouse and corn-kiln. The long-house was built on a slope with first, a small room at the upper end, then the main living quarters around a central hearth and finally the long byre giving an overall length of 85ft, though other long-houses reached a length of 108ft. The walls consisted of dry-stone work up to a height of 2 or 3ft, presumably forming the base for a turf wall. The roof was supported on couples which rose from ground level. Efforts to locate Medieval house-sites proved fruitless presumably because the buildings were constructed without foundation trenches and were abandoned and the building stones re-used at relatively short

²⁹ <https://www.strathnavermuseum.org.uk/>

intervals. Earlier occupation of the site is indicated by the Iron Age hut-circles and souterrain (NC64SE 28).³⁰

Canmore records that Forestry Commission Scotland undertook “a programme of archaeological work consisting of a comprehensive site inspection and detailed measured survey in February–March 2014 to provide a baseline record of the surviving structural features at Rosal township. The survey works recorded the remains of 15 dwellings (of which 13 were longhouses), 23 ancillary structures (of which at least 6 were barns – indicated by their opposing entrances used for winnowing) 4 corn kilns, 3 pit-like features (sited on knolls), eleven enclosures and 2 stone (circle) settings, as well as numerous clearance cairns and sections of turf/stone banks and walling.

A supporting high resolution aerial laser scan survey (ALS or LiDAR) was also commissioned by FCS (and undertaken by Bluesky International). The low earthworks of the longhouses, barns, corn-drying kilns, enclosures and field systems are all captured within the extensive surface model. Approximately 1km² was flown at a very high resolution (averaging 16 points per metre) as a bespoke archaeological survey. The resulting terrain model records the nature and extent of the associated rig and furrow field systems. The terrain model has been used to generate images for onsite interpretation.”³¹

3.4 North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust (NSCFT) is a company limited by guarantee³² (SC161610) and charity³³ (SC03473) initially established in 1995 as Northern Development Forestry Ltd. The current name was adopted in 2000 and the company has had charitable status since 2002.

3.4.1 Community area, membership & directors

The NSCFT community area is defined by the four community council areas of Tongue; Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra; Strathy and Armadale; and Melvich. NSCFT has a membership of almost 300, is managed by a board of 11 directors³⁴ and employs 2 part-time contractors.

Ordinary Membership is open to individuals aged 16 and over who:

- are resident in the Community;
- are entitled to vote at a local government election in a polling district that includes the Community or part of it; and
- who support the purposes.

Individuals and organisations which support the purposes but are not entitled to vote at a local government election in a polling district that includes the Community or part of it may become Associate members: these cannot stand for election to the Board or vote at General Meetings. Individuals aged 12-15 who support the purposes may become Junior members: they cannot become Directors or vote at General Meetings.

NSCFT can have up to 12 directors, of whom up to 9 (who must be Ordinary Members) can be elected by the membership. Up to four directors may be appointed by the four community councils covered by the Trust and up to a further 3 directors may be co-opted so as to ensure a spread of skills and experience within the Board, however the combined total of Appointed and Co-opted directors must not be larger than the number of elected directors.

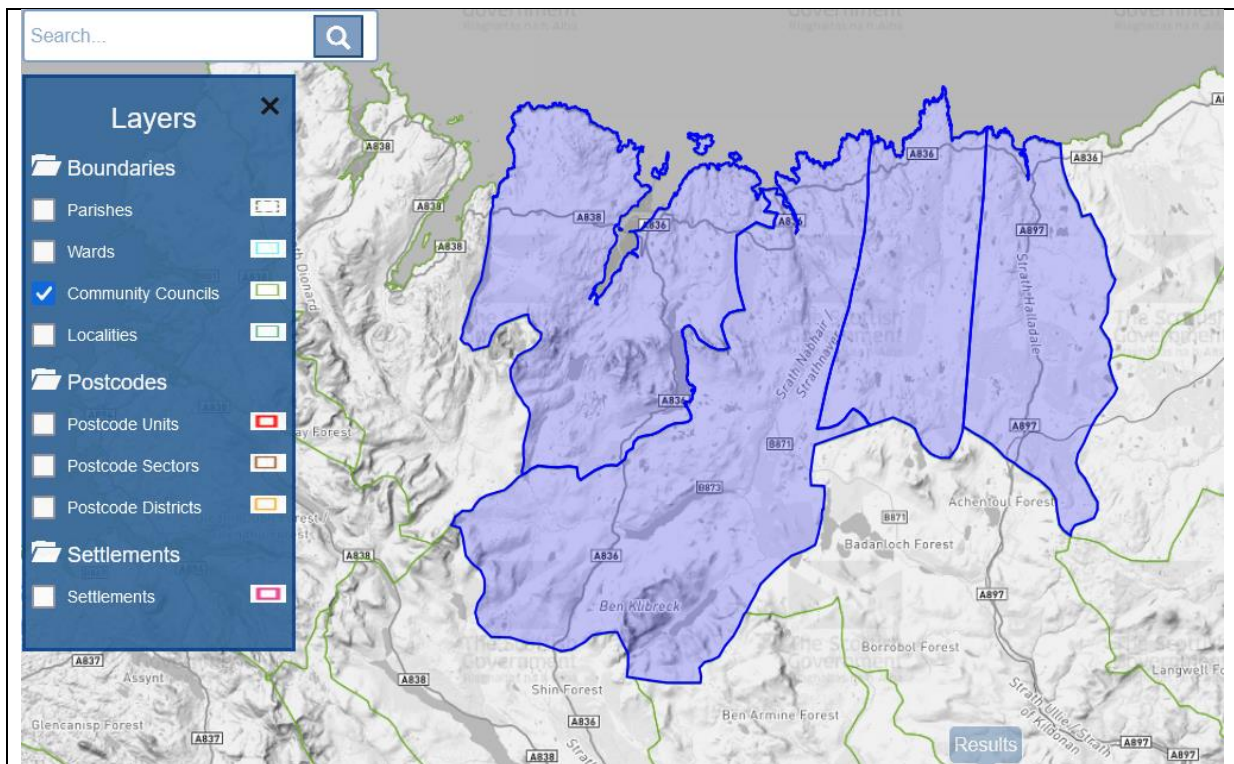
³⁰ H Fairhurst ‘Rosal: a deserted township in Strath Naver, Sutherland’, Proc Soc Antiq Scot, vol. 100

³¹ <https://canmore.org.uk/site/5682/rosal>

³² <https://find-and-update.company-information.service.gov.uk/company/SC161610>

³³ <https://www.oscr.org.uk/about-charities/search-the-register/charity-details?number=34731>

³⁴ See brief biographical profiles in Appendix I



Map 4: NSCFT Community area³⁵

3.4.2 Company purposes

NSCFT's purposes, as formally defined by its constitution, are:

- To provide or advance the accessibility of recreational facilities, and/or organising recreational activities, which will be available to members of the community and public at large with the object of improving the conditions of life of the community;
- Advancement of citizenship or community development, including rural or urban regeneration. To promote for the public benefit rural regeneration, following principles of sustainable development, where “sustainable development” means development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs, in areas of social and economic deprivation within the community;
- To advance educational opportunities in the community, relating to environment, culture, heritage and/or history, including the relief of unemployment in such ways as may be thought fit, including assistance to find employment; the advancement of education, training or retraining, particularly amongst unemployed people, and providing unemployed people with work experience, the creation of training and employment opportunities by provision of workspace, buildings and/or land for use on favourable terms;
- To advance environmental protection or improvement including preservation, sustainable development and conservation of the natural environment, the maintenance, improvement or provision of environmental amenities for the community and the preservation of buildings or sites of architectural, historic or other importance to the community, in particular woodlands and forests.

3.4.3 Community assets and activity

North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust owns and manages the following assets:

- Borgie log cabin: NSCFT own and manage one of the two log cabins at Borgie forest, the cabin is available for hire by community groups and for private use³⁶.

³⁵ From <https://crtb.sedsh.gov.uk/crtb/>

³⁶ <http://nscft.org/borgie-cabin/>

- Forsinain drying sheds: NSCFT's largest project has been the purchase in 2003 of the former drying sheds at Forsinain, and their fitting out as a wood processing facility. The facility is equipped with a range of processing equipment, whilst NSCFT has also acquired machinery to facilitate extraction and transport of felled timber.
- Forsinain forest: NSCFT acquired 37ha of Forsinain forest in 2018 from Forestry Commission Scotland through the National Forest Land Scheme. The wood is ~1km north of the timber processing facility at the drying sheds.

NSCFT have also carried out work on forests in other ownerships:

- On 12 May 2005 NSCFT and Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS) signed a joint Management Agreement for the Naver Forest, comprising lands at Borgie, Dyke, Forsinain, Rimsdale, Rosal and Syre extending to c. 9,810 hectares. Under the 25-year agreement FCS agreed to consult with the Trust over current and future management of the forest, the Trust have first option to carry out work in areas of the forests where there are agreed management plans, and FCS and the Trust will seek to work together to encourage joint projects, enhance local economic benefits, promote recreation, and increase non-timber benefits, etc.
- NSCFT has a longstanding management contract with RSPB for the removal of tree crops (predominantly lodgepole pine) as part of RSPB's peatland restoration work in the Dyke and Forsinain forests (which RSPB purchased from FCS).

NSCFT have also delivered or co-delivered a range of other activities, including a Gaelic alphabet trail and berry growing trials in Borgie forest, as well as numerous and varied events with and for schools, local community and the general public.

NSCFT currently has the following timber handling and processing equipment:

- 48" Stenner bandsaw
- 36" Forester saw
- Crosscut chopsaw
- Japp woodprocessor
- 12" Heizohack woodchipper
- Hydraulic fence pointer
- High pressure tanolin treatment plant
- 3 tractors (2 * 120bhp, 1 * 70bhp)
- 8t timber trailer with 6m crane
- Transit tipper
- 3t all-terrain forklift

3.4.4 Community communications

NSCFT maintains a website at <http://nscft.org/> and a Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/NSCFT/>

3.5 Rosal acquisition process

FLS notified the community of their intention to dispose of Rosal Forest on 21 June 2018. The initial steps for community acquisition of Rosal were undertaken by the Strathnaver Museum, who publish an Invitation to Tender for a feasibility study / business plan in April 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic caused some delays in delivery of the contract, which had been awarded to SKS Scotland³⁷, although a community consultation was undertaken in July / August 2021 (see below).

³⁷ <https://www.sksscotland.co.uk/>

Strathnaver Museum is currently undergoing a major refurbishment and the Trustees did not feel that they had the capacity to take forward the acquisition. North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust, which has experience of forest acquisition and management, therefore stepped in and engaged CWA to deliver a feasibility study / business plan to support the CATS and SLF applications.

3.5.1 Community consultation

A community consultation was carried out by SKS during July / Aug 2021. The survey was available online, using SurveyMonkey, the link to which was publicised via social media³⁸, and paper copies were also delivered to those who lived locally and were known not to have computer access.

A total of 65 surveys were returned, and a full analysis is included as Appendix 2.

Key findings from the survey include:

- Very strong support for NSCFT/community ownership of the site: 63 respondents supported community ownership (2 didn't answer this question), with 61 supporting NSCFT ownership, with just 1 against (3 didn't answer).
- Very strong support for managing the surrounding forest with a focus on environment and biodiversity, cf. commercial forestry, with 46/64 strongly agreeing and 16 agreeing.
- Strong support for developing in a way that "does not lead to a dramatic increase in visitors from outside the area" (32/64 strongly agree, 17 agree) however there was a range of views expressed on this point, not least perhaps because the question was not quantified. There is clearly widespread concern about the potential perils of mass tourism given the NC500 experience and a general agreement that development should be in keeping with the nature and history of the site.
- General support for a bothy or 'hutting' development in the medium term (14/62 strongly agree, 27 agree), but concerns were raised about potential abuse.
- Strong support for longer term re-peopling of the area, e.g. through woodland crofts (21/62 strongly agree, 21 agree), although concerns were raised about increased traffic movements and the impact on the remote nature of the site.

Survey respondents were provided with a list of nine proposals for the site and asked for their opinion. All were received positively, but the order of preference was:

1. Improvements to habitat to encourage wildlife to the area
2. Improvements to access / paths / signage
3. Tell the story of the continuous settlement of Rosal over 2500 years
4. Set aside an area to honour those who were removed during the Clearances
5. Introduce some amenities, such as compost toilets, bird hides etc.
6. Carry out organised walks / talks / forest activities
7. Develop a series of workshops to explore the cultural and natural history of the site
8. Develop the land as a resource for crafting and micro businesses
9. Commission an art installation to interpret the story and emotional experience of Rosal

Respondents were asked for their ideas: paths, interpretation and other facilities were the most frequently mentioned, but there was also support for projects that created employment and contributed to the local economy. Respondents were also asked if they were keen to help, and if they had relevant interests / skills / experience. 22 respondents answered positively, across a range of topics from project management / funding and communication / social media / marketing to organising activities and events and forest management / maintenance.

³⁸ The link was shared on Facebook by various local organisations including NSCFT, Armadale Village Hall, Farr North Community Development Trust and Strathnaver Museum, as well as several individuals.

4 Rosal Forest

Rosal Forest covers ~160ha and is situated in the upper reaches of Strathnaver, on the east side of the River Naver. The main access is by a 1.5km forest road, which joins the B871 just to the east of the Naver bridge.



Map 5: site map with FLS boundary highlighted (OS 1:50,000)

4.1 Ownership and management history

The site is currently owned by Scottish Ministers and managed by Forestry and Land Scotland. It is the last portion of a once very substantial (~6,600ha) land holding covering 5 separate forest blocks in the Strathnaver and Strath Halladale area which were first identified for disposal in 2008.

The Forestry Commission acquired the Rosal site in 1956 and it was planted between the 1960's and the 1990's, predominately with Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine. The main part of Rosal Forest was sold to the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership in 2015³⁹.

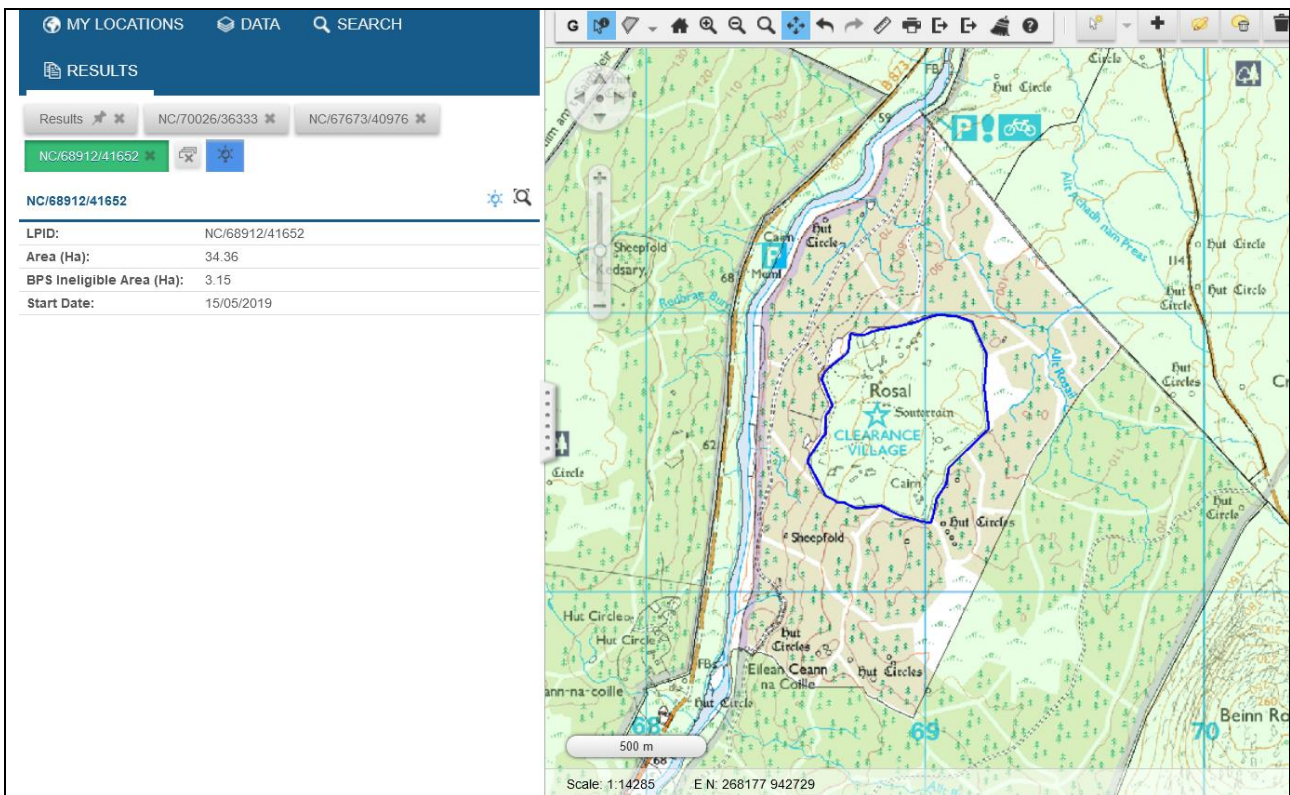
4.1.1 Grazing

The Bidwells valuation report states that “We understand there is presently a seasonal grazing let in place associated with the open ground in the centre of the property, running from April to November 2021, at £100 per annum for 33.96ha, with a similar arrangement in place in 2020. We understand that the land was last let on a more formal basis in 2014 at £650pa.”

³⁹ <https://scotlis.ros.gov.uk/property-summary/STH3935>

4.1.2 Land Registration with Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate (RPID)

34.36ha of the clearance site is registered with RPID, reflecting the grazing lease for this area. The remainder of the site must be registered prior to any application for forest management grants (including the Long Term Forest Plan preparation grant).



Map 6: Land Parcel Registration⁴⁰

4.2 Geology

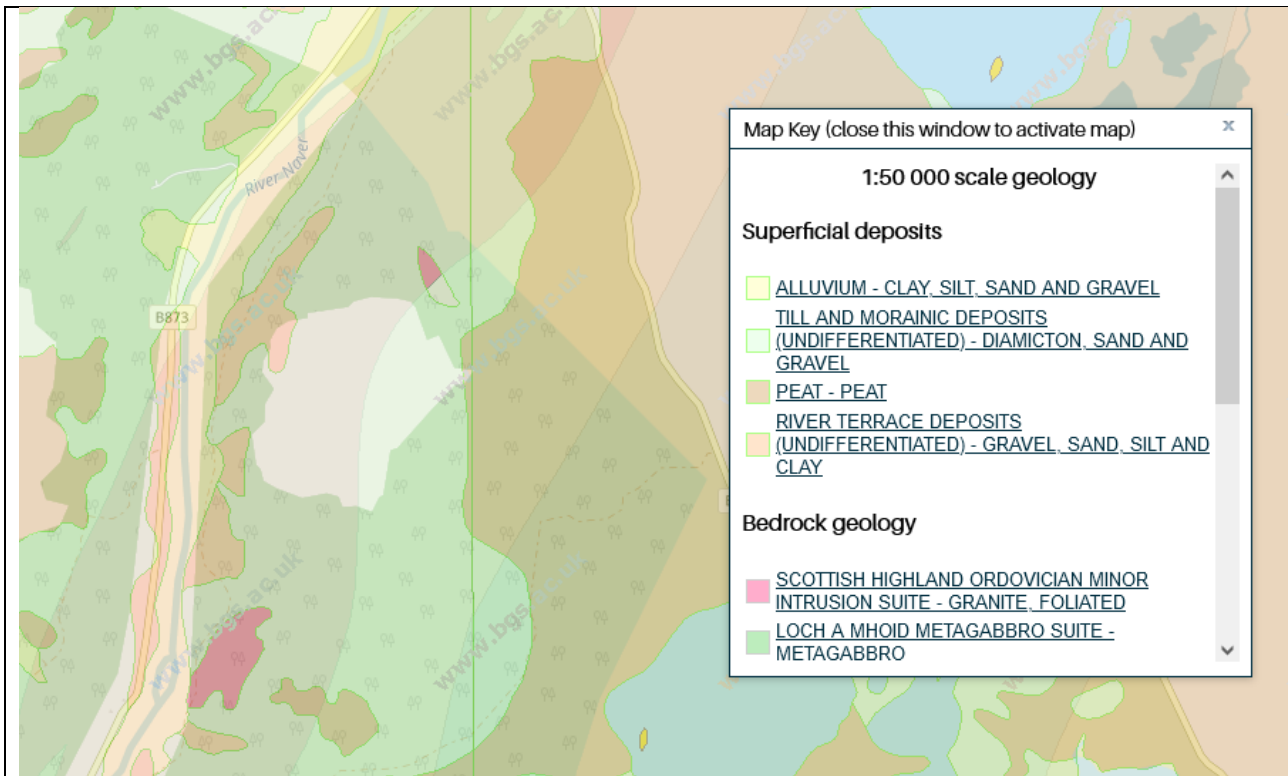
The British Geological Survey identifies the underlying geology for most of the site as being Strathnaver Granite - Granite, Foliated. This is igneous bedrock formed approximately 444 to 485 million years ago in the Ordovician Period. The local environment was previously dominated by intrusions of silica-rich magma.

The underlying geology of the north-eastern portion of the site is rocks of the Bettyhill Formation - Migmatitic Psammite with Migmatitic Semipelite. This is metamorphic bedrock formed approximately 541 to 1000 million years ago: originally sedimentary rocks formed in shallow seas which were later altered by high grade regional metamorphism.

Superficial deposits are predominantly till and morainic deposits formed up to 3 million years ago in the Quaternary Period. The local environment was previously dominated by ice age conditions. In the west of site, by the River Naver there are superficial deposits comprising River Terrace Deposits (undifferentiated) - Gravel, Sand, Silt and Clay.

⁴⁰ From Rural Payments and Services website <https://account.ruralpayments.org/AFRC-Viewer/>

Note that the boundary of the unregistered area does not match the property boundary in the SE corner.



Map 7: Underlying Geology⁴¹

4.3 Soils

Soils across most of the site are relative thin and predominantly mineral, with local gleying and with alluvial deposits adjacent to the river. On higher, flatter ground there are significant areas of peat.

4.4 Topography

The site sits on the east side of the north-flowing River Naver. Elevation ranges from 60m above sea level on the western boundary to approx. 130m above sea level in the SE corner of the site.

The majority of the site has a westerly aspect and drainage, however the northern eastern portion, including part of the clearance village site, is relatively flat and drains north into the Allt Rosal.

Slopes are gentle across the majority of the site and would not pose access issues for harvesting or other machinery. There are some localised steeper areas above the borrow pits in the southern portion of the site.

4.5 Climate and site suitability for forestry

The Altnaharra No. 2 Climate Station (approximately 15km southwest of Rosal Wood), which holds an number of records for UK temperature extremes, records an average annual precipitation of 1,186mm⁴². This is relatively moderate, and considerably less than experienced at sites closer to the west coast.

Forest Research's Environmental Site Classification for Forestry (ESC) decision support tool⁴³ indicates that the site is the site has a cool, moderately exposed and moist climate and that W4

⁴¹ From British Geological Survey mapviewer <https://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain/home.html?>

⁴² <https://www.metoffice.gov.uk/research/climate/maps-and-data/uk-climate-averages/gfkgdgi2j>

⁴³ <http://www.forestdss.org.uk/geoforestdss/>

“Birch with purple moor grass” is the most appropriate native woodland type across the site. ESC records that DAMS (a measure of exposure) scores range from 12-16 (moderate) and that soil nutrient regime is considered to be the most important factor constraining tree survival and growth. The land capability for forestry map⁴⁴ records the entire site as F6 “Land with very limited flexibility for the growth and management of tree crops”.

The experience of first rotation crops suggests that, at least on the well-drained slopes, ground conditions and soil fertility are somewhat better than these broad-brush models suggest, and that given appropriate mutual shelter and adequate protection for herbivores a wider range of species, including oak, hazel, aspen and holly, might thrive in pockets of better ground.

4.6 Fauna

Wildlife is abundant with pine marten, badgers, foxes, and deer regularly seen within the broader Rosal forest. A wide range of small birds call the wood home with woodpeckers, tits, and finches in abundance. Numerous birds of prey including white-tailed eagle, golden eagle, osprey, sparrowhawk, kestrel, buzzard and various species of owl have been recorded in the forest⁴⁵.

The Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership are investigating the possible reintroduction of red squirrels to Rosal Forest and could work in partnership with NSCFT to deliver this project.

4.6.1 Deer

Deer are a major obstacle to successful establishment and/or restocking of forestry, especially where species other than Sitka spruce are desired. Effective deer control will be essential if NSCFT take on ownership.

The Rosal block is within FLS’s Naver Wildlife Management Unit: red, sika and roe deer are recorded but no deer density numbers are provided in the FLS Land Management Plan (LMP) for Rosal, although it is implied that deer numbers are too high for successful broadleaf establishment (as borne out by the experience of recent restocking operations).

Prior to 2018 the deer control was carried out by the managers of the surrounding forest after the forest disposal. Deer control was taken back in house by FLS in late 2018. FLS has provided the following figures for the total deer cull between 1/4/2018 and 31/3/2022

Species	Adult Males	Adult Females	Calves	Total
Red	59	21	13	93
Roe	16	10	7	33
Sika	8	3	2	13
Total	83	34	22	139

Table 8: FLS deer cull returns 1/4/2018 to 31/3/2022

Deer control in the remainder of Rosal forest (owned by MFFFP) is carried out by contractors. The annual average cull over the last four years is 136.

We understand that MFFFP has also been trialling Trico deer repellent to deter browsing with some success, although deer culling is considered more effective.

⁴⁴ Checked at https://map.environment.gov.scot/Soil_maps/?layer=4

⁴⁵ Information from Richard Wright.

4.7 Flora

The FLS Land Management Plan does not record any rare or unusual species at Rosal. Ground flora assemblages appear typical for the range of habitat types across the site, albeit impacted by browsing.

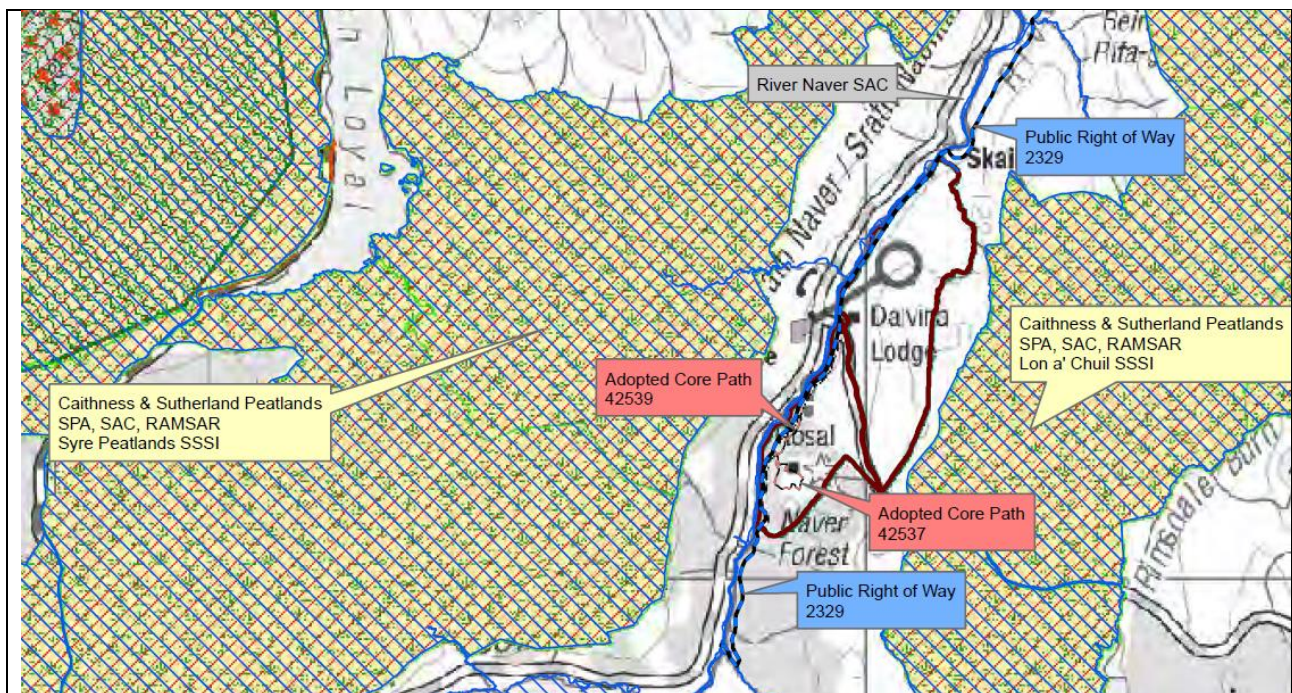
4.7.1 Invasive species

There are small areas of gorse on the western fringe of the forest, and some small clumps on the restock area to the NE of the clearance village. There are significant areas of bracken under pine and larch stands, and on the clearance village.

4.8 Environmental designations

There are no environmental designations on the site itself, however the site is adjacent to the River Naver Special Area of Conservation (SAC)⁴⁶: the qualifying interests are Freshwater pearl mussel and Atlantic salmon. Control of siltation during harvesting, restocking and other operations will be an important consideration.

The Syre Peatlands Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) is approximately 1km away to the west, across the River Naver, whilst the Lon a' Chuil SSSI is approximately 1.5km away to the west. These SSSI are both also part of the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands SAC and Special Protection Area (SPA). Operations on site are unlikely to have any impact on the peatland SSSIs.



Map 8 FLS LMP environmental features & core paths

4.9 Ancient and/or native woodland

None of the site was identified as ancient woodland or of long-established plantation origin by the Ancient Woodland Inventory⁴⁷. None of the site was recorded as native woodland by the Native Woodland Survey⁴⁸.

⁴⁶ <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/8362>

⁴⁷ Checked at <https://map.environment.gov.scot/sewebmap/>

⁴⁸ Checked at

<https://scottishforestry.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=0d6125cfe892439ab0e5d0b74d9acc18>

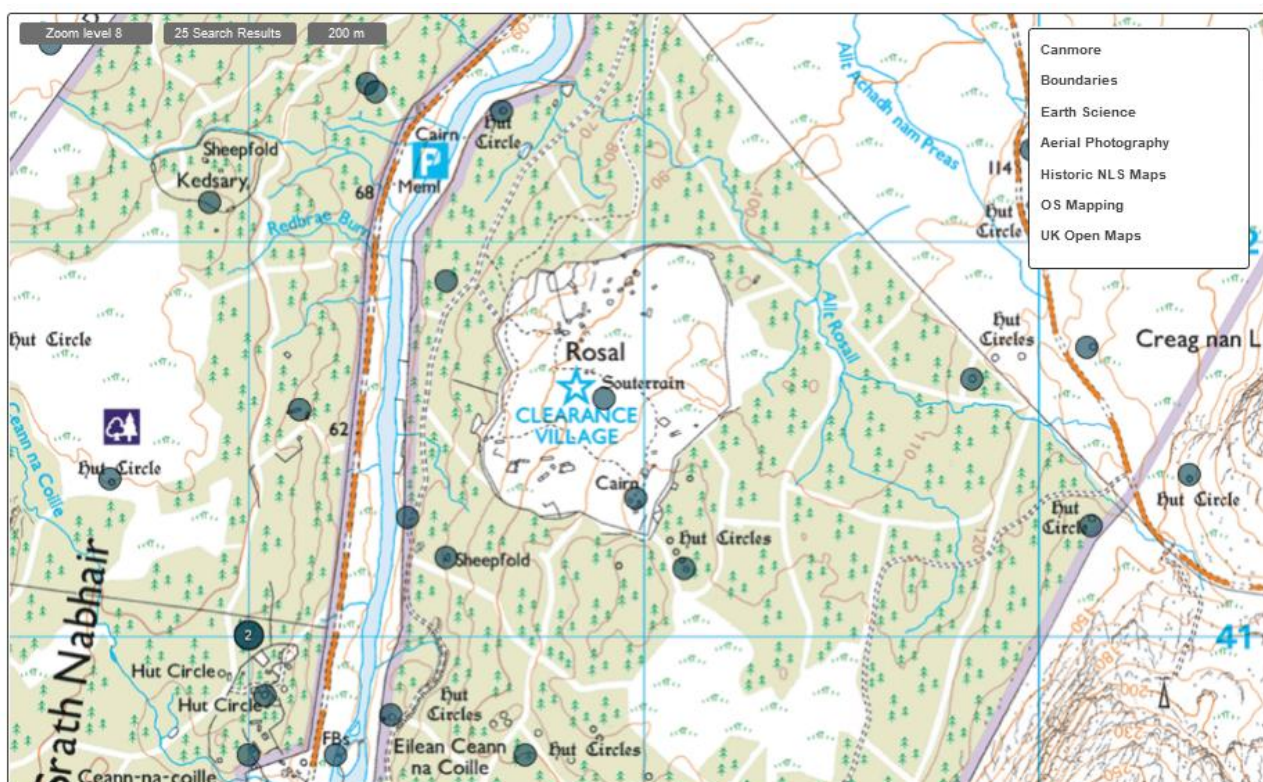
4.10 Archaeology

The site contains two scheduled monuments:

- SM2510 “Rosal, deserted township”⁴⁹
- SM2515 “Rosal, hut circles and clearance cairns”⁵⁰

In addition to the two scheduled sites there are numerous other historic sites in and around the woods: Canmore⁵¹, Historic Environment Scotland’s catalogue of historic site record, has 9 records on the site (a full list is provided as Appendix 4).

Whilst initial focus of community activity and interest is on clearance village it is important to stress that all historic sites will be appropriately managed, and that the clearance era is one period in the long history of human occupation of Strathnaver; the other sites contribute to this broader picture.



Map 9: Canmore records of historic sites

4.11 Boundaries and fencing

The northern and western boundaries are deer-fenced⁵², the eastern and southern boundary (~2,000m) with the land in MFFFP ownership is unfenced and undemarcated, except for a gate with associated signage on the forest road at NC683407.

- The western boundary deer fence extends to ~2,150m and whilst still standing is near the end of its serviceable life: there is one obvious active deer crossing point where the top netting has fallen down and a number of smaller holes under the fence. There is a stile over the fence

⁴⁹ <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM2510>

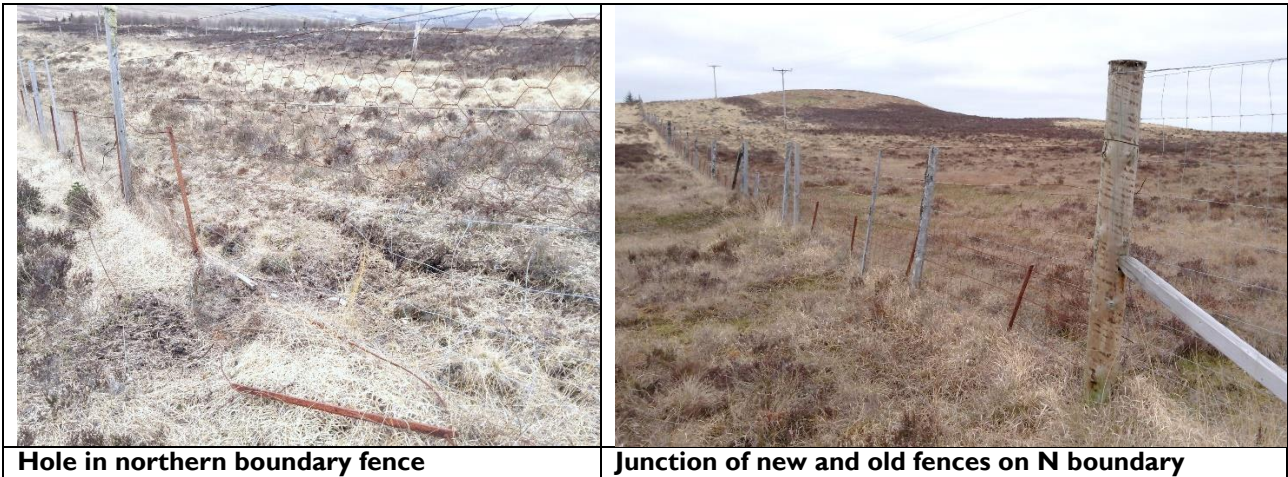
⁵⁰ <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM2515>

⁵¹ <https://canmore.org.uk/>

⁵² NB the deer fence may not exactly follow the property boundary

(unconnected with any path) at NC684415 and a gate, largely overgrown with gorse, at NC683410.

- The north-eastern boundary deer fence runs for ~1,100m. The eastern 300m or so (and the continuation to the MFFFP entrance to the forest) is relatively new and in good condition but the remaining 800m is of similar vintage to the western fence and possibly in worse condition. The western half of this section bounds the native woodland on croft ground, which is itself deer fenced, however there is an unprotected section of ~400m with one very significant hole and numerous points where remedial work is necessary.



The forest road crosses a deer grid (largely full of stones/earth) at the northern entrance to the forest. There is a metal deer gate which appears to be kept propped open.

Responsibilities for fencing need to be confirmed, but our understanding is that legal responsibilities for the fences are shared 50/50 with neighbours: the western fence with Syre Estate, who own the riverside strip, the northern fence with Skelpick Partnership and/or Rhifail Sheep Stock Club. In practice fence repairs / replacement will need to be driven by the forest owners.

4.11.1 Internal fencing

The clearance village site is stock fenced. The western portion is in good order but much of the rest is rather poor and needs replacing. Windblown trees lie across the fence at a couple of points.

4.12 Access for timber harvesting

Access for timber harvesting is via the well-established (albeit very potholed) forest road which runs from the B871 at NC696439 just to the east of the Syre bridge to the NW tip of the forest at NC690426 and thence north-south through the western part of the site, exiting at NC683407.

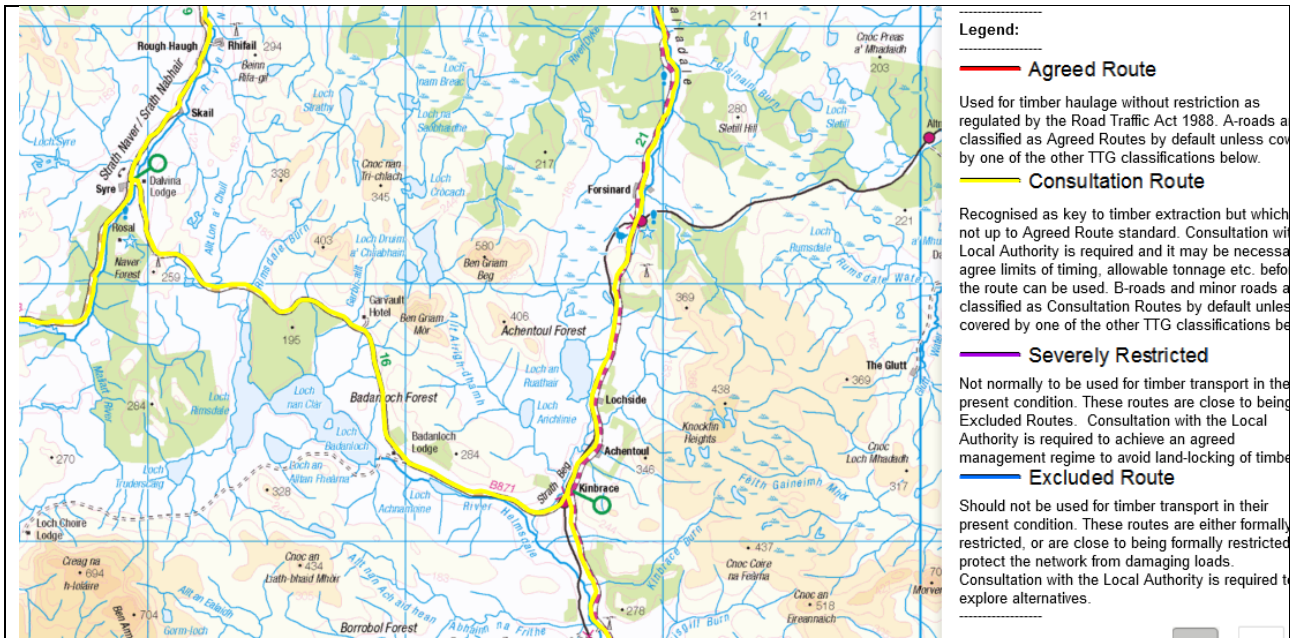
Our understanding is that FLS own the road from the B871 to the forest (it is cmpt 4070 in their sub-compartment database) and thus it will be included in the sale. FLS also have access rights to the forest road to the south, it is unclear if these rights will also be transferred.

Internal topography is gentle and the woodland can be worked with standard forest harvesting machinery. There is no other internal roading: the felled areas on the west side of the forest were worked to the main forest road, with stacking alongside the road, whilst those on the east of the site were extracted to another forest road which gives access to the B871 at NC702414: this forest road and entrance are now in private ownership.

4.12.1 Timber transport

Timber transport is potentially a major constraint on future forest management.

The B871 and B873 are Consultation Routes which require liaison with Local Authorities over the timing, frequency and/or lorry configuration to be used. All timber from Rosal currently has to travel east on B871 then south down the A897 from Kinbrace to the A9 at Helmsdale.



Map 10: Agreed timber transport routes from Rosal⁵³

The District Valuer reported that “I understand that the owners need to bid for permission to transport timber out on the Forest Route with bids for up to 36,000 tons in total. It is not economic to remove less than 5,000 tons at a time unless it was possible to agree with another landowner to use part of their allocated bid.”⁵⁴

If this is still the case, it is likely that harvesting would have to take place in no more than two tranches to ensure that each produced sufficient volume.

The Timber Transport Forum map shows the A897 north from Kinbrace as a consultation route, however it has been suggested that it is in fact an excluded route so timber is not normally allowed to be transported north e.g. to Forsinain. It may be possible to negotiate a dispensation from Highland Council for NSCFT to transport small volumes of timber to their processing facility at Forsinain, which is 43km away (i.e. much closer than other potential markets)

4.12.2 Roadstone

There are two small borrow pits adjacent to the forest road at the southern end of the wood at NC684410 and NC684409 which could provide stone for road repairs.

4.12.3 Services

There are no services on site. There is however a 33kv overhead powerline just to the north of the forest which crosses the access road.

⁵³ <https://timbertf.maps.arcgis.com/apps/webappviewer/index.html?id=4a23d4910e604b71872956441113c83c>

⁵⁴ Valuation report, VOA, January 2020

4.13 Access for public recreation

The FLS Land Management Plan asserts that “Rosal Clearance Village is one of the key visitor destinations in North Sutherland”, although this is not currently reflected in the condition of signage or visitor infrastructure, which has been unfavourably remarked on by visitors⁵⁵.

Forestry and Land Scotland has a webpage⁵⁶ for Rosal, with basic visitor information. FLS has produced an interpretative leaflet (see Appendix 5), but this is currently not available on the website as it is not a fully accessible document.

There are road signs to “Rosal forest walk” at the A836/B871 junction south of Bettyhill (16km away), the A836/B873 junction just outside Altnaharra (20km) and the A897/B871 junction at Kinbrace (24km), but there is no signage at the key B871/B873 junction to the west of the Naver bridge, or at the site entrance where the forest road meets the B871. (This location is tagged as “Rosal Forest” on Google maps).

Public access is generally via the forest road described in 4.12 above. This road is wide and well-established but the surface is badly potholed and in need of repair.

It is also possible to approach the forest on the forest road from the south, via Dalharrold, or to cross the River Naver via fisherman’s bridges⁵⁷ at NC682407, just south of the SW tip of the Rosal block (NB there is no stile across the deer fence at this point), or at NC690428, approx. 250m north of the northern entrance.

There is a small (unsigned) car park with spaces for 8-10 cars at NC690427 just outside the main entrance at the northern end of the forest. Whilst the access road is owned by FLS our understanding is that this car park area is now owned by the Skelpick Partnership.

There is also a parking bay, again with space for 8-10 cars, at NC685419 by the forest road, adjacent to the interpretation panel and the footpath that leads to the clearance village.

This latter area is indicated as a parking area on the map on the interpretation panel, on the FLS Rosal leaflet, and on the 2015 iteration of the “Forests of the Far North” leaflet, however the FLS Rosal website⁵⁸ suggests parking at the area outside the forest gate.

There are no official estimates of visitor numbers to the Rosal site, although local estimates are that visits are relatively rare and it has been suggested that visitor numbers to the clearance village may be below 100 per annum.

4.13.1 Paths

A narrow surfaced path (~150m) climbs from the information board / parking bay to the pedestrian gate in in the stock fence. A wider vehicle track runs parallel and just to the south of to the path, giving access a stock gate for grazing management.

⁵⁵ https://www.tripadvisor.co.uk/Attraction_Review-g7205385-d11963977-Reviews-Rosal_Clearance_Village-Kinbrace_Scottish_Highlands_Scotland.html

⁵⁶ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/rosal>

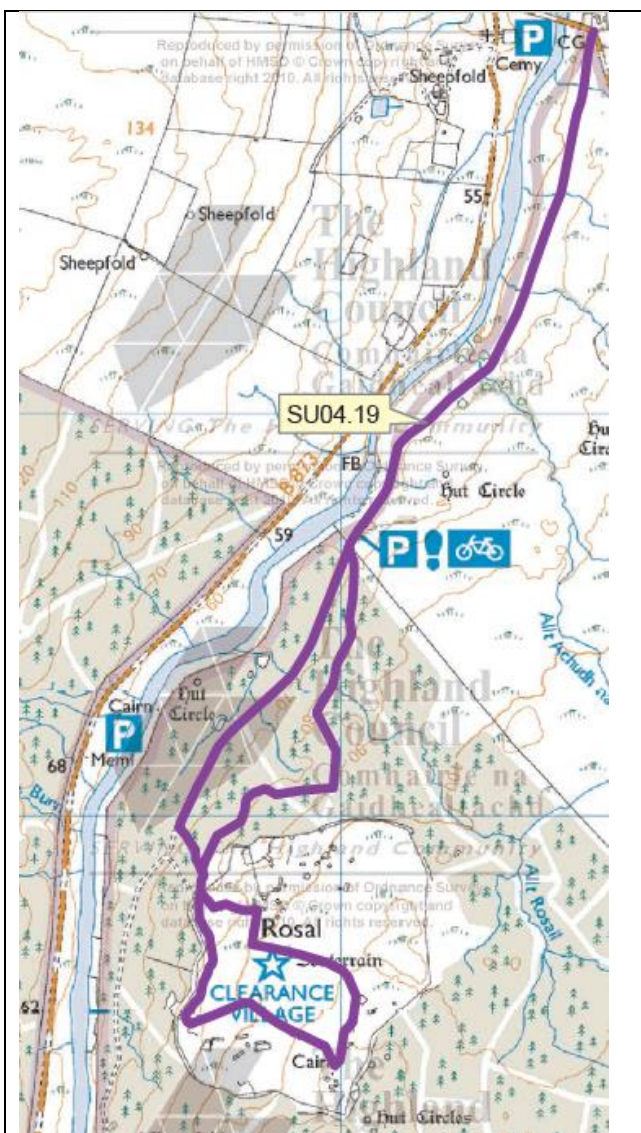
⁵⁷ Signage at these bridges (which presumably predates the outdoor access code) suggests they are private. The bridges are in reasonable condition but it would probably not be appropriate for NSCFT to promote them as routes to the forest.

⁵⁸ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/rosal>

Once inside the fence a rough surfaced stone track (~200m) climbs relatively steeply up on the village site, terminating at a stone seat. This would be accessible to an ATV, or perhaps an all-terrain buggy, but not a wheelchair, and the gradient and surface may be challenging for those of limited mobility.

The remainder of the ~1,400m path loop within the clearance village itself is unsurfaced and is little more than a trod in the grass. Intermittent waymarker posts, many of which are loose, indicate the route, although in some places the path itself has disappeared. There are boggy areas which may have been crossed by boardwalks in the past, although most of these have been removed and are piled in the SE corner of the site.

The upper (eastern) return path to the car park runs for ~1,200m through the Scots pine stands of cmpts 4071 and 4072. The path is narrow and unsurfaced but well-drained, with boardwalk bridges across streams, and provides a much more attractive route than the forest road. Windblow necessitates detours in a couple of places near the village site.



Map 11: Core paths

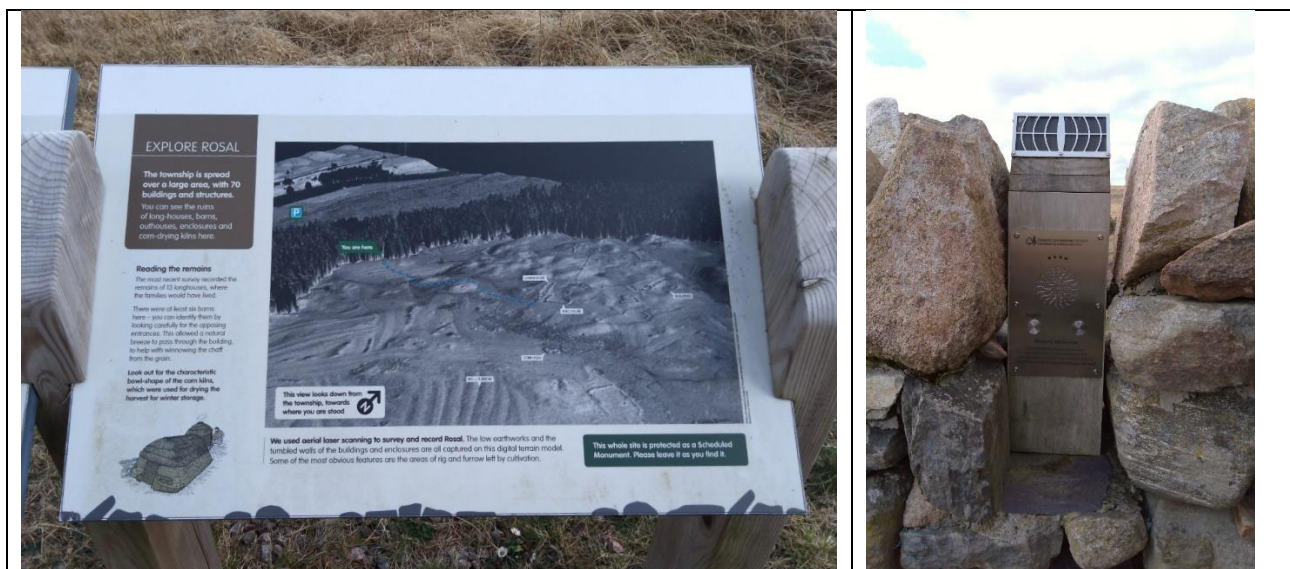
Highland Council core path SU04.19 utilises the main access route, the Rosal village trail and the upper return path, with parking outside the forest. The core path is comprised of a wide range of surfaces: approx. 50% is forest road, 25% is surfaced paths of various gradients and quality, and 25% is little more than a waymarked trod across the clearance village site.

The Rosal trail is featured on the Walk Highlands website⁵⁹ (parking outside the forest). The 4km walk is graded as easy, slightly boggy in places: there is a detailed description (although it suggests that there is a picnic area and a board giving information at the car park site) and a downloadable map.

4.13.2 Signage and interpretation

There is no formal signage within the forest, although the first part of the upper (eastern) path does have some green waymarker posts. There are two interpretation boards, at NC685418, where a surfaced path leaves the forest road, and at NC686418, at the edge of the scheduled site. The leaflet dispenser at the former board is apparently only stocked in the summer.

A stone seat has been constructed at the eastern end of the surface path at NC688417 adjacent to ruined buildings: this has an audio interpretation console, featuring a reading from Donald Macleod's "Gloomy Memories". An unsurfaced and intermittent path (sometimes no more than a trod) provides a loop around the clearance village site, linking many of the ruins, however there is no onsite interpretation or identification of what individual buildings were used for.



Interpretation board and audio installation at Rosal

4.13.3 Strathnaver Trail

The Strathnaver Trail⁶⁰ links and interprets 29 archaeological sites, including the Rosal settlement. The trail begins at the Strathnaver Museum where a map and trail guide is available⁶¹. The trail was established ~15 years ago and some of the infrastructure is a little tired and in need of refreshment. It is understood that the trail is "owned" by Highland Council: it is unclear whether there is any budget for maintenance.

4.13.4 Rosal forest

The adjacent Rosal forest, owned by the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership, has a large network of trails and tracks, and includes numerous historic sites, including the Truderscaig settlement, and that of the 12th Century Battle of Dalharrold, where the Scots defeated the Vikings.

⁵⁹ <https://www.walkhighlands.co.uk/sutherland/rosal-strathnaver.shtml>

⁶⁰ <https://www.strathnavermuseum.org.uk/strathnaver-trail/>

⁶¹ Download at <http://www.strathnavermuseum.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/StrathnaverTrailMap.pdf>

A wind harp has been installed at Dalharrold⁶² in memory of all those cleared from the land and the Mackays' ancestor Christina Mackay.

4.13.5 Landscape character & value

The FLS LMP notes that “Rosal Forest lies in relatively open Strath Naver running through moorland slopes and hills landscape. The slopes rising up from the wide Strath floor are not very high nor steep; therefore the landscape is open and doesn't create a sense of enclosure. The forest rises from the floor of the strath up the slope.”

Until recent harvesting operations the clearance village site was completely encircled by conifer stands, which had the effect of more clearly delineating and defining the site. Felling operations across the eastern portion of the site, and on neighbouring property, have opened up the site considerably.

4.14 Neighbouring land use

The site is bounded to the east and south by the main part of Rosal forest, which was sold by FCS in 2015. There has been extensive felling of adjacent stands, restocking of adjacent stands appears to largely been with Sitka spruce, with broadleaves in 1.2m tree shelters. We understand that a wider range of species, including Scots pine and Norway spruce, has been employed elsewhere in the forest where better soils permit.

There is a young, predominantly broadleaved woodland alongside the access road to the north of the woodland. Higher ground to the north-east of the site is used for sheep grazing by the Rhifail Steep Stock Club.

The western boundary of the site runs roughly parallel to the River Naver (used for fishing) – there is a strip of rough grazing land 15-50m wide between the fence line and the river.

The B873 Altnaharra – Syre road runs along the far bank of the River Naver, and beyond that the Syre forest, which was formerly owned by FCS and has also been largely felled in recent years.

4.15 Forest cover

The Bidwells valuation report characterises Rosal Forest as “a below average quality commercial conifer woodland”. It is comprised predominantly of Scots pine dominated crops, originally planted in 1961 & 1962, with some hybrid larch, Sitka spruce and lodgepole pine.

There is extensive and catastrophic windblow in mature stands on higher ground. Significant areas have been felled alongside the River Naver and in the north-east of the block but the majority of restocking in the latter area appears to have failed.

4.15.1 Tree species and age classes

The Rosal site comprises three main types of forest cover: mature crops, recent restocking and open ground. The figures in the table below are taken from the FLS sub-compartment database however, inspection suggests some significant divergence from these figures on the ground: in the mature crops there seems to be considerably less lodgepole pine and rather more larch and Sitka spruce. This may reflect lodgepole's vulnerability to windblow, and the under-recording of small stands of the other two species.

⁶² <https://www.codaworx.com/projects/dalharrold-wind-harp-northern-scotland-lord-tanlaw-simon-brooke-mackay/>

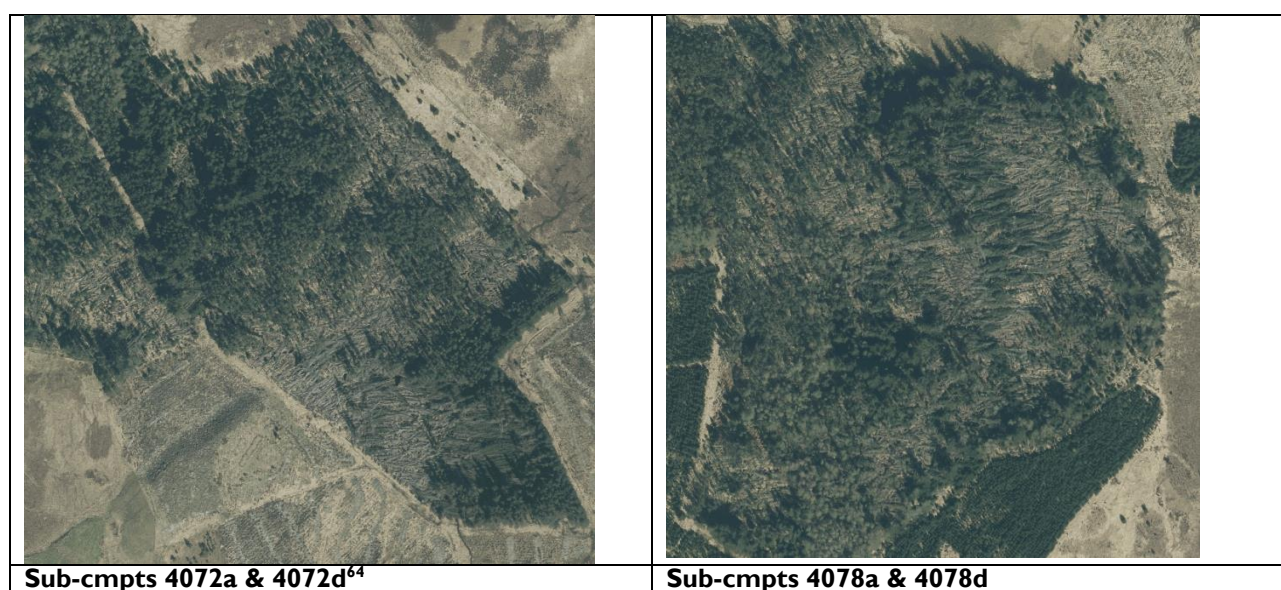
Broadleaves represent a much smaller component of the planted area, reflecting the failure of most recent restocking operations, and similarly there is very little young (planted or naturally regenerated) Scots pine. Conversely, there is substantial Sitka regeneration, both on recent restock sites and more generally through the forest, both in windblown areas and sometimes as an understorey to pine crops.

Species	1961	1962	2009	2010	2020	Total
Scots pine	37.70	11.01	0	1.15	3.74	53.60
Lodgepole pine	11.86	0.79	1.14	1.21	0	15.00
Sitka spruce	3.57	0.52	1.11	1.86	0	7.06
Larch	2.20	0.64	0.06	0	0	2.90
Mixed conifers	0	0	0.41	0	0	0.41
Birch (downy/silver)	0	0	0	1.28	8.21	9.49
Goat willow	0	0	0	0.68	2.49	3.17
Rowan	0	0	0	1.21	1.23	2.44
Common alder	0	0	0	0	2.49	2.49
Open						27.18
Agricultural land						35.49
Archaeological sites						1.46
Unplantable or bare						0.86
Total	55.33	12.96	2.72	7.39	18.16	161.55

Table 9: Species by Planting Year (figures from FLS sub-compartment database⁶³)

Mature crops: The FLS sub-compartment database records 68.29ha of conifer stands planted in 1961 and 1962, the majority of which is Scots pine (48.71ha / 71%), with lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce and hybrid larch also present both as pure stands and in intimate mixture with the Scots pine.

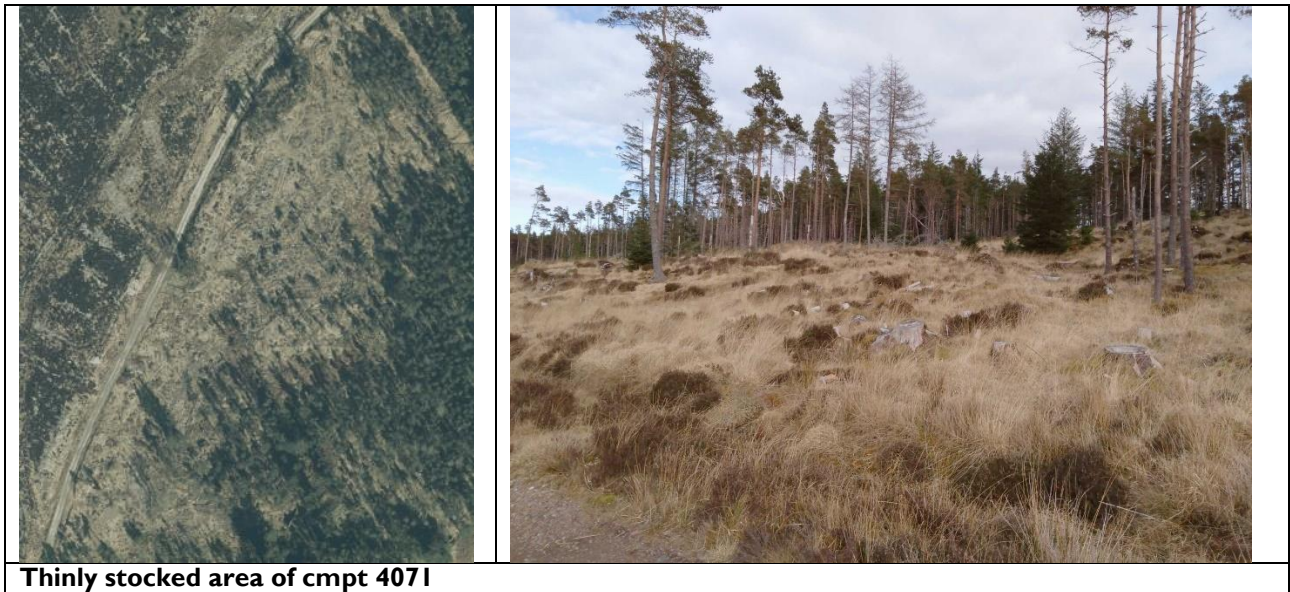
1.56ha of the area is recorded in the sub-compartment database as windblown, leaving an area of 66.73ha of standing crops, however site visits and aerial imagery suggests that at least a further 10ha has been lost to windblow – notably in cmpts 4072 and 4078 as per the imagery below.



⁶³ Note that these figures were provided by FLS in April 2022 and have a number of minor differences from those provided in 2021 for the preparation of the valuation report

⁶⁴ Imagery from Marine Scotland <https://marinescotland.atkinsgeospatial.com/nmpi/default.aspx?layers=718>

Additionally, there has been substantial windblow, which was subsequently harvested (but not restocked) in 2016, in sub-cmpts 4071a and 4077a on the east side of the forest road, leaving approx. 5 ha very thinly stocked as shown in the aerial imagery and photo below.



There are individual blown trees and smaller pockets of windblow through the whole forest, and the actual area of standing mature crops is therefore probably not much more than 50ha.

Other than the forest road running north-south on the west side of the forest there is no internal roading, and there is no evidence of any past thinning operations.

Recent restocking: The FLS sub-compartment database records 28.27ha of restocking from 2009, 2010 and 2019. 10.68ha of this is conifers, 17.59 is native broadleaves (birch, rowan, willow & alder).

The 2009 restocking comprises 2.72 ha of a mix of conifers in sub-cmpts 4077c and 4078c and most of this appears to have been successfully established.

The 2010 restocking in cmpt 4071, in the NW corner of the site⁶⁵, is a mixture of broadleaves and conifers (Sitka with some lodgepole). There are signs of heavy browsing on the broadleaves but losses have been supplemented by conifer regeneration.

A small sub-cmpt (4075e) restocked with Sitka in 2010 has survived but appears checked.

The 2019 restocking occupies two main areas in the north-east and on the west of the site, both of which appear to have largely failed (survival rates ~10% in NE, ~20% in W), perhaps due to high deer pressure. As the Bidwells valuation report noted “These areas will require substantial inputs in beating-up, weeding and, in particular either deer control or deer fencing.”

Sitka regeneration is apparent across much of the north-eastern 2019 regeneration area, with densities seemingly related to proximity of seed source: 4072e, to the east of a mature Sitka block, appears fairly well stocked (>2,000 stems/ha), whilst densities are much lower in cmpt 4075.

It is questionable whether Scots pine is a suitable choice for the flat peaty area to the NE of the clearance site: Sitka spruce would appear to have a higher likelihood of success. It is noticeable that

⁶⁵ NB this area is identified as riparian woodland in the FLS Land Management Plan.

on the adjacent land restocking appears to have been predominantly with Sitka, with the relatively limited areas of broadleaved restocking benefitting from 1.2m treeshelters, although there is considerable browsing evidence where the trees emerge, suggesting that 1.5m or even 1.8m shelters are necessary. Treeshelters have not been employed by FLS (reflecting FLS policy), but in their absence survival rates seem very low.

FLS have confirmed that initial stocking density assessments for recent restocking were carried out in 2019 and beating up took place in January 2020. Final stocking density assessments will be carried out in the spring of 2023 and will inform any decision to program further work.

We understand that the FLS Land Management Prescription allows for up to 15% non-native trees in the native woodland area. Based on the stocking density assessment, a decision at year five will be taken either to remove the non-natives, or to submit an amendment to change the prescription/objectives for the site.

From NSCFT's perspective it would clear be preferable for any remedial work to be completed prior to any transfer. Similarly, if is deemed appropriate to seek approval for a change of species on site (i.e. adopting the Sitka spruce regeneration, rather than persisting with Scots pine) it would be preferable for such an amendment to be made by FLS.

Open ground: 64.99ha (~40%) of the site is recorded as open ground in the FLS sub-compartment database. The largest single component of this is clearance village site but there are also significant other areas of open land, including:

- Forest road, rides and an unplanted strip along the northern boundary;
- Two unplanted sub-compartments at the southern end of the site (which do in fact have some well-established Sitka regen);
- Some peaty areas left open during restocking;
- Designed open ground around other historic sites.

As noted previously ~5ha on the east side of the forest road was felled in 2016: this is not recorded in the sub-compartment database.

4.15.2 Yield Class

Yield class is an index of the potential productivity of even-aged stands of trees. It is based on the maximum mean annual increment of cumulative timber volume achieved by a given tree species growing on a given site. It is measured in units of cubic metres per hectare per year (m³/ha/year) and conventionally expressed in increments of 2. The range of values found in GB is from 2 to 30.

The FLS sub-compartment database records the following ranges for 1961 and 1962 conifer stands:

Scots pine	YC 8 - 10
Sitka spruce	YC 12 - 16
Lodgepole pine	YC 8 - 10
Larch	YC 6 - 12

These values are moderate by Scottish standards and reflect the generally poor growing conditions at the site. Detailed inventory work has not been undertaken but our initial impression is that the Yield Classes in the FLS sub-compartment database are reasonably reliable.

4.15.3 Timber breakout & quality

The Scots pine crops, where not affected by windblow, are of moderate to good form.

Sitka spruce form is moderate: trees tend to be straight and well grown but many are in relatively small groups where the edge trees have heavy branching.

Larch has grown well across much of the site but trees are often of poor form, with swept or twisted stems.

Lodgepole pine stands are generally poor and prone to windblow.

4.15.4 Standing volumes

As noted previously, the area of standing mature timber is significantly less than recorded in the FLS sub-compartment database and there is intermittent windblow throughout the standing crops.

The table below show our revised estimates of the area and standing volume for the four main species; these should be regarded as indicative and more detailed work is required to survey the site and carry out necessary inventory work.

Species	FLS area (ha)	Revised area (ha)	Standing volume (m3)
Scots pine	48.36	39.71	11,305
Lodgepole pine	11.54	4.00	1,276
Sitka spruce	4.03	4.29	1,782
Hybrid larch	2.80	4.15	1,176
Total	66.73	52.14	15,539

Table 10: Revised areas and standing volume estimate

The windblown areas also contain significant volumes of timber, perhaps 2-3,000m³, although much of this will be severely degraded and unrecoverable. Most of what could be recovered would only be usable as firewood or chip.

There is also a small volume within younger stands, notably the 2009 restocking in 4077c and some of the more established Sitka regeneration around the forest: this has not been quantified.

4.15.5 Plant health

FLS have not made NSCFT aware of any specific plant health issues at Rosal. There are a number of active plant health threats to trees and forests in Scotland, most notably *Dothistroma* needle blight⁶⁶, affecting pine species, and *Phytophthora ramorum*⁶⁷ affecting larches. If the latter were identified at Rosal, Scottish Forestry could issue a Statutory Plant Health Notice requiring the felling of infected larch trees plus any other larch within a 250 metre buffer zone.

Although larch is a relatively small component of the forest, it is found in small blocks scattered across the site, and removing it would require substantial additional felling of other species for access. This would adversely affect the wind-firmness of the remaining stands.

4.16 FLS Land Management Plan

Rosal is covered by Forestry and Land Scotland's North Sutherland Land Management Plan⁶⁸ - this is a merged plan covering over 14,200 ha and incorporating 3 areas (Borgie, Strathnaver & Dalchork)

⁶⁶ <https://forestry.gov.scot/sustainable-forestry/tree-health/tree-pests-and-diseases/dothistroma-needle-blight>

⁶⁷ <https://forestry.gov.scot/sustainable-forestry/tree-health/tree-pests-and-diseases/phytophthora-ramorum>

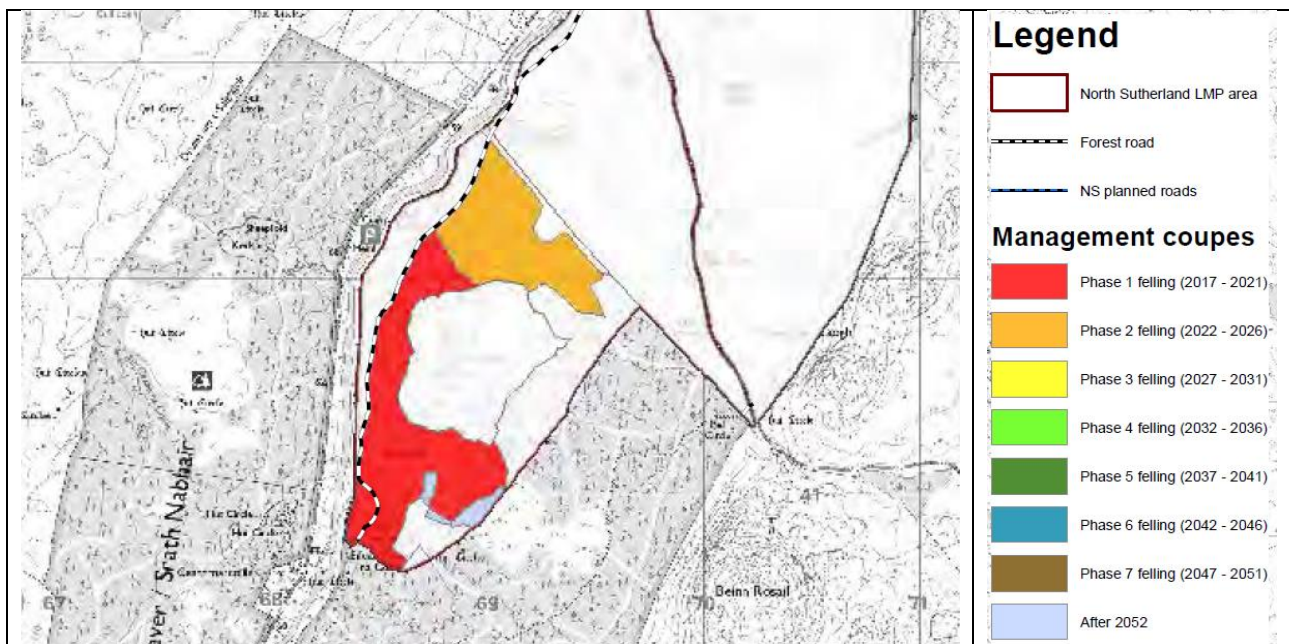
⁶⁸ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/planning/active/north-sutherland>

which previously had their own forest design plans. The North Sutherland LMP was approved by the FCS Highland and Islands Conservancy on the 16th of June 2016.

Rosal is by far the smallest component of the plan. The plan identifies the Rosal clearance village as one of the key visitor destinations in North Sutherland although there is little detail as to future management plans for the site.

4.16.1 Felling plans

The FLS Land Management Plan proposes felling the remaining mature stands in two phases: the southern part in 2017-2021 (this work has not taken place), the northern part in 2022-2026.



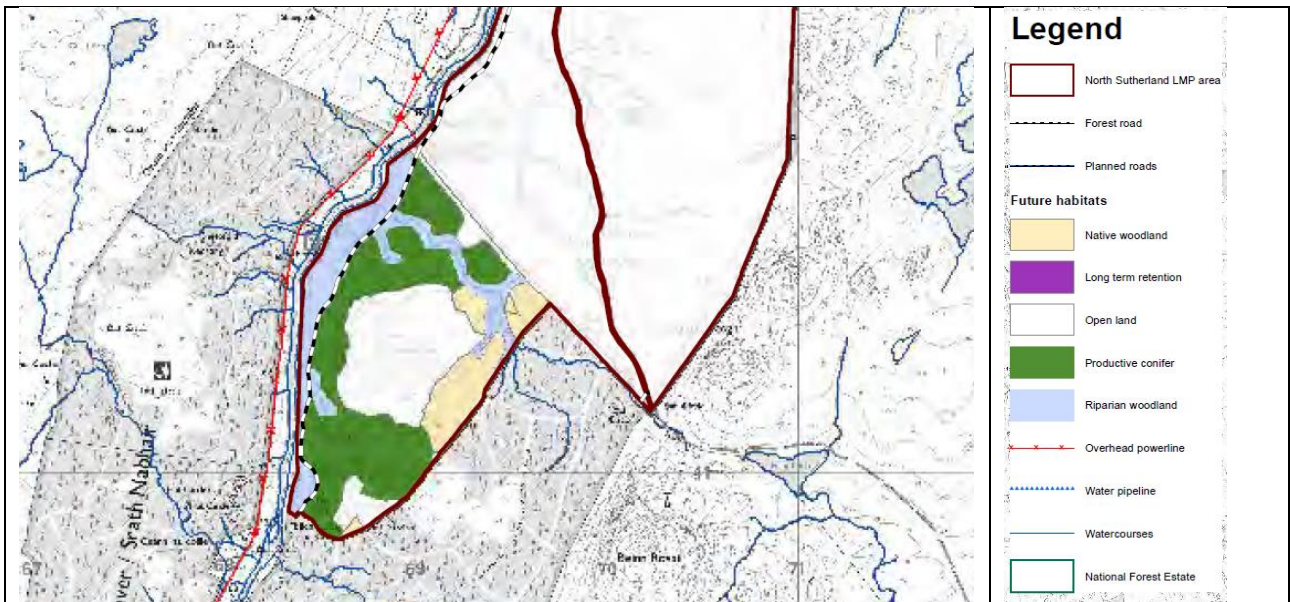
Map 12: Management coupes map from FLS LMP

4.16.2 Restocking plans

The FLS LMP proposes to restock the majority of the Phase 1 and Phase 2 felling areas with conifers, predominantly Scots pine. The LMP states that the restock sites will be planned to make them windfirm and more attractive to visitors, though no information is provided as to how this will be achieved.

The plan notes that riparian woodland will be created alongside the Allt Rosal and to the west of the forest road to contribute positively to water quality in River Naver (SAC) and to create a buffer between the watercourses and the productive forestry. As noted previously, much of the broadleaved restocking west of the forest road appears to have failed and Sitka and lodgepole are currently the dominant species.

The areas at the eastern edge of the site are identified as native woodland in FLS's plans, although as noted they are currently dominated by Sitka spruce regeneration.



Map 13: Future habitats and species map from FLS LMP

5 Future Forest Management Options

This section of the document explores options for future forest management at Rosal, should NSCFT seek to acquire the entire site. Whilst not the primary motivation for community acquisition of the site, forest management could contribute positively to the economic development and environmental enhancement of Rosal, as well as to its amenity and recreation value.

Unfortunately, the current condition and location of the site constrain management options: existing stands are ~60 years old and already have substantial windblow, there are significant liabilities with respect to restocking and fencing, and restrictions on timber transport may limit local utilisation. Negotiations with Scottish Forestry and Forestry and Land Scotland will be necessary to ensure that these liabilities and constraints do not make community acquisition unviable.

5.1 Management systems and governance

All forest management in the UK must comply with the requirements of the UK Forestry Standard⁶⁹. Additionally, all forest operations must comply with specific guidance on e.g. watercourses, archaeology and protected species. NSCFT is familiar with operating within these requirements, both on its own holding at Forsinain and in works contracted for the RSPB.

5.1.1 Governance

Post-acquisition responsibility for management of the site will be vested in the Board of NSCFT, which has well-established and appropriate management and governance systems. Decisions are made collectively, with individual Board members leading on specific areas.

If NSCFT acquire the site it will establish a sub-group to steer the management of the Rosal site; this will include representatives from Strathnaver Museum and the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership.

NSCFT will seek to employ a Community Development Manager with responsibility for implementing the community's plans for the site (see section 6.1 below for more details).

As owner of the Forsinain woodland and sawmill, NSCFT is already familiar with the annual recurring costs associated with land management and governance systems, such as insurance, annual accounts inspection, as well as office costs, consumables and sundry expenses. NSCFT will ensure that the Rosal site is covered by suitable public and employer's liability insurances and will consider appropriate insurance to cover against storm or fire damage.

NSCFT is a member of the Community Woodlands Association (CWA) which provides advice, assistance and information to community woodland groups across Scotland. CWA organises training and networking events on a range of topics for member community groups, and through CWA's membership of the Scottish Community Alliance, NSCFT is eligible for the Community Learning Exchange, which supports community groups to visit their peers.

5.1.2 Forest planning

Following acquisition, NSCFT will register the unregistered portion of the land with SGRPID.

⁶⁹ The UK Forestry Standard (UKFS) is the reference standard for sustainable forest management across the UK; it is intended to ensure that international agreements and conventions on areas such as sustainable forest management, climate change, biodiversity and the protection of water resources are applied in the UK.

If NSCFT acquire the entire site it will develop and seek approval from Scottish Forestry for a Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP)⁷⁰; this is required for access to future forestry grant support and ensures necessary felling permissions for the first 10 years. The Long Term Forest Plan could be produced in-house, by the Development Manager or delivered under contract by a private sector forest management company/agent.

If NSCFT only acquire a portion of the site, i.e. the clearance village and a small adjacent area of woodland, a Long Term Forest Plan is not required, and NSCFT will develop a simple woodland management plan covering the area acquired.

It is conventional for community bodies acquiring forest land from FLS to adopt the existing FLS Land Management Plan in order to inherit any felling permissions and continue with any approved harvesting work whilst developing their own LTFP. However, in this case, given the substantial divergence between the LMP and the situation on ground⁷¹, NSCFT would be best advised not to adopt the current plan as this might leave them committed to unachievable outcomes and constrain their ability to develop a deliverable plan of their own.

Stakeholder consultation is an integral part of the forest planning process. Stakeholders include local communities, neighbours, government agencies where they have an interest in the site (e.g. Historic Environment Scotland, NatureScot) and local groups or NGOs with specific interest in the site (e.g. local history groups, conservation groups, RSPB).

Consultation can be carried out in a variety of ways, with responses solicited by letter/email, questionnaire, during a public meeting in a neutral venue or at a meeting on site. Stakeholders are invited to comment on and also to provide additional information about a site in response to a draft concept plan with associated map or maps that illustrate the opportunities and constraints for forest management.

5.1.3 Forest certification⁷²

NSCFT will consider, post-acquisition, whether to seek certification for Rosal (NSCFT's current forest holding at Forsinain is not certified).

Certification may bring a small premium for harvested timber, and may make timber more competitive and attractive to buyers, most of whom need to ensure that a high proportion of the timber they buy for processing is certified in order to maintain the certification labels on their products. However, the costs of certification are considerable and although some savings can be

⁷⁰ <https://forestry.gov.scot/publications/standards-regulations-and-incentives/forestry-grant-scheme/forest-plan-resources/132-long-term-forest-plans-applicant-s-guidance>

A LTFP is a 20-year strategic management plan that brings together the management objectives, the environmental, economic, and social functions and the silvicultural prescriptions into a comprehensive plan to deliver long term benefits through sustainable forest management. It contains detailed proposals for the initial 10-year period with a further 10 years in outline and includes an over-arching vision for how the forest will look after that 20-year period.

⁷¹ This could be mitigated if FLS were able to amend their plans to change the species prescriptions and adopt the Sitka regeneration.

⁷² Forest certification is a voluntary process whereby an independent third party (the "certifier") assesses the quality of forest management and production against a set of requirements ("standards") predetermined by a public or private certification organization. In the UK, certification, either under Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) or Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC) principles, is carried out with reference to the UK Woodland Assurance Standard (UKWAS). There is a fixed annual fee for being part of a certification scheme and for an annual audit along with the additional costs of management to meet the certification requirements.

achieved by joining a group scheme run by a forest management company, it is unclear whether the benefits will outweigh the costs.

5.2 Timber harvesting

According to the FLS sub-compartment database, 60-year old stands of Scots and lodgepole pine, Sitka spruce and larch cover 68ha of the forest, although catastrophic windblow has already consumed much of compartments 4072 and 4078 on the highest ground and ~5ha of windblow has already been cleared from sub-compartments 4071a and 4077a. There are individual blown trees throughout much of the rest of the forest and (in the absence of intervention) it is likely that windblow will continue to affect the remaining stands, although the rate of damage is difficult to predict.

The mature stands do not appear to have been thinned, and given their age and the exposure of the site there is little or no potential to start thinning now, as this would almost certainly promote further windblow; this leaves clearfell as the only viable intervention. As noted previously the FLS Land Management Plan proposed to do this in two tranches, the first of which, covering 60% of the standing area, was scheduled for 2017-21, with the remainder to be felled by 2026.

It would be economically challenging to clear up the blown compartments as a standalone operation. Any timber produced is likely to be of very poor quality, and these stands would be difficult to work in isolation as they are distant from forest roads: extraction would have to either be down through standing crops to the west or across restocked areas to the east to use the NE forest road and entrance gate on the neighbour's land (assuming permission for this was granted).

NSFT have three main options:

- Adopt the FLS plan and fell as soon as possible,
- Delay felling for a decade, by which time the restocking of existing felled areas should have established, and then carry out felling operations in 2 or 3 tranches,
- Carry out a larger number of smaller scale felling operations staged over the next 15-20 years.

All three options have significant advantages and disadvantages:

Complete and rapid clearfelling is the simplest and in some ways the safest option, as it generates immediate income to be reinvested in forest management, however, it would lead to a complete loss of forest amenity and would have negative implications for the delivery of broader social and economic objectives from the site.

Delaying felling runs the risk of windblow and (perhaps less likely) a substantial drop in timber prices, although it would maintain forest amenity in the mature stands until such time as the restocked sites were well-enough established.

Carrying out harvesting as **a larger number of smaller operations**, would be a better fit with local utilisation, however that may be constrained by restrictions on timber transport (see 4.12.1 above). There are fixed costs to bringing timber harvesting machinery onsite which militate against small scale operations, although it may be possible to mitigate this by coordinating felling (and possibly timber transport) operations with the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership.

It should be noted that if NSCFT do not acquire the site, any other external buyer would most likely take the first option and seek to fell these stands as soon as possible, to minimise the risk of further losses from windblow and to generate income to cover the costs of fencing, restocking etc.

In the long term it is possible that the next rotation of trees may produce some small volumes of timber, and early thinning may help increase the wind-firmness of stands, but it will be several decades before this is possible.

5.2.1 Local timber utilisation

If the timber transport issue could be solved (see section 4.12.1 above), some of the timber from Rosal could contribute to supply to NSCFT's existing sawmilling and firewood business, based at Forsinain.

It might be possible to use mobile sawmilling and / or wood-chipping equipment to process material onsite at Rosal, which could then be transported directly to customers. However, this would require investment in mobile machinery and the provision of some infrastructure at Rosal: storage areas, simple roofed and floored structures for operations in all weathers, so doesn't appear to be a viable option.

5.3 Restocking

NSCFT's objectives in restocking are (beyond meeting statutory obligations) to maintain woodland cover, enhance biodiversity, preserve the setting of the historic monuments and provide an attractive and resilient forest that supports the development of public recreation and other community projects.

As noted above, FLS's plans are to restock Rosal with a mixture of Scots pine and native broadleaves (mainly birch, willow, alder, rowan), with the former predominating on well-drained mineral soils and the native broadleaves dominating riparian strips adjacent to the River Naver and the Allt Rosal and on the peaty ground to the north-east of the clearance village.

As soils are relatively good across most of the site and Scots pine appears well suited to the conditions, assuming deer impacts can be minimised, it would seem appropriate for NSCFT to seek to restock future felling coupes predominantly with Scots pine and broadleaves such as birch, rowan, willow and alder: there may even be potential in some sheltered areas to plant small quantities of other native broadleaved species, including oak, gean, aspen, hazel and holly.

However much of the restocking to date has not been successful, although it is unclear to what extent this is due to poor species choice or inadequate deer control. It is also unclear whether FLS will redress this prior to community acquisition.

It is notable that Sitka spruce is regenerating successfully across much of the felled area, albeit at relatively low density, reflecting its greater suitability for the site and lower palatability to deer, so if these areas haven't been successfully restocked prior to acquisition it would be pragmatic for NSCFT to incorporate a proportion of Sitka within any future restocking plans for wetter, peatier sites, and to adopt natural regeneration wherever possible. Any variance from FLS's restocking plan will require approval from Scottish Forestry.

5.4 Deer management and fencing

Significant and effective deer control is essential to ensure successful establishment of restocking of any species other than Sitka spruce. This will involve improvements to deer fencing and an increase in culling on site. There are various options: generally speaking, the less is invested in fencing the heavier the deer control effort required to ensure successful restocking of areas felled by FLS and any other areas to be harvested and restocked in the future.

Deer fencing costs have increased rapidly in recent years and estimates of over £15/m are common, although by and large the fence line is relatively accessible and the long straight lines and often flat terrain should help reduce costs, whilst NSCFT may be able to provide strainers, stobs, etc., from the mill at Forsinain.

There are three main fencing options:

- A complete perimeter fence (~5,000m)
- Replacing the existing unprotected fence (~2,500m)
- Repairing the existing fence.

Deer fencing the entire perimeter is the best way to reduce deer pressure, however this would require ~5,000m of new fencing: a very significant investment which could only be contemplated if there was large income anticipated from timber harvesting. Tree-shelters would not be required. Initial deer control would be required to remove any deer fenced inside the block and then reactively, to cull any deer that subsequently found their way in. Establishing a new perimeter fence would be advantageous for future forest management, as it would reduce the costs of protecting future restock sites.

Replacing the old, external deer fence⁷³ reduces fencing costs somewhat but brings additional costs in deer control, restocking and management and would only be viable if MFFFP were willing to agree to a heavy deer culling effort, at least in the northern portion of the forest; **and if** Scottish Forestry were willing to allow NSCFT to replace the Scots pine element of the inherited restocking with Sitka regeneration. Heavier ongoing deer culling would be required for future forest management cf. the previous option.

The third option is **repairing the existing fence**: this reduces fencing costs significantly, at least in the short term, but brings even greater management and restock costs, and only delays eventual expenditure on a replacement fence. It might be a viable option if FLS are willing to retain responsibility for successful establishment of the 2020 restock areas, i.e. not only to beat up the areas but to carry out the necessary deer control, as this would obviate the need for NSCFT to carry out immediate harvesting operations to fund restocking and fencing.

Regardless of the chosen fencing solution, the deer grid at the northern entrance is full of stone and grass, and requires lifting and cleaning out. It would be preferable if the metal gate were kept closed, especially in winter, as once the grid fills with snow the deer can simply walk across. The adjacent wooden gate should be removed and a pedestrian stile / gate installed.

Experience on the neighbouring property suggests that broadleaved survival is possible if trees are protected with 1.2m tree shelters, although this still allows browsing by red deer. However, this is at very significant financial and environmental cost, requires the use of unsustainable materials and might be considered detrimental to the setting of the clearance village.

Deer deterrents such as Trico could be employed as additional protection but are unlikely to be sufficient on their own to enable establishment. Whilst considerably cheaper than tree shelters, the label limitation only permits one neat application per year at a rate of 20l/ha (or two applications of 10l/ha) which limits the coverage or the number of trees that can be protected. Trico is a ready-to-

⁷³ This option might require MFFFP to also replace their western boundary fence, which, at least adjacent to the FLS block, is of the same vintage.

use spray and can be applied using conventional knapsack sprayers, and is not considered effective against rabbits, hare and voles etc.⁷⁴

5.5 Forest management proposals and costs

This section considers the costs of operations to address the liabilities associated with the forest, and the likely costs and income of future forest management.

There are various options and several key issues would need to be clarified before finalising costings for each option. With respect to the inherited liabilities, the main points are:

- Whether FLS will address some or all of the major liabilities prior to community acquisition, most notably the failed restocking;
- Whether and to what extent Scottish Forestry will permit amendments to the FLS restocking plan (e.g. adoption of Sitka regeneration);
- Whether NSCFT and MFFFP can agree a deer culling strategy that meets both parties' needs.

The decisions made on fencing and deer control will also impact on future management, as will:

- Whether Highland Council will allow transport of small volumes of roundwood north from Kinbrace for processing at Forsinain;
- The extent to which NSCFT can afford to prioritise maintaining forest amenity over returns from timber.

5.5.1 Inherited liabilities

In the worst-case scenario, where FLS do not carry out remedial work prior to acquisition, NSCFT are required to deliver the FLS plan and the very heavy deer culling strategy necessary for this cannot be agreed with MFFFP, the cost of the restocking ~20ha would be very high, possibly in excess of £50,000: the actual cost would depend on the deer fencing option chosen, what proportion of trees required shelters and how much beating up was needed.

The only way NSCFT could fund this work would be through harvesting of the existing mature stands, which would reduce/remove forest amenity and bring additional restock costs for the newly harvested blocks.

Small restock areas can sometimes be effectively protected by temporary fencing but the area needing protection in this case is likely to be too large for this to be a viable option.

If Scottish Forestry insisted on NSCFT meeting FLS's species plans there would also be a need to remove Sitka regeneration from restock sites.

5.5.2 Future management of mature stands

Our initial figures suggest that the standing volume at Rosal is in excess of 15,000m³, with a further volume of low quality material potentially recoverable from windblown stands. As noted previously, Rosal is remote from most conventional timber markets, and as the crops are unthinned and of poor to moderate quality the sawlog component is likely to be relatively low.

Timber prices have been buoyant in recent years, and although they have fallen back somewhat from a peak in 2021, the general trend of high prices is anticipated to continue. Harvesting at Rosal should therefore be profitable at current prices, although a significant proportion of revenues will be

⁷⁴ Info from Forestry and Timber News, October 2017

required to restock and protect the newly felled sites and to carry out remedial work on forest roads.

The FLS LMP envisages harvesting in two tranches, generating ~9,000m³ of timber in the first tranche, with a further 6,000m³ in the second phase⁷⁵, plus whatever could be recovered from windblown stands. This officially involves felling ~68ha⁷⁶, the great majority of which would require restocking⁷⁷, approximately 38ha in the first phase, 30ha in the second.

The area to be restocked could possibly be reduced to ~50ha if NSCFT were willing to abandon windblown stands to allow natural regeneration and to leave “unfelled” the very thinly stocked 5ha to the east of the forest road where FLS has cleared windblow⁷⁸.

	tranche 1			tranche 2		
	volume	£/m ³	£	volume	£/m ³	£
Sawlogs	3,600	30	108,000	2,400	30	72,000
Palletwood	1,800	15	27,000	1,200	15	18,000
Short roundwood	3,600	10	36,000	2,400	10	24,000
	9,000		171,000	6,000		114,000

Table 10: Timber volumes and income from two harvesting tranches

The figures in the table above should be regarded as indicative: more detailed inventory work is required to provide a more accurate estimate of both timber volumes and the relative proportions of the various timber types. Additionally, timber prices are notoriously volatile and there is no guarantee that current market prices will be maintained.

Rapid felling as per FLS plans would bring about a loss of forest amenity at the site and is unlikely to have widespread community support. Other options are to delay felling until younger stands are better established and/or to carry out more, smaller scale harvesting operations.

Although the mature stands at Rosal are still growing, the rate of growth is declining and it is unlikely that the annual increment will significantly exceed losses due to on-going windblow; delaying harvesting brings a significant risk of very substantial windblow and a reduction in the recoverable volume. Similarly, it may be difficult to design small scale harvesting to work to windfirm edges, which may promote windblow in remaining stands.

NSCFT may be willing to accept an overall reduction in timber income as the price of maintain forest amenity. There is potential for local processing to add value to at least some of the harvested material, either on-site, or subject to Highland Council approval, at Forsinain. The loss of timber volume might thus be offset by increased profitability per m³, however, without significant investment at Forsinain the quantities involved will be very limited.

5.5.3 Restocking felled areas

Although the above figures suggest very substantial revenues from timber harvesting, a significant proportion would be required to cover restock of the felled areas and other costs. Restocking costs depend on the extent and method of ground preparation required, the species used, the level of deer pressure and the density of planting but are likely to be in the range £2-3,000/ha.

⁷⁵ This assumes that there would not be significant additional windblow in these stands.

⁷⁶ In reality some of this area has already been cleared

⁷⁷ The actual area to be restocked would be somewhat less than that felled because modern forestry standards require more open ground within forests.

⁷⁸ This would require Scottish Forestry approval.

Limited grant aid for restocking is available through the Forestry Grant Scheme: the rate is currently £550/ha⁷⁹.

Fertiliser might be needed on poorer ground, and some weeding required on the better sites.

Some mortality is to be expected on any restock site but assuming species and site are well matched and browsing pressure is well-controlled this is usually in the region of 10-20%, however, with uncontrolled browsing losses can be almost total.

Protection from deer is potentially very costly: tree shelters are very expensive⁸⁰ and it is often cheaper to provide a complete perimeter fence: either way this could consume most or all of the surplus from harvesting.

Costs could be reduced somewhat by amending the species mix to incorporate an element of Sitka spruce in restocking plans, if acceptable to Scottish Forestry, or by use of deer repellents to reduce browsing, but costs might still be substantial.

5.6 Indicative costings

This section contains indicative costings for three fencing and restocking scenarios outlined above, all of which assume that FLS do not carry out remedial work on the existing restocking areas and NSCFT inherit responsibility for this work, which is paid for complete and rapid harvesting of the mature stands.

Gross restocking costs are estimated as £2,500/ha, including plants and planting, ground preparation, weeding, maintenance and a standard allowance for beating up. Actual restocking costs will vary significantly according to species mix: Sitka spruce is likely to be cheaper to establish than Scots pine or broadleaves. Restocking the FLS felled areas should be somewhat cheaper because these won't require ground preparation, which has already been done.

Where it is likely that losses due to deer may be high, an additional £1,000/ha has been included to cover extra beating up / protection (tree shelters). However, if deer number remain at current levels even this extra allowance will not be adequate.

All three scenarios assume that restocking grant is not available for stands already felled / partly restocked by FLS: if it is available this would add up to £11,000 of income.

A standard £10,000 cost for road repairs after timber harvesting has been employed for all three scenarios.

Management & maintenance costs estimates a fee for a private sector forestry contractor to manage and oversee works for five years. Additional beating up, deer control and fence monitoring works bring increased costs under this heading.

⁷⁹ <https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/woodland-improvement-grant/restructuring-regeneration/>

⁸⁰ <https://www.britishhardwood.co.uk/tubex-tree-shelters>
<https://www.britishhardwood.co.uk/square-sawn-tree-stakes-discounted-with-protection>

5.6.1 Full perimeter fence

Item		Unit	Unit £	£
Timber income	tranche 1			171,000
	tranche 2			114,000
Restock grant		60	550	33,000
Total income				318,000
Perimeter deer fence		5000	15	75,000
Restocking	existing	20	1500	30,000
	future	60	2500	150,000
Road repairs				10,000
Management & maintenance				20,000
Total costs				285,000

Table 11: Indicative income and cost, full fence replacement

These costings suggest that the income from timber harvesting would be sufficient to meet the costs of restocking and the erection of a complete full perimeter fence, and would generate a small surplus.

Under this scenario restocking costs are minimised, because deer can effectively be excluded from the area; and it is likely that successful establishment would happen sooner, reducing management and maintenance costs.

5.6.2 Replace existing fences

Item		Unit	Unit £	£
Timber income	tranche 1			171,000
	tranche 2			114,000
Restock grant		60	550	33,000
Total income				318,000
Replacing existing deer fence		2500	15	37,500
Restocking	existing	20	2500	50,000
	future	60	3500	210,000
Road repairs				10,000
Management & maintenance				30,000
Total costs				337,500

Table 12: Indicative income and cost, fence replacement

These costings suggest that this option is not viable: it is likely that any savings from only replacing existing fences would be more than compensated for by increased restocking costs from the additional protection (tree shelters) or beating up required.

These costs could possibly be reduced if very heavy deer control at the north end of Rosal can be agreed with the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership, this would also probably necessitate significant fence repairs on the part of MFFFP.

This option also has increased management and maintenance costs, reflecting additional work in beating up and deer control.

5.6.3 Repair existing fences

Item		Unit	Unit £	£
Timber income	tranche 1			171,000
	tranche 2			114,000
Restock grant		60	550	33,000
Total income				318,000
Patching existing deer fence				5,000
Restocking	existing	20	2500	50,000
	future	60	3500	210,000
Road repairs				10,000
Management & maintenance				35,000
Total costs				310,000

Table 13: Indicative income and cost, fence repair

These costings suggest that despite the increased management and maintenance costs, patching the existing deer fence rather than replacing it would reduce costs sufficiently to make this option just about viable.

However, this option will bring additional costs over the longer term as fence monitoring and repairs will need to continue until all stands are fully established.

5.7 Analysis

These figures, whilst indicative, illustrate that it would be very challenging, economically, for NSCFT to address the liabilities that would be inherited from FLS if the full site were to be acquired without remedial works.

Whilst the first option appears viable in purely economic terms, the overall surplus isn't very large in absolute terms and it comes at the cost of a complete loss of forest amenity at the site so is unlikely to be welcomed by the community. The fence replacement scenario shows a deficit and the fence repair scenario does little more than break even, whilst storing up long term costs.

Additionally, in all scenarios there would be considerable time and effort involved in managing the forestry work, which would be a distraction from the community's main focus on the enhancement and promotion of the clearance village and the other historic sites.

It is therefore recommended that NSCFT do not seek to acquire the entire site unless these liabilities can be mitigated, either by FLS addressing them prior to acquisition, or by FLS retaining responsibility for the restocking of the felled stands.

6 Development Projects

NSCFT have identified the following broad objectives for community ownership of Rosal:

- Cultural: preservation and enhancement of the setting of the Rosal clearance village and other historic sites
- Social: maintaining and enhancing the amenity and recreation value of the site
- Economic: sensitive management and development of the site to contribute positively to local economic regeneration
- Environmental: restructuring and stewardship of the forest stands to enhance biodiversity and increase resilience

This section of the study assesses the feasibility of various projects which have been suggested as having potential to deliver these objectives. The employment of a Community Development Manager, covered in section 6.1 below, and partnership working, especially with Strathnaver Museum and the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership, will be key elements in the design and delivery of these initiatives and activities.

Rosal is an iconic site, important both nationally and locally. Cultural objectives, and specifically the opportunity for the preservation and enhancement of the site to be in community hands is central to community interest in acquisition. Initial proposals for this are presented in section 6.2 below.

NSCFT also recognises the importance of delivering a range of social, economic and environmental benefits from the broader Rosal site: a wide variety of potential initiatives and development projects has been considered, as detailed in sections 6.3 – 6-5 below.

Some potential projects, outlined in section 6.6 below, have been set aside at this time: this is usually because they are considered inappropriate / incompatible with the site, or because the likely demand is not considered sufficient to justify investment.

It is not possible at this stage to fully cost all the proposed activities and projects, some of which will require specialist business planning, or consultation with regulators and other stakeholders, which be undertaken following acquisition. Indicative costs for some elements of work have been provided where these are available.

The delivery of many projects will be to some extent contingent on the availability of investment capital or grant funding so the absolute cost is less important than the extent to which funding packages can cover all costs or will require match funding from the applicant. NSCFT does have financial reserves from its timber harvesting work at Forsinain, and may be able to generate additional revenues from harvesting at Rosal, which could be used to contribute towards development projects.

There are many potential funders for community development projects: where there are key funders for specific projects these are noted in the text; a longer list of potential funders is presented as Appendix 3.

Note that for brevity, the text below frequently says “NSCFT will...”, however as noted previously partnership working will be crucial and it may be that other partners take the lead on individual elements of work.

6.1 Community Development Manager

NSCFT will employ⁸¹ a Community Development Manager (CDM) to take day-to-day responsibility for the management and development of the site. The employment of a member of staff is seen as crucial to build capacity and provide additional skills and experience, particularly with respect to heritage management, which aren't available within the NSCFT Board. Creating employment will be an important first step in increasing the local economic benefit of the forest and having a Development Manager in place will help ensure that NSCFT and the community's aspirations for Rosal are taken forward effectively.

The key tasks of the CDM will be to:

- develop and implement an integrated plan and project to research, preserve and enhance the clearance village and other historic sites;
- oversee land management operations, including the development of recreation infrastructure;
- develop and implement proposals for other community and economic development projects at Rosal.

The potential job description is quite broad and it is possible that some of the technical forestry elements, such as the development of a Long Term Forest Plan, are delivered by specialists through separate contracts.

Initial funding for this post will be sought through post-acquisition revenue support from the Scottish Land Fund, which may also be able to contribute to NSCFT's immediate setup and fixed costs: office provision, insurance, etc. It is anticipated that subsequent funding for the post will be available as part of a National Lottery Heritage Fund project.

6.2 Rosal clearance village and other historic sites

Preserving and enhancing the historic environment is the key driver of community aspirations for ownership of Rosal. Whilst the main focus to date has been the clearance village the other historic sites will not be neglected and there is potential, through wider interpretation to place the clearance site in the broader context of the history of Strathnaver.

NSCFT will work closely with Strathnaver Museum, Historic Environment Scotland, Highland Council and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive project plan to research, preserve and enhance the clearance village and other historic sites.

The National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) is likely to be a key funder for this project, through the National Lottery Grants for Heritage programme⁸² which provides grants of between £250,000 and £5million for projects that connect people and communities to the national, regional and local heritage of the UK.

There is a multi-stage grant process, requiring an initial expression of interest, followed by a development and a delivery phase. The sub-sections below identify key aspects of work, although the scope and some of the specific proposals may evolve during the project development phase. Some elements (e.g. grazing, external road signage) may not be within the project scope, in which case they will be taken forward independently. It is also possible that some of the aspects of other projects considered in sections 6.3 - 6.5 might be deliverable through this project.

⁸¹ This could be by direct employment, or through the engagement of a self-employed contractor.

⁸² <https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-grants-heritage-250k-5m>

6.2.1 Survey and project development

NSCFT will commission a review of all current knowledge and management plans on the various historic sites at Rosal to collate existing knowledge and identify any gaps for future study.

The most notable study of Rosal was the archaeological investigation of Rosal undertaken in the 1960s by Horace Fairhurst and published as *Rosal: A Deserted Township in Strath Naver, Sutherland*⁸³.

We understand that the Strathnaver Museum has a copy of the LiDAR data which Forestry Commission Scotland commissioned in 2014, which may be valuable for future interpretation purposes.

Similarly, developing understanding of the various other historic sites is important to place the Rosal village in the broader context of human occupation of Strathnaver.

6.2.2 Maintenance of site

NSCFT will seek to re-establish a formal lease of the grazing rights as seasonal grazing of the clearance village site will inhibit the spread of invasive vegetation. There is also a need to control bracken, which is spreading at the southern edge of the site, and to ensure that tree regeneration, especially of Sitka spruce, does not encroach on the site.

The stock fence which encircles the site extends to ~2,300m: much of this is in relatively poor condition and will require replacement to ensure that livestock do not encroach on restocking areas.

6.2.3 Access

The Rosal site is fairly accessible, via the forest road and a short length (~150m) of path. This is currently in reasonable condition but will need regular maintenance to ensure that it remains so. A further 200m of stone path climbs steeply on to the village site.

It would be possible to upgrade the first part of this path to full all-abilities standard, but more challenging to develop all-abilities access on the site itself, not least because of the gradients involved and the constraints of working on a scheduled site. NSCFT will work with partners to investigate options to develop more inclusive access as part of the future development project for Rosal.

Consideration will be given to reserving one or two parking bays at the southern car park for those with impaired mobility.

NSCFT will seek to enhance the longer loop path around the clearance village site. This may include providing boardwalks across boggy sections and/or some stone reinforcement, although for much of the route it may be sufficient to trim the grass and rely on a natural surface. The waymarker posts are very tired and need replacement: this could be done in conjunction with additional interpretation / identification of buildings (see 6.12.5 below).

6.2.4 External signage

As noted previously external signage provision to Rosal is poor. NSCFT will work with Highland Council and other landowners to ensure there is appropriate road signage to the forest: key locations are the junction of the forest road with the B871, and the B871 / B873 junction on the west side of the Naver Bridge.

⁸³ <http://journals.socantscot.org/index.php/psas/article/view/8730>

6.2.5 Interpretation

NSCFT will seek to tell the story of Rosal (both the clearance village and other historic sites) to a wider audience using a range of interpretative methods and media.

Static interpretation boards are commonly employed to inform, welcome, orientate and direct users. If done well such installations have value but they can be very expensive to commission and can age rapidly. The two existing FLS interpretation boards will be retained by NSCFT; it is not considered necessary to install additional or replacements boards at this time, however, NSCFT will, in association with Strathnaver Museum, review and refresh the site leaflet.



Existing audio interpretation



Wooden post example⁸⁴

NSCFT will seek to make greater use of audio interpretation. There is currently one such installation onsite, at the seating area, which might benefit from being cemented in. Additional units embedded in wooden posts would be secure whilst less intrusive and more discreet / in keeping with the site than display boards. As noted above these could double as waymarker posts, identifying, interpreting and contextualising specific buildings around the site.

NSCFT will investigate the potential for the development of a mobile app to enable self-guided walks around the site. Given the limited mobile coverage in the area, this would require either a local hotspot, or more, likely, development of an “offline” mobile app which would allow the user to download and run the app, regardless of connectivity.

NSCFT and/or Strathnaver Museum will develop and host a dedicated website with resources related to Rosal.

6.2.6 Events

NSCFT will, in conjunction with Strathnaver Museum and the Highland Council Ranger Service, develop a programme of events to increase awareness and understanding of Rosal and the broader

⁸⁴ <https://www.interpretationshop.co.uk/product/solar-audio-post-wooden/>

history of human habitation of Strathnaver. This will include guided walks on site and online events with a range of guest speakers.

6.2.7 Education

NSCFT, working in partnership with local schools and Strathnaver Museum, will develop the educational value and use of the site. This will involve hosting school visits and developing trails, artefacts and workshops to have educational outcomes. It is envisaged that this would contribute to Gaelic education as well as History/Geography studies.

6.2.8 Reconstruction of buildings

Post-acquisition, NSCFT will investigate the potential to construct one or more buildings as replicas of those would have been present in the pre-clearance settlement. This would be a major development project requiring significant external support and funding.

NSCFT's working assumption is that constructing a building on the scheduled monument site would be challenging and that it will be preferable to deliver this project on a site adjacent to the main forest road. Nonetheless adjacency to the historic site should help to both contextualise the reconstructed building(s) and enhance the interpretation of the village.

There are other restored or reconstructed blackhouse projects in the Highlands and Islands, including the Garrannan Blackhouse Village⁸⁵ on Lewis to the Highland Folk Museum in Newtonmore⁸⁶, whilst the Caithness Broch Project⁸⁷ is planning to build a replica Iron age broch at a yet-to-be confirmed site.

The first stage of this project will be to commission an exploratory study to identify learning from these and other examples around Scotland and to outline possible costs and constraints. A key consideration will be whether likely footfall justifies the necessary investment.

6.3 Recreation

NSCFT will develop the recreational use of Rosal forest and the surrounding area: this will be done in a sympathetic and sensitive way, designed to help improve the tourism offer of North Sutherland, encouraging slow and responsible tourism from visitors who contribute to the local economy.

A simple people-counter will be installed to record visitor numbers. Students from North Highland College (part of the University of the Highlands and Islands) designed and built a people-counter for Dunnet Forest, they may be willing to do the same for NSCFT at Rosal.

Historic Environment Scotland will be consulted with respect to any works impacting on scheduled sites.

6.3.1 Signage

NSCFT will install a simple threshold sign at the northern entrance to the forest. Additional signage may be installed as required in due course.

⁸⁵ <http://www.garrannan.com/>

⁸⁶ <https://www.highlifehighland.com/highlandfolkmuseum/>

⁸⁷ <https://www.thebrochproject.co.uk/>

6.3.2 Access road

NSCFT will ensure that the access road is maintained and when necessary repaired to ensure that it does not discourage public use. MFFFP may wish to use this road and therefore may be willing to contribute towards its repair and upkeep. Stone for road repairs (and for path repair/construction projects) is available from the borrow pits at the south end of the forest.

6.3.3 Car parks

NSCFT will seek to maintain the current car-parking facilities both within and outside the forest. The capacity of 8-10 cars at each is likely to be enough for the near future, although expansion will be considered if necessary. Simple signage will identify these as appropriate car parking areas.

The ownership of the external car park will be clarified prior to community acquisition of the forest: if necessary NSCFT will seek to acquire or lease this area.

NSCFT has no plans to introduce car parking charges, although consideration will be given to installing a donations box or (preferably) providing a mechanism for visitors to donate electronically.

6.3.4 Path works

NSCFT will maintain and enhance the existing path network outwith the clearance village site.

Remedial work (clearing windblow, resurfacing / re-routing wet areas) will be carried out on the upper path (the higher, eastern, section of the loop to the clearance village) as necessary. The current specification is perfectly adequate for this path. Full contractor costs might be £2-3k but savings can be made by doing work in-house / with volunteers. Stone is available from the borrow pits. Ongoing tree clearance after storms is likely to be necessary.

Waymarking will be reviewed and additional marker posts installed as required.

In the longer term there is scope for the development of additional paths, particularly in the southern part of the forest, however, any plans will require integration with future development and harvesting plans. Costs are dependent on specification, although a simple 50cm wide single-track path, similar to that at the north of the forest, is likely to be most appropriate.

6.3.5 Seating, benches and shelter

NSCFT will install simple perches and/or benches⁸⁸ alongside paths to increase accessibility. If provided/installed by contractors, costs could be £500 – 1,000 each but considerable savings could be made if NSCFT supplied the timber from Forsinain and installation was by volunteers.

Consideration will be given to constructing a small, simple roofed shelter. These are an attractive feature of many community woodlands and can provide both a popular destination and a mid-walk resting place for visitors. (Huts, bothies etc. are dealt with in a later section). Evanton⁸⁹ and more recently Dunnet have installed open shelters with reciprocating log roofs.

6.3.6 Compost toilet

NSCFT will install a compost toilet on-site to cater for visitors and volunteers; this will enhance accessibility and the general amenity of the forest. The site is yet to be identified but will likely be

⁸⁸ See the Paths For All Outdoor Access Design Guide (pp 116-123) for specifications
<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/resource/outdoor-access-design-guide>

⁸⁹ <https://www.evantonwood.com/index.asp?pageid=694246>

alongside the forest road between the northern entrance to the wood and the junction with the path to the clearance village.

Various designs are available: the NatSol⁹⁰ is widely used, including by a number of other community woodlands such as Aigas, Evanton and Beechbrae. Costs vary according to specification⁹¹, particularly whether or not the client provides the building (which NSCFT could do, with timber from Forsinain), but are in the range £4-7.5k, plus carriage, installation and VAT, where applicable. If not incorporated in the Heritage Lottery project this could be the subject of an application to Awards for All Scotland or the LEADER replacement fund.

6.3.7 Promotion

Off-site (e.g. on-line) promotion of facilities will be an important component of driving up footfall, especially if the target audience is beyond the immediate community area. Increasingly, potential visitors like to know what is available at a given destination and often will seek to print off or download a map to guide them on a phone or other device.

As well as promoting recreation opportunities within the forest, NSCFT will seek to ensure that recreation provision at Rosal links with wider trail networks, in particular working with MFFFP to develop / co-promote the network of trails for walking and mountain biking in the wider Rosal Forest area.

As noted above a dedicated website will be developed which will include information on recreation facilities at Rosal and the wider area.

Additionally, NSCFT will seek to work with Strathnaver Museum, Highland Council and others to refresh the Strathnaver Trail.

6.3.8 Art

NSCFT will seek to develop Rosal as a venue for outdoor art. This could involve both ephemeral projects that use the natural resources and more permanent works that are inspired by the location; either developed through courses or by an artist in residence programme which could be taken forward in conjunction with either Strathnaver Museum or Timespan⁹² in Helmsdale.

Options might include a simple poetry trail⁹³ that uses new or existing poems or ballads of the local area or might originate from a workshop or event, reflecting the cultural heritage of the area. Another option would be a sculpture trail such as that installed at Dunnet Forest⁹⁴. NSCFT was a partner in a project that resulted in the installation of a sculpture “The Unknown” at Borgie Glen in 2012⁹⁵.

Costs for any such projects are very variable. Creative Scotland, which distributes funds from the Scottish Government and the National Lottery, has a range of programmes⁹⁶ and would be a potential funder for arts projects at Rosal; the input of established arts organisations would be sought in the development of any funding applications.

⁹⁰ <https://natsol.co.uk/>

⁹¹ <https://natsol.co.uk/composting-toilet-prices/>

⁹² <https://timespan.org.uk/>

⁹³ E.g. <https://www.corbenicpoetrypath.com/>

⁹⁴ <http://www.dunnetforest.org/>

⁹⁵ https://artuk.org/discover/stories/the-unknown-a-contemporary-giant-in-an-ancient-landscape?fbclid=IwARlkccUbKKdOUP8u7s44Mm65xLVFORZrEiUwACn_MqF0lcTb4nKF6q4Api8

⁹⁶ <https://www.creativescotland.com/funding/funding-programmes>

6.3.9 Camping

Given the likely fairly limited demand and lack of through-traffic it is not considered viable to have a manned, paid-for camping facility at Rosal, although there may be value in identifying a simple unserviced area for wild camping, if only to keep campers off the scheduled monument. Such a site should be relatively flat and well drained, reasonably adjacent to the compost toilet and have a fire-pit.

6.3.10 Volunteering

Using Rosal for organised volunteering is somewhat constrained by the relative remoteness of the site from population centres and the lack of facilities on or adjacent to the site. Nonetheless, given appropriate investment in equipment, storage and welfare facilities there is potential for some small scale activity, carrying out tree planting and maintenance; construction and maintenance of paths and recreation infrastructure; and environmental surveys and monitoring.

In addition to local volunteers it may be possible to work in partnership with external organisations such as TCV⁹⁷ which offer paid-for volunteering opportunities. The iconic status (and also perhaps the remoteness) of Rosal may be an advantage when advertising such opportunities, and there is potential to tie in with local accommodation providers in the delivery of the volunteering package.

All volunteers need to be appropriately trained, equipped, managed, supported and serious consideration needs to be given to their safety. NSCFT will need to acquire appropriate tools and personal protective equipment (PPE) for volunteers and ensure that appropriate insurances are held and risk assessments made.

Scottish Forestry's Community Fund⁹⁸ can support the establishment, equipping and training of volunteer groups.

6.3.11 Skills training

Some community woodland groups have developed their woods as venues for skills training, both in terms of developing woodland / land management skills or using the woodland as a venue for a much wider range of skills training. However, developing this to any significant extent, i.e. moving beyond ensuring volunteers are appropriately trained or occasional educational events, to the point where it might become an income generating activity, has often proved challenging, and requires significant investment in infrastructure, people and promotion.

Although there is some potential to use Rosal as a venue for training in various aspects of forest and deer management, the remoteness of the site and the limited facilities (particularly the lack of indoor learning space) constrain use and it would probably be more appropriate, if NSCFT wish to develop a training arm, to focus this on the Borgie cabin, which is more accessible and has the necessary built infrastructure already in place.

6.4 Economic development projects

In addition to the sale and processing of timber, there are a number of potential development projects which could help meet community objectives for the forest, either directly, by re-planting the area through woodland crofts or by contributing to long term income generation and thus helping underpin the financial sustainability of the forest.

⁹⁷ <https://www.tcv.org.uk/>

⁹⁸ <https://forestry.gov.scot/forests-people/communities/community-fund>

Most of these projects will require specific business planning to assess demand and identify options for raising investment capital over and above NSCFT revenues from timber harvesting. A number of possible funders for development projects is contained in Appendix 3.

6.4.1 Woodland crofts

NSCFT will investigate the development of woodland crofts at Rosal; this idea met with considerable support in the public consultation. Several community woodland groups⁹⁹ have identified woodland crofts¹⁰⁰ as a means to deliver their objectives, in particular the provision of affordable housing to meet local need and to attract young people and families to the area to stimulate economic activity.

Work on developing a woodland croft project could begin immediately after acquisition, however, experience elsewhere suggests that it will take several years to successfully deliver a woodland crofts project. Applications to create new crofts must be made to the Crofters Commission by the owner of the land, which can be a community organisation such as NSCFT.

Any plans for woodland crofts will have to be integrated with the overarching Long Term Forest Plan for the site, and the timing with harvesting plans considered (at NW Mull and Kilfinan the crofts occupy newly felled sites). Additionally, NSCFT will need to develop and agree an allocations policy with the community and project partners, to ensure that there is an objective process in place to allocate crofts according to local priorities, and deal with any issues which may arise.

Additional support is available through the Woodland Crofts Partnership was established by CWA, the Communities Housing Trust and the Scottish Crofting Federation to support and promote woodland croft development.

6.4.2 Tourism accommodation

NSCFT will investigate the development of small scale tourism accommodation and facilities at Rosal, to generate income to help support community management of the site. There was support for such proposals in the community consultation, albeit tempered with concerns about increased traffic. Any proposals would have to be carefully sited and managed to ensure that it did not adversely affect either the historic environment or NSCFT's other projects and activities on site.

There are a range of possible specifications, from glamping pods to huts and chalets: each will appeal to a different audience (individuals seeking remoteness, families, those looking for weekend retreats or even longer stays for e.g. artist in residence) and will have slightly different requirements for servicing, accessibility, etc. Over time it may be possible to develop a suite of accommodation types attracting different market segments, although the scale and extent of development will always be constrained by the desire to maintain a sense of remoteness and seclusion.

Sites need to be relatively accessible, not just for guests so that they can come and go easily, but also for servicing and monitoring. Consideration will need to be given to views from the cabins and accessibility to forest paths and trails.

⁹⁹ E.g. North West Mull Community Woodland Company created 9 crofts in 2012, whilst the Kilfinan Community Forest Company established 3 new crofts in 2017: these new crofts were all on recently clear-felled sites but this does not have to be the case. Kilfinan Community Forest Company and South West Mull & Iona Development have applications for a total of 13 new crofts lodged with the Crofters Commission. Glengarry Community Woodlands is currently concluding the acquisition of land at Ardochy from Forestry and Land Scotland, in part to establish up to six woodland crofts.

¹⁰⁰ NB There is no legal definition of a woodland croft: appending the word 'woodland' merely implies that a croft has sufficient tree cover overall to be considered a woodland under forestry policy.

Establishing such a business would need initial capital investment and ongoing expenditure in maintenance & cleaning of facilities as well as in promoting the opportunities and managing bookings (all of which creates employment). An alternative option would be for NSCFT to establish the accommodation but sub-let the promotion and on-going management of the facilities to an existing or new business.

6.4.3 Hutting

In recent years there has been substantial interest in hutting¹⁰¹, encouraged by the Reforesting Scotland “Thousand Huts” campaign.¹⁰² The usual model¹⁰³ is that individuals pay a ground rent to a landowner to build a simple hut for the use of their family and friends. Huts tend to be ‘off-grid’ but accessible for servicing and maintenance and with a water supply and toilet facility.

There is no standard rental rate as there are many variables. The Thousand Huts website suggests that “based on our survey of 50 hutters, this ranges from approximately £500-£1200 per annum per hut plot on a multiple site. It can depend on the services and initial outlay paid for by the hut site developer, as there are often substantial costs incurred at this stage”.

Hut construction at Rosal would be technically feasible although accommodating this alongside woodland crofts and/or tourist accommodation, may be challenging, especially as these other options may be a better fit with NSCFT/community objectives for the site.

6.4.4 Commemorative trees

As discussed below a green burial site may not be feasible or desirable at Rosal, however, given the high profile of the site and large diaspora from the clearances there is potential to develop a web-based business planting memorial trees relatively adjacent to (but not on) the scheduled site.

One of the areas to the east of the forest road which were cleared by FLS in 2016, but not yet restocked, could be earmarked for this. Trees would need protection from deer, either individually, or through construction of a small deer fenced enclosure.

6.5 Environmental projects

Improving the environmental value of the forest emerged as a high priority from the community consultation carried out in 2021. Restructuring of the forest, by felling existing mature stands and restocking with a wider mix of species, as described previously, will help deliver this aspiration, although as noted, effective deer control will be required to allow successful restocking of broadleaves.

6.5.1 Pond, wetland area and wildlife hide

NSCFT will, in partnership with Pondlife and the North Sutherland Wildlife Group, seek to develop a pond and wetland area, with a small wildlife hide / workshop space. This would:

- act as an immediate focus for the natural history restoration of the area

¹⁰¹ A ‘hut’ is defined in Scottish Planning Policy as: “a simple building used intermittently as recreational accommodation (i.e. not a principal residence); having an internal floor area of no more than 30m²; constructed from low impact materials; generally not connected to mains water, electricity or sewerage; and built in such a way that it is removable with little or no trace.” Whilst Planning Permission is required for new huts, they can be exempt from most Building Regulations and the requirement for a Building Warrant as long as the criteria listed above are met.

¹⁰² <https://www.thousandhuts.org/>

¹⁰³ An alternative option would be for NSCFT to build and own the huts, and manage them as holiday lets

- provide a focus for wildlife studies.
- at an early stage, act as a demonstration of the aims of the new project.

The North Sutherland Wildlife Group have identified a potential site approximately 200m south of the interpretation board for the clearance village. On the west side of the track, there is a natural hollow that could be excavated to create a large pond. On the other side of the track, about 10m further on, there is a natural boggy area alongside the track fed by a small stream, which would make a great amphibian/invertebrate area, or perhaps a dragonfly pond.

Parts of the boggy area could be excavated to create small pools. Walkways/pontoons could be constructed for pond dipping. A range of nest boxes could be installed for various species. Between the larger pond and these pools, a modest shed could be constructed that would act as both a hide and a workshop space. Making use of the building's outside walls could also create an information centre describing the natural history of the site.

6.5.2 Red squirrel introduction

As noted previously, the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership are investigating the possible reintroduction of red squirrels to Rosal Forest and could work in partnership with NSCFT to deliver this project. The existing Scots pine stands which comprise the majority of the older forest area at Rosal would provide good red squirrel habitat, although it seems likely that these stands will be impacted by felling or windblow, at least in the longer term.

6.5.3 Foraging, berries etc.

There was support expressed during the consultation for introducing missing native flora including berries and other foraged foods and, if deer numbers can be controlled, this might be an effective means of enhancing the environmental and amenity value of the forest. NSCFT has some experience in this area, having previously managed berry-growing trials in Borgie forest.

6.6 Other project ideas not to be progressed

Several other project ideas have been considered but will not be taken forward in the short term, for a variety of reasons, including lack of demand and inappropriateness at the Rosal site

6.6.1 Woodland playpark and/or gym

It would be possible to develop specialist recreation infrastructure at Rosal: a woodland playpark and or outdoor gym, or even high rope facilities such as those provided elsewhere by Go-Ape¹⁰⁴. However, these are not considered appropriate for the site and it seems unlikely that potential footfall would justify the necessary investment in such facilities

6.6.2 Specialist mountain biking facilities

A number of community woodland groups have developed specialist mountain biking facilities including graded trails, skills areas and pump tracks. Mountain biking and off-road cycling continue to grow in popularity, attracting a wide range of users from families to daredevils. The recent development of e-bikes is anticipated to widen participation.

As with other recreational facilities, mountain biking infrastructure requires significant investment and can be difficult to monetise. Most projects are dependent on grant for establishment costs,

¹⁰⁴ <https://goape.co.uk/>

whilst income to fund maintenance can be generated from car parking and uplift, bike hire/repair and cafes.

Whilst it would be technically feasible to develop downhill mountain biking facilities or to install a pump track at Rosal it is considered unlikely that demand would justify the necessary investment. Such developments might also be considered inappropriate for the site.

6.6.3 Other sports

The remoteness of the site from centres of population and the limited facilities for parking etc. reduces the likely potential to increase the use of Rosal for sporting events such as enduro¹⁰⁵ or dirt crit¹⁰⁶ mountain bike racing, running or orienteering¹⁰⁷.

6.6.4 Green burials

Green, or natural burial is the interment of a person's body in a manner that allows the body to recycle naturally, and has become an increasingly popular alternative to other contemporary Western burial methods in recent decades, as a response to both the environmental impact and the cost of conventional funeral care. The Findhorn Hinterland Trust has a well-established site¹⁰⁸ and a number of other community woodland groups are developing and investigating proposals.

Proposals to establish new burial grounds are assessed by Local Authorities and The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA), the latter assessing the potential to impact on groundwater, with requirements on soil depth and distance from watercourses that might be difficult to meet at Rosal.

¹⁰⁵ E.g. <https://www.nevisrange.co.uk/event/scottish-enduro-series-round-6/>

¹⁰⁶ E.g. <https://www.nevisrange.co.uk/event/dirt-crit-mountain-bike-event/>

¹⁰⁷ Orienteering involves navigating between control points marked on a specialised orienteering map. For one-off events control markers are installed on a temporary basis. A permanent orienteering course can be installed using wooden markers, with a map made available e.g. online.

¹⁰⁸ <https://www.findhornhinterland.org/green-burial/>

7 Alternative acquisition and tenure options

Whilst the primary focus of this study has been the community purchase of the whole Rosal site, consideration must also be given as to whether community objectives could be met under alternative models of tenure, such as acquisition of part of the site, or through a lease or management agreement between NSCFT and FLS.

7.1 Acquisition of entire site

Community **acquisition of the entire site** provides control of future management of the both the clearance village and the surrounding forest, and gives the greatest scope for community development projects. It is also likely to be the preferred option for Forestry and Land Scotland.

However, as noted previously, acquisition of the forest areas will require NSCFT to take on significant liabilities which might compromise the viability of community management. NSCFT could seek to mitigate these risks through the inclusion of specific terms and conditions in their asset transfer request, e.g. that FLS retain responsibility for the restocking sites until these are fully established to the satisfaction of Scottish Forestry.

The exact terms would be subject to negotiation but NSCFT's request would be likely to include the following conditions:

- FLS to carry out beating up and maintenance of previously restocked sub-compartments until Scottish Forestry accept them as fully established,
- FLS to negotiate with Scottish Forestry and take forward any necessary changes in species prescriptions in the Land Management Plan (i.e. where Sitka regen is to be adopted in place of Scots pine / broadleaves),
- FLS to carry out any restocking required by Scottish Forestry in those parts of sub-compartments 4071a and 4077a where there has been significant windblow clearance,
- FLS to maintain existing fences to a deer-proof standard.

In order to facilitate this work NSCFT would allow FLS free access to carry out restocking and fencing operations, as well as for deer management. If, as FLS appear to believe, the liabilities are not as significant as suggested, meeting these condition should not be too onerous.

It is unclear what FLS's response would be to such a condition as there do not appear to be any precedents.

7.2 Partial acquisition

Under a **partial acquisition**, NSCFT could acquire the clearance village site plus a small area of woodland to link with the forest road. The Asset Transfer Request would also include a request for rights of access along the forest road.

A partial acquisition area covering ~40ha has been identified for the purposes of this study (see Map A): this comprises ~35ha of the clearance village site plus ~5ha of woodland and open ground between the village site and the forest road. This 5ha area includes the current car-parking area adjacent to the clearance village and the sections of the upper path which require remedial work, and it provides some space for other projects and infrastructure development. In practice, the exact boundary would be a matter for negotiation between NSCFT and FLS.

FLS would retain ownership of the surrounding forest. It could seek to dispose of this area, if a buyer could be found who was willing to take on the outstanding liabilities, or retain it indefinitely. If the forest area was retained by FLS it is possible that NSCFT could in time acquire it as a “phase 2” project once the restocking had been successfully established.

The Asset Transfer provisions of the Community Empowerment Act give community bodies the right to ask to acquire a specific portion of a publicly owned asset, although there is no requirement for the public body to agree such a request. There have been examples of community acquisitions covering just part of a site through CATS.¹⁰⁹

It is possible that FLS might well reject a proposal on the grounds that it made managing or marketing the remainder of property more difficult. If NSCFT only acquired part of the forest it would forego the opportunity to develop wider recreational and business development projects, and would have to negotiate with FLS the new landowner with respect to improving access to the rest of the forest.

7.3 Lease

The Asset Transfer provisions of the Community Empowerment Act give eligible community bodies the right to request to lease publicly owned assets. This could be the entire site or just part of it. If NSCFT were to lease just the clearance village site it would also have to negotiate rights of access along the forest road.

Under a lease, NSCFT would take on full responsibility for managing the leased area, and would retain all or most (depending on the lease terms) of any surplus from timber harvesting, but would not have access to revenue grants from the Scottish Land Fund¹¹⁰. Rent (unless set at peppercorn level) would be an on-going cost to the community.

Many of the desired projects could be taken forward (unless the terms of the lease were unusually restrictive) however it might be challenging to get grant funding for some development projects involving capital expenditure. In the longer term a lease might prove more restrictive, limiting the scope for NSCFT to pursue as yet unforeseen development possibilities, as each new proposal might have to be negotiated with FLS.

If FLS were to sell the site, NSCFT would find itself with the new landlord, who might or might not be amenable to cooperation and partnership working.

7.4 Management agreement

A further possible tenure option is a management agreement. There are various levels of formality possible with this option, from signed to verbal agreements. Similarly, the level of responsibility assumed by NSCFT could vary considerably. FLS would (probably) retain responsibility for managing the forest and would keep the income from timber harvested: ultimately the timing of harvesting (and possibly the details of restocking proposals) would rest with FLS.

There are some advantages to the community in that the potential financial liability of catastrophic windblow would remain with the FLS, however the community would be severely constrained in its access to grant funding and the types of projects it could take forward. A management agreement

¹⁰⁹ E.g. at [Muirdrochwood](#) and [Carron Valley](#).

¹¹⁰ Under a lease, NSCFT would not need capital funding for acquisition, but leased assets are not currently eligible for post-acquisition revenue funding from the Scottish Land Fund. e.g. for a development manager post

might also constrain development projects, with some funders unwilling to support projects where the community did not have long-term control over the land.

If FLS were to sell the forest, then unlike a lease, the management agreement would not transfer automatically to a new owner, and NSCFT would lose its rights over the area covered unless the new owner was willing to develop a new agreement.

7.5 Analysis

The ***preferred tenure model*** for any community-led project is closely linked to the objectives of the community and the nature of the projects it is seeking to take forward: generally speaking, the greater and more complex a community's ambitions, the more an outright purchase is favoured.

Given NSCFT's aspirations for Rosal and their experience of managing woodland at Forsinain, purchase of the full site would usually be the most appropriate option. However, given the outstanding liabilities associated with the forest a full acquisition without measures to mitigate these is not recommended.

Our recommendation is that two potential options should be considered by NSCFT:

- a partial acquisition, with NSCFT seeking to acquire the clearance village site and a small area of woodland to facilitate access, infrastructure and future community development projects.
- a full acquisition, but with mitigation of inherited liabilities negotiated, e.g. with FLS retaining management responsibility for restocked stands until their successful establishment is confirmed by Scottish Forestry.

A lease of the clearance village site is possible but would be more complicated to manage than a partial acquisition, and we do not consider the management agreement option viable, given the constraints on project funding and the potential for a change of ownership.

8 Community Acquisition

Community acquisition of the forest will take place via FLS's Community Asset Transfer Scheme¹¹¹, which follows the provisions of part 5 of the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015¹¹².

8.1 CATS application timetable

Asset Transfer Requests to Forestry and Land Scotland are assessed by an independent evaluation panel against published criteria. The panel has six members¹¹³, chosen for their expertise across the economic, environmental and social sectors. Forestry and Land Scotland considers this assessment when making its decision on the request.

The evaluation panel is due to meet in early September, so NSCFT's CATS application should be submitted by 10 August. Some documentation and information may need to be supplied after this date, notably the demonstration of community support for NSCFT's acquisition plans (see 8.3 below). If this information is not available by the time the panel meets it should possible for any recommendation to be caveated as "subject to successful demonstration of community support".

The assessment process includes a period of public consultation (managed by FLS) and can take up to six months, though is often completed slightly quicker than this. Once an application is approved the community body has six months to negotiate any terms and conditions and to submit an offer and then a further six months to complete the transfer¹¹⁴. These timescales are subject to amendment by mutual agreement.

8.2 Valuation

A formal valuation was jointly instructed by NSCFT and FLS and carried out by Bidwells in October 2021. The market value of the site was assessed as £350,000.

The instruction letter from Mike Kerby (FLS Disposals Agent) states that "It is understood that the valuation will be valid for a period of six months, after which time a revaluation may be required."

The revaluation is normally a desktop exercise, to reflect market changes in the intervening period, although it may also present an opportunity to ensure the valuation is based on updated crop records.

8.2.1 Valuation for partial acquisition

Bidwells were not asked to provide prices for the various components of the site and their explanatory text in the valuation report focuses on the value of the timber crops (which has been the most volatile element of forest values in recent years) rather than the clearance village or the other open ground.

However, their internal process will have included ascribing values to the various stand types and land uses: our understanding is that the clearance village site was valued as upland agricultural grazing,

¹¹¹ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme>

¹¹² <https://www.gov.scot/policies/community-empowerment/asset-transfer/>

¹¹³ <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme/asset-transfer-request-evaluation>

¹¹⁴ FLS's guidance, which lays out these steps in detail, is currently being revised. <https://forestryandland.gov.scot/what-we-do/communities/community-asset-transfer-scheme/submit-an-asset-transfer-request> However, the basic requirements are set out in the Community Empowerment Act and Scottish Government guidance.

reflecting its use as such, with no attempt to ascribe a price to the cultural value of the archaeological site. As grazing land is generally less valuable than stocked timber land this suggests that the per hectare value of a partial acquisition is unlikely to be higher than that for the overall site, and could be somewhat lower¹¹⁵.

Thus if the whole site of 160ha was valued at £350,000, a 40ha (=25%) acquisition predominantly comprising the clearance village site is unlikely to be more than £87,500, and could be as low as £50,000. For the purposes of this study a value of £75,000 is used in section 9 below.

8.2.2 Calculation of discount

The Asset Transfer Request (ATR) must state the price that the Community Body is offering to pay for the asset, this can be at market value as assessed by an independent valuer (see section 4.2 for fuller discussion) or at a lower amount, with the discount requested being justified in terms of the additional public benefit to be delivered.

These public benefits, and any discount granted, are considered as a specific monetary amount, not as a proportional reduction. For example, if the benefits justify a discount of £10,000, this discount could be 90% of a small sale or 5% of a large sale and would not increase with the value of the asset. Thus, any discount granted will be the same whether the revised valuation for the site comes back as £300,000 or £400,000.

8.3 Community consultation

A detailed community consultation exploring community was carried out previously in July / Aug 2021: the results are contained in Appendix 2.

NSCFT recognises the need to demonstrate community support for its chosen proposals: this will be done via a simple online survey which could be conducted August/September 2022.

8.4 Funding for acquisition

Subject to a formal approval of the asset transfer request and the level of discount by Forestry and Land Scotland, NSCFT will seek to raise funds to meet the acquisition price and deliver initial development costs.

The primary funding source for the community acquisition of Rosal is likely to be the Scottish Land Fund¹¹⁶ (SLF), which supports urban and rural communities to become more resilient and sustainable through the ownership and management of land and land assets. Grants of between £5,000 and £1 million are available to fund the purchase of land or land assets.

Applicants must demonstrate that their project will help their local community to:

- achieve more sustainable economic, environmental and/or social development through ownership of land and buildings
- have a stronger role in and control over their own development
- own well managed, financially sustainable land and buildings.

¹¹⁵ Although prices of open ground suitable for planting have risen sharply in recent years, the site designations at Rosal would prohibit such activity here.

¹¹⁶ <https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/scottish-land-fund>

Up to 95% of eligible project costs can be supported by SLF, with a minimum of 5% of funding coming from other sources, although requests for a lower intervention rate may be looked on favourably. SLF can also provide some post-acquisition revenue funding.

Potential alternative sources of funding include:

- Community fundraising
- Charitable trusts
- Windfarm distributor funds
- NSCFT's own funds
- Funds secured against future income from e.g. timber harvesting

8.5 Post-acquisition

Once the acquisition is complete NSCFT will recruit a Community Development Manager, register the land with SGRPID, seek funding for the immediate work programme and, in partnership with Strathnaver Museum and others if appropriate, co-produce an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund for the longer term development of the clearance village and other historic sites.

9 Business Plan for partial acquisition

This and the following section provide outline costings for the two recommended options. For ease of presentation the costings for a partial acquisition are presented first, followed by those for a full acquisition: only those elements which are additional or have changed are detailed in the second iteration.

Where projects require specialist business planning, or consultation with regulators and other stakeholders, only indicative costs are provided. As many projects are to some extent contingent on grant funding or investment capital the absolute cost is less important than the extent to which funding packages will cover costs or require match funding from NSCFT.

9.1 Land purchase

As noted previously, the Bidwell valuation did not ascribe values to different land types, so the price for a partial valuation cannot be calculated directly. However, as it is likely that the clearance village would be a lower price per hectare than the stocked stands, an estimated price of £75,000 has been used for the purpose of this plan. A specific valuation will be required once the area to be acquired has been agreed.

A discount of £25,000 will be requested, reflecting the additional public benefit delivered by community management of the site. See section 9.8 below for calculations.

9.1.1 Acquisition costs

Item		£
Acquisition costs	Market valuation	75,000
	less discount	25,000
Legal fees		5,000
Total		55,000
Scottish Land Fund	80%	44,000
SSE		11,000
Total		55,000

Table 14: Acquisition costs and income

NSCFT will seek 80% of the acquisition price from SLF, with the remaining 20% coming from grant aid from an application to SSE (which would also cover initial set-up costs).

NSCFT would also request rights of access for management purposes over the forest road from the junction with the B871 at NC696439 to the junction to the access track to the clearance village at NC685419.

This is a reasonably common feature of asset transfer requests and there are standard terms and conditions, which would include NSCFT paying a share of maintenance on an “as used” basis. Given that NSCFT would not be carrying out timber harvesting or large scale construction works it is not anticipated that these costs would be significant.

It should be noted that the road is currently in very poor condition as a result of previous and current FLS use: significant repairs are required to facilitate the public access to Rosal and provide a baseline to which any future shared repair work should meet.

9.2 Community Development Manager

NSCFT will recruit a part-time (0.6 FTE) Community Development Manager (CDM) to manage the site and deliver the NSCFT Business Plan. The key responsibilities of the role will include:

- writing a simple woodland management plan,
- managing the implementation of recreation infrastructure projects,
- developing a programme of events and educational visits,
- instituting a community volunteer programme and promoting opportunities,
- developing a National Lottery Heritage Fund project for the redevelopment of the clearance village site,
- implementing future development projects e.g. blackhouse reconstruction,
- Developing income streams from Rosal to support future management.

The Business Plan assumes that the CDM starting salary will be £30,000 pro rata, with a 3% per year annual increment, plus a pension contribution of 3%. Recruitment, travel and subsistence¹¹⁷, staff training and other office costs are shown in the table below, along with other company costs: the development of a Rosal website and a contribution to accounts and insurance costs.

Item	Y1	Y2	Y3	Y4	Y5	Total
CDM salary etc.*	19,833	20,428	21,041	21,672	22,322	105,295
T&S & training	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
Recruitment	500					500
Set-up costs & website	4,000					4,000
Recurring office costs	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000	5,000
Insurance	600	600	600	600	600	3,000
Accounts	250	250	250	250	250	1,250
Total	27,183	23,278	23,891	24,522	25,172	124,045
Income						
Scottish Land Fund	18,546	18,622				37,168
National Lottery Heritage Fund			19,112	19,617	20,138	58,868
SSE	4,000					4,000
NSCFT	4,637	4,656	4,778	4,904	5,034	24,009
Total	27,183	23,278	23,891	24,522	25,172	124,045

Table 15: Staff and office costs

*includes ENIC and pension contribution

This post will be part-funded (80%) for 2 years by a revenue grant from the Scottish Land Fund, and then for 3 years by the National Lottery Heritage Fund. £4,000 of initial set up costs will be met by an application to SSE (which also covers acquisition (see 9.1.1 above). The balance of staff and office costs (20%) will be met from funding from NSCFT's own funds (total £25,000 over 5 years), primarily generated from timber harvesting at Forsinain.

The continuation of employment beyond the end of the Lottery project will be dependent on developing income streams from e.g. tourism accommodation.

¹¹⁷ For necessary journeys on NSCFT business

9.3 Land management

A small area of land between the clearance village site and the forest road will be acquired by NSCFT to secure access to the clearance village and provide space for future development projects. The area identified by the plan covers approximately 5ha, of which 4ha is mature woodland, primarily Scots pine, and 1 ha is open ground, where previous windblow was cleared by FLS in 2016 and has not been restocked.

Management requirements for the forest stand are likely to be minimal, concentrating predominantly on windblow clearance, especially where this impacts on recreation infrastructure. Costs arising will be met by sales of woodfuel. If the entire stand blows down the site will need clearing and restocking.

It is unclear whether Scottish Forestry will require any restocking of the already felled areas – these are not identified as such in FLS's Land Management Plan so their status is unclear. If full restocking is required the costs of trees and ground preparation might be £2-3,000, depending on area and species. There would also be a need for protection from deer: this could be through fencing and/or through use of deer repellents such as Trico.¹¹⁸

Even if restocking is not formally required by Scottish Forestry, NSCFT will carry out a partial and gradual restocking of the felled areas, planting small, relatively dense groups of trees and employing temporary fencing to create small enclosures. This work can be done by volunteers, estimated material costs of £250 per year.

Some sections of the existing stock fence around the clearance village are in poor condition: these will be progressively repaired / replaced. This work can be done by volunteers, estimated material costs of £500 per year. Costs will be met by re-letting the grazing on the clearance site (estimate £750/year) and from developing a web-based business planting memorial trees adjacent to (but not on) the scheduled site (estimate £250 a year from year 2).

9.4 Recreation infrastructure

Following acquisition, NSCFT will carry out some immediate works to improve recreation provision in year 1. More extensive recreation infrastructure works will be taken forward as part of the large scale National Lottery Heritage Fund to redevelop the clearance village (see section 9.6 below).

9.4.1 Path works

NSCFT will carry out remedial works on the 500m section of the upper footpath within its ownership: removing blown trees and reinstating several short sections of the path. Where possible works will be undertaken by volunteers.

As the partial acquisition area does not include the borrow pits at the south end of the forest, NSCFT will either have to open a new pit or acquire stone from outwith their ownership. This could come from FLS, alternatively the Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership have an active borrow pit from which the relatively small volumes of stone required for path repairs could be sourced.

NSCFT will investigate the installation of a simple people-counter: there is potential for this to be developed by North Highland College as a student project.

¹¹⁸ https://trico-repellent.com/en_US

9.4.2 Signage and waymarking

NSCFT will work with Highland Council and other landowners to ensure there is appropriate road signage to the forest: key locations are the junction of the forest road with the B871, and the B871 / B873 junction on the west side of the Naver Bridge. These operations have not been costed.

A simple threshold signboard will be erected at the entrance to the NSFCT landholding, and the waymarking of the current path to and on the clearance village site will be improved. Simple bench seating will be provided to improve accessibility and amenity.

9.4.3 Compost toilet

NSCFT will install a compost toilet in the forest in year 1 to cater for visitors and volunteers. The exact location is to be confirmed (and will be dependent on planning) but is likely to be adjacent to the forest road near the current car park area.

Various designs are available: the NatSol¹¹⁹ is widely used, including by a number of other community woodlands such as Aigas, Evanton and Beechbrae, and has been used for pricing purposes. It assumed that a full access composter unit (current cost £4,350 + VAT) will be acquired and the surrounding building constructed by NSCFT using timber from the sawmill at Forsinain.

9.4.4 Shelter

A simple, unserviced, shelter will be constructed adjacent to the car park. This will provide protection from the elements for visitors and volunteers, and for guided walks and schools visits. Much of the work will be carried out by volunteers, using timber from NSCFT's sawmill at Forsinain.

Item	year	unit	cost/unit	£
Composting toilet unit	1	1	6,000	6,000
Path repairs	2			1,500
Threshold sign at main entrance points	1	1	400	400
Waymarkers	2	10	30	300
Seating	1			1,000
Shelter	1	1	1,500	1,500
Total				10,700

Table 16: Recreation infrastructure costs

9.4.5 Events and educational visits

In addition to encouraging informal recreation through provision of signage, path improvements and toilet facilities, NSCFT will develop a programme of events to increase awareness and understanding of Rosal. This will involve working in partnership with Strathnaver Museum, local schools and the Highland Council Ranger Service and include guided walks on site and schools visits and other activities (e.g. at Strathnaver Museum).

The Community Development Manager will be responsible for these activities, which will be piloted in years 1 & 2, with the expectation that experience and learning will be incorporated in the development of the larger National Lottery Heritage Fund bid. Provisional targets are 6 guided walks per year (1 per month May – October) and 6 school visits (Tongue, Bettyhill, Melvich, Helmsdale & Lairg primaries plus Farr High School).

¹¹⁹ <https://natsol.co.uk/>

These activities could be funded through an application to Awards for all Scotland. Other potential funders are listed in Appendix 3.

9.5 Volunteering

NSCFT will develop the use of Rosal for volunteering, through investment in tools and equipment, and appropriate storage. Key tasks include path construction and maintenance, tree planting and maintenance, fencing and control of invasive vegetation, but a broad range of activities would be available for volunteers of all ages and abilities, including environmental monitoring and survey work.

Opportunities for involvement will be promoted on NSCFT’s Rosal website / Facebook page, and also via contributing stories / pictures to local newspapers when events take place in the woodland. The local “Branching Out”¹²⁰ group is based at Borgie Forest and may be a source of volunteers for work at Rosal.

Item	£
Site storage unit	2,000
Hand tools	1,500
PPE	500
Total	4,000

Table 17: Community volunteering setup costs

On-going costs (e.g. for replacement tools & equipment) are estimated at £250 a year.

Quantifying volunteer numbers is challenging. Absolute numbers of local volunteers are likely to be constrained by relative remoteness. Initially it is expected that the group will operate monthly, during the summer, with extension to fortnightly through the year (weather permitting) if demand permits. A very conservative estimate of 30 person days per year (6 hours per day) by year 3 has been used for the purposes of calculating discount (see 9.8 below).

The first two year’s activities will act as a pilot to inform longer term development. NSCFT will explore the potential to work in partnership with external organisations such as TCV¹²¹ which offer paid-for volunteering opportunities. As part of this, NSCFT will explore opportunities to develop links with local accommodation providers, or to provide simple accommodation on-site e.g. through a bunkhouse or glamping pods.

An application for funding will be made to Scottish Forestry’s Community Fund¹²², which can support the establishment, equipping and training of volunteer groups.

9.6 Clearance village development project

As noted previously, preserving and enhancing the historic environment is the key driver of community aspirations for ownership of Rosal and NSCFT will work closely with Strathnaver Museum, Historic Environment Scotland, Highland Council and other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive project to research, preserve and enhance the clearance village and other historic sites – this will be the subject of an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

¹²⁰ Branching Out is an outdoor therapeutic programme for adults who use mental health services in Scotland

¹²¹ <https://www.tcv.org.uk/>

¹²² <https://forestry.gov.scot/forests-people/communities/community-fund>

This fund has a multi-stage grant process, requiring an initial expression of interest, followed by a development and a delivery phase. The first stage will be a review of all current knowledge and management plans on the various historic sites at Rosal to collate existing knowledge and identify any gaps for future study. The survey and project development phase will take place during year 2: costs have been estimated at £10,000.

The stage two delivery phase will include:

- maintaining the Community Development Manager role¹²³ for three years,
- the design and implementation of a detailed interpretation and promotion strategy,
- access improvements (paths, waymarking) on-site, potentially including provision of all-abilities access if this can be achieved within the constraints of the scheduled monument,
- the expansion of the events programme,
- an education strategy
- the construction of one or more buildings as replicas of those would have been present in the pre-clearance settlement.

These activities (other than the CDM role) have not been costed at this stage as the scale and scope of the project will be determined through the development phase and informed by the pilot work undertaken in the first two years of community ownership.

Although the Rosal clearance village provides the main “hook” for developments, a key aspect of the work is to place Rosal in the broader context of human occupation of the strath. This will involve working with neighbours and others in seeking opportunities to promote and enhance access to other historic sites in and around Rosal.

9.7 Other community development projects

It is recognised that a partial acquisition will limit NSCFT’s options for delivering additional economic development projects and thus generating long term income streams: woodland crofts and woodlots would not be feasible in the small area being considered, whilst there is reduced scope for tourism development.

There are however opportunities for the provision of some accommodation: a small bunkhouse or a couple of glamping pods, as well as a simple, unserviced camping area (which would also help dissuade wild campers from using the clearance village site). Accommodation provision would also help develop the site for hosting external volunteering. These projects need additional development work and business planning and have not been costed. Implementation would be dependent on identifying suitable investment capital or grant funding.

9.8 Calculation of discount for partial acquisition

The CATS scheme allows community bodies to seek a discount on the market value of the acquisition based on the monetary value of these benefits over the first five years of community ownership. Community acquisition, management and development of Rosal will deliver wide-ranging public benefits, although many of these benefits are difficult to quantify or monetise and will only become apparent over a longer term.

NSCFT’s application for a discount is based on the following components:

- Employment

¹²³ It may be necessary to readvertise this post under a new name and carry out a separate recruitment exercise.

- Recreation
- Volunteering

The justification and calculation for each is outlined below. For each, the current value of these benefits is discounted over 5 years at a rate of 3.5%.

9.8.1 Employment

NSCFT will create a new job – a Community Development Manager – with a total salary over 5 years of ~£95k. The majority for the costs of this post will be grant funded in the first five years and thus that proportion of the benefits accruing from the post will be accounted for by the grant funding body.

However, it is anticipated that 20% of the costs of the post will be met by NSCFT from unrestricted reserves which derive from timber harvesting operations elsewhere. It is not uncommon for 5-10% of costs to be met by local fundraising, so the half of the NSCFT commitment (i.e. 10% of the total cost) has been disregarded for the purposes of calculation.

The calculation of the economic impact of the Community Development Manager post is based on 10% of the basic salary and uses a Gross Value Added multiplier for “Cultural services” of 1.3¹²⁴.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Community Development Manager	18,000	18,540	19,096	19,669	20,259
10% (half of NSCFT's contribution)	1,800	1,854	1,910	1,967	2,026
Multiplier 1.3	2,340	2,410	2,483	2,557	2,634

Table 18: NSCFT contribution to CDM role for discount

9.8.2 Recreation

NSCFT’s proposals to promote Rosal and to improve signage, interpretation and recreation infrastructure is anticipated to increase visitor numbers compared to the current very low baseline (<100). Given the special nature of the site, and its relative remoteness from centres of population, it is considered that the great majority of visits will be “additional”, i.e. provision of facilities at Rosal will not simply substitute for recreation visits elsewhere.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Visitors	500	750	1,000	1,500	2,000
Value	700	1,050	1,400	2,100	2,800

Table 19: Visitor numbers and value for discount

The calculation of the value of visitor numbers uses “Willingness to Pay” figures, estimated at £1.40 per visit (Scottish Forestry 2019).

9.8.3 Volunteering

A very conservative estimate of 20 work days in year 1 growing to 30 days by year 3 (6 hours per day) has been used for the purposes of calculating discount.

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Volunteer days	20	25	30	30	30
Value	1,000	1,250	1,500	1,500	1,500

Table 20: Volunteer days and value for discount

¹²⁴ <https://www.gov.scot/publications/input-output-latest/>

The value of volunteer work is difficult to quantify, given it includes community wellbeing and cohesion and biodiversity improvement as well as the economic value of outputs and personal physical and mental health benefits, but has been estimated at £50 a day, noting that the Scottish Living Wage is £9.90 per hour in 2022¹²⁵

9.8.4 Total discount applied for

The gross value of public benefits from these three components over the first five years is calculated as £27,223, although applying a 3.5% discount rate reduces this to £25,143.

NSCFT will therefore apply for a discount of £25,000 against the acquisition price.

	year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5	5 yr total
CDM salary only	18,000	18,540	19,096	19,669	20,259	95,564
10%	1,800	1,854	1,910	1,967	2,026	9,556
1.3 GVA Multiplier	2,340	2,410	2,483	2,557	2,634	13,975
Recreation	500	750	1,000	1,500	2,000	5,750
	700	1,050	1,400	2,100	2,800	8,050
Community volunteering	20	25	25	25	120	600
	1,000	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	6,000
Gross value	4,040	4,710	5,383	6,157	6,934	27,223
Discounted at 3.5%	4,040	4,545	5,012	5,533	6,013	25,143

Table 21: Discount calculations for partial acquisition

¹²⁵ <https://scottishlivingwage.org/>

9.9 Five year budget for partial acquisition

The five-year budget for a partial acquisition is presented below. Costs and income (other than for the Community Development Manager role) for the NHLF-funded clearance village development project have not been included, although they would be substantial: potentially around £250,000 over several years.

Year	0	1	2	3	4	5
Acquisition	55,000					
Community Development Manager		21,333	21,428	22,041	22,672	23,322
Set-up costs		4,000				
Governance + office		1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850
Land management		750	750	750	750	750
Recreation		8,900	1,800	200	200	200
Community volunteer development		4,000	200	200	200	200
NLHF stage I (survey)			10,000			
	55,000	40,833	36,028	25,041	25,672	26,322
SLF	44,000	18,546	18,622			
NLHF staff				19,112	19,617	20,138
NLHF stage I (survey)			10,000			
SSE funding for acquisition & set up	11,000	4,000				
NSCFT funding for staff & office		4,800	4,900	5,000	5,100	5,200
Recreation infrastructure grant		8,900	1,800			
Volunteering grant		4,000				
Earned Income		750	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
	55,000	40,996	36,322	25,112	25,717	26,338
annual surplus/deficit	0	163	294	72	46	16
cumulative surplus/deficit	0	163	458	530	575	591

Table 22: Five-year cash-flow for partial acquisition

Notes

Year 0 = Acquisition

Recreation infrastructure grant = Awards for All Scotland (max £10,000) plus other local funding

Volunteering grant = Scottish Forestry Community Fund

10 Business Plan for full acquisition

This section provides outline costings for the scenario whereby NSCFT acquire the full site, but FLS retain responsibility for restocking the recently felled areas.

To avoid undue repetition only those elements which are additional or have changed cf. the partial acquisition scenario costed in the previous section are considered in this second iteration.

10.1 Land purchase

The Bidwells valuation of £350,000 is now out of date and would need to be updated prior to any acquisition, but has been used for the purposes of this study.

Although the purchase price would be significantly higher than for a partial acquisition, the discount requested is based on the quantifiable public benefit delivered, and this does not increase proportionately to the value of the asset.

10.1.1 Acquisition costs

Item		£
Acquisition costs	Market valuation	350,000
	less discount	25,000
Legal fees		5,000
Total		330,000
Scottish Land Fund	80%	264,000
SSE		66,000
Total		330,000

Table 23: Acquisition costs and income for full acquisition

Funding for the acquisition would come from SLF (80%) and SSE (20%), as previously, although the sums involved would be considerably larger.

10.2 Community Development Manager

As with the partial acquisition, NSCFT will recruit a part-time (0.6 FTE) Community Development Manager (CDM) to manage the site and deliver the NSCFT Business Plan. Costs and income will be as per table 15 above.

10.3 Land management

A full acquisition, even with FLS retaining management responsibility for the ~28ha of newly restocked stands, would bring substantial additional management requirements.

10.3.1 Forest manager

NSCFT will engage a forest manager with responsibility for planning and overseeing forest operations. Key responsibilities will include:

- Development and implementation of a Long Term Forest Plan,
- Application to the Forestry Grant Scheme (and other grant sources) for relevant funds for land management works (e.g. path construction and maintenance, pond creation),

- Windblow clearance as necessary to maintain access
- Planning and oversight of any harvesting and restocking operations (e.g. clearing blown stands in compartments 4072 & 4078).

It is possible that this role could be combined with that of the Community Development Manager outlined above, and there may be some overlap of responsibilities e.g. with respect to working with volunteers on land management projects, however the necessary skill sets are rather distinct, so it is more likely that this would be a separate postholder.

Given the relatively limited hours required and the intermittency of the work it may be preferable to engage a private sector forestry consultant to deliver this work on a contract basis. Costs would be dependent on work programme but are estimated at £5,000 in year 1, £2,500 subsequently.

Initially these costs would be met by grant aid (probably from SSE), although once harvesting commenced it is anticipated that forest management costs will be met from timber revenues.

10.3.2 Long Term Forest Plan

Following acquisition, and once NSCFT has registered the currently unregistered portion of the land with SGRPID, the Forest Manager will develop and seek approval from Scottish Forestry for a Long Term Forest Plan (LTFP), which is required for access to future forestry grant support and includes any necessary felling permissions for the first 10 years.

Grant aid of £3,125 for plan preparation is available through the Forestry Grant Scheme¹²⁶: this assumes that the restocking areas under FLS responsibility are eligible for inclusion.

10.3.3 Timber harvesting

In order to maintain forest amenity, existing mature stands of Scots pine, larch and spruce will not be harvested until the recently felled areas have fully re-established: it is anticipated that this will take at least ten years. At this stage NSCFT will commence felling and restocking these stands. Harvesting operations will be in several phases, with restocking employing a mix of Scots pine, broadleaves and Sitka spruce.

NSCFT will give consideration to earlier clearance and restocking of the windblown areas in compartments 4072 & 4078: permission for these works will be included in the Long Term Forest Plan, but operations will only take place if planning and tendering demonstrates that these operations would be economically viable¹²⁷. Restocking of these areas will employ a mix of Scots pine, broadleaves and Sitka spruce.

10.3.4 Restocking

As noted previously, approximately 5ha of sub-compartment 4071a and 4077a have been largely cleared of (windblown) trees, without restocking. It is unclear whether Scottish Forestry require restocking of these areas, and if so whether FLS will carry out these works prior to acquisition or retain responsibility for doing so afterwards. If NSCFT are required to restock these areas they will do so gradually, employing a mix of Scots pine, broadleaves and Sitka spruce. Costs are estimated at £10,000, assuming that deer numbers are well controlled by FLS to facilitate their own restocking.

¹²⁶ <https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/woodland-improvement-grant/long-term-forest-plan/>

¹²⁷ It is not possible to make this assessment at the time of writing as it is likely to be at least two years before the necessary permissions are in place (although a standalone felling permission would be quicker than a LTFP).

10.3.5 Fencing

The extent of fencing works required will depend on FLS's chosen solution to deliver their own restocking works. NSCFT would seek to avoid significant expenditure on fencing until this can be met through income from timber harvesting, but would if necessary carry out patching and repair works on the existing fence. This work could be done by volunteers.

10.3.6 Environmental enhancement

NSCFT would, in partnership with Pondlife and the North Sutherland Wildlife Group, seek to develop a pond and wetland area, with a small wildlife hide / workshop space as described in section 6.5.1 above, to act as a focus for the natural history restoration of the area and provide a base for wildlife studies.

This would be taken forward as a standalone, grant-aided project, with costs estimated as in the range £10-15,000, depending on scale and specification. Potential funders are listed in Appendix 3.

NSCT would investigate the feasibility of introducing missing native flora including berries and other foraged foods to enhance the environmental and amenity value of the forest.

10.4 Recreation infrastructure

The acquisition of the entire forest increases the scope for recreation developments, both within NSCFT's holding, and in conjunction with neighbours, in developing Rosal as a recreational hub for walkers, cyclists, etc.

In addition to the immediate works detailed in 9.4 above, NSCFT would seek to develop additional paths through the forest, e.g. in years 4 & 5 to the south of the clearance village, and, in a later phase, along the western perimeter of the wood, to give views across the River Naver. Indicative routes are shown on Map A.

Actual routes would be subject to site survey and costs subject to final specification but for the purposes of this plan these two new paths are each estimated as 1,000m long, with costs estimated as £10.00 per linear metre, based on the construction of a simple "single track" path ~60cm wide, with occasional wider "passing places", constructed using stone sourced from on-site borrow pits. NSCFT would also provide appropriate waymarking, as well as seats and benches. Total costs for the first path to the south of the village are estimated at £12,000, spread across years 4 and 5.

Some grant income would be available through the FGS Sustainable Management of Forests Public Access – Rural Woods¹²⁸: this has been estimated as £500/year for years 2-4 and £1,000 for year 5 (once the new path in the south of the forest has been built). Additional grant funding would be required. Some potential funders are listed in Appendix 3.

As noted above, provision of all-abilities access will be considered through the NHLF project for the clearance village. NSCFT would also consider expansion of the in-forest car-parking if it appeared that there was sufficient demand.

NSCFT will investigate opportunities to develop Rosal as a venue for outdoor art, and to deliver other projects that might increase public amenity, although it is unlikely that there would be capacity to progress these in the first five years of ownership.

¹²⁸ <https://www.ruralpayments.org/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/sustainable-management-of-forests/public-access-rural-woods/>

10.5 Volunteering

As per 9.5 above, NSCFT would seek to develop the capacity to host volunteering opportunities on-site. Again, the first two year's activities will be a pilot to inform longer term development which could include working in partnership with other volunteering-focussed organisations.

Acquisition of the full site provides a greater number of land management tasks and thus might be preferable for the longer term development of a volunteer-hosting business.

10.6 Clearance village development project

As per 9.6 above, NSCFT will work with other stakeholders to develop a comprehensive project to research, preserve and enhance the clearance village and other historic sites which will be the subject of an application to the National Lottery Heritage Fund.

10.7 Other community development projects

Acquisition of the entire forest greatly increases NSCFT's options for delivering additional social and economic development projects which might deliver additional public benefit and contribute to long term income streams. However, it is likely that organisational capacity would restrict NSCFT's ability to progress these in the first five years of ownership, when the NHLF clearance village project will be the main priority.

As noted in 6.4.1 above, NSCFT will investigate the development of woodland crofts at Rosal as a means to provide affordable housing to meet local need and to attract young people and families to the area to stimulate economic activity. This initial feasibility work will take place during the first five-year phase of ownership, with the development of woodland crofts, if feasible, taking place during later phases.

Support is available through the Woodland Crofts Partnership which was established by CWA, the Communities Housing Trust and the Scottish Crofting Federation to support and promote woodland croft development.

As noted in 6.4.2 above, NSCFT will investigate the development of small scale tourism accommodation or facilities at Rosal, to generate income to help support community management of the site. This work will need additional development work and business planning and has not been costed. Implementation would be dependent on identifying suitable investment capital or grant funding.

10.8 Calculation of discount for full acquisition

Although a full acquisition would increase the potential for delivery of community benefit in the long term, it is unlikely that there would be significant differences in the initial five-year period, which is the reference period for the calculation of discount. This is because the main priority in this period will be the NHLF-funded project to develop the clearance village and other historic sites, with the most significant additional projects such as woodland crofts, deferred to later phases.

As in section 9.8 above NSCFT's application for a discount is based on the following components:

- Employment
- Recreation
- Volunteering

The justification and calculation for each is outlined below. For each, the current value of these benefits is discounted over 5 years at a rate of 3.5%.

10.8.1 Employment

The Community Development Manager role will be unchanged and so the figures for this element are the same as in section 9.8.1 above.

10.8.2 Recreation

Whilst there will be some additional recreational provision, this may not be in place until the later part of the five-year period, so any impact on visitor numbers in the period will be limited, and the figures for this element are the same as in section 9.8.2 above.

10.8.3 Volunteering

Similarly, acquiring the entire forest will increase the potential range of tasks, and increases the long-term potential for a paid-volunteering business to be developed, but the short term impact will be small and unquantifiable, so the figures for this element are the same as in section 9.8.3 above.

10.8.4 Total discount applied for

As before, NSCFT will apply for a discount of £25,000 against the acquisition price.

	year 1	year 2	year 3	year 4	year 5	5 yr total
CDM salary only	18,000	18,540	19,096	19,669	20,259	95,564
10%	1,800	1,854	1,910	1,967	2,026	9,556
1.3 GVA Multiplier	2,340	2,410	2,483	2,557	2,634	13,975
Recreation	500	750	1,000	1,500	2,000	5,750
	700	1,050	1,400	2,100	2,800	8,050
Community volunteering	20	25	25	25	120	600
	1,000	1,250	1,250	1,250	1,250	6,000
Gross value	4,040	4,710	5,383	6,157	6,934	27,223
Discounted at 3.5%	4,040	4,545	5,012	5,533	6,013	25,143

Table 24: Discount calculations for full acquisition

10.9 Five year budget for full acquisition

Year	0	1	2	3	4	5
Acquisition	330,000					
Community Development Manager		21,333	21,428	22,041	22,672	23,322
Forest Manager contract		5,000	2,500	2,500	2,500	2,500
Set-up costs		4,000				
Governance + office		1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850	1,850
Land management		750	750	750	750	750
Recreation		8,900	1,800	200	6,000	6,000
Community volunteer development		4,000	200	200	200	200
NLHF stage I (survey)			10,000			
	330,000	45,833	38,528	27,541	33,972	34,622
SLF	264,000	18,546	18,622			
NLHF staff				19,112	19,617	20,138
NLHF stage I (survey)			10,000			
SSE funding for acquisition & set up	66,000	4,000				
NSCFT funding for staff & office		4,800	4,900	5,000	5,100	5,200
LTFP preparation		3,125				
FGS management grants			500	500	500	1,000
Recreation infrastructure grant		8,900	1,800			
Grant for forest management		2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000	2,000
Funding for additional paths					6,000	6,000
Volunteering grant		4,000				
Earned Income		750	1,000	1,000	1,000	1,000
	330,000	46,121	38,822	27,612	34,217	35,338
annual surplus/deficit	0	288	294	72	246	716
cumulative surplus/deficit	0	288	583	655	900	1,616

Table 25: Five-year cash-flow for full acquisition

Notes

Year 0 = Acquisition

Recreation infrastructure grant = Awards for All Scotland (max £10,000) plus other local funding

Volunteering grant = Scottish Forestry Community Fund

Grant for forest management = to be identified

Funding for additional paths = to be identified

II Analysis of major risks

II.1 Table of risks

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigation
Asset Transfer Request refused by FLS	Low	Project cannot proceed	NSCFT ensure high quality application and business plan, strong community support etc.
Funding bid to SLF unsuccessful	Low/Medium	Project v unlikely to proceed	High quality application, strong community support
Community unable to raise match funding for acquisition if required	Low	Project v unlikely to proceed	Robust fundraising plan and implementation
Significant fall in timber prices	Low/Medium	Reduced income for NSCFT	Flexibility in harvesting plans, fell when prices increase
Deterioration of relationship with neighbouring landowners/managers	Low	Delays, changes to plans, additional cost, loss of community support	Maintain good communications and relationships. Sensitive management. Maintain professional standards.
P ramorum identified in Larch – SPHN issued	Medium	Will require significant felling (extent depends on SPHN details)	Very limited mitigation available other than early felling.
Severe windblow in woodland	Medium	Reduced income, potential impact on amenity and other projects	Careful management, flexibility if needed. Cash in hand to respond in case of emergency.
Lack of community involvement / volunteers	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, lack of community commitment or buy-in	Active communications and promotion of opportunities. Working with external groups that can help liaise with interested volunteers
Lack of capacity within group / loss of key individuals	Low/ Medium	Delays in implementation, management failures	Robust governance systems, wider networking and support. Keep it fun and interesting for directors.
NHLF funding bid for clearance village unsuccessful	Low/ Medium	Delay, project unable to proceed	Good quality application, strong partnership and development process, potential resubmission
Funding bids for other development projects unsuccessful	Low	Delays, projects unable to proceed	Good quality applications, flexibility, potential resubmission

Table 26: Major risks and mitigation

11.2 Areas of major uncertainty

11.2.1 Impact of COVID-19

This Feasibility Study and Business Plan was drafted between March and July 2022, with the two-year long COVID-19 pandemic still on-going. The long term impacts of the pandemic on government finances and priorities, and on public behaviour (e.g. tourism) are still unclear.

11.2.2 Timber price

UK timber prices are notoriously volatile, reflecting a range of factors. Prices are currently good, though they have fallen back from a peak in 2021. The most important factor in timber price fluctuations is the **exchange rate**: the most significant factor in the recent buoyant timber prices was the fall in sterling after the EU referendum.

The second key factor is **foreign supply** of timber with fluctuations often reflecting the impacts of storm clearance or pests on European production or regulatory issues in specific nations (in mid to late 2020 the hiatus in getting felling licences in The Republic of Ireland saw UK suppliers shipping logs across the Irish Sea to supply Irish sawmills and domestic timber prices rose significantly as a result.

Much of industry and construction is now picking up again, bringing an increase in **domestic demand** after a slow down due to the pandemic, but the long term prognosis for the UK economy, post Brexit and post-pandemic is unclear.

Finally, **diesel** is the biggest component of harvesting, extraction and timber transport costs. The price of crude oil fell during the pandemic, largely reflecting the collapse in demand, but has risen sharply in recent months following the Russian invasion of Ukraine. The medium-term trajectory of fuel prices is unclear.

Most market commentators consider that the long term price for timber will rise, albeit with short-term fluctuations along the way. The government and business response to the climate emergency is likely to involve a significant switch to renewable materials for energy and construction. Timber is in a very favourable position to meet demand for building materials (products are developing all the time to utilise the resources available from Scottish forests for constructing energy efficient homes in Scotland) that will lock carbon into buildings that last 100 years. It is also a suitable feed stock for energy generation and long-term might also supply raw fibre for cellulose products that can be turned into clothing, for example.

11.2.3 Grant aid and investment capital

Many of the likely activities and operations to be pursued by NSCFT will rely on grant aid to some extent. Woodland management operations, including restocking, are currently supported through the Forestry Grant Scheme, which has until recently been co-funded by the EU and the Scottish Government. Whilst the scheme will continue in the short term, the longer term outlook (post 2024) is unclear, although the importance of forestry in tackling the climate and biodiversity emergencies gives some confidence of extended support.

Many proposed development projects will require funding (or investment capital) from a range of sources, some of which are identified in Appendix 3. There is currently a refocussing of grant aid from both statutory and charitable sources to help support initiatives to tackle and/or mitigate the impacts of the pandemic and support a “green recovery”, and the longer term impact of COVID-19 on the availability of funds is unclear.

12 Abbreviations

ATR	Asset Transfer Request
ATV	All-terrain vehicle
B, S & A	Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra
CATS	Community Asset Transfer Scheme
CC	Community Council
CDM	Community Development Manager
CWA	Community Woodlands Association
DAMS	Detailed Aspect Method of Scoring
ESC	Environmental Site Classification
EU	European Union
FCS	Forestry Commission Scotland
FGS	Forestry Grant Scheme
FLS	Forestry & Land Scotland
ha	Hectare (=100m x 100m, 10,000 square metres)
NSCFT	North Sutherland Community Forestry Trust
LMP	Land Management Plan
LTFP	Long Term Forest Plan
LMP	Land Management Plan
MFFFP	Mackay Family Forestry and Farming Partnership
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLHF	National Lottery Heritage Fund
OWL	Outdoor Woodland Learning
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
RPID	Rural Payments and Inspections Directorate
RSPB	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SLF	Scottish Land Fund
SPA	Special Protection Area
SPHN	Statutory Plant Health Notice
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
UKFS	UK Forestry Standard
UKWAS	UK Woodland Assurance Scheme
TCV	The Conservation Volunteers
YC	Yield Class

Appendix I NSCFT Director Biographies

Andreas Herfurt, Bettyhill, Chair

Born, grew up and studied medicine in Mainz, Germany. Emigrated to Scotland in 1994 and moved to this area in 1999. Clinical lead for North and West Sutherland from 2001 to 2016. Knowledge of rural demographics and logistic considerations. Interested in wildlife (involved with BTO Sule Skerry ringing group since 2011) and a keen wildlife photographer. Experience in rural health care, pre-hospital emergency medicine and running a business in a very rural setting.

Al Whitworth, Skerray, Vice-chair

[Redacted]

Alistair Easthope, Bettyhill, Secretary

[Redacted]

Rosemary Macintosh, Bettyhill

Born and brought up in the local area, Rosemary has awareness of local demographics (past and present), other community groups, benefits and issues of living in a remote rural area, accounting and administrative duties of charitable organisations and a working knowledge of local heritage resources/needs. Background experience in a wide range of areas, including business management, social work, hospitality, heritage work and volunteering (UK and overseas). Skills include report writing, chairing/minuting meetings, participating/presenting views positively in discussions, representing organisations at key meetings, willingness to learn, ability to work as part of a team/on own initiative and address/achieve target outcomes making use of all available resources.

Hugh Black, Bettyhill,

Worked in engineering until attended Paisley University and gained a degree in Mental Health Nursing. Worked in Crosshouse Hospital until 2011 and then ran the Mental Health Crisis Service in Caithness for 5 years. Currently the Mental Health Nurse for North Sutherland, with a special interest in using nature to improve mental and physical health. Has taken lead role in several successful outdoor groups in North Sutherland, including one in Borgie Forest enabling people to build wooden structures/objects to benefit the local environment. Also a Director of the Farr North Development Trust.

Alexander (Sandy) Murray, Strath Halladale

[Redacted]

Callum Macleod, Strathy

[Redacted]

Iain Forbes, Melvich

[Redacted]

Ike Barnes, Armadale

[Redacted]

Roy Collins

Iain Rankin

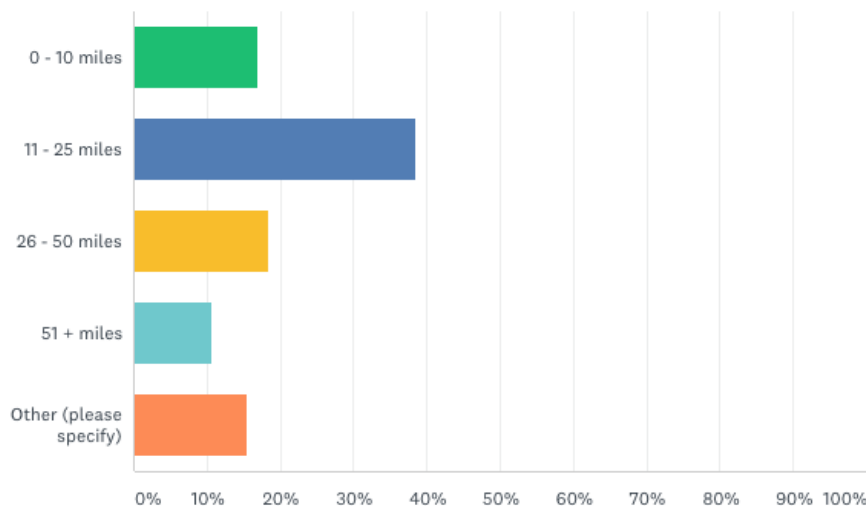
Appendix 2 Rosal Community Survey

Methodology

A survey was undertaken using SurveyMonkey during July / Aug 2021, which was sent out electronically, via social media and paper copies were also delivered. The surveys were then collated and analysed. A total of 65 surveys were collected, which is a good sample from an area with a low population (the community council area's population is approximately 400). The questions at the end of the survey show that there was a relatively equal mix of male/female respondents and age groups, with 38% aged 26 – 55 years old, 32% 56 – 65 years old and 30% 66 + years. Disappointingly there was no younger respondents (aged 16 – 25 years) which is perhaps indicative of the Facebook pages it was shared on. It would be worthwhile trying engaging with this group of people through other means (e.g. via the High Schools, Instagram accounts etc.) in the future to encourage their involvement.

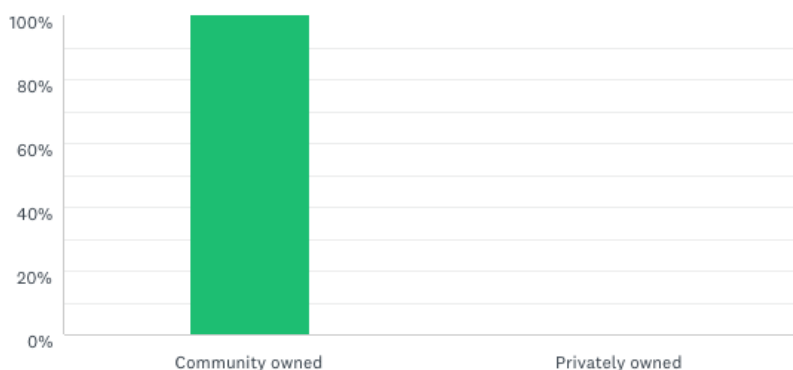
Questions and analysis

Q1. The Rosal clearance village & forest is located just off the Strathnaver Road south of Syre and by the Kinbrace turn-off. How close do you live to it?



As can be seen in the graph above, 54% of respondents live 0 – 25 miles away from the clearance village & forest. Ten respondents chose 'other', which, as they explained in their comments, meant they were visitors from around the UK and abroad which gives a useful insight into their opinions.

Q2. Would you prefer the land at Rosal to be owned by the community, or do you think it is better if the land is sold to a private buyer?

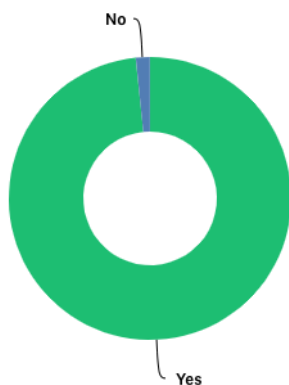


Very unusually, 100% of respondents all gave the same answer to this question i.e. they would all prefer the land at Rosal to be owned by the community rather than selling it to a private buyer. This is clearly an exceptionally strong result.

Comments given to this question included:

- *An ideal opportunity to supplement historical and cultural events in the area, as well as leisure.*
- *I've ticked community owned because I had to tick something, but I think it does not matter, as long as the site is not developed as a tourist destination but remains accessible to those who have a reason to be there.*
- *This is a wonderful initiative, deserving maximum support.*
- *It is important that this historic area be kept open for the Community as a whole without fear of the site being cleared once again!*
- *In practical terms, all the community arguments in favour are eminently sensible. In symbolic terms, this would go some way toward addressing the horrific wrongs of times past.*
- *Is there a business case for community ownership without lottery or state aid type funding?*
- *Although the community would own it I suggest the forestry trust/commission should look after it.*
- *In view of its history, it would be fitting for the people to re-claim it*
- *Living near Dunnet and seeing the efforts the trust put into the forest there, I can only see community ownership being a massive help as long as you can get a good base of volunteers going forward.*

Q3. Would you support the Forestry Trust holding this asset on behalf of the community?

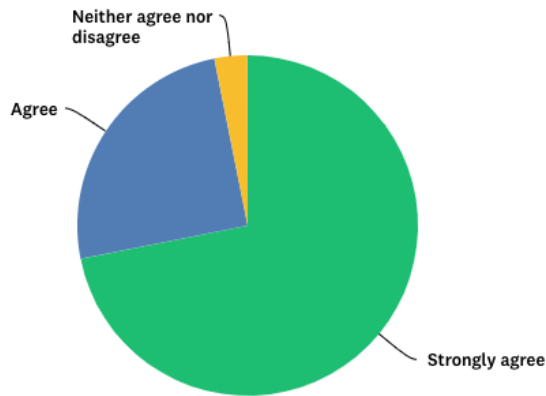


Only one respondent said they did not support the Forestry Trust holding this asset on behalf of the community, as the diagram to the left illustrates, showing once again the strong community support behind this project.

Comments given to this question include:

- *Liaison with other interested bodies would be essential.*
- *I think they would have the capacity to work with other parties to maximise the long-term benefit of acquisition.*
- *Community ownership in this way has so many benefits*
- *I'd like to see reforestation that includes broadleaf trees as well.*

Q4. Commercial forestry is unlikely to be viable at Rosal. We would like to manage the forest to increase the richness of life in the forest and make it more pleasant to visit. Do you agree with this approach?

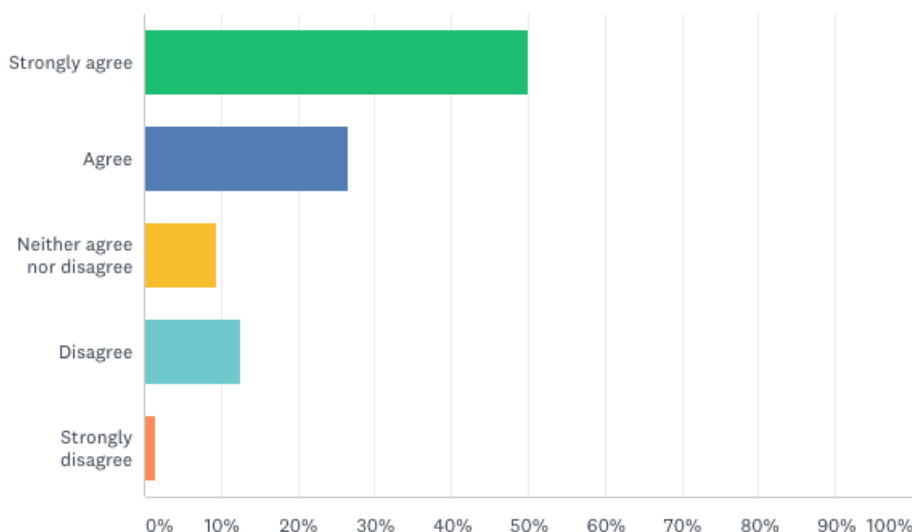


Another very strong outcome can be seen with this question, with 72% of respondents 'strongly agreeing' that the forest should be managed and 25% 'agreeing'.

Comments given to this question include:

- *Yes, but that doesn't exclude sustainable management for firewood etc.*
- *The "make it more pleasant to visit" sets alarm bells off. Tourism is dangerous a double-edged sword. You don't want casual tourists looking for a place to camp for free etc. and spoil the vibe for genuinely interested visitors. The site should be treated with the same respect as a cemetery.*
- *This will maximise the benefit, as compared to intensive forestry with its dark masses of close-packed pines*
- *Rewilding experts should be consulted in order to get the best advice on this along with opportunities for grants towards this.*
- *We need a biodynamic and biodiverse environment all the more as climate change is taking place.*
- *The remains should be kept as a monument.*
- *I think it is 100% the right way to go.*

Q5. We want to make Rosal a better and more interesting place to spend time in, but we don't think that the area and roads can cope with large numbers of new visitors. We aim to develop the land in a way that does not lead to a dramatic increase in visitors from outside the area. Do you agree or disagree with this?



There was strong agreement to this question with over 75% of respondents either 'strongly agreeing' or 'agreeing'. However, 14% 'disagreed' or 'strongly disagreed' showing some polarisation of views. Comments at this question included:

- Development for a relatively small local population is rather short-sighted. Strathnaver Museum visitors regularly ask about the Rosal site and are keen to visit.
- Would be good to increase awareness of the historical importance of the area.
- Very unlikely that "large numbers" of visitors would be an issue in this area I would think.
- It is CRUCIAL that this does not become just another tourist attraction, or just another thing to "do" in NC500 Disneyland. If the aim here is to increase random visitors to the site, I cannot agree to it. It's a memorial to a traumatic past. Those that are interested in it will find their way to it, without a ridiculous marketing and publicity drive. Keeping it low key is what makes the site attractive to those who care about it. Attempting to brighten up a ruin seems bizarre.
- The problem with enticing large numbers of people to places like Rosal is that that in itself might well negate the very things that make it attractive.
- We are in danger of becoming victims of over-tourism already, as a result of the dreadfully branded NC500. Any development at Rosal would have to be very carefully considered if we want to avoid the excesses of bad behaviour witnessed in Durness.
- It's important not to overload the area with people passing through and instead look to a format that provides amenity to encourage people to live and work in the area, and also attracts visitors who want to spend time enjoying the various aspects
- Due to its location I do not think that the numbers would affect the road
- It is disappointing that poor infrastructure would prevent people learning about and experiencing our past. Disappointing but also understandable.
- Let the land own the land, if you follow me. Environmental concerns are of more pressing value than proposed commercial projects elsewhere and even more than employment issues. I believe this irrespective of my living at such a distance. Strathnaver and north coastal Sutherland are among the vanishing (I hope not) treasures of Scotland.
- I think an increase in visitors will happen, therefore it is best to prepare.
- More people should visit it and be reminded of what happened there.
- There are already plenty of attractions/beauty spots along the NC500, aiming for less numbers in a place you hope to conserve can only be of help. The downside would be the economic side, is there a way to make money from visitors?

Q6. Do you have any thoughts or ideas about how Rosal could be developed to benefit the local community? What would you like to see at Rosal?

signage also site use interpretation path etc village
area local people see information people forest improved

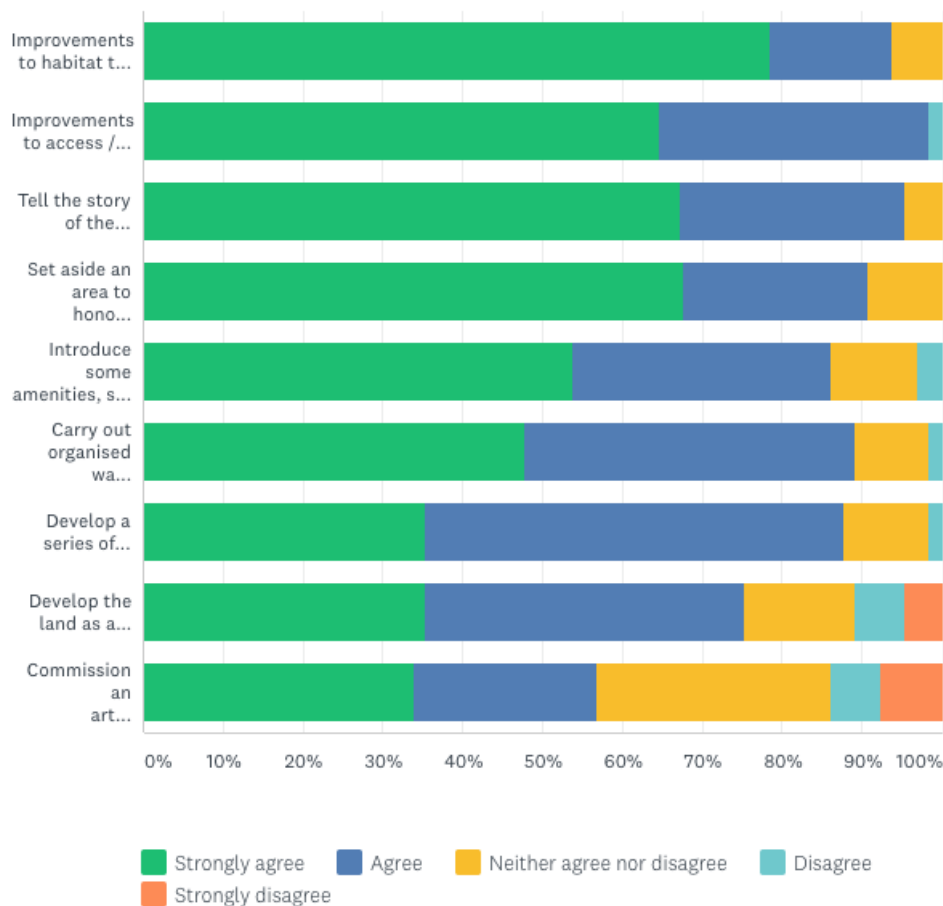
The word cloud above illustrates the more popular ideas that respondents gave in the comments, some of which can be seen below:

- Paths and seating; open-sided shelter(s) such as at Dunnet Forest could be erected, with Clearance Village and nature information that is pertinent to the immediate area; links with Strathnaver Museum and local schools; links with proposed activities at Borgie Breco (less travelling and less pressure on Rosal area); forest trails; a place for reflection. The site should be sufficient stimulation without the need for re-enactment.
- New interpretative boards and welcoming path - wheelchair access a possibility. Artwork in the form of sculptures.
- Seasonal tour groups could attend planned events to minimise road issues. Using the forest and Rosal village as an educational resource for learning and training young people or those interested in developing

practical woodland skills. Organised activities such as wildlife, tree ID, foraging, woodland skills would also promote sustainable use of the area.

- Clear interpretation in keeping with natural environment to portray its significance both past and present. If viable, repopulating the area.
- Forest trails, wildlife hides, firewood production, explore potential for woodland crofts, introduce missing native flora including berries and other foraged foods.
- I would like to see jobs for local people e.g. site management, maintenance, visitor engagement, crofting etc.
- If development is a prerequisite for change of ownership, then the group has to be honest and take a long hard look at the challenges, consequences and benefits of any development, which I know they will. My opinion is that peppering the place with sculptures or information boards and modern-looking pathways would detract from the genuine melancholy memorial atmosphere that exists there now. You don't want to turn out into a museum, because the character of the place would change. The village is in a process of decay, and it deserves to rest in peace. The kind of development that I can see working, is if it were to become a real village again. If it were to rise from the ashes then that would be poetic justice, but to create a visitor attraction from it would be tasteless and sad.
- A reconstruction of a typical dwelling
- Woodland crofts. Community owned huts, available for rent.
- An outpost of Strathnaver museum, developing a synergy with it, as well as resource for health and wellbeing.
- Improved management for wildlife and interpretation for local people so they can enjoy and learn about the site. Small scale appropriate and sensitive economic use in some limited areas - wood fuel, foraging, willow, school visits etc.
- I would like to see something that is developed for the benefit of local people, be it in the form of affordable housing, jobs etc. but not with the sole purpose of attracting more tourists. We have become over reliant on tourism and are facing the danger of over-tourism which will destroy the very essence of what is special about Sutherland.
- Some more work on the walks available in the area. The idea of the harp is great. Incorporating the nearby archaeology, i.e. the brochs, would be great. Marketing the whole area as a destination to spend more than a very short time in.
- I'd like to see an easy mountain bike track in the forest area and a path maintained for walking. The clearance village itself: The current Gaelic bilingual sound recordings are very effective, like to see that developed and the village signage/interpretation expanded to what it was. To see the village sites maintained. I'd like for the Gaelic language to be honoured and kept at the forefront of all signage and interpretation works. The remote, empty and quiet atmosphere is the most poignant marker of what happened there, I feel it important not to have too much 'busy-ness' and not overload the site with activities or hubs.
- Cycle paths for tourist and a touring caravan/camper van site similar to the one at Loch Naver
- A high fenced off section for dogs separated from the rest, there's several dog parks in Inverness and one in Caithness, people can hire them on an hourly basis for private use or they are open for public use. It gives dogs with issues a bit of freedom whilst keeping them and other animals safe from attacks etc.
- Rosal is beautiful, if you are successful in the purchase, why not do the whole biodiversity thing whilst also trying to promote/inform people of why the village is there etc.

Q7. If we owned Rosal, here are some of things we'd like to do. Do you agree or disagree with these ideas?



The graph above shows the responses given, which have been converted into weighted average to show which ideas were most popular (see table below).

Ideas for Rosal (most popular first)
Improvements to habitat to encourage wildlife to the area
Improvements to access / paths / signage
Tell the story of the continuous settlement of Rosal over 2500 years
Set aside an area to honour those who were removed during the Clearances
Introduce some amenities, such as compost toilets, bird hides etc.
Carry out organised walks / talks / forest activities
Develop a series of workshops to explore the cultural and natural history of the site
Develop the land as a resource for crafting and micro businesses e.g. spinning and weaving, basket work, natural dyes and forest foods
Commission an art installation to interpret the story and emotional experience of Rosal

Some of the comments given with this question include:

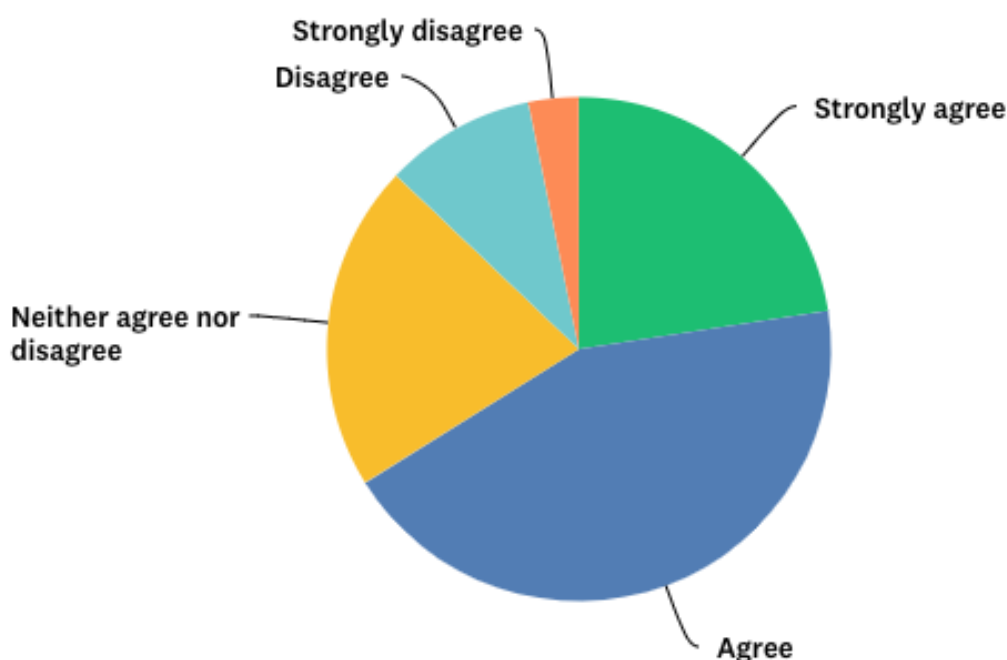
- *Not opposed to art installations but not sure about the suggested idea. Developing the land as a resource for crafting and micro businesses could lead to joint ventures/further developments through the use of the cabins in Borgie Breco. Local people have skills in leading workshops/demonstrations.*
- *The face-to-face/tour/group activities, walks and talks and so forth are a solid idea. Conversations between people should be the way the story is told, because interaction between people is what resonates. The danger of endowing the site with interpretation panels, is that it may detract from any*

emotions that people may feel from seeing the ruins just on their own without any explanation. Questions will come up and those who will want to know will find the answers. And those that know, will already know why they have visited. Art installations are just simply superfluous at a site that has so much meaning already - some sort of memorial may work. It does not need to be a statue or monolith. It could be something simple and meaningful.

- Over development would spoil the area.
- It could be part of a regular series of workshops/lectures focussing on different aspects of the story of the area but these might be hard to sustain through time.
- These are all excellent ideas
- It gladdens my heart that all of the above ideas will be explored and skills of long ago times will be remembered and developed.
- The site itself is evocative enough. I don't think it needs to be interpreted. Let people get a feel for the place by themselves.
- I was at a 'play' (don't know what to call it) about the clearances in Rosal, the actors were dotted about in various houses showing they're crafts etc., it really brought it home the life they lived, it was very moving and really brought it to life, the experience has stayed with me.
- I think toilet facilities could lead to overnight unwanted wild camping.

Q8. There may be room for a bothy or 'hutting' development in the medium term (3+ yrs). Would you agree or disagree with a bothy or hutting development at Rosal?

As the pie chart below shows, the majority of respondents 'strongly agreed' (23%) or 'agreed' (44%) to this question.

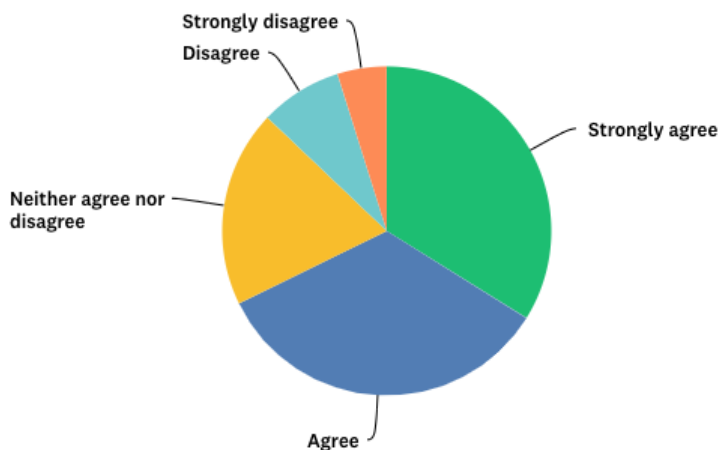


However, the comments which were given to this question indicate notes of caution:

- Not convinced this wouldn't lead to abuse of the facility.
- Would need someone to manage it.
- Would depend on the purpose of the bothy.
- Would depend how this would be managed. May attract more overnights with vehicles and other associated issues.

- *Hutting is a great idea, but a bothy is very different, and could be open to abuse, as has been seen at other bothies recently.*
- *I would like to know more about this idea. Any bothy that is too accessible is open to abuse. We are witnessing a dreadful new breed of visitor with no respect for our environment. They seem to want to consume what they can get for nothing. Until there are changes to camping and parking laws and stricter, punitive measures to control visitor behaviour then I do not support the Bothy idea.*
- *People back on the land even if it's only on weekend stays. It should not just be another look at history site. Give living people ownership.*
- *There may be some potential for earning money to put back into the trust if opportunities/ pods/ Aires were to be explored.*
- *What about a Men's Shed as well? And a centre where disabled children and their carers can join in with selected (expanding?!) activities?*
- *The highlands have many micro craft type schemes and few reach their forecasted potential because despite the idyllic notion, there is not the footfall to support them.*
- *In balance with other activities, and the plans for people living here, yes. Though there is a difference to those who are temporary and permanent residents*
- *Hutting and bothy activity would completely alter the nature of the land. The area is not large enough to accommodate an increase in natural biodiversity and hutting.*

Q9. In the longer term (5+yrs) we would like to see people living at Rosal again (not on the Clearance Village itself which is a scheduled Ancient Monument). This would be small scale and might include the formation of Woodland Crofts for example. Would you agree or disagree with the aim of small scale resettlement at Rosal?

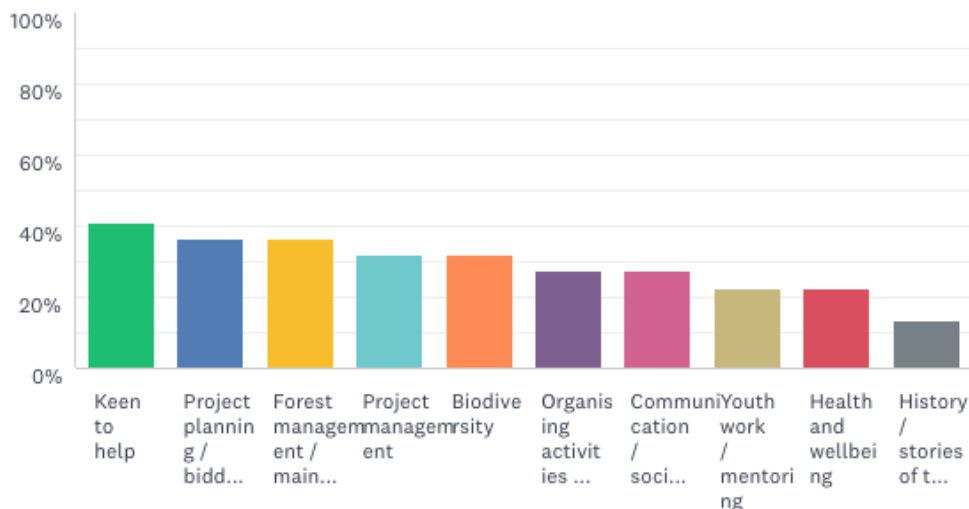


As can be seen in the chart above, the majority of respondents (68%) 'agree' or 'strongly agree' with the concept of small scale resettlement at Rosal with only 13% 'disagreeing' or 'strongly disagreeing'. Some of the comments left here include:

- *This would lead to an increase in traffic movements, which you want to avoid.*
- *As long as they are sold or let as residential homes.*
- *As mentioned before, the idea of resettling/rebuilding is one that has genuine traction, at least to me. How that is done would need extensive discussion.*
- *New crofts are the best idea for addressing the harm done to the community in the past.*
- *Thousands upon thousands of acres of Highland and Island Scotland were deliberately depopulated in the 19th Century and as the world becomes increasingly crowded, it would seem logical that some of these should be repopulated. I'm not sure that Rosal would be ideal for this but approve the principle.*

- As long as they were for full time occupation and not tourism purposes. Priority to get these should be given to local young people.
- Wonderful! How good it would be after all the heartbreak of the Clearances, to bring people back to the land. And there are so many people of ability who are able to work from home and who are looking for the right place to locate
- I am not sure that is necessary. It would depend on the development
- Yes, people on the land is the key - committees are great but people on the land make it work
- You'll need to establish priorities for selecting future residents. What about a cooperative settlement?
- As my reply to hutting, the land is not large enough for this. This kind of development would completely alter the remote feel of the area.

Q10. Do you have any of the following interests / skills / experience that could help the Forestry Trust develop this project?



There was a positive response to this question, with 41% of people saying they were 'keen to help'. A number of people left contact details in the comments.

Q11. The Forestry Trust currently has about 300 members and we'd love you to join us! Please leave your contact details below if you would like us to send you further information.

Almost 50% of respondents answered positively here with many people leaving contact details.

Q12. What's the best way to communicate with you in the future?



80% of respondents said that 'email/mail updates' was the best way to communicate with them in the future, with 39% preferring social media pages/posts. One person left a comment:

- *The email updates that you send are excellent - not too many, which happens sometimes with other organisations and can lead to email overload, and always with important and interesting information, so that I am glad to take time to read them and follow up if I can.*

Question 13 requested more contact details.

Q14. Do you have any further comments or anything you'd like to add?

Strathnaver may live land community area future
project needs development Good luck will

- *Good luck! Change of ownership does not mean that "developments" have to take place, or that it becomes part of. But owning the place can mean that Rosal is protected from being forgotten, and that one day, it may even become a place for people to live again.*
- *Best wishes with project!*
- *Thank you for bringing our ancestral lands back into local control. The land needs to be managed by the community.*
- *Our small part of the world is moving into an era when anything could happen - wind farms hold out the promise of significant marginal money for our communities, the NC 500 promotion is directing an unprecedented stream of potential visitors through our area, Polvsen's high end tourism intentions will surely have some positive impact and the Spaceport will hopefully provide a reasonable number of steady jobs. On the other side of the coin the pandemic is running up a vast national debt which may brink many years of austerity. And then there's climate change! So uncertainty prevails.*
- *Just to send warmest wishes for success. The finest way to invest in a community's future is to take every opportunity to buy land*
- *I'm a Joiner/Carpenter and if you need any help in the future, however things go, please feel free to contact me. I would happily build picnic benches at cost price or possibly even donate a couple if it was something you perhaps needed at some point.*

Appendix 3 Potential funders for community development projects

There are a number of potential funders for NSCFT's proposed forest management and community development projects:

Scottish Rural Development Programme

The current Forestry Grant Scheme (FGS) contains two relevant packages of grant aid to support the management of existing woodlands: Sustainable Management of Forests (SMF) and Woodland Improvement Grants (WIG). The former makes annual recurrent payments for routine management (such as deer control) whilst the latter pays one-off capital grants for discrete activity.

Given the likely range of management activities, NSCFT would be eligible for the following elements of the current Forestry Grant Scheme:

- Long-term forest plan & Deer management plan (WIG)
- Restructuring Regeneration (WIG)
- Public Access – Rural woods (SMF)
- Species Conservation – reducing deer impact (SMF)

Long Term Forest Plan

Funding is currently available under WIG to help pay for the preparation of a long-term forest plan, development of which requires stakeholder consultation. The grant rate for a new long-term forest plan is £25 per hectare for the first 200 hectares, £5 per hectare thereafter. Because of the extensive open and agricultural ground not all of the Rosal site would be eligible: If 120ha is deemed eligible then the grant will be £3,000. After 10 years, a forest plan renewal grant offers £10/ha, i.e. £1,200.00 for a forest of 120ha.

<https://account.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/woodland-improvement-grant/long-term-forest-plan/>

<https://account.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/woodland-improvement-grant/forest-plan-renewal/>

Funding is also available for a deer management plan (DMP). the grant rate for assessing populations, undertaking a baseline damage assessment and subsequently preparing a Deer Management Plan is £12 per hectare for the first 500 hectares, i.e. £1,440 for 120ha. Once a Deer Management Plan is approved land managers can apply for grant towards deer control through the Sustainable Management of Forests – Species Conservation – Reducing Deer Impact option (see below).

<https://account.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/woodland-improvement-grant/deer-management-plan/>

Restructuring Regeneration

This WIG offers £300/ha for replanting UKFS woodlands and £550/ha for more diverse woodland. At Rosal, given the plans for a multi-species woodland, it is likely that the “diverse woodland” rate would be applicable. This allows for a maximum of 60% for any one species across the forest and a minimum of 20% ‘other species’.

The restructuring regeneration grant would be applicable for the restocking of stands that NSCFT fell in the future. Scottish Forestry has yet to confirm that NSCFT are able to apply for this grant to help restock areas which have failed. It should be noted that even the £550/ha rate provides only a relatively small contribution towards the actual costs of restocking.

<https://account.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/woodland-improvement-grant/restructuring-regeneration/>

Public Access – Rural Woods

This option aims to provide support for the management of rural woodlands for public access. Support is provided to assist with the ongoing maintenance of paths that promote the use of woodlands for health benefits. The grant pays £100/ha/yr to support the costs of tree and path safety inspections, litter removal and keeping paths, signs and facilities up to an acceptable standard. The area covered by the grant is based on a 25m zone either side of qualifying paths (other than forest roads). The grant is capped at £10,000/land holding/year.

<https://account.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/sustainable-management-of-forests/public-access-rural-woods/>

Reducing deer impact

The aim of this option is to reduce deer impacts to a level that will allow the regeneration of unprotected soft conifer and broadleaved species at a landscape scale, to help diversify forests and improve their conservation value. £6/ha/yr is available to help reduce deer numbers or maintain them in the range of five to 10 deer per square kilometre.

<https://account.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/forestry-grant-scheme/sustainable-management-of-forests/reducing-deer-impact/>

Agri-Environment Climate Scheme – Improving Public Access

Capital funding for path creation and other recreation infrastructure. Paths must be constructed to a high specification and must be a core path or a link to a core path, or provide access to a feature of interest, or link to other paths at ownership boundaries to part of wider local path networks or of a long distance path.

<https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/agri-environment-climate-scheme/management-options-and-capital-items/improving-public-access/>

LEADER

LEADER delivered support for rural development through implementing Local Development Strategies and was aimed primarily at small and medium sized community driven projects that are pilot and innovative in nature. The programme is currently closed for applications but discussions are continuing as to a successor fund.

<https://www.ruralpayments.org/publicsite/futures/topics/all-schemes/leader/>
<https://www.highlandleader.com/>

National Lottery

Awards for All Scotland

Awards for All can provide up to £10,000 for projects that involve the community and

- bring people together and build strong relationships in and across communities
- improve the places and spaces that matter to communities
- help more people to reach their potential, by supporting them at the earliest possible stage.

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/national-lottery-awards-for-all-scotland>

Grants for Community Activity

This funding aims to support communities to improve the places they live and the wellbeing of those most in need. Grants of £10,000 – £150,000 are available to deliver the following outcomes:

- Everyone in the community has the opportunity to influence and get involved in community-led activity
- People in the community are better connected and work together to improve their well-being.

<https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/grants-for-community-led-activity>

Heritage Fund

Grants from £3000 to £5million for projects that boost the local economy, encourage skills development and job creation, support wellbeing, create better places to live, work and visit and improve the resilience of organisations working in heritage.

<https://www.heritagefund.org.uk/funding/national-lottery-grants-heritage-2021-22>

Charitable Foundations

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation

<https://www.esmeefairbairn.org.uk/>

The Esmée Fairbairn Foundation aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities throughout the UK both now and in the future. It is one of the largest independent grant-makers in the UK and supports a wide range of work within the arts, children and young people, the environment and social change.

Robertson Trust

The Robertson Trust funds and supports charitable organisations of all sizes who are committed to achieving positive change for individuals and communities across Scotland.

<https://www.therobertsontrust.org.uk/>

Other potential charitable funders include:

The Tudor Trust: <https://tudortrust.org.uk/how-to-apply/>

The Henry Smith Charity: <https://www.henrysmithcharity.org.uk/>

The Dulverton Trust: <https://www.dulverton.org/>

The Mickel Fund: <http://www.mickelfund.org.uk/>

The Weir Charitable Trust: <https://weircharitabletrust.com/apply-now>

The Pebble Trust: <http://www.thepebbletrust.org/>

The Marsh Christian Trust: <https://www.marshchristiantrust.org/grants/>

Miscellaneous

Windfarm distribution funds

SSE renewables makes around £225,000 per year available for community and charitable projects from the Strathy North windfarm, Projects in the Bettyhill, Strathnaver and Altnaharra; Melvich; and Strathy and Armadale community council areas can apply:

<https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/community-fund-locations/great-britain/strathy-north/>

The SSE Sustainable Development Fund is in addition to their local community funds and supports strategic projects in the regions where SSE is operating. Projects across the Highlands are eligible to apply.

<https://www.sserenewables.com/communities/sustainable-development-fund/>

North Highland Initiative

The NHI's Community Infrastructure Support Programme provides grants of up to £1,000 for small initiatives in the community, tourism and support sectors in Caithness, Sutherland and Ross & Cromarty

<https://www.northhighlandinitiative.co.uk/support-programme-infrastructure>

Paths for All – Community paths

Supports support communities to create, promote and maintain local community paths and active travel routes.

<https://www.pathsforall.org.uk/community-paths/cmp-grants>

Action Earth – Scotland

Action Earth has grants to give to groups of volunteers who are carrying out environmental projects in Scotland. Grants from £50 to £250 are available for practical activities that involve volunteers in improving outdoor spaces or creating habitats for wildlife.

www.volunteeringmatters.org.uk/actionearth

Tesco Bags of Help grant scheme

The Tesco Bags of Help Fund is open for not for profit community groups to apply for up to £2000 for projects that bring benefit to communities.

https://www.groundwork.org.uk/national-grants/grants_tesco-community-grants/

SEPA Scottish Landfill Communities Fund

The Scottish Landfill Communities Fund (SLCF) is a tax credit scheme, linked to Scottish Landfill Tax that encourages landfill site operators to provide contributions to Approved Bodies, who can then pass the funds onto community and environmental projects. There are 6 potential objectives of funding, these include:

Object C: “to provide, maintain or improve a public park or other amenity”.

Object C projects are usually only eligible for funding if the project site is within 10 miles of a landfill site or transfer station – the nearest to Rosal is at Tongue, which is just under 10 miles away.¹²⁹

Object E: “the maintenance, repair or restoration of a building, other structure or a site of archaeological interest which is a place of religious worship, or a site of historic or architectural or archaeological interest and is open to the public”.

Object E projects are not required to be within a set radius of a landfill site or transfer station.

<https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/scottish-communities-landfill-fund/>

¹²⁹ <https://www.sepa.org.uk/data-visualisation/scottish-communities-landfill-fund/>

Appendix 4 Historic sites at Rosal



Map 14: historic sites at Rosal

Canmore¹³⁰, Historic Environment Scotland's catalogue of historic site record, has 9 records on the site, as shown on the map above and catalogued in the table below. There are numerous adjacent sites, notably on the west bank of the River Naver and to the east, at the foot of Creag nan Laogh.

Sites 5682 and 5686 are scheduled ancient monuments (SM2510¹³¹ and SM2515¹³² respectively)

¹³⁰ <https://canmore.org.uk/>

¹³¹ <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM2510>

¹³² <https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM2515>

The scheduled site at 5686 straddles the boundary with MFFFP land to the south east.
Only sites 5682 and 5696 are within the partial acquisition area

ID	Link	Classification	Canmore Notes (date)
5723	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5723/allt-rosail-strath-naiver	Cairnfield (Period Unassigned), Enclosure(S) (Period Unassigned), Hut Circle (Prehistoric)	<p>Stony mounds, situated within a formerly cleared area and therefore considered to be field clearance heaps; and a circular enclosure, 12m in diameter, consisting of a turf bank, 3m broad and 0.3m high, with an entrance in the SE. In the same area are the remains of four large enclosures, essentially rectangular in plan. (1960)</p> <p>The site is now within an area of established forestry. The circular enclosure is a hut circle measuring 11.0ha in diameter internally. It has been planted over but the wall remains virtually intact. The rectangular enclosures, which presumably post-date the hut circle, and the clearance heaps have been disfigured and obscured by the forestry operations. (1978)</p>
5683	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5683/rosal	Cairnfield (Period Unassigned)	<p>Stony mounds which, since they occur within a formerly cleared area, must be considered to be field clearance heaps. (1960)</p> <p>The clearance heaps have been disfigured and obscured by afforestation. (1978)</p>
5682	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5682/rosal	Burnt Mound (Prehistoric), Head Dyke (Post Medieval), Township (Period Unassigned)	<p>The remains of the township of Rosal whose lands are first on record in 1269 and which was cleared 1814-18, since when it remained relatively undisturbed until in 1962 excavation and survey by Fairhurst made it a type-site for clearance depopulation. The arable lands of the township extended over 60 acres and were enclosed by a dry-stone dyke, the plough rigs surviving as a green island in the rough moor. Seventy structures were recognised of which 15 to 18 were long-houses, the remainder being barns, outhouses, stackyards and corn-drying kilns. The barns were rectangular with one rounded end. A few of the buildings had bowed walls and rounded ends and it is suggested that these may be earlier than the others. Selective excavation was undertaken on a typical complex consisting of long-house, barn, stackyard, outhouse and corn-kiln. The long-house was built on a slope with first, a small room at the</p>

			<p>upper end, then the main living quarters around a central hearth and finally the long byre giving an overall length of 85ft, though other long-houses reached a length of 108ft. The walls consisted of dry-stone work up to a height of 2 or 3ft, presumably forming the base for a turf wall. The roof was supported on couples which rose from ground level. Efforts to locate Medieval house-sites proved fruitless presumably because the buildings were constructed without foundation trenches and were abandoned and the building stones re-used at relatively short intervals. Earlier occupation of the site is indicated by the Iron Age hut-circles and souterrain. (1969)</p> <p>Burnt Mound. This burnt mound is situated on the E side of a boggy gully within the ring-dyke of Rosal Township, some 60m ESE of the entrance to the Forestry Commission walk. It comprises two oval mounds set parallel to each other across the slope; merging with the natural slope to the SE and opening out to the NW. It measures 7.4m from NE to SW by 5.7m transversely and up to 0.6m in height. Exposures in both arms revealed cracked stone set in a matrix of black soil. (1991)</p> <p>A township comprising nine unroofed buildings, one of which is T-shaped, one unroofed structure, which may be another building, and a ring dyke is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xlv). Thirty-nine unroofed buildings, what may be the remains of a two-compartment, long building, one enclosure and a ring dyke are shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10,000 map. (1995)</p>
5696	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5696/rosal	Cairn (Period Unassigned)	<p>The site and form of this cairn suggest a Bronze Age burial cairn rather than one of the numerous clearance heaps which occur nearby. (1969)</p> <p>A possible burial cairn set on the summit of a low crest. It measures about 7.5m in diameter and stands to 0.7m in height, surmounted by a small modern cairn. There is no sign of a kerb or cist. (1978)</p>
5699	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5699/rosal	Cairnfield (Period Unassigned), Hut Circle(S) (Prehistoric),	<p>Iron Age occupation is indicated by the existence of hut-circles, a souterrain and field clearance heaps in and around the township of Rosal (NC64SE 12). The hut circles include the published 'Enclosure' (A), the unnamed circle at NC 6910 4137 ('B') and four others discovered during Fairhurst's survey in 1962 (C-F). They are 30 to 40ft in diameter and</p>

		Souterrain (Prehistoric)	<p>consist of low banks of earth and boulders. 'A' has an entrance in the SE. The rectangular structure published at NC 6885 4176 ('G') was excavated by Fairhurst and proved to be a circular hut platform, 41ft in diameter cut into the slope on the SE and revetted on the NW by blocks forming a wall 4ft thick and 2ft 6ins high. No definite hut was associated with the souterrain but to the north there were intermittent traces of a very low annular bank, some 30ft in diameter, which excavation showed to be composed of small stones inadequate for the foundation of a hut, although it is possible that any large stones had been removed. The souterrain itself was excavated by Corcoran in 1962 and proved to be unpaved and 42ft long with three lintels still in position. The entrance was in the SE and 7ft 6ins from it were what appeared to be door-checks. Another peculiarity was the outward batter of the passage walls towards the top. (1960)</p> <p>The Iron age occupation at Rosal is generally as described above. All hut circles, now lying in unthinned forestry approximately fifteen years old, have been disfigured by ploughing and planting. Hut 'E' given at NC 6908 4123 was not located. The site of the hut platform ('G') excavated by Fairhurst is as described by him. Unusually the curving wall on the lower NW side though well preserved does not exhibit an entrance as could be expected. Possibly this is a later wall, contemporary with the township, and overlying the hut platform. The souterrain now largely filled with earth displays the three lintel stones remaining in situ. The clearance heaps form no cohesive pattern mixed as they are among the later cultivation of Rosal township. (1978)</p>
5684	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5684/rosal	Cairnfield (Period Unassigned)	<p>Stony mounds which, since they occur within a formerly cleared area, must be considered to be field clearance heaps. (1960)</p> <p>The clearance heaps have been disfigured and obscured by afforestation. (1978)</p>
86868	https://canmore.org.uk/site/86868/river-naver	Enclosure (Period Unassigned)	<p>An enclosure of two compartments is depicted on the 1st edition of the OS 6-inch map (Sutherland 1878, sheet xlv), and is similarly shown on the current edition of the OS 1:10,000 map (1992), as a sheepfold. (1995)</p>

5691	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5691/ceanna-coille	Cairnfield (Period Unassigned), Hut Circle (Prehistoric)	<p>A small enclosure or hut circle, found during field investigation, within an area of formerly cultivated land bearing field clearance heaps. The enclosure considerably mutilated, measures 11.5m by 9.5m and consists of an earth and stone bank, 0.2m high and spread to 2.5m broad, with an entrance, 2.5m wide in the south. (1960)</p> <p>This hut circle at NC 6836 4080 is as described above. It lies within forestry, but due to its position in a ride it has not been totally destroyed. The field clearance heaps have been obscured and disfigured by the forestry. (1978)</p>
5686	https://canmore.org.uk/site/5686/ceanna-coille	Cairnfield (Period Unassigned), Hut Circle(S) (Prehistoric)	<p>A group of eight enclosures or hut circles found during fieldwork among field clearance heaps in an area of formerly cultivated ground on a S facing slope. 'A', 'B', 'C' and 'H' are large and well-defined, 14m to 16m in diameter and consisting of earth and stone banks up to 1m high with entrances in the S or SE. Two of them have fine revetted entrance passages 4m long. The other enclosures are less well-defined, 8m to 14m in diameter, and consist of earth and stone banks 0.3m in maximum height with no apparent entrances. (1960)</p> <p>This settlement of hut circles lies within Naver Forest which is well established, and all are mutilated by ploughing and planting. The larger examples survive in moderate condition, the less strongly-built huts are now almost unrecognizable; hut 'D' cannot be located. Field clearance heaps are still evident within the forest. (1978)</p>

Appendix 5 FLS Rosal leaflet

“ *A most benevolent action, to put these barbarous Highlanders into a position where they could better associate together... and advance in civilisation.* ”

Patrick Sellar



A Cruel Clearance

The estate factor, Patrick Sellar, undertook his work with a ruthless efficiency. He was tried for culpable homicide following the death of an aged woman at the nearby Badinloskin. Although he was acquitted of these charges, Sellar is still associated with the most brutal aspects of the clearances. In 1816, he issued a second notice to quit at Rosal, and the last of the original tenants left. Patrick Sellar himself became the new tenant of Rosal and the surrounding area, running a huge sheep farm.

Gloomy Memories

The evictions in Strathnaver became well known, partly due to Donald Macleod. Donald was born at Rosal and lived there until the evictions in 1814. He wrote his accounts many years later, and published them in 1856. Donald wrote in English, but would have spoken Gaelic when he lived at Rosal. You can listen to extracts from his book Gloomy Memories at our bench onsite or at forestryandland.gov.scot/visit/rosal

“ *the comfort and social happiness of all destroyed* ”

Donald MacLeod, Rosal



le sgrios ga dhèanamh air comhfhurtachd agus sonas an àite is nan daoine ”

Dòmhnall MacLeòid, Rosal

For more information

Tel: 0300 067 6841
Email: enquiries.north@forestryandland.gov.scot



Getting to Rosal

From the B873, turn east onto the B871 towards Kinbrace at Syre. Near the bridge at Syre you'll see a forest road on your right. The car park is 1½ miles (2.4 km) along this gravel road at grid reference NC 690 426.

Use **#FoundMyForest** on your pictures and videos, and we'll share them on social media.



Find out more:
forestryandland.gov.scot

For information on public transport services contact: Traveline Scotland, 0871 2002233 or www.travelinescotland.com

© Crown Copyright 2021



Forestry and Land Scotland

Coilltearachd agus Fearann Alba

Rosal

A clearance village in Strathnaver



North Highlands

forestryandland.gov.scot



Changing Times

Until 1814, Rosal was a thriving Highland community. But big changes were coming. Elizabeth, Countess of Sutherland owned the land and was more interested in maximising opportunities than maintaining the traditional way of life. She wanted to see 'improvements'. The residents of Rosal were told to leave.

Meat was in high demand for the growing population in the south, and Britain's woolen mills were expanding fast. Large scale sheep farming promised far greater profits than the tenants could offer in rent. Some people even suggested that the evictions were for the good of the tenants. Few of the people forced to move would have agreed.

The clearances happened all through Strathnaver, and all across Sutherland. By 1870, all the suitable land in Sutherland had been put to sheep farming, and the traditional communal way of life had all but disappeared.



Uncovering the Past

After the clearances, Rosal remained virtually untouched. In 1962 an archaeologist called Horace Fairhurst carried out an excavation at the site, making Rosal one of the first historic rural settlement sites to be investigated in detail. Horace also recorded seventy structures, including long-houses, barns, outhouses, stackyards and corn-drying kilns.

More recently, impressive new technology has allowed us to discover more about Rosal. Flying over the site with an aerial laser scanner has collected huge amounts of data, which has been used to record the landscape in amazing detail. These computer generated images accurately reveal features which can be very hard to spot onsite.



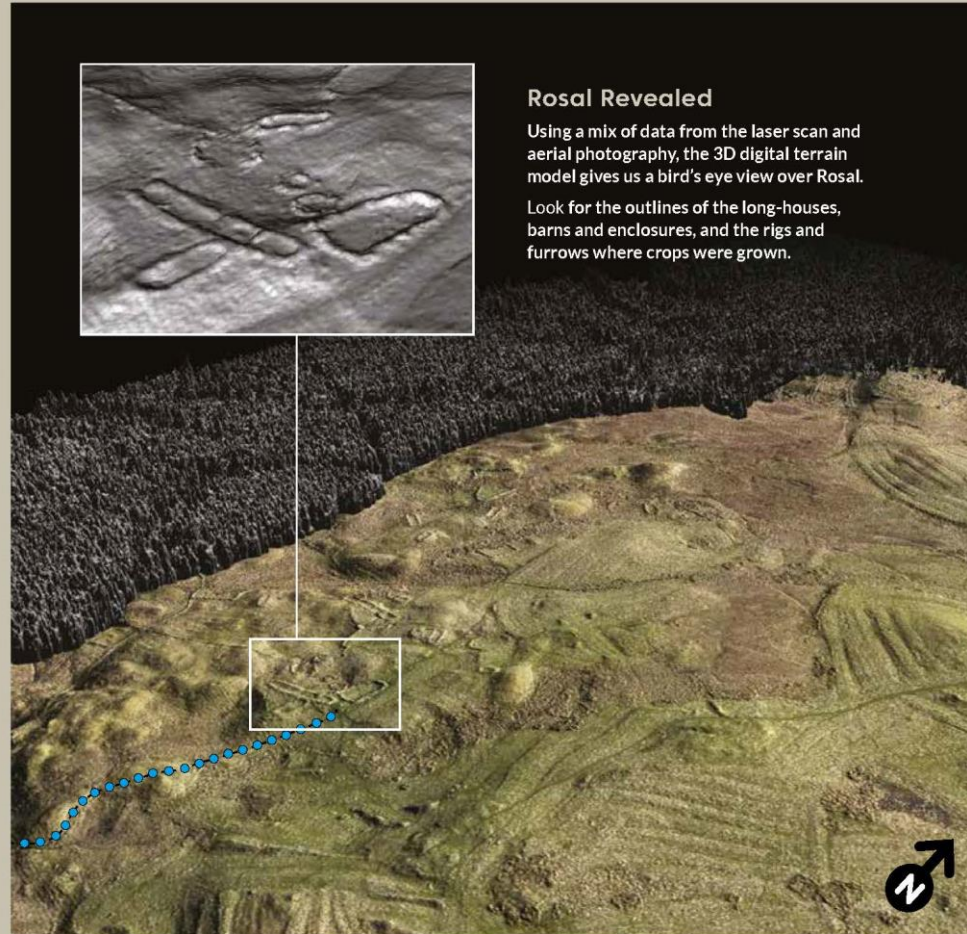
Pin-point accuracy: thousands of individual laser scanning points show us the low footings of a building

Securing the Future

The remains of Rosal stand as a memorial to a lost way of life. We work with the local community to preserve this important site and to encourage visits. The whole site is protected as a Scheduled Monument. Please leave it as you find it.

Discover More

Strathnaver has a long and rich history. Visit the Strathnaver Museum in Bettyhill and pick up a guide to the Strathnaver Trail. For more information please visit www.strathnavermuseum.org.uk



Rosal Revealed

Using a mix of data from the laser scan and aerial photography, the 3D digital terrain model gives us a bird's eye view over Rosal.

Look for the outlines of the long-houses, barns and enclosures, and the rigs and furrows where crops were grown.

VISIT THE TOWNSHIP



Rosal Clearance Village Trail ●●●

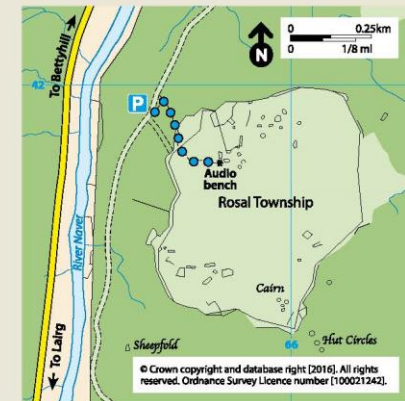
Follow this short trail for an introduction to the remains of Rosal township. Don't miss Donald Macleod's Gloomy Memories at the audio bench, an eye-witness account of the evictions.

Rough, narrow grassy paths. Includes steep slopes and one gate. Some areas may be muddy or wet.



½ mile / 0.8 km
Allow ½ hr

Explore more: you are welcome to walk around the township. The area can be rough, slippery and wet in places. Please leave the ruins as you find them.



© Crown copyright and database right (2016). All rights reserved. Ordnance Survey Licence number (100021242).



KNOW THE CODE BEFORE YOU GO

Enjoy Scotland's outdoors responsibly

- Take responsibility for your own actions
- Respect the interests of other people
- Care for the environment