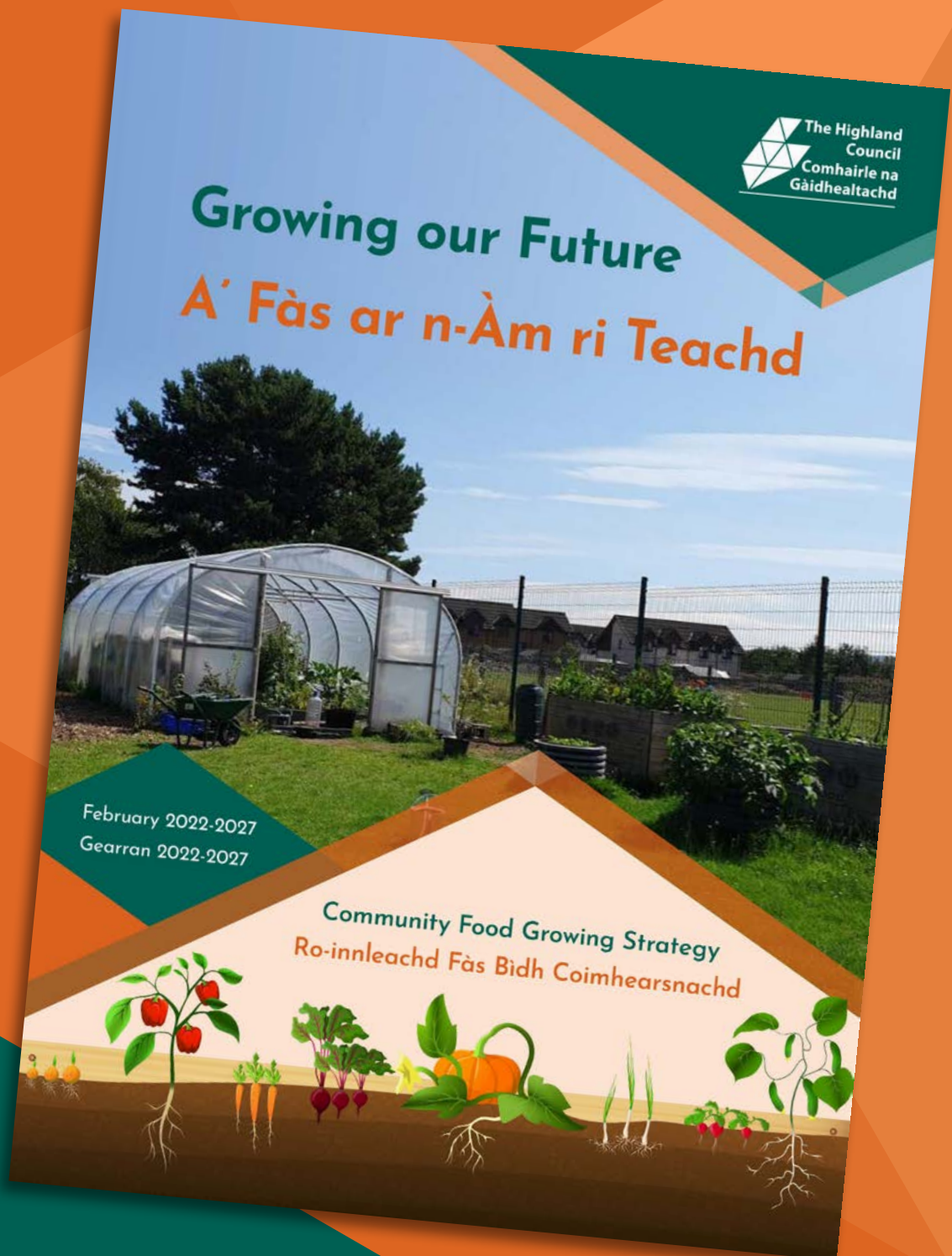


Initial guidance to accompany... Stiùireadh tùsail airson a dhol an cois...



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Section 1: Tools, resources and support

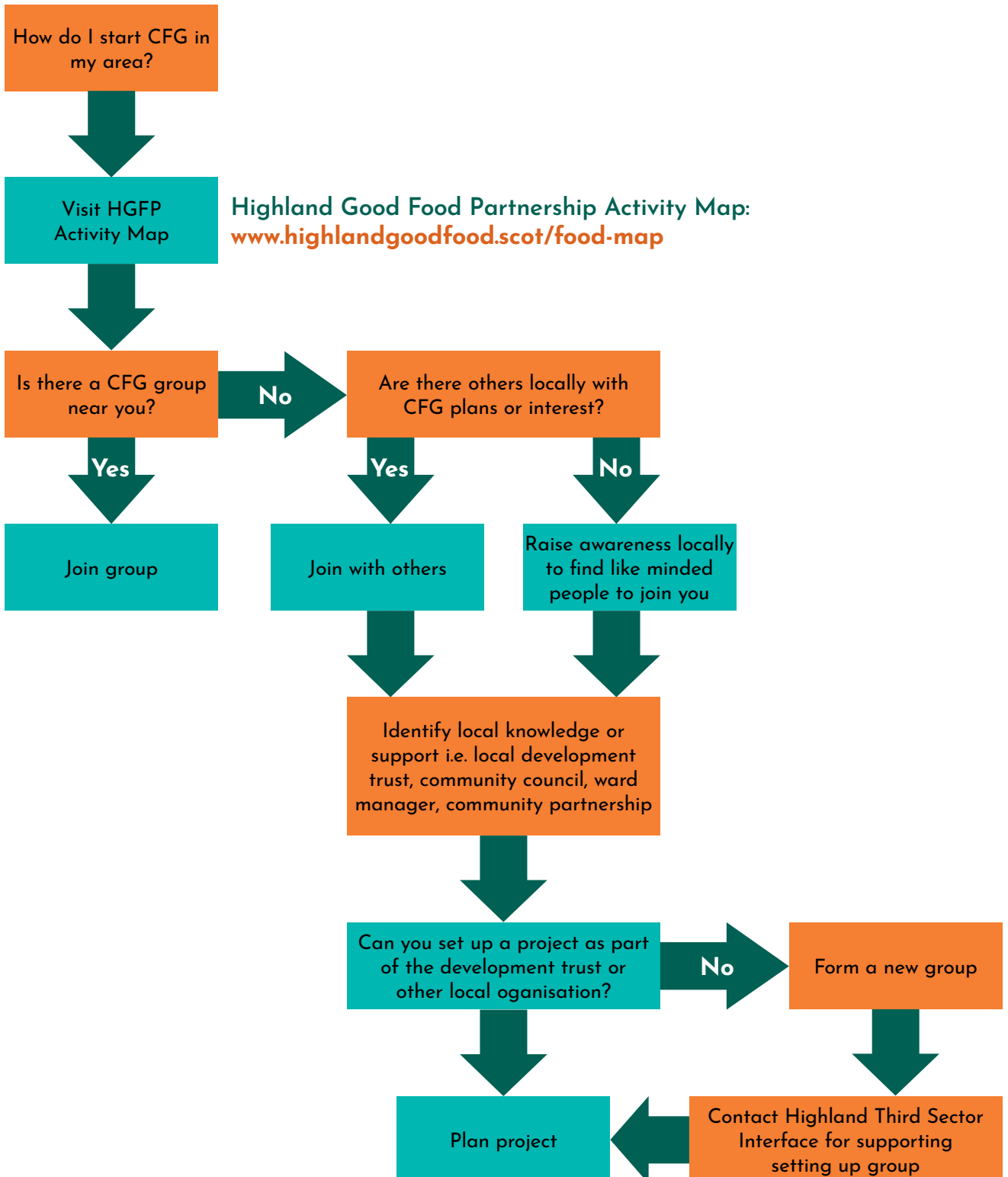
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Section 2: Case Studies

Section 1

There is a wealth of knowledge and support available to help communities throughout their Community Food Growing (CFG) journey. This guidance is designed to highlight the best sources of support, tools and resources to make it easier to find the support that you need.

If you would like to start growing in your community it is best to first, consider joining an existing group where possible. Follow the flowchart below to help you work out what the first steps are for you.





Who can help?

Useful guides that cover all aspects of setting up and running a community food project

Social Farms and Gardens

Support: Community Growing Resource Pack available to SF&G members. Membership is free.

www.bit.ly/SocialFarmsAndGardens

Community Ownership

Support: Community Growing Resource Pack. www.bit.ly/DTASCommunityGrowing

Get Growing Scotland

Support: Resources and news from growing projects across Scotland.

www.bit.ly/GetGrowingScotland

Setting up a group and managing volunteers

To set up a new group takes a lot of work and willing volunteers but there is help available and a good place to start for advice is Highland Third Sector Interface (HTSI). Getting the right governance structure in place from the start can help avoid issues in the long run and put you in a good position to raise funds; HTSI and OSCAR can help guide you through this process. Volunteers are an important corner stone of any community food growing project and being active in recruitment and support is integral to the longevity of any project. SCVO resources can help think through volunteer management and the policies you need to have in place to best support people to be involved, and the Highland Good Food Partnership can help you link to other groups locally for peer support.

Development Trust Association Scotland

Support: Link you to your local development trust.

www.bit.ly/dtascot

Highland Good Food Partnership activity map

Support: Link you to other groups in Highland.

www.bit.ly/HighlandFoodMap

Highland Third Sector Interface

Support: Setting group purpose, developing constitution, volunteer development.

www.bit.ly/HighlandTSI

HTSI Local Delivery

Support: Set-up and running of groups; volunteer management; training and capacity development and funding.

www.bit.ly/HTSILocal

OSCAR

Support: The Scottish charity regulator.

www.bit.ly/OSCARCharity

Royal Horticultural Society

Support: Resources on setting up a group, volunteers and insurance.

www.bit.ly/RHSCCommunityResources

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO)

Support: Advice and resources on starting and running a charity, and supporting volunteers.

www.bit.ly/SCVOSupport

Social Farms and Gardens

Support: Resources for getting started.

www.bit.ly/SFGResources

Developing your project

Developing and implementing a community growing project can be a steep learning curve but there is help available. It is a good idea to speak to organisations that have experience of your specific type of project. You could consider joining as a member of a larger national membership body to help link you with similar projects across Scotland.

Scottish Allotments and Garden Society

Support: Advice on setting up your allotment group.
www.bit.ly/ScottishAllotments

Scottish Orchards

Support: Advice on orchard growing.
www.bit.ly/ScottishOrchards

Trellis Scotland

Support: Skills sharing, help setting up therapeutic gardens.
www.bit.ly/TrellisScotland

Social Farms and Gardens

Support: Support for communities to farm, garden and grow.
www.bit.ly/SFGResources

Scottish Community Alliance

Support: Community Learning Exchange.
www.bit.ly/ScottishCommunityAlliance

Men's Shed

Support: Support with practical help in your community.
www.bit.ly/mensshedscommunity

Assistance with Funding

A great way to keep on top of what funding is available in Scotland is to sign up to Funding Scotland's Fund Finder. This provides the most current and up to date information on most community funds available in Scotland. Funding is becoming more competitive, so it is good to make sure your project is community led and where possible collaborate and partner up with other groups and organisations to strengthen applications.

SCVO Funding Scotland

Support: Online fund finder.
www.bit.ly/FundingScot

Highland Council Grants

Support: Grants for community groups.
www.bit.ly/THCGrants

Highland Third Sector Interface

Support: Signpost to local funds available and provide social enterprise support.
www.bit.ly/HighlandTSI

Scottish Land Fund

Support: Community support to purchase land and land assets.
www.bit.ly/ScotLandFund

Who can help?

Working with Schools and Young People

Partnering up with a local school or youth group is both exciting and rewarding. It is a great opportunity to engage the next generation and bring a community together.

Highland One World Global Learning Centre

Support: Support with sustainability projects in schools.

www.bit.ly/HighOneWorld

High Life Highland

Support: Young Leadership Programme and links to their youth work team.

www.bit.ly/HighLifeHighland

Farmer Jones Academy For You Training

Support: Delivering Food Education in Schools.

www.bit.ly/FJAForYou

MOO Food

Support: Share their primary school programme that is fully linked to curriculum.

www.bit.ly/MOOFood

Hi-Hope

Support: Opportunities for youth work experience across the Highlands.

www.bit.ly/Hi-hope

Tree Council

Support: Orchards for schools guide, funding and free trees.

www.bit.ly/TreeCouncilOrchards

Highland Good Food Partnership Education and Training group

Support: Supporting food education and training projects.

hello@highlandgoodfood.scot

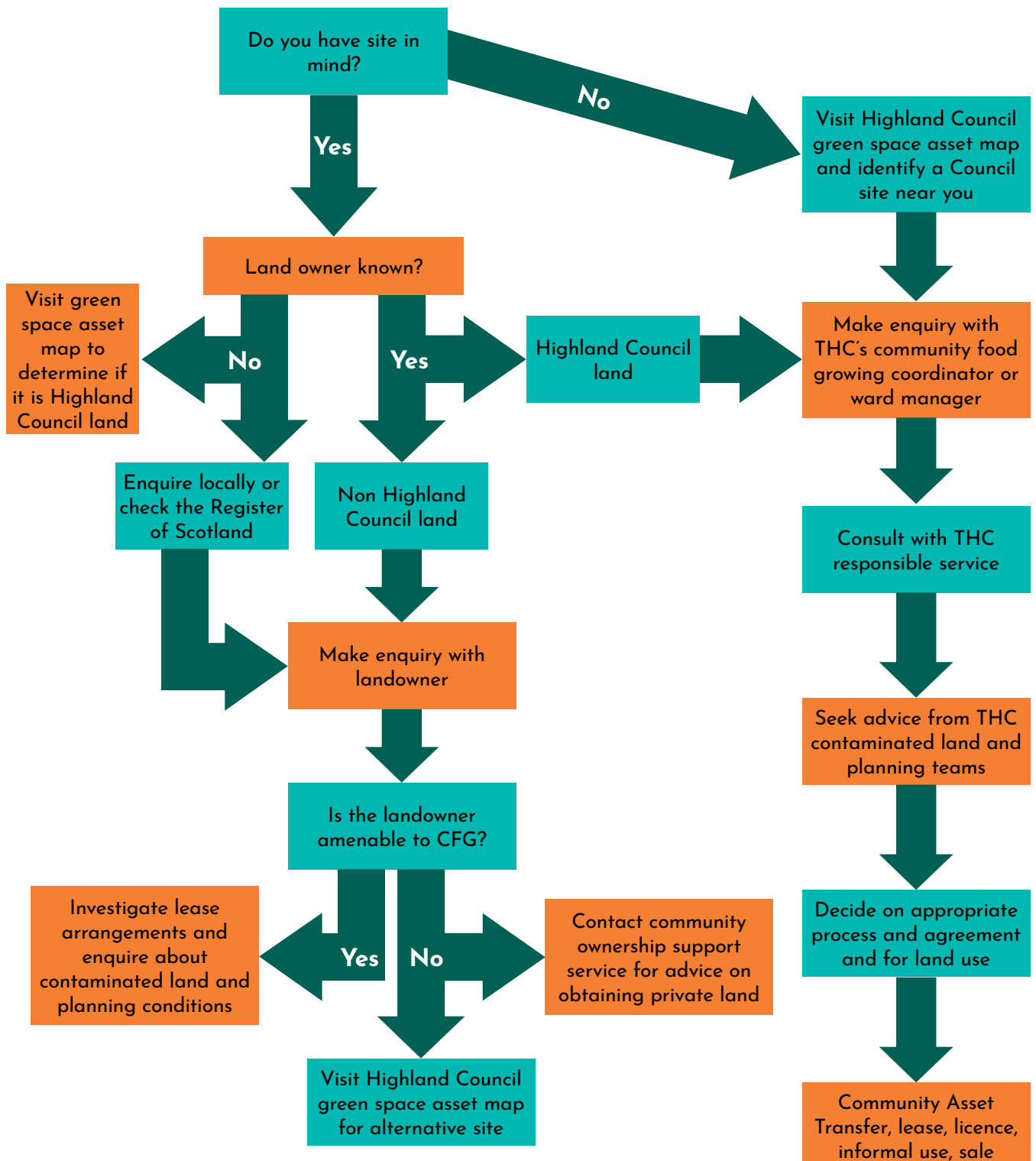
www.bit.ly/HighlandGoodFood



Finding and Securing Suitable Land

There is no single solution that fits all for identifying suitable Community Food Growing land. However, there are people and organisations who can help, give advice and support communities along the way.

The Highland Council green space asset map is a good place to start to look for land suitable for Community Food Growing. Communal green space within all new developments will also have identified Community Food Growing spaces. The Highland Council also encourages communities to consider the potential within existing play parks to include Community Food Growing spaces.





Who can help?

Depending on where you live there will be a mixture of different situations for land ownership. You may have public green space owned by Highland Council, common good land, or land owned by other public sector bodies or

community development trusts. There may be land owned privately by individuals or companies, or areas of land in housing developments owned by developers or housing associations. It can be difficult to know who owns land but finding and accessing the right site is a key part of starting your Community Food Growing project.

A good starting point is to speak to other local people, ask around and connect with your local community council and Councillors to tap into local knowledge. If you think the land may belong to Highland Council or is common good land, then check the Council's green space asset map or contact the Council's community food growing coordinator to help confirm. If you are unable to find out who owns the land, then contact the Registers of Scotland to do a title investigation. This has a cost and your group will need to be able to cover this.

Early discussions with the landowner are very important. You must be able to get permission to use the site, often through a lease or ownership, before you can progress with your project, submit planning applications or apply to some funders.

Community Councils

Support: Identify your local community council.

www.bit.ly/HighlandCommunityCouncils

Community Land Advisory Service

Support: Information on making land more available for community use.

www.bit.ly/CommunityLandAdvice

Local Councillors

Support: Identify and contact your local councillor.

www.bit.ly/HighlandCouncillors

Registers of Scotland

Support: Public registers of land and property in Scotland.

www.bit.ly/ROSLand

Ward Managers

Support: Identify and contact for local knowledge, network and links to relevant HC service.

www.bit.ly/WardManagers

Community Ownership Support Services

Support: Support for communities taking on assets.

www.bit.ly/DTASCommunity

Highland Council Community Asset Transfers

Support: Advice on community asset transfer and map of council assets.

www.bit.ly/HighlandCAT

Highland Community Partnership

Support: Public agencies and third sector collaborative working across Highland.

www.bit.ly/HighlandCPP

Assessing the suitability of the site for food growing

Contact Highland Council's planning department about any medium to large scale community growing project or any project where new access routes or change of use of a site is necessary. They will explain what consents you may need and what information they need from you to help you get planning permission if required.

When choosing land for community food growing sites, the former use of the site and potential for land contamination should be considered. The Highland Council's Contaminated Land Team welcome the opportunity to discuss site options, can check records, and provide advice free of charge. If a site does have a former use which is potentially contaminative, the site may need investigation and if necessary, remediation.

Highland Council planning and building standards

Support: Advice on planning permissions.

www.bit.ly/HighlandPlanning

Highland Council Contaminated Land Team

Support: Advice on issues of contamination and suitability for use of land.

www.bit.ly/HighlandContaminatedLand
land.contamination@highland.gov.uk

Contaminated land guidance

Support: Guide for growing on land which may be contaminated.

www.bit.ly/ContaminatedLandGuide

Social Farms and Gardens

Support: Advice for all community food growing, including contaminated land.

www.bit.ly/SFGResources

Promoting inclusion and wellbeing

Community food growing is a positive way that those experiencing health challenges can engage with the natural world and take part in activities that benefit their health and wellbeing. There are also many opportunities for CFG projects to support people who are experiencing food insecurity by creating opportunities to share food, contributing free food to the community, linking up with foodbanks and larders and enabling those without gardens to have access to land, skills and resource to grow for themselves.

Nourish Dignity in Practice Toolkit

Support: Support community food growers to deliver food activities with dignity.

www.bit.ly/DignityInPractice

Independent Food Aid Network

Support: Cash First Leaflet for Highland.

www.bit.ly/IFANCashFirst

Think Health Think Nature

Support: Green health promotion resources and directory of initiatives and activities.

www.bit.ly/ThinkHealthThinkNature

Trellis Scotland

Support: Scotland's network for therapeutic gardens.

www.bit.ly/TrellisScotland

Section 2

The following case studies have been written by community groups to highlight some of the work already taking place across Highland, they don't necessarily represent the views of The Highland Council but aim to serve as a source of inspiration and learning from the experiences of others.





We are a small charity which provides social and therapeutic horticultural activities at our Growing Spaces within a local allotment site, beside the new Badenoch and Strathspey Hospital and at table top gardening sessions at three Care Homes/Day Centres across the area. Elderly people, many of whom have dementia really relate to the gardening and associated craft work that is completed at the sessions.

People in our communities who may have various disabilities attend our Growing Spaces and our Hospital Therapy Garden, where they enjoy the time together; they learn to grow a variety of flowers, fruit, herbs and vegetables; they take produce home to cook and enjoy.



Project Questionnaire

What is your proudest project achievement?

Receiving a significant amount of money a few years ago from Tesco Bags of Help which allowed us to redesign our Growing Spaces and make them DDA compliant, and much easier to maintain for all concerned, and more accessible for many people.



What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

The positive impact it has on those who attend our sessions from the elderly lady who said 'this is the best thing I have done' when making seed bombs for Christmas presents at one of our table top sessions, to those who 'just love' coming to our Growing Spaces and enjoying the social time while gardening.



How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

One member of staff who has a contract with us.



How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

All the Trustees are volunteers, and others who work in our Growing Spaces, plus others who carry out pieces of work from time to time - probably 10 - 15.



How are you funded?

We are funded by a variety of Trusts and have had support from Tesco Bags of Help and the Co-operative Community Fund.





Project

Pocket Orchards

How did the project start/what does your project do?

There are now about 240 orchard trees in Wester Ross communities from Plockton to Ullapool. Most of the pocket orchards are quite small - perhaps 6-9 trees. They are there both for community and environmental benefit. Many of the local schools now have pocket orchards: the biggest one so far is at Gairloch High School, with 37 trees.

Other sites include village halls, public open spaces, youth hostels and churches. Laide community woodland has some trees, as does the Inverewe (NTS) estate.

The majority of the trees are apples but there are also plums, pears, and cherries. At Poolewe there are also cornelian cherries, cherry plums, hazels, crab apples, as well as two chestnut trees and a walnut.

Funding has come from a variety of sources, including private donations, a crowdfunder, charitable trusts, and a grant from the Council's Ward Discretionary Fund.

There have been some setbacks. The pocket orchard at Achnasheen was completely destroyed by deer and deer have been a concern elsewhere too. At Inverewe the NTS has deer fenced the orchard there and we plan to add more trees (there are currently 12 apple trees).

At Aultbea the first site we planted, by the clapper bridge, has proved too exposed for some of the trees (we plan to replace the losses).

However, on the whole the trees are growing and slowly establishing themselves. The varieties planted have all been carefully chosen for West Highland conditions. Future plans include grafting to propagate old local varieties of apple, offering training in fruit tree care, and encouraging local people and schools to take advantage of the free harvest as the trees start to crop over the next few years. We also hope to inspire local crofters to consider planting fruit trees and hardy soft fruit in suitable places.

In the longer term the aim is to create resources for community resilience, contribute towards a more circular economy, and build biodiversity. The trees will we hope encourage pollinators, improve the soil with annual leaf fall, and provide shelter and wind resistance. But overall, the best outcome will be to reduce the sense of despair and dependence so common among rural highland communities. From small beginnings, if we can gradually rebuild local self-confidence and provide more hope for a better future, it will have been worthwhile.



How did the project start/ what does your project do?

We have various pupil groups who come out to take part in a wide variety of projects that take place on the school farm. The key aims of the projects are as follows:

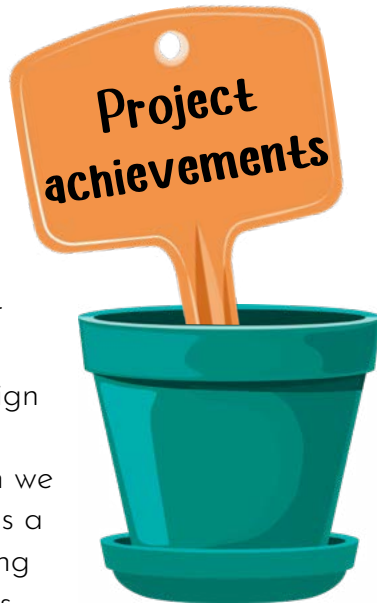
- 1) Increasing the farm's biodiversity through the development of native wildflower areas, orchards and soft fruit areas and different wildlife habitat zones. These include: two wildlife ponds, native winter flowering heathers, native wildflower areas (Operation Pollination), various tree and hedgerow zones and a grassland meadow area.
- 2) Maintaining small scale crop and food production for educational purposes. We use the polytunnels for growing a variety of food crops so pupils can get first-hand experience of how food is grown and the skills required for growing it. We also harvest apples and plums from the orchard area and process the fruit with the pupils to make jam and juice.
- 3) Developing practical gardening and maintenance skills with the pupils. The pupils learn some essential gardening skills including; preparing the ground, planting crops, making compost, repairing various garden structures, pruning trees and path maintenance among other things.
- 4) Developing their enterprise skills through the sale of school farm produce and products inspired by the school farm such as bird feeders and crop/ plant support structures.



Project Questionnaire

What is your proudest project achievement?

We became the first school in Scotland to build our own wood fired clay pizza oven. The pupils in our senior enterprise class helped design and construct a pizza oven which we use every term as a way of celebrating our achievements.



How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

We have several members of staff who are highly involved with delivering the various projects on the school farm. They include Morag Muschate, Lynsey Macdonald, Jack Trevelyan and various class teachers plus some garden volunteers who give up some of their time to help maintain the garden areas.



What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your projects?

There is a never ending list of maintenance jobs for pupils to help with and that nature has a great habit of taking over!



How many volunteers are involved with delivering your project?

Between 2-4 volunteers help maintain the school farm but are not involved with delivering the projects.



How are you funded?

We fundraise ourselves through our own enterprise activities and have been supported in the past by council ward funding, and central government sustainability funds.



Name of organisation



Lochbroom & Ullapool Growing Group (LUGG)

Project

LUGG Community Allotment

How did the project start/what does your project do?

LUGG was started by some active members of the Ullapool community in 2010 with an aim to provide space for growing food for local people. There was significant opposition towards the development of the allotments by other community members. Grant funding provided money for a beautiful tool shed, compost toilet, polytunnel and materials for outdoor raised beds. Since this there has been further development, including, a deer fence, water system and solar panels in the polytunnel to charge a water pump. The ground is leased annually from The Highland Council.

LUGG has been used by community groups for various projects including mental health and children's groups and we hope that in the future more people can use the allotments.

Over recent years we have made it more friendly for wildlife with wildflower beds, a pond, insect hotel and bird feeders and most plot holders are organic gardeners.



Project Questionnaire



What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

That it takes a collective effort to keep it going and to make improvements. It seems we are always lacking volunteers as people are already so busy making it difficult to make progress.

In 2017/18 we had repeated vandalism of the polytunnel by people who slashed the plastic. This is still an action to be addressed however the company that installed the polytunnel is no longer in business and we are struggling to find a company that can replace like for like. If any other sites are looking to put in a polytunnel I think they need to be mindful of this.

Some plot holders are also part of the chicken group and currently keep six hens of varying breeds on site. Their droppings go into the compost system on site.

We were down to three hens in December 2020 when the government declared that there was avian influenza and poultry should be kept indoors or in a run separate from wild birds.

As we couldn't feasibly do that and it felt cruel to keep them in such a wee hen house until there was no avian flu, we sent them on their holidays to a friend who would be able to keep them inside in a much bigger space until the flu passed.

It has proved a good time to let the ground recover so there is a better space now for them to come back to and possibly for some new hens. It is really important to highlight this as avian flu raises its head every now and again and if people are wanting to keep livestock then all eventualities need to be thought about.

Over the pandemic there has been a lot of things to consider to tending plots and as government guidance was constantly changing, many people were incredibly wary of coming to the allotments. People for various reasons gave up their plots, but the plots inside the polytunnel were snapped up quickly.

As we have not had working parties due to the pandemic, the communal areas have suffered, and I think we need some real help to get them back to a manageable state.

It has been challenging to say the least and limitations within our committee adds to the challenge. There is a lot of learning to do about running a committee and inspiring people to want to take more interest in the area where they grow.

“Many hands makes lighter work”



Project Questionnaire



What is your proudest project achievement?

Getting it started and keeping it going is a major achievement.



Photos by Lechbroom & Ullapool Growing Group

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

0 - it is all voluntary. It would be amazing to have someone employed to work there.



How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

There are 6 members on the committee and additional plot holders come along for monthly volunteer days.



How are you funded?

Through plot fees.





Project

Ballifeary Community Council

How did the project start/what does your project do?

This is a small Council tenant led project which started off during COVID-19 (Autumn 2020) to:

- Provide a positive outdoors activity during COVID-19 restrictions that local people could take part in.
- Show, especially with concerns last year about availability of food in the shops, that it is possible to grow a range of healthy and tasty vegetables and salad leaves etc easily in Inverness.
- To make healthy vegetables and salad etc available free of charge to anyone who wants to use them.
- Turn an unused and quite sad-looking outdoor space in an area with high local footfall into a new community focal point which people could enjoy.

It is a very informal project and everyone is welcome to become involved. Organising events has been quite difficult during COVID-19 but we have held activities such as a socially-distanced plant swap, a spring bulb planting event, and weekly get-togethers when allowed. We also lit up one of the trees in the growing space last Christmas and invited local people to hang decorations on it and make Christmas wishes. We post news of events, what's growing/ready to harvest/recipe ideas on our Facebook page and also have a noticeboard on site.

We hope to be able to develop the space further to allow more planting areas for vegetables and fruit etc and also to let us grow flowers, shrubs and small trees which will be good for pollinating insects and other wildlife.



Project Questionnaire

What is your proudest project achievement?

We have created a new growing space, grown lots of vegetables and salads, built up a group of active volunteers and a larger group of local people of all ages who are very interested in, and supportive of, the project. We also know that people are using what we grow, and we have been able to donate some produce to Ness Foodstuffs (Ness Bank Church).

In late summer this year, we had a visit and very positive feedback from assessors from the Keep Scotland Beautiful "It's your neighbourhood" scheme, which was really encouraging given that we have only been running for a year and are a very small-scale project.



What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

That so many people are interested in growing food and that it brings together people from a wide range of backgrounds and ages.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

None.



How many volunteers are involved with delivering your project?

We have a regular active group of around 6-8 adults and 6 children but a wider group who help with planting, donating plants/seeds and/or who just like to come along and chat when we are at the community growing space. Over the summer/autumn, we held weekly get-togethers for weeding, planting and planning and also provided large chalks for local children to make pavement art at the growing space.





Photos by Let's Grow Ballifeary



How are you funded?

We started off the project with COVID-19 community resilience funding. We also successfully applied for support from the Arnold Clark Foundation. This money has paid for the materials for our four large vegetable containers (which were made by a local volunteer), for plants, tools/watering cans, compost and other materials. We have had a generous donation of compost from Scotbark in Inverness, seeds donated by Seeds of Hope, and have also had a lot of seedlings, plants and containers donated by local residents.

We are very grateful to The Highland Council for the support we have had from their local Tenant Participation staff.





How did the project start/ what does your project do?

Our project is a community garden, run from Invergordon Academy, where we encourage volunteers to come along and grow their own vegetables in our beds and our polytunnel. This year we have also teamed up with the Academy's Rural Skills pupils who will be helping with our beds and will be growing their own produce in a new bed that they have prepared. Hopefully this will prove a good way to encourage healthy eating by seeing how vegetables are produced. It is hoped that some of the parents of these pupils may get involved.



What is your proudest project achievement?

We held four open events during the summer which brought along some local people who enjoyed kebabs made from produce that they had picked.



How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

2 full time staff.



How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

We have two volunteers to work on the project.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?



Engagement with the public has proved difficult due to Covid restrictions and a sense of lethargy in some parts of the community. We have also realised that to maintain the garden we need a dedicated member of staff to take control.



How are you funded?

We are funded through High Life Highland.



How did the project start/what does your project do?

The long neglected garden is slowly being restored since coming into community ownership. It now grows local produce and flowers for residents, local businesses and visitors in polytunnels and outside beds. There is also a community sponsored orchard, rose beds and some allotment style plots that local residents can use in return for a few hours volunteered in the garden each month. We also operate a community food waste compost scheme with the local primary school. The garden is open to the public and provides a beautiful amenity space for locals and visitors. It has created a part time job and lots of volunteering opportunities. Future plans include the restoration of the derelict greenhouses, looking at ways that the island can become more self sufficient for food and reducing food waste further.

During the pandemic we realised what an important asset the garden was to the community. We were able to increase the amount of produce we grew and our customer numbers increased as they had access to fresh seasonal produce without having to leave the island. Our volunteer numbers also increased and helped alleviate the isolation felt by many who were able to come along and help in a safe outdoor environment. We also removed set prices for our produce and offered it on a donation basis, ensuring that no one was excluded due to their financial circumstances.



Project Questionnaire

Project achievements



What is your proudest project achievement?

Opening up the garden and creating a space for the community to enjoy after 30 years of the gates being closed while at the same time growing fruit, vegetables, salad, herbs and flowers which are enjoyed at such a local level.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

0.6 FTE

Staff



How are you funded?

During 2017/18 we received £61,000 funding from the Climate Challenge Fund which purchased 3 polytunnels, seeds and equipment as well as funding a full time gardener and a part time community engagement officer for a year. Match funding of £7,900 was provided by Raasay House Community Company who own and manage the garden on behalf of the community. This enabled us to get the garden back into production.

In 2018/19 we received £4,900 from The Mushroom Trust which allowed us to plant an orchard in one quadrant of the garden. Match funding of £1000 was raised by us through offering sponsorship of the trees to the community and visitors.

Raasay House Community Company receive an income from leasing Raasay House to a private business who operate it as a hotel and outdoor centre. Since the CCF funding ended some of this money has been used to fund the part time Gardener's wages and it also covers annual insurance costs etc. Purchases of small equipment, seeds and our other annual costs are paid for using income from the sale of produce, donations and fundraising events.

We are continuing to look at ways in which the project can become more financially sustainable.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

Be realistic and don't over estimate how much you can do with the resources you have! We're still learning to abide by this ourselves.

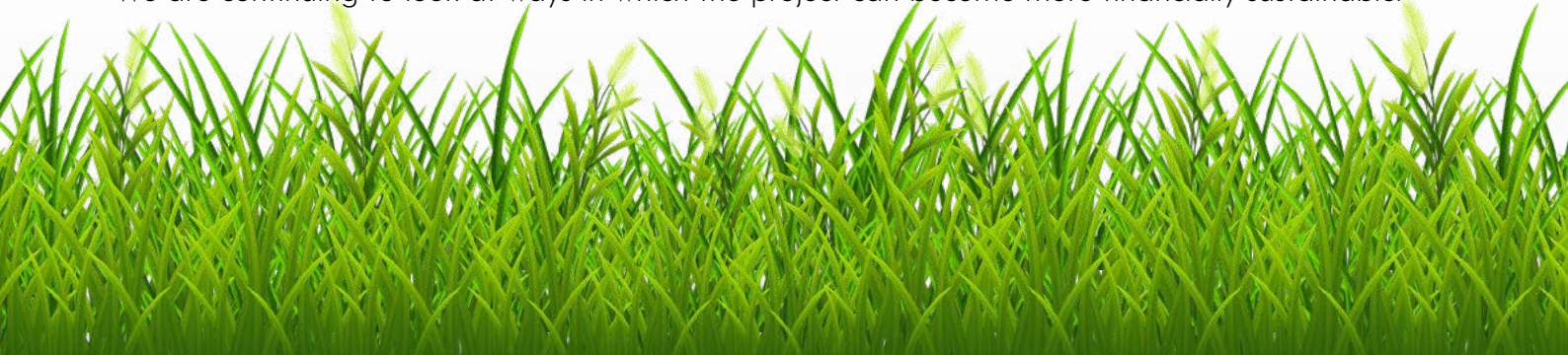
Lessons Learned



How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

7 volunteers are on the steering group, and we have another 6 or so regular volunteers (that's just under 10% of the island's population). Our average volunteer hours are nearly double the gardener's paid 20 hours per week during the peak season and the project would not be possible without this contribution.

Volunteers





Project

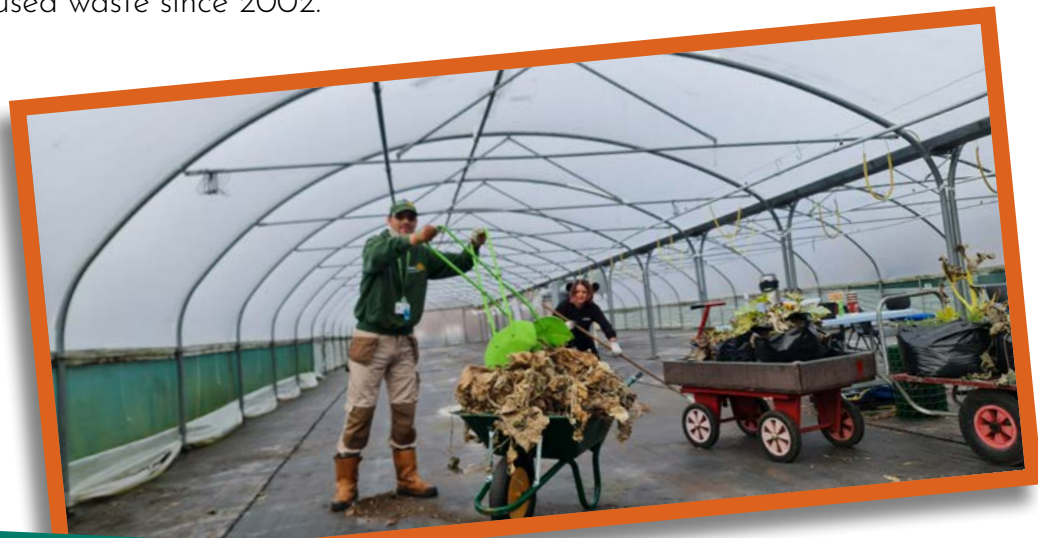
The Grow Project

How did the project start/what does your project do?

The Grow Project is a therapeutic garden, created by and for people with additional support needs, mainly learning disabilities. It is a healthy, positive and beautiful educational and working environment, enabling people to work meaningfully and enjoyably towards reaching their potential.

We have a large vegetable plot, a fruit cage, polytunnels, a wildflower meadow and wildlife gardens and ponds. The project is open to the public, through the Botanic Gardens. We have reduced and reused waste since 2002.

We work with the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society offering trainees an individual-centred course – **'Grow and Learn'**. It's a friendly, thriving place!



Project Questionnaire



What is your proudest project achievement?

The ethos of the place: prioritising people and planet. Most of the trainees have been here for years because they enjoy it so much. We've received the Green Apple Award several times because of our natural methods and minimum waste approach to growing food. Many areas in the garden are given over to wildlife to support biodiversity and pollination.

Since the COVID-19 crisis began, we have diverted resources into supporting local food charities, such as Inverness Foodstuffs and Crown Cupboard. A couple of our volunteers also help at Foodstuffs so there is good collaboration and we hope to improve upon the variety and seasons we can offer them free food. We also donate vegetable seedlings to local charities who are growing veg with vulnerable kids, people in poor health etc.



What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

Not to set targets! Be patient and the jobs will be done when they are done. The important thing is to support the trainees.



How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

We have a thriving community volunteer group – currently over 20 of whom 16 come in on a weekly basis for 3 – 6 hours. It's a lovely place to volunteer. Previously, we have had Duke of Edinburgh Award participants and we currently have 5 High Life Highland Leadership volunteers comprised of 3 adults with mild learning disabilities and 2 teenagers, who are also doing their Saltire Awards.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?



2 part-time Horticultural Trainers, assisted by occasional Relief Horticultural Trainers.

How are you funded?

Funded by NHS Highland and the generous support from individuals, including the Sutherland Family Trust. We are becoming more financially sustainable by introducing a daily charge to participants eligible for financial support. We also raise money from selling our plants and vegetables to Botanic Garden visitors.





How did the project start/what does your project do?

Thurso Grows is run by Thurso Community Development Trust and includes running a community garden space of 1000m² and associated workshops on composting, gardening and food waste minimisation. We also aim to promote local produce and encourage people to grow at home while taking a community aspect to sharing food. Previously funded by the Scottish Government Climate Challenge Fund we were able to redevelop our Garden space over two years. We are now funded by National Lottery Communities Fund for a further two years where we are taking an approach of empowering our volunteers to run workshops and have ownership of the garden and growing. They regularly sell produce at our Town Market and welcome others to the Garden, we also work with other groups including North Highland College and NHS to provide green health activities in the garden space.



Project Questionnaire



What is your proudest project achievement?

Our project only commenced in April 2019 with staff in place a month later in May. Our community garden site was hugely neglected having been run by a previous organisation who had failed to recruit voluntary effort and had been in abeyance for the previous two years. We had no raised beds or space for growing at the point of commencing the project as all of the garden space was completely overgrown. In addition to this the focus previously had been wildflowers so the ground was not fully suitable for growing produce. We commenced very quickly a full redesign of the space and created raised beds which enabled us by July to actually have salad vegetables growing in the garden space. The skills of our gardener and project co-ordinator meant that regularly from August/September volunteers were able to take produce home and the garden was ripe with produce. Our harvest festival in October saw over 50 attend and all of the food provided was grown in the garden. It is a myth in Caithness that nothing grows, so our proudest achievement is that if you are determined enough it most definitely grows!



How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

We hold regular garden sessions weekly which bring 20-30 volunteers each week. In addition to this we run community meal sessions with around 20 weekly volunteers.

How are you funded?



Thurso Grows is funded by the Climate Challenge Fund. We have also received smaller grant awards from Tesco Bags of Help and most recently Green Health Partnership funding, Lottery Communities Funding and Town Centre Regeneration Funding.



How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

1.8 FTE.



What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

We were very fortunate to receive core funding towards running our project without it we would not be able to have made as great an impact as we have. The community garden space we inherited is testament to that, without the funding which has been made available to us if having to run on voluntary effort our garden space would still be under development. With funding we have been able to install a Polycrub®, which in Caithness conditions vastly improves our chances of success in growing.

www.polycrub.co.uk

Caithness is notoriously difficult to grow in and our season starts at least a month following normal growing guides.

However, we suffered with the exit of Climate Challenge Funding where we had thought on starting the project that we would have been able to continue funding. That made us have a really good look at sustainability of the garden in 2020 and where funding would come from next. We worked hard to secure new funding and in July 2021 we were awarded two years of support from the Lottery Communities Fund. While working on this we also devised a plan for a social enterprise and now with Thurso Community Benefit Society as our trading arm we are about to launch Socially Growing which through an asset transfer of the Highland Council Greenhouses in Thurso and the creation of a Zero Waste Refill Shop will see commercial growing take place in our greenhouses and hopefully a profitable business which will support the community growing part of our project in the long term.



Photo by Thurso Grows



The initial idea started back in 2012 but it is in the last two years that the project has gathered momentum. In 2012, two fields at Knocknagael Farm part of the Scottish Government bull stud farm on Essich Road, Inverness, were identified as surplus to the farm. A planning application for 200 new houses was lodged in 2013. The land was eventually retained for agriculture and a community group was formed that took forward an initial feasibility study. The project has gathered momentum since 2019 when the group started to work with HIE¹ and DTAS² to follow a formal Asset Transfer Request process under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015. Knocknagael Ltd was established in July 2020, and since opening to members in 2021, has seen an increasing membership.

This is a transformative project. The site (the smiddy field) is good quality agricultural land so has a strong potential to provide for community food growing and amenity areas. Knocknagael Ltd is seeking to acquire the field to develop these uses. The community-growing project will include allotments, an orchard, areas for walking and wildlife and community growing areas for the benefit of the community.

The project addresses the demand in Inverness for community growing spaces, and seeks to responds to social and health needs, and the climate and environmental challenges. This is an area of Inverness becomingly rapidly urbanised where community spaces are lacking.



Project Questionnaire



What is your proudest project achievement?

There have been a number of major milestones achieved in the last year and a half that have given momentum to the project. A key moment was being successful in the application for a Scottish Land Fund Stage 1 grant in July 2020 to take forward a feasibility study and business plan for the project. This has allowed us to take forward a community consultation with more than 340 responses received in less than two months, and a 98% of support for the project. We have also identified future partnerships with a range of organisations such as Birchwood Highland, Action for Children and with local schools.

During this period the company opened to members and reached 60 members in the summer, and secured charitable status, two other important milestones. The commissioned work has provided the foundation for Knocknagael Ltd being able to submit an Asset Transfer Request to Scottish Government in October 2021, the culmination of a significant amount of effort³. The next steps will involve applying to the Scottish Land Fund for the purchase of the site and securing funding to implement phase 1.



How many staff work on your project?

At the moment the project is run by volunteers. Knocknagael Ltd has 6 directors plus members.



How are you funded?

Our main source of funding for this stage has been the Scottish Land Fund.



How many volunteers are involved with delivering your project?

Currently we have almost 70 members, although we are not yet at the stage that we can take forward practical activities, many of our members have a strong interest in giving back to the community. We have organised several visits to different projects to learn from others.

³ The commissioned work included a feasibility study and business plan by Community Enterprise, a Landscape Report by Harrison Stevens a landscape design practice and a Valuation Report by Bell Ingram.



What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

The whole process has been a learning experience allowing the project, the company and those involved to develop and grow. A key lesson from the response we have received is that there is very strong community support for more projects of this kind and demand for allotments following the pandemic. More should be done to facilitate the use of public land for these purposes. While taking forward pioneering projects is challenging, a practical lesson is not to give up, progress can be made. Finally, we have also learned how much these projects can help bring people together in urban communities, something underestimated.





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