



our land, our people  
and our place  
in the future

## REPORT OF THE SUSTAINABLE LAND-USE WORKSHOP

held in Bridge House, Inverness  
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# 1. THE MAIN IDEAS of the WORKSHOP

The main themes from the day's discussions

## **Assets**

North Sutherland has two tremendous assets:

- The environmental value of much of the area. Assert the value of this asset, and demand a fair return for looking after it.
- Community support and huge community commitment.

## **The Value of the Strategy**

- Formulating the Land-Use and Renewable Energy Strategy has been a key step in gaining the support of the agencies.

## **The Importance of Community-led Development**

- It is important to form community development companies to focus and progress development work at the community level.

## **Be Proactive**

- Develop community pride.
- Promote the area.
- Be tough - fight for a fairer deal, but take care to keep partners on board.
- Exert pressure - it does work.

## **Two Levels of Action**

- Distinguish two levels on which action can be taken – the practical and the political.
- Divide your ideas into two groups: those on which you can take some practical action now, and those which require political change before progress can be made.

## **Acting on the Practical Level**

- Write an Action Plan rather than a Management Strategy.
- Form community companies to take initiatives forwards.
- Use paid officers in the community(ies) to drive action.
- Small sums of money can be very important.
- Do what you can – one step at a time, and take the community with you.
- Be opportunistic - act when you can – don't wait for everyone to be ready.
- Demonstrate that change can happen – politicians will pick up on your success.

### **Acting on the Political Level**

- Don't lobby for change at the political level unless you can do it through a constituted body or network that can make its voice heard effectively.

### **Practical Actions**

- Create an information directory and website.
- Promote North Sutherland and 'sell' designations.
- Promote ecotourism.
- Change attitudes to conservation designations.
- Tackle issue of unworked/absentee crofts.
- Engage land managers not yet involved.
- Align priorities with agency objectives where possible.
- Remove obstacles to land access created by lack of information about ownership.
- Enlist support of the Local Enterprise Company for resource targeting in zonal area (all or part of North Sutherland).
- Investigate 'hybrid' funding – a blend of new, targeted funding and existing mainstream funding from public sector agencies.
- Engage in Community Planning process with its potential for cross-agency-support.

### **Other Practical Actions Dependent on Change at Political Level?**

- Extend the Croft Entrant Scheme (CES).
- Address housing need.
- Create new jobs.
- Expand Crofting Communities Development Scheme (CCDS).
- Develop tourist services capacity (guides, rangers, etc).
- Fund incentives to use land in new ways and to run trials of new ideas.

### **Actions on the Political Level**

- Question publicly the values and assumptions on which present system of payments is based – which is not designed to benefit the working crofter.
- Lobby for reform of existing payment schemes.
- Lobby for resource targeting.
- Lobby for new funding approaches.
- Lobby for more flexible, less compartmentalised working by agencies.
- Lobby for better funding for agri-environmental initiatives.
- Address arguments to those with the power to effect change – often in Brussels.

### **Tactics Generally**

- Create virtuous circles, i.e., positive feedback loops (success breeds success).
- Build partnerships – circumspectly.

- Seek to influence forthcoming reforms of existing schemes.
- Learn the tools the agencies use.
- Try to align priorities to match agency objectives, and *vice versa*.
- Define outcomes.
- Pilots, demonstrations – are they crucial? Or is the time for them past?
- Put pressure on the agencies to work collaboratively in a way that builds on /harmonises with community agreements.
- Use existing funding schemes where you can, but also seek new funding approaches for new ideas – avoid losing the cutting edge.
- Find effective means of putting pressure on those who influence decisions.
- In presenting a case make the most of the strength of community support and commitment. Your efforts to date cannot be dismissed lightly, because of the input of local people.
- Use political representatives to exert pressure.

### **Encouraging Signs/ Possible Opportunities**

- You are not alone. Other organisations are also working to develop a broader debate and so bring about change.
- There is £400m for non-agricultural support in the European Union (EU) rural development budget.
- The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) is to be reformed in 2006.
- There is potential in the Community Planning process.
- The Scottish Parliament has set up a Rural Development Committee.
- The Scottish Parliament will want to have a greater say in spending of EU funds.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

**Frank Rennie**

**Lews Castle College, University of the Highlands and Islands**

The idea of today's workshop is to stimulate discussion about how The North Sutherland Sustainable Land Use Strategy Group can take forward its work on land-use management planning.

We have with us both those who have been involved in the group's discussions so far and others who have not been involved but who may be able to help take things forward. Though not directly involved in the Dùthchas project, I have an interest as Convenor of the University of the Highlands and Islands' Sustainable Rural Development Research School, and will try to make my contribution today as facilitator.

We will start this morning with several short presentations which will help us to focus on what has been done and how it has been achieved, and so give us a perspective on the results of the Dùthchas process. The afternoon will be given over to discussion and group brainstorming sessions on practical suggestions for taking the Strategy Group's ideas forward. Thus although the project is coming to an end, the focus is very much on the way ahead.

- DUTHCHAS -  
A PERSONAL VIEW from the NORTH COAST

**Joan Campbell,**  
**Pilot Area Advisory Group and Young Returners Strategy Group**

Although this is a sustainable land use workshop, I have been asked to speak about my personal view of the entire Dùthchas project. What Dùthchas means to me in one word is opportunity. Let me try to give a personal overview of the process rather than a more formal audit.

To be honest, my initial reaction to Dùthchas was to sharpen my claws. I was asked by Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise (CASE) to add to an already full portfolio the remit of Dùthchas and Initiative at the Edge. This was about a year after the first reports of Dùthchas hit the local headlines, so I was inquisitive.

I was told that Dùthchas and Initiative at the Edge would run in tandem, and I was responsible to CASE. So I mugged up on both. Because I understood Dùthchas to be a demonstration project, I had as much sympathy for those who were introducing this slow-moving consultative process as I had for the community people whose frustration at seeing little accomplished in the early stages brought an element of anarchy to some of the meetings.

So I found myself engaged in a number of arguments, at board level and community level. In short it meant that I personally must see two sides of the argument. But if it were to be always an argument, then there would be a loser, and that loser would be the community.

A good lesson to be learned was how Dùthchas enabled its very capable co-ordinators to show the communities the value of going into the heart of each area and refusing to leave until they had the answers. It is from these answers that the projects now on the ground have developed.

It then became important to believe the oft-quoted phrase “working in partnership”. It has been particularly valuable to me to see the consistent encouragement given by the agency people, who continued to attend meetings when community numbers dwindled.

I am a great believer in partnerships, and I don’t care who does the job as long as it gets done. But that too proved a sore point, and I have seen the hurt caused by laying claim to the success of a project which was initiated, and at times taken forward, without Dùthchas intervention. So, for me, it means being very aware of who does what locally, and that has not been easy! An overlap was at times inevitable and the wrong end of the stick easily grasped.

Dùthchas has undoubtedly meant **communication** – the value of good communication and the drawback of lack of communication, to the extent that at times Dùthchas was synonymous with total **confusion**! Keeping the workers in the dark is not a good idea when you rely upon good-humoured volunteers to carry out the job. The good humour goes quickly, followed by the volunteers.

I believe that Dùthchas along with its sidekick, Initiative at the Edge, has done a tremendous amount of good in the area, good that should continue into the future in the sustainable manner elicited by both schemes. As Dùthchas is drawing to a close, I know that without a ‘helmsman’ much of the work will disappear into the archives. Continued participation in a sustainable development plan for the area, brought about through the goodwill of the volunteer workers in the

communities, can be achieved through the continued guidance of a scheme that will remain with us when Dùthchas slips off centre stage. And that scheme is Initiative at the Edge. Then the continuance of the great **opportunity to move forward** that Dùthchas initiated will be its lasting memorial.

Dùthchas brought to the area many good things. We had a lot of communication, a lot of fun, a great recognition of the many talents that seemed to be dormant, a chance to be an ambassador for North Sutherland both over the seas to the islands and abroad. We had the opportunity to show good old-fashioned hospitality to our country folks as well as to those from abroad, many of whom still communicate with us.

If we want to make the best of all the projects initiated by the schemes, then we must grab the **opportunity** and leave behind the **confusion**.



## **4. An INTRODUCTION to NORTH SUTHERLAND**

### **Pat Thompson, Pilot Area Advisory Group and Land Use Strategy Group**

North Sutherland covers a huge area divided into just three parishes – Durness, Tongue and Farr. It is served by two Highland Councillors and five community councils. It is traditionally known as the Land of Mackay, and is rich in cultural heritage and archaeological remains with over 6,000 listed sites dating back over 6,000 years.

#### **Population**

North Sutherland was at the centre of the Clearances in the nineteenth century. In 1991 the population of the area was 1,951, while the population of Sutherland as a whole was 13,216. Between 1981 and 1991 the population of North Sutherland fell by five per cent, and it is expected that the forthcoming census will confirm that the population in one area has dropped by 30 per cent in the last 20 years. Moreover the structure of the population is skewed when compared with the Highland average, with proportionally more retired people and proportionally fewer in the 16-29 age group. The average population density is one per square kilometre, as opposed to the Sutherland average of two and the Highland average of just over eight.

#### **Employment**

Most people are employed in the service sector (29 per cent) or in agriculture, forestry and fishing (27 per cent). There is a seasonal variation of 5-8 per cent in the unemployment rate, slightly lower than the overall Highland rate.

#### **Land Use**

Most land is in sporting management, or in agriculture or forestry. There are 667 crofts, of which 112 have absentee tenants. Together they cover about 6,000 hectares with the common grazings extending to about 16,000 hectares. By 1999 there were 26 entrants under the Croft Entrant Scheme. Forestry covers about six per cent of the land area, a figure which reflects the fact that vast tracts are unsuitable for growing trees.

#### **Environment and Natural Heritage**

The area is renowned for its clean air and water and the quality and diversity of its natural heritage, which is a major resource. There are 50 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), which together cover 47 per cent of the land area, and two National Scenic Areas, which cover 12 per cent of the land area. Part of the area is included in the Caithness and Sutherland Peatlands Special Protection Area (SPA) and candidate Special Area of Conservation (cSAC), and is a proposed World Heritage Site. A number of other sites are classified as SPAs and cSACs under the European Community (EC) Birds and Habitats Directives.

#### **Initiative at the Edge**

In recognition of the social fragility and environmental interest of the area, North Sutherland was designated as one of seven pilot areas for Initiative at the Edge (Iomairt aig an Oir), which is intended to encourage greater inter-agency co-operation in project development in Scotland's most fragile rural areas. Initiative at the Edge is managed in North Sutherland by CASE.

### **Social Inclusion Programme**

The Sutherland Partnership manages the Social Inclusion Programme and aims to support young people vulnerable to social exclusion because of rural isolation in a large area poorly served by roads and public transport networks

## 5. DÙTHCHAS in NORTH SUTHERLAND

### **Kerry Conlon, Dùthchas Project Officer, North Sutherland**

Dùthchas is an old Gaelic word which describes the link between people and place, and people's sense of place and of belonging, and of their shared heritage. It speaks of an empowered people with a strong sense of identity, who cherish their inheritance and who have a determining role in their own future and in that of future generations. It is an appropriate word to describe communities which are actively working together for a sustainable future.

The purpose of the Dùthchas project is to address the issues of sustainable development in some of the most rural areas in north-west Britain. The project has been working in three pilot areas since 1998 – North Sutherland, North Trotternish and North Uist. These areas were chosen because they were identified as fragile rural communities, with distinctive cultural and natural assets. Each of the three areas is unique, but all share common opportunities and problems.

The project receives 50 per cent of its funding from the European LIFE Environment Programme. The other 50 per cent is provided by the eleven funding partners from the list of 21 agency partners: The Highland Council; Scottish Natural Heritage; Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise; Skye and Lochalsh Enterprise; the Crofters Commission; Highlands and Islands Enterprise; Comhairle nan Eilean Siar (Western Isles Council); Western Isles Enterprise; Forestry Commission; Scottish Tourist Board; and Historic Scotland. The Scottish Arts Council and Scottish Homes have also helped to fund projects.

The other partners are: Forest Enterprise; North of Scotland Water Authority; Scottish Arts Council; Scottish Environment Protection Agency; Scottish Homes; Scottish Museums Council; Scottish Office – Agriculture, Environment and Fisheries Department (now Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department); Scottish Wildlife and Countryside LINK; Scottish Council for Development and Industry; and the University of the Highland and Islands.

The main aim of the project is to find practical solutions to problems of developing rural areas and their natural surroundings in a sustainable way. To achieve this aim four sustainable goals were developed, and seen as the most important things to work on:

- Retaining a viable and empowered community
- Maximising benefit from natural and cultural resources by wise use, and by protecting and enhancing these resources
- Reducing problems of remoteness by delivering local needs locally and reducing dependence on external inputs
- Minimising the negative and enhancing the positive impacts of actions on other places and communities and on future generations.

The first phase of the process was the Initial Review, for which the area was divided into 11 sub-areas. In each the team held public meetings, some well attended, some not, and also carried out house-to-house surveys. The team asked people what they liked and disliked about their area and what improvements they would like to see in the future. The aim was to enable local people and agencies to identify:

- the strengths of the area
- the challenges facing it
- ideas for the future
- current local initiatives

- key local players.

The team gathered all the information and prepared an exhibition, which toured the eleven areas in the Magnus Arts Bus. The bus attracted all age groups, and people were asked to vote on the bus for the things that they wanted to see taken forward. Accompanying the exhibition on the bus was a tape/slide presentation which was shown in local hotels. At the same time the North Sutherland Value Statement and the first newsletter was produced and sent to every household in the area.

While all this was going on, the Pilot Area Advisory Group was meeting. It is made up of community representatives from the eleven sub-areas together with local agency representatives, and exists to:

- Advise on each stage of the work
- Support the local co-ordinators
- Inform and involve the community
- Develop the strategy
- Take forward priority projects.

The Advisory Group decided to concentrate on five themes as the most important for North Sutherland: Young Returners, Local Produce, Cultural and Natural Heritage, Essential Services and Sustainable Land-Use and Renewable Energy. The group met about four times a year and from these meetings, the Strategy Groups evolved.

The work of the Strategy Groups was to agree an area strategy for sustainable development by:

- Integrating community and agency priorities
- Integrating social, environmental and economic priorities
- Agreeing objectives and indicators to measure progress
- Prioritising actions for implementing and incorporating recommended actions into agency plans
- Incorporating recommended actions into agency plans.

Each Strategy Group developed a vision, objectives and a list of actions. To help them do so, they held massive consultation exercises with experts in specific fields. Today's event marks the first step in the next phase for the Sustainable Land-Use Group – the development of a demonstration project.

The Dùthchas Project has also hosted a Trans-national Conference in Strathgairn, which was attended by visitors from rural communities in Portugal, Estonia, France, Germany, America and Norway. We have also had visits from groups from Sweden and Norway. In addition, members of the local community have visited Norway, Denmark and Cumbria as well as the other Pilot Areas. These visits have proved very interesting and worthwhile.

Each of the three Dùthchas areas held a seminar on adding value to local produce, with the Strategy Groups very much in evidence. These events were considered very successful, as the comments received as part of the evaluation indicate. These activities have made possible an exciting exchange of ideas and have also benefited the area by giving a boost to the whole North Sutherland economy.

Where do we go from here? At the beginning of the Dùthchas process we asked three questions:

- Is it possible to plan a development path for our economically fragile rural areas based on and sympathetic to the natural and cultural heritage?

- Can this be done in a way which ensures the enthusiastic participation of local people so that what they want to see happen becomes a key part of the plan?
- At the same time can all the key government bodies and local authorities support the process and adjust their plans and policies to ensure the success of the plans?

Now that we have answered these questions – each in the affirmative, we are in a position to go forward. We are currently engaged in discussions to set up the “North Sutherland Development Partnership” which comprises the communities of the area and the agencies that we work with. This means that current projects will continue, and we hope that there will be many more besides. We are optimistic about the future and hope that today’s meeting will suggest many ideas for an innovative blueprint for sustainable land-use in our area. We thank the communities and the agencies which have supported Dùthchas throughout the whole three-year process.

## 6. WHY ARE WE HERE?

### The need for a sustainable development land-use management plan

John Toal, Pilot Area Advisory Group and **Land Use Strategy Group**

I would like to give you some idea of the process by which the Sustainable Land-Use and Renewable Energy Strategy Group developed. Figure 1 (please see Appendix One, page 31) indicates the main stages of strategy development. Over a period of six to eight months four or five meetings were held in North Sutherland and from these developed five Strategy Groups, as Kerry has said. (Please see Figure 2, Appendix One, page 32 for more details.)

The Sustainable Land-Use and Renewable Energy Group came together as a group in December 1999 and developed a vision and a set of objectives (please see Figure 3, Appendix One, page 33). The objectives illustrate the wide range of topics that were covered in the process.

These were sent out for consultation to the Pilot Area Advisory Group, all 21 partnership agencies, every household, the Strategy Group and the Reference Group. Soon after, in March 2000, the vision statement was revised and three main objectives were selected (please see Figure 5, Appendix One, page 35).

Since then we have concentrated on Objective 4: to promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices. The H diagram (please see Figure 4. Appendix One, page 34) gives our analysis of how well the area is currently doing in meeting that objective. This became the focus for further consultation on the specific question of how the area's performance could be improved, and led to some additions to the list of suggested actions and also some small changes to the vision statement.

The group then addressed the question: how were these ideas to be taken forward? At this stage we also considered setting up a demonstration action project with seed-corn funding of £1,000, but decided that this would involve a great deal of lobbying, which was not necessarily the role of Dùthchas. We were also aware that in the recent past Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) had funded an environmental demonstration project in Skerray over several years (The North West Agricultural Demonstration Project).

We then began to move towards the idea of incorporating some of the objectives into an overall land management plan for the area – a sustainable land-use plan or blueprint with a delivery mechanism, and tried to focus on this by writing to the agencies represented here today. We felt it should be possible to adapt the idea of integrated development plans for specific areas and create a sustainable development plan for the area. Such a plan would give us a more focused basis for targeting support on an area of obvious need, being economically fragile though socially and environmentally enriched. It would also be very appropriate for North Sutherland with all its designations – a Dùthchas area, an Initiative at the Edge area and a Social Inclusion area.

What the group has done so far is to gather ideas and speculate about a way forward from a land-use perspective. The idea of today's workshop is to try to test this thinking. Does it have potential? Can we pilot these ideas with funding from the public sector agencies in designated areas? Or is this simply wishful thinking at the end of a consultative process that lacks reality and clarity?

We have tried to describe the thought processes that have shaped and distilled our statement about a land use blueprint. We now have the seed of an idea, and we hope that there is potential to fertilise it and develop the thinking for the betterment of the area. We feel we have now taken the process as far as we can as a Strategy Group. We admit to having had some difficulty with the idea of a small-scale demonstration project, because we are trying to focus on the bigger land-use picture and all that stems from that and relates to it.

As time has gone on, we have concentrated on specific elements of the broad canvas. It has been essential to do this, but we are not excluding new thinking and not ignoring other aspects of some of the ideas that have come up. Our thinking may reflect some of the specific interests of members of the group, but we have taken pains to ask representatives of the communities and the agencies for their view. If there appears to be a crofting bias, don't expect someone employed by an organisation whose remit is to promote and develop crofting to apologise. Anyway, there are up to 667 good reasons for any such slant.

Moreover, crofting needs urgent attention. For over a decade we have heard how crofting will benefit from Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) reform, with support moving from production to social, environmental and wider rural interests. If there is tangible evidence of that shift, it seems to be passing many people by. The result is disillusionment. Meanwhile the natural foundations that are there to be supported are being eroded.

What we are highlighting is the need for alternatives, and ultimately for deliverables, that transform the rhetoric of integrated sustainable development into something tangible. We are doing this in the context of land-use at a time when it is topical and of political significance. In that respect there is an opportunity to explore alternatives and, perhaps, an opportunity for innovation and experimentation.

The major challenge today is to embrace that opportunity and build on what has been a long and demanding process for the communities of North Sutherland - in a way that delivers benefits for the area. To do that, we are meeting here in Inverness – which we felt we had to do to test our ideas and get help from outside. We apologise to anyone from North Sutherland who would have preferred this meeting to have been held in the area. Our aim remains to deliver benefits for the people of North Sutherland.

## 7. REFLECTIONS AND DISCUSSION

### Plenary session

#### Introduction – Frank Rennie

There is an opportunity now for further discussion of the ideas we have been hearing about, and particularly for contributions from those from outwith the area who are involved with the project as representatives of public agencies or organisations active in North Sutherland.

Certain themes have run through the presentations: sustainable development; integration; activities and grants; the search for practical solutions; and a sense of anticipation.

We have heard much that is admirable about the work of the Dùthchas project and the Strategy Group: about the time allowed for the ideas of the communities of the area to be developed and refined; about the identification of priorities; about ways of supporting the communities and about consolidating what has been achieved so far; and also about the difficulties that are created as the consultation process begins to raise aspirations.

Solutions will have to take into account that North Sutherland is one of the most sparsely populated areas in Europe and that the area has a diversity of land interests – crofting, forestry, conservation, ‘sporting’ estates. In addition, its peripherality means that development initiatives have additional costs.

So there are unanswered questions. To what extent can people pick up and run with the ideas that the Sustainable Land-Use Strategy Group has been putting forward? To what extent can partnership working be formalised with the Local Enterprise Company? If it can, can the strategy be developed into a ‘business plan?’ with help from Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), possibly – indeed preferably – in a community context? And beyond that, are the resources available to capitalise on agency good will and community effort?

#### Discussion

*Note: The following points were made by individuals during the discussion, but not necessarily agreed by the group.*

##### *Strategy Group*

- The Strategy Group held three meetings with the same members. Between each of these meetings there was consultation with a reference group of experts, functioning as a shadow group, as well as responses from individual households.
- The areas prioritised for immediate action inevitably reflect the interests of the strongest members of the group. But we are able to go forward flexibly as a whole area or as one part of it. We have no intention of losing the uniqueness of any of the 11 communities, and any attempt to ensure equality of development would be doomed to failure.
- In seeking better resource targeting and promoting zonal areas of support, we are prepared to work in any area that justifies targeting, on the principle that if you are going to use resources properly, you must target properly.



### *Local Investment in the Process*

- It is clear that there has been a huge effort and commitment of time and energy by the community. You must take the view that society owes you something in return for providing – and safeguarding – such a massive number of SSSIs and such a large amount of open space. It is owing to a failure of government and public agencies that conservation in these areas is not adequately funded, and you have to stand up and tell them that they are not doing enough. Much of North Sutherland is not just a worthy cause, but increasingly recognised as having high environmental value. Keep working with your partners but be tough about asserting the value of your assets and the need to treat the people of the area properly.
- Attempts to improve tourism infrastructure in the area show that pressure pays.

### *Assessing the Process*

- What do you see as a successful outcome to the process? Stopping things getting worse? Improvements? In what – population? Employment? To what level?

### *Fight for North Sutherland*

- Fight for North Sutherland. Work on making people proud of it, and fight for it. Learn the tools the agencies use and make them work for your money. Your land was impoverished through the human tragedy of the Clearances, when many individuals made huge commercial gains and the nation prospered. Claim ownership and fight for what you need. Point out that agricultural support is still organised in such a way as to compensate the very rich for loss of income. You are on a winner.

### *Arguing for the Area*

- Many issues are beyond the control of communities. Perhaps they can't change existing grant payments but they can argue the case for improved funding with the appropriate agencies. There may be no immediate extra money from mainstream budgets, however.
- There is a need to argue along such lines as: Why is there a subsidy of say £100 a hectare for corn, but not for an SSSI?
- We are very dependent on decisions taken in Brussels. SNH has been arguing for 5-10 years for changes in the way agricultural support is distributed, but with very little success. The experience demonstrates that SNH has no power in such matters, nor do HIE and THC. So we have to address where power lies. One tactic is to continue to press for changes from a community rather than an agency perspective, and exert pressure through political representation, which does give the area some power.
- Any lobbying or campaigning that the community engages in can only add weight to the work organisations like the Scottish Crofters Union are doing on the strategy side. Rest assured we will help you motivate the politicians. Your efforts to date cannot be dismissed lightly, because of the input of local people. Together we can work to 'wind up' people to develop a broader debate.
- There is considerable power in local solidarity. Local groups have their own agendas, but North Sutherland is on the threshold of speaking with one voice.

### *Funding*

- The system of area payments for designated land is not designed to help the working crofter.
- Seeking a new approach to funding for a sustainable Land Management Strategy for North Sutherland would seem preferable to trying to access funding from existing schemes.
- In promoting the strategy, it is important not to be thought to be saying "more of the same". If the ideas that you have streamlined and the priorities that you have particularised become embedded in schemes supported by mainstream funding, there is a danger that your plans will lose their cutting edge.

- Chasing money for short-term projects does not equal sustainability. An agency can respond on one of three levels:
  - at the very local level, using local flexibility
  - at a regional node, where they can give emphasis to a topic, e.g., the high proportion of conservation designations in North Sutherland
  - at a national, or political, level, where issues are only resolved through some mechanism at national level.

Rather than short-term project funding, you should seek long-lasting mechanisms, which can maintain a structure for work at a local level.

- One of the quickest ways of unleashing resources may be to watch neighbours doing it.

#### *Working with Others*

- Assertions of ownership and community agreements about strategy may well upset agencies, who would be happier sitting in a room together on their own working out what they can do. But where communities do have aspirations, the agencies should be responding. We have got to get agreement between agencies that reflect agreements on the ground.
- All agencies are focused on delivering their own targets, for their jobs depend on it. Only when you bring them together, do they realise that others may be doing the same thing.
- If you find yourself adopting a partnership approach, do you mean to align priority issues alongside the objectives of organisations like HIE, which are very target driven, even if they are also interested in the 'intangibles'?
- We have been aware of issues about how much flexibility the agencies can have, and how much they are able to work together and target and prioritise, given their statutory remits. We have been working with agencies on these issues. We have developed a model structure in each Dùthchas area for taking forward strategy and implementing plans. The structure is different in each area: in North Uist a community-based organisation will co-ordinate the implementation, on behalf of the wider partnership group; in Trotternish a community-based Company Limited by Guarantee is in the process of being set up; North Sutherland would like to take the same route, working initially through a partnership agreement between the community and the key agency players, and ultimately setting up a community company.
- We have also had three consultations with the 21 agencies about strategy alignment in an attempt to identify how they can support the project. These have revealed the difficulties in making strategic links to the Area Strategies.
- An interesting model is the island of Westray, where community consultation, organised by the Corrom Trust, had two practical results. One was the setting up of a Company Limited by Guarantee. The other was a community development strategy. This formed the basis for the community to meet with the agencies to look at how they could pull together.
- Another example of collaboration was a calendar for the community, which showed when funding became available and how to apply for it - which was a way of targeting agricultural support and maximising the returns from it.
- One of the problems is a tension between reliance on agencies, which are largely reactive, and the community's need to be proactive. Agencies cannot target, but have a duty to respond on issues which have already been identified, e.g. new crofts, without being able to consider related needs for, say, housing, or jobs.

#### *Existing Opportunities*

- Opportunities already exist - watch that they are not passing people by. People have innovative ideas, and money is available, so encourage them.
- Dùthchas is unique in bringing opportunities to the people. People's mind-sets have been changed, and they now see that agencies are there to be used.

- Do not ignore the potential of community planning which will oblige agencies to address the needs of communities like North Sutherland. There are huge opportunities for Dùthchasto feed into the process.

#### *The Limitations of Existing Mechanisms*

- Agricultural policies are still very compartmentalised; for instance, RSS is still 'bolt on'. 2006 CAP Reform should mean a much more integrated approach. However, it is recognised that existing mechanisms are failing and people will be looking at multi-objective land management contracts in France, USA, and New Zealand. Communities must set their targets and outcomes, and then say this is what we need to achieve them. Making use of demonstrations and pilots will be absolutely crucial. There is unlikely to be much change in LFAs and agri-environmental funds but peripheral areas must say what they need and exert pressure.

#### *Levels of Action*

- There are two levels of action. The first means grasping the political agenda, but there needs to be a body to do that. There are also actions you can take without any political change. At a very practical level (based on your own experience) separate out the political agenda from the practical. If you concentrate only on the political agenda, you will simply create doom and gloom. You must form community companies to take action where you can. Then you will be ready once other structures and money falls into place. Don't write the things you want to do into a Sustainable Land Use Plan – they will just get lost, because other organisations don't have integrated Sustainable Land Use plans. You also need someone with a salary in the community to pursue sustainable development opportunities – such a person can be far more effective than extension workers and capacity building. Small sums of money can be the key. Take one step at a time and get a mandate for each step.

#### *Encouraging Signs*

- As we talk of being more proactive, and forming local development companies to pursue goals agreed by the community, note a few encouraging signs. The Scottish Parliament has just formed its first-ever Rural Development Committee. There are £400m in the EU rural budget for projects outwith agriculture. Politicians will pick up and use success stories, good working examples of the kind of projects we would like to see. And as time goes by, the Scottish Parliament will surely wish to have a more proactive role in the spending of EU money in Scotland (despite the present constitutional arrangement).

## 8. IDEAS FOR THE FUTURE

### Pat Thompson

I have taken much from the discussion, and embrace the point about the importance of an Action Plan as opposed to a management strategy. It is a very timely idea when Dùthchas has got people talking, the communities are as one, and there is the potential to deliver benefits.

To close this morning's session, let me give you three possible ways forward for you to think about at lunch:

1. Maintain the status quo.
2. Develop existing funding mechanisms – fine-tune them in the hope that that will make a significant difference.
  - Less Favoured Areas (LFA) payments
  - Agri-environment support (e.g., Rural Stewardship Scheme (RSS), Organic Aid)
  - Crofting Counties Agricultural Grants Scheme (CCAGS)
  - Make more money available, and so create some opportunities.
3. Develop a suite of area-based support mechanisms with the emphasis on the socio-economic and environmental benefits of active crofting, so linking those working the land with others.

Seek support for:

- Young crofters
- Enhancement of croft buildings and infrastructure
- Cattle and cropping, new breeds
- Machinery rings
- Positive management of Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs), Special Protection Areas (SPAs), Special Areas of Conservation (SACs)
- Local finishing, slaughtering, product development and product marketing
- Training and education in the community (retain people, thus avoiding the problem of having to work to get people back)
- Development of ecotourism
- Seek broad package of support from Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department (SERAD), the Crofters Commission (CC), The Highland Council (THC), Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise (CASE), and Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH).

## 9. FACILITATED PARTICIPATORY WORKSHOP

### Introduction – Frank Rennie

The task for the afternoon session is to consider, in groups, the action points listed against Objective Four and prioritise them (and others which may arise). Objective Four is “to promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices” (please see Figure 5, Appendix One, page 35).

Please apply the following considerations, using a scale of 1 to 5, where ‘1’ counts low, and ‘5’ counts high:

- Likely time-scale (e.g., ‘Now’/ 18-24 months/ longer-term, etc)
- Financial cost (you have a licence to look at existing funds)
- Need for external involvement (i.e., from outwith the 11 communities).

For example, ‘1’ means an action point could be addressed now or has very small financial implications, or requires very little external assistance.

### Group One (led by Pat Thompson)

#### 1. Preliminary Discussion

*Note: The following points were made by individuals during the discussion, but not necessarily agreed by the group.*

#### *Need for a Wider Debate*

- There is a need to involve, over the longer-term, a larger number of land managers of all kinds to ensure better representation of the broad range of practice.
- It should be relatively easy and quick to find out why some groups are not getting involved e.g., landowners who have been invited, and to develop action to work with them.

#### *Awareness-raising and Training*

- There is a need to address a range of training and/or awareness issues.

#### *Achieving the Vision*

- Remember the vision of integrating current and innovative land management practices.
- There is a need to remain constantly aware of the bigger picture – of socio-economic conditions, and to analyse possibilities as these change, using for example a SWOT analysis.
- Project Officers can be asked to harmonise Dúthchas planning with the strategic plans of agencies and other organisations, where possible.

#### *Accessing Data*

- It can be difficult to access data of different kinds – data about funding, about land-use practice, about access to the resource that the land represents, about land ownership. It can be

particularly difficult to ascertain who owns woodland. The Highland Council has a data-base on landownership, but it needs updated. Is there a need to lobby on land reform?

#### *Supporting Crofting*

- There is a need to do something about absentee crofting (using an effective carrot rather than resorting to a stick).
- The Croft Entrant Scheme needs to be given a higher profile, and needs to achieve more. Crofts need to be used better. New crofts should only be created if they offer new economic opportunities. There is also a need to create more opportunities for crofters to earn part-time incomes.
- Co-operative schemes, such as sheepstock clubs, machinery rings, seem to work best when those involved are under pressure and do not perceive themselves to have other options.

#### *Ecotourism*

- The value/economic benefit of ecotourism should not be neglected.

#### *Access to Resources*

- There is a need to have access to the resources of the land, the coasts, and the sea. These are rich in renewable energy potential. One estate created 40 jobs in renewable energy.
- Marine/freshwater fisheries are also important resources to which access is needed.
- There is a need to feed into the Community Planning process and to develop cross-agency support. Once it is clear who has ownership of resources, the community planning process should be used to address issues of access.

#### *Distinguish between the Practical and the Political*

- Make a distinction between practical steps that can be taken and issues which need lobbying. Connect with networks engaged in political lobbying.

## 2. Response to the task set by the Workshop facilitator

ACTIONS To promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices (Objective 4)	Time	Cost	'Local ness'
4.1 <u>Look at and identify best practice examples of sustainable land-use</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Will need to devise/ identify criteria of sustainability.</li> <li>• Then seek examples and learn from others (further away?).</li> <li>• May need long time-frame (lifetime or longer) before sustainability of project or practice can be demonstrated.</li> </ul>	1?	1	3
4.2 <u>Better resource targeting – promote zonal areas for support</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Promote N Sutherland as a zone within Scotland.</li> <li>• SNH &amp; Forest Authority already targeting.</li> <li>• Opportunity for LEC to play a special role?</li> </ul>	2/3	2/3	5
4.3 <u>Promote/reward cattle ownership and management</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cattle numbers declining because of labour involved.</li> </ul>	1	3	4

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need to raise awareness of cattle stock clubs amongst producers, and promote community/co-operative approach.</li> <li>• Review take-up.</li> </ul>			
<p>4.4 <u>More funds for agri-environment initiatives – clear links with marketing of healthy, environmentally sound product</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need lobbying action to bring about guaranteed entry to RSS.</li> <li>• Also need to make links with Local Biodiversity Action Plan, and support local aspiration to market better products.</li> <li>• Also promote awareness of opportunities for local producers.</li> </ul>	4	2	34
<p>4.5 <u>Add value by linking traditional land management with tourism, recreation, local marketing, etc</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a difficult area: regulations (e.g., about food products) can be tricky, not just for individuals, but for groups too.</li> <li>• Need big inputs to find markets/market development.</li> <li>• Also need to find ways of overcoming problems of low volume, and of maintaining quality and grading, and ensuring continuity of supplies (crucial).</li> <li>• Also have to be able to survive changes in consumer taste/habits.</li> <li>• Sandy Renfrew (CC) has experience of these difficulties.</li> </ul> <p><u>More positively:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate partnerships &amp; links with other areas, to facilitate wintering of stock in, e.g., E Ross, SE Sutherland.</li> <li>• Work with local outlets – it is significant progress for a local producer to be able to supply a local hotel or restaurant.</li> <li>• Individuals may be able to find niche markets.</li> <li>• Think beyond agricultural produce.</li> <li>• Clarify links with Local Produce Strategy Group</li> </ul>	No score		
<p>4.6 <u>Review options for retirement schemes and start-up incentives for younger entrants to agriculture or alternative land uses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Current scheme funded by LEC.</li> <li>• Need start-up funds for cattle; flexibility in plans?</li> <li>• Need more assistance with buying stock.</li> <li>• Need more co-ordination (Crofters Commission) with support from HIE.</li> </ul>	1	1	3
<p>4.7 <u>Payment to reflect environment instead of numbers – this would encourage better finished product and promote a shift away from production-based subsidy</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This is a political issue: need to lobby Scottish Executive.</li> <li>• Find a voice which insists a lot more money should go in this direction.</li> </ul>	4	1	4

<p><b>4.8 DEMONSTRATION ACTION</b></p> <p><b><i>Draw up a Dùthchas Area (N Sutherland) sustainable management plan (blueprint) with a recommended delivery mechanism (i.e., support and funding in place)</i></b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Need commitments of help and involvement.</li> <li>• Focus on an objective of agricultural change: reverse the decline in cattle numbers and cropping; halt the loss of people and the decline in active crofting.</li> <li>• Treat as both an environmental and an economic issue.</li> <li>• Prepare a management plan, with some flexibility? Or a process to take initiatives and actions forward.</li> <li>• Look at other plans and offload to them.</li> <li>• Take small practical steps forward whenever possible.</li> <li>• Talk to, and enlist support of, LEC, HIE, Highland Council.</li> <li>• Find someone prepared to chase funding - but remember constraints on and costs of volunteers' time.</li> <li>• Ensure any development meets sustainability criteria, and is not just development for its own sake.</li> <li>• Pursue possibility of 'hybrid' funding (some blend of targeted funding and existing system in which community accesses funding from agency through delivery process) – acceptable to communities?</li> <li>• Use Dùthchas Project Officers in post over next two years.</li> <li>• Address issue of getting targeted funding.</li> <li>• Lobby councillors, approach Highland Council for mainstreaming funding for Sustainability Officer(s)/ cf. Community Education workers.</li> <li>• Tackle issue of who employs them – an existing agency or a community business?</li> <li>• Seek strategy alignment where possible.</li> <li>• Tackle issue of complexity of factors affecting agencies' action plans. Can be done – CES started, as a result of a strategic decision, in two targeted areas, before being extended to others. Analyse what needs to be done.</li> <li>• Offer to deliver elements of agencies' plans, perhaps peripheral to their core objectives, for an agreed amount.</li> <li>• Need some targets, but persuade agencies' to become more flexible/ accept element of risk.</li> </ul>	<p>No score</p>
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## **Group Two (led by John Toal)**

### **1. Preliminary Discussion**

*Note: The following points were made by individuals during the discussion, but not necessarily agreed by the group.*

#### *Primary Aim*

- Make clear that the strategy is to secure the existing population and encourage returners.

#### *The Value of Persistence*

- There is a need for persistence. It is crucial to keep plugging away at attempts to bring change. (Consider the change in thinking about birchwoods since 1996).

#### *Information*

An information directory could be quickly compiled as a desk exercise. It could include a short statement and the collation of, or references to, existing documents.

- There is also a need for a web site. Someone would have to be given responsibility for updating it – perhaps the Initiative on the Edge officer. (Note: The Cultural and Natural Heritage Group are setting up a website.)
- There is also a need to prepare and distribute simple guidelines for land-based industries.

#### *Promoting the Area*

- There is also a need to find an effective mechanism to promote North Sutherland as an area. Perhaps a glossy document?
- There is a need to 'sell' designated areas. We also have to change attitudes to designations. Younger people are more sympathetic.

#### *Crofting*

- The Crofting Entrant Scheme (CES) has a very limited budget, yet the need to create more entrants is very strong. Strath Halladale is one of the most active crofting areas, yet the average age of crofters there is over 60. CES could be targeted quickly, possibly with support from the LEC.
- We also need new thinking on the current scheme, with a fresh look at crofts which are not worked or which have absentee tenants.
- The long-term future for agriculture in North Sutherland is dire. We need to get cattle onto every piece of ground with a conservation designation. We should aim to promote the practice of grazing cattle for non-meat production. Is there other funding which could be used? Will any cattle do?
- We need a zonal approach to township development. We need to formulate sustainable development objectives, and make use of existing funding - CCDS, RSS. One objective should be the development of Cattle Clubs and township herds – with matching processing facilities.
- To encourage young people back into crofting there is a need to provide alternative employment.
- There needs to be good access to housing, which most people can't finance without a job.
- The 1990 reforms of the Crofters Building Grants and Loans Scheme (CBGLS) have enabled schemes like CES to develop, through new housing assistance on bareland crofts, but crofting housing grants have not kept pace with the cost of living. Perhaps there is a case for paying a higher rate of grant in some areas, but in the past there has always been a uniform approach to

grants. However the current rates could perhaps be re-examined in any re-jigging of the CBGLS. Difficulties in getting mortgages have led to decrofting.

- There should be a quick decision on whether the pilot Empty Croft Homes Scheme is an effective means of meeting housing need, and more funding should be provided if the review is favourable.
- It is important to address housing needs by providing evidence of demand and pressure.
- The traditional system of agricultural support has broken down. But it makes sense to build on the existing CCDS. The aim should be to maximise the benefits of the existing scheme and develop new long-term objectives using local officers and the Initiative at the Edge officer. This would be relatively easy to set up. Cf. Strathspey and SNH's Skerray scheme.
- The good uptake for CCDS illustrates the importance of 'home-grown' objectives. Objectives originating outside the area are less likely to be supported.

### *Funding*

- We need not just new information, but new money as well, and not just for renewable energy projects but for land use generally.
- There is a need to target funds on areas of greatest need, although we already have some targeting. Further targeting may involve means testing and/or discretionary grants. There is a need to argue the case for why targeting is necessary. Reference can be made to the Dùthchas plan which gives steps ahead based on consultation.
- The aim should be to target as broad a range of funding as possible – for example, for steadings, training, marketing. An application for a funding package of this kind is more attractive to funding bodies, who take the view that the linkage gives better value.
- Seek funding to employ local people as:
  - project officers – who can act as paid form-fillers in the funding application process
  - local advisers, as in Unst
  - monitors of designated areas.

### *Tourism*

- There needs to be more in the strategy about tourism and the environment. We need to reverse the trend, which is for North Sutherland to become a day-trip area, and create opportunities to take money off people. We need to build capacity at a basic level: North Sutherland has currently no pool of guides or rangers, and no training, e.g., a wildlife guiding course.
- We need a local 'Task Force for Tourism and the Environment'. We must try to make it possible for people to see what they want to see, and get the pricing right.
- Tourism and the environment initiatives should be based locally and bring local benefits. Within the Dùthchas project, tourism is being dealt with by the Culture and Natural Heritage Strategy Group, but it is worth stressing some key ideas. For example, lettings should be managed by a local operator, rather than by a business operating from outside the area. The themes of People, Land, Culture are most important assets for tourism.
- Recreation and ecotourism should have more prominence in the plan.

### *Local Produce*

- There is an obvious link from encouraging tourism to local produce, but there are practical difficulties about promoting it. Finishing and direct marketing are very difficult, given the small amounts produced. Also low levels of production mean high unit costs. There is also a major snag – the need to achieve consistency and continuity, which affects organic produce particularly. North Sutherland could benefit from co-operative or collective schemes, with high class, multi-purpose facilities, of the kind to be found in France, for processing and selling produce, but such schemes require total commitment from all member-producers if continuity of supply is to be maintained.

- There is a need to create virtuous circles – e.g., tourism leads to increased interest in local produce, which attracts more visitors. Perhaps these could be shown to operate in a sample township benefiting from the RSS and/or CCDS.
- Other ways forward include action to encourage respect for and appreciation of seasonal produce and awareness of its origin, by for example education and marketing.

#### *Forestry*

- There is a need to promote community forestry, but there are costs. Objectives of local timber utilisation are very long-term.

#### *Other Forms of Land Use*

- There is a challenge to find incentives for people to use the land. Provide support for activities that people will want to engage in rather than just the traditional practices (does crofting have to be just about sheep and cattle?). Flowers? Ecotourism (revenue is the pay-off)? There has been a 90 per cent take up of grants in ESAs in Strathspey. If options and alternatives are provided, people will take them up. There needs to be a wider range of measures to encourage crofters to keep stock – including easier access to more information.
- New schemes and initiatives have to pay money on the achievement of outcomes to encourage those who have put in the effort.

#### *Practical Action*

- There is a need to make progress by some very basic, practical action. For example, identify 12 jobs and employ local people to do them.
- Identify simple actions/initiatives that could be instrumental in bringing about change – perhaps, for example, paying six crofters each to encourage twites and rock doves. This may be enough to encourage other crofters to show an interest. Funding for any new initiatives must continue long enough to bring about a change in thinking.

#### *Bringing about Change*

- Only 10 per cent of EU agriculture budget is currently directed to conservation. How do we change framework, conditions of support? Is it important to set targets?
- There is a need to involve the area in Community Planning, though it is currently structured in a way that prevents that.

## 2. Response to the task set by the Workshop facilitator

ACTIONS To promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices (Objective 4)	Time	Cost	'Local ness'
2. Create short, simple information directory, and set up website.	1	1	1
• Involve area in Community Planning process	No score		
4.1 <u>Look at and identify best practice examples of sustainable land use.</u>	No score		
4.2 <u>Better resource targeting – promote zonal areas for support</u>			

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop zonal approach to township development.</li> <li>Formulate sustainable development objectives, and make use of existing funding - CCDS, RSS.</li> </ul>			
<p>4.3 <u>Promote/reward cattle ownership and management</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combat attitude that sheep the easy option – rooted in crofting systems and lifestyles.</li> <li>Develop Cattle Clubs and township herds – with matching processing facilities.</li> <li>Develop initiatives like Skerray and Strathspey crop scheme.</li> <li>Ensure that incentive payments make the new activity worthwhile.</li> </ul>	4-8 (aggregate score)		
<p>4.4 <u>More funds for agri-environment initiatives – clear links with marketing of healthy, environmentally sound product</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work for change in long-term use of agri-budget to change conditions of support.</li> </ul>	3	3	3
<p>4.5 <u>Add value by linking traditional land management with tourism, recreation, local marketing, etc</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop environment – local produce link.</li> <li>Address issues of small amount of produce and high costs.</li> <li>Tackle finishing and marketing problems, e.g., by creating common facilities shared by different producers or areas.</li> <li>Tackle problems of seasonal produce, e.g., by encouraging respect for/appreciation of seasonal produce and awareness of origin of produce.</li> <li>Develop links between forestry and tourism and recreation.</li> <li>Develop community forestry by highlighting best practice.</li> <li>Create locally based jobs in the environment and woodlands.</li> <li>Employ local advisers – achievable if help and organisation is available.</li> </ul>	3	3	3
<p>4.6 <u>Review options for retirement schemes and start-up incentives for younger entrants to agriculture or alternative land uses</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Address main aim of securing existing population and encouraging returners.</li> <li>Need review of CES and more finance for the scheme.</li> <li>Need fresh action on unworked crofts and absentee tenants.</li> <li>Need higher level of assistance under CBLGS.</li> <li>Address housing needs.</li> <li>Seek alternative sources of funds (in integrated approaches).</li> </ul>	1 1 3	1 1 3	1 1 3
<p>4.7 <u>Payment to reflect environment instead of numbers – this would encourage better finished product and promote a shift away from production-based subsidy</u></p>	No score		
<p>4.8 <b>DEMONSTRATION ACTION</b> <i>Draw up a Dùthchas Area (N Sutherland) sustainable management plan (blueprint) with a recommended delivery mechanism (i.e., support and funding in place)</i></p>	No Score		



## 10. CONCLUSION

### Summing Up the Day's Discussion – Frank Rennie

From the day's discussions, I have gathered together what seem to be the common threads - a relatively small number of ideas which have come up again and again in discussion of issues, many of which have been with us for a long time:

- *A Local Information Network*  
There is a need for a local North Sutherland information network.
- *Local Solidarity*  
Firm up local solidarity – whether defined by area or region. This will need lobbying and organisation.
- *Widening the Geography*  
Modifications to local agency practice will have knock-on effects, so you are breaking the trail for others. Develop links with other areas.
- *Alignment*  
Align community aspirations with the targets and objectives of agencies involved in providing assistance, and *vice versa*.
- *Partnerships*  
Develop partnerships, but operate them carefully – for particular purposes and for specific outcomes. Be aware there has to be an element of give and take in any successful partnership, and therefore some loss of independence. Beware too of the poisoned chalice of collective responsibility.
- *Concentrate on the Practical*  
Keep clear the distinction between the political dimension and the practical action that can be taken. Don't become meshed in political action: choose which issues you are going to address and decide whether you are going to tackle them head-on or by the back door.
- *Community Planning*  
Seek to exploit the potential of Community Planning, which is currently the preserve of local authorities and other organisations operating locally. There needs to be more grass roots influence on the process.
- *Rural Development Committee*  
The Steering Group should arrange a meeting with Rural Development Committee recently established by the Scottish Parliament.
- *Action Plans*  
There have been numerous calls to think in terms of an Action Plan rather than a Strategic Management Plan, in order to focus on practical outcomes.
- *Community Companies*  
Think about setting up Community Companies through which energies can be channelled and focused, and which have the political and legal 'persona' to attract funding and investment.

- *Funded Community Workers*  
There is widespread agreement that funded Community Workers are invaluable, but who pays, and whom are they responsible to? The community? If so, how is it defined?
- *Quality of Life Issues*  
There are a number of 'quality of life' issues that are not sustainability issues. These often express the legitimate aspirations of the community. National investment in measures to address them pays dividends.
- *Targeting*  
Community groups should target areas which public agencies are known to be engaging with, and offer to deliver specific objectives. Such an approach could enable some pooling of resources, provided by different agencies from their mainstream funding. There is a need to devise some system, perhaps based on a rolling programme, which would both fast-track targeted delivery and provide communities with specific incentives.
- *Crafting Communities Development Schemes*  
Operate on the principle of zonation within the framework of an CCDS, to make it possible to concentrate on issues relevant to a particular community, and to allow assistance to be led by demand rather than attempt to apply equal treatment regardless of the extent of local enthusiasm.
- *Realistic Outcomes*  
There is no guarantee of consistent good will, let alone funding. There needs to be some measuring of outputs to assess progress, and illustrate what can be achieved by investing public funds.
- *Seek Support from the Scottish Executive*  
There appears to be an obvious opportunity for a structured package, such as a business plan or a strategy with outputs, to be delivered to the Rural Development Committee of the Scottish Parliament. Doorstep them. Build on work so far.
- *Seek Other Forms of Support*  
Though Dùthchas is coming to an end, work will continue with Initiative at the Edge. There will, it is to be hoped, packages of development with multi- goals. There will be opportunities to create links with the Northern Periphery Programme, and with UHI's research work. Encourage input and support from HC and HIE business counsellors
- *Be Proactive*  
There is a need to be proactive, but focused on targets according to an agreed strategy.
- *Local Sharing*  
Develop and facilitate means of sharing locally – e.g. exchanging experience of problem-solving and good practice; and also information. Investigate the possibility of sharing a Development Officer with another community/area.

## **Closing Remarks**

### **Pat Thompson**

The members of the Strategy Group will regroup and reflect on all that they have heard today. Meanwhile the formal report will be circulated to you all.

The North Coast Development Group is being formed at this very moment and is planning a varied course of action, if not a formal management plan.

I hope that those of you who visit North Sutherland in years to come will see some tangible evidence of today's meeting.

The members of the Strategy Group thank you all for coming today, and also thank Vanessa, Issie and Wilma for organising the workshop, Joan and Kerry for their presentations, and Frank for facilitating the discussions.

## **Afterword**

### **Sandy Murray**

I have been involved with Dùthchas for three years, but I have heard many new things today, especially in the afternoon session.

Over the three years we have achieved success in what we set out to do. We have gathered together a great deal of information and we must now make sure we don't lose it. We must also format it so that people can make use of it.

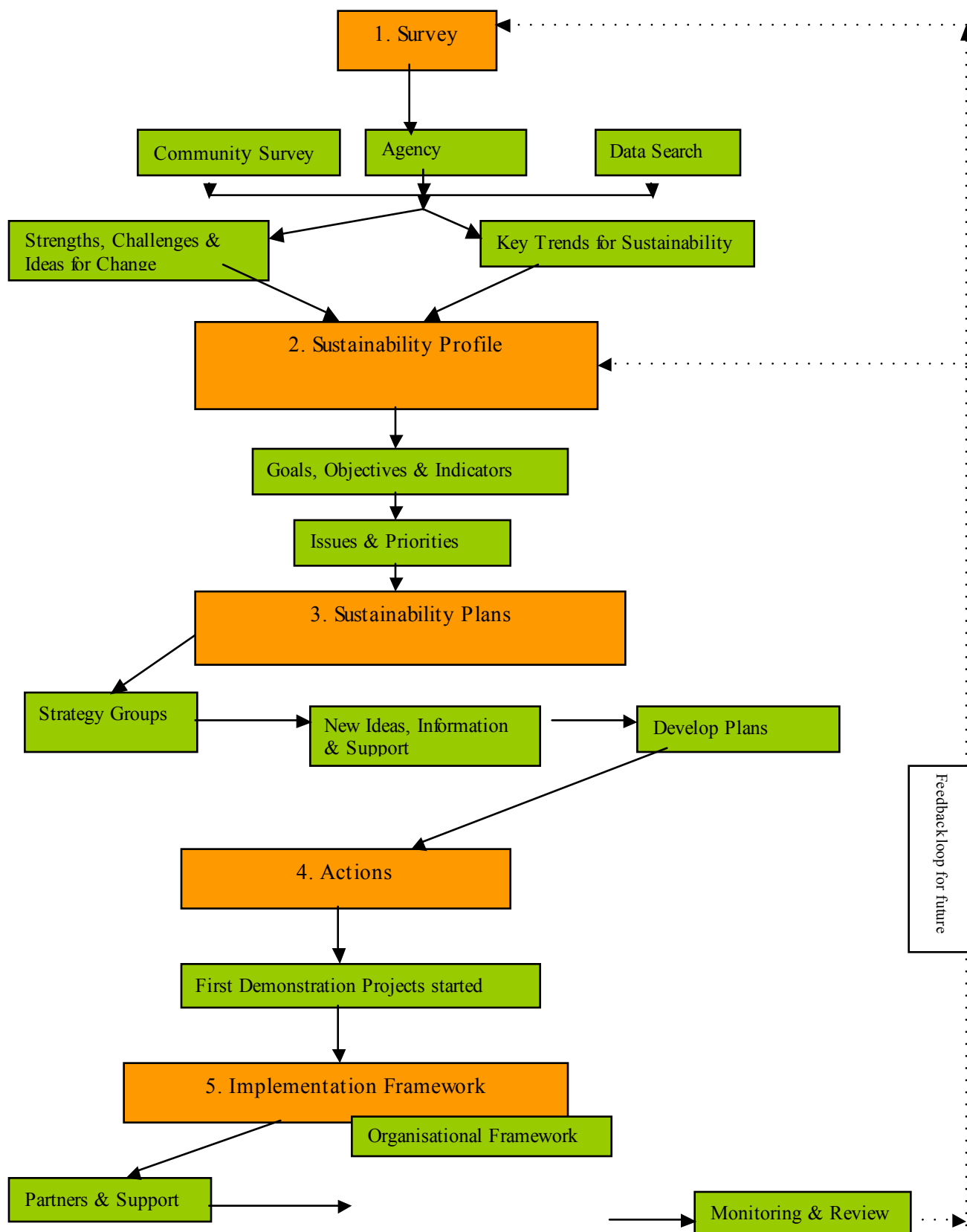
I am pleased to say that although Dùthchas is coming to an end, funding for projects will continue under Initiative at the Edge.

I count myself fortunate to have been involved in the project. Thank you all for coming today and contributing to our work.



Figure 1: *STAGES OF STRATEGY DEVELOPMENT*

### How was the Strategy Developed?



**Figure 2:**  
**DUTHCHAS PILOT AREAS SUSTAINABILITY PRIORITIES**

*North Sutherland*

<b>Sustainability Priorities: Topics selected for immediate Action</b>	<b><i>Sustainability Priorities: Topics for future Action</i></b>
<b>Young Returners</b> <b>Local produce</b> <b>Cultural and Natural Heritage</b> <b>Essential Services</b> <b>Sustainable Landuse &amp; Renewable Energy</b>	<i>Improve habitat and species management</i> <i>Develop Trails, paths, walkways and Interpretation</i> <i>Increase local involvement with planning</i> <i>Reduce reliance on imports</i> <i>Waste Reduction</i>

**Trotternish Peninsula**

<b>Sustainability Priorities Topics selected for immediate Action</b>	<b><i>Sustainability Priorities Topics for future Action</i></b>
<b>Trotternish Trails and Interpretation</b> <b>Diversification, markets and produce</b> <b>Transport infrastructure</b> <b>Renewable Energy</b> <b>Waste Reduction</b>	<i>Young Returners</i> <i>Increase local involvement in planning</i> <i>Essential Services</i> <i>Reducing reliance on imports</i> <i>Active habitat management</i>

*North Uist*

<b>Sustainability Priorities Topics selected for immediate action</b>	<b><i>Sustainability Priorities Topics for future action</i></b>
<b>Renewable Energy</b> <b>Sustainable Use of Marine Resources</b> <b>Marketing of Local Produce</b> <b>Tourism using our Unique Features</b>	<i>Transport</i> <i>Community, Recreation &amp; Sporting Facilities</i> <i>Essential Services</i> <i>Making better use of natural resources</i> <i>Waste &amp; Recycling</i> <i>Health</i> <i>Erosion</i> <i>Young Returners</i> <i>Community Planning</i> <i>Employment Opportunities for young &amp; old</i>

*Figure 3: STRATEGY GROUP WORK*  
**How the Group developed their topic**

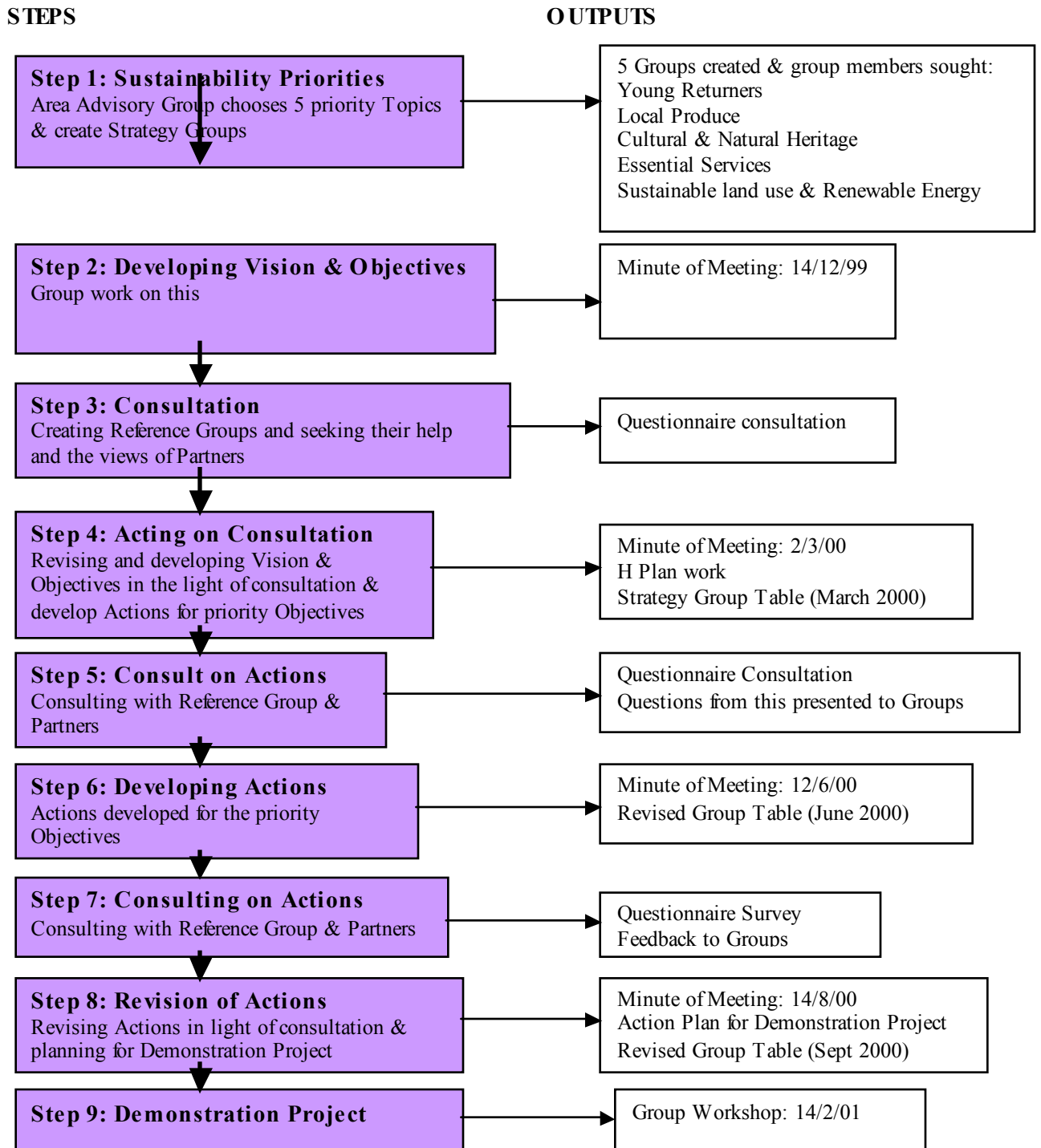


Figure 4: H Plan Findings -

**Objective: To promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices**

**(+) Positive reasons for score**

- The objective is partially recognised in existing support payments
- CAP reform increasingly recognised these objectives
- Crofting is recognised as a socially and environmentally beneficial land use system
- Keeping people on the land – maintenance of traditional land management skills
- Has an attraction to keep local people or entice them back to their roots
- Active crofting linked with social fabric of communities eg. housing quality, local community etc.

*How well are we meeting this objective at present?:*

**Group Score: 3**

0

10

**Actions to be taken to improve the score for future.**

- Encouragement for alternative / innovative land uses
- Better resource targeting – promote zonal areas for support
- Promote / reward cattle ownership and management
- More funds for agri-environment initiatives – clear links with marketing of healthy, environmentally sound product.
- Field trips to examine sustainable land uses in other parts of the world – develop locally think globally
- Introduce GM crops
- Link traditional land management with tourism, recreation, local marketing etc.
- Promote / investigate local finishing and marketing of product eg. environmentally friendly lamb, beef etc

**(-) Negative reasons for score**

- Lack of proper resource targeting. The most socially beneficial systems do not necessarily receive the bulk of environmental payments
- Social and environmental interests can be viewed as conflicting interests
- Decline in agricultural returns can entail poorer land management
- Not enough consideration is given to these benefits within current support structure
- Insufficient recognition of objectives by national government – over consideration of vested large scale agricultural interests
- Dependence on sheep
- No clear commitment to encourage diversification
- Land ownership system leaves environmental payments / compensation open to abuse
- Loss of active land management: abandonment
- Poor local use of agricultural products – no local finishing
- No real commitment to reward positive environmentally friendly land management etc. eg CPS poorly funded

## VISION:

“Wise stewardship of the land with long term benefits for local communities, achieved through integration of current land management practices.”

## OBJECTIVES:

1. **Renewables:** To promote and support a balance of energy/ resource conservation and development of appropriate renewable energy with adequate community controls and benefit from renewables development
  2. **Forestry:** To develop forest resource that is based on multiple benefits including : community participation/ownership; landscape diversity; ecological diversity etc.
  3. **Agriculture:** To promote and support diversification within the agricultural sector;
  4. **To promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices;**
  5. To encourage appropriate grazing levels (stocking density) and stock management practices in harmony with the natural environment
  6. **Sporting management:** To harmonise sporting management with other land uses (e.g. recreation, access, agriculture, forestry, conservation) and encourage and support wider ownership of sporting interest with benefits for the whole community.
  7. **Landscape:** to recognise the inherent value of natural and cultural landscapes through a process that involves local people
  8. **Recreation:** To promote and support the development of access opportunities/ facilities in harmony with other land uses;
  9. To use natural resources for local economic benefit, in preference to imported resources;
  10. To harmonise this strategic plan with other mainstream plans.
- NB: Priority objectives are shown in **bold**

## ACTIONS

- 1.1 Examine feasibility of resources that could be developed in N Sutherland area and undertake a sustainability cost-benefit analysis
- 1.2 ***Develop an information directory on funding, technology and operational structures and procedures***
- 1.3 Improve building insulation
- 1.4 Promote and install solar / wind generation equipment on a household basis
- 1.5 Develop appropriate wind / wave / hydro renewable energy schemes

## ACTIONS

- 2.1 **Look at best practice examples elsewhere**
- 2.2 Develop a woodland network within the area
- 2.3 Develop woodland training education and interpretation within the area
- 2.4 Demonstration of integrated community woodland within North Sutherland
- 2.5 Improve public access with themes put in place ie mountain bikes, picnic areas etc.
- 2.6 Develop a timber utilisation centre to add value to the local timber resource
- 2.7 **Work to secure community involvement in forest design, management and utilisation**

## ACTIONS

- 4.1 **Look at and identify best practice examples of sustainable land use**
- 4.2 Better resource targeting – promote zonal areas for support
- 4.3 Promote / reward cattle ownership and management
- 4.4 More funds for agri-environment initiatives – clear links with marketing of healthy, environmentally sound product.
- 4.5 Add value by linking traditional land management with tourism, recreation, local marketing etc.
- 4.6 Review options for retirement schemes and start-up incentives for younger entrants to agriculture or alternative land uses
- 4.7 Payment to reflect environment instead of numbers – this would encourage better finished product and promote a shift away from production based subsidy





## 12. APPENDIX TWO: LIST of ACRONYMS

CAP	Common Agricultural Policy
CASE	Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise
CBGLS	Crofters Building Grants and Loans Scheme
CC	Crofters Commission
CCAGS	Crofting Counties Agricultural Grants Scheme
CCDS	Crofting Communities Development Scheme
CES	Croft Entrant Scheme
CSAC	candidate Special Area of Conservation
CTDS	Crofting Township Development Scheme
EC	European Community
ECHS	Empty Croft Homes Scheme
LFA	Less Favoured Areas
RSS	Rural Stewardship Scheme
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SERAD	Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
THC	The Highland Council
UHI	University of the Highlands and Islands



### 13. APPENDIX THREE: AIMS / OBJECTIVES of the WORKSHOP

- Provide a brief background to the aims, workings and results of the Dùthchas project in North Sutherland
- Establish the basis of need to draw up a sustainable land-use management plan for North Sutherland
- Establish the value of drawing up a land-use management plan for the local community, relevant statutory agencies and the Highlands and Islands community as a whole
- Identify past and present funding measures/mechanisms of relevance to sustainable land-use in North Sutherland
- Identify current barriers (actual/perceived) to drawing up a management plan for sustainable land-use
- Identify those parties interested in working with the local community to draw up a sustainable land-use management plan.
- Agree on the appropriate course of action to progress the idea.

## 14. APPENDIX FOUR: The WORKSHOP PROGRAMME

10.00 – 10.30                      Registration and tea or coffee

### **Session One – The Background**

10.30	Introduction to Session One Frank Rennie, Lewis Castle College, University of the Highlands and Islands
10.35	Round table Introductions
10.40 – 10.50	Dùthchas – A Personal View from the North Coast Joan Campbell, Pilot Area Advisory Group
10.50 – 11.00	An Introduction to North Sutherland Patrick Thompson, Pilot Area Advisory Group
11.00 – 11.20	Dùthchas in North Sutherland Kerry Conlon, Dùthchas, Project Officer, North Sutherland
11.20 – 11.40	Why are we here? The need for a North Sutherland sustainable land use management plan John Toal, Pilot Area Advisory Group
11.40 – 12.50	Reflections and Discussion
12.50	What Next – Some ideas for the future Patrick Thompson, Pilot Area Advisory Group
13.00 – 13.45	Lunch

### **Session Two – Ideas for the Future**

13.50	Introduction to Session Two Frank Rennie
14.00 – 16.00	Facilitated Participatory Workshop

#### **Key Areas**

- Identify past and present funding measures/mechanisms of relevance to sustainable land use in North Sutherland
- Identify current barriers (actual/perceived) to drawing up a management plan for sustainable land use
- Identify those parties interested in working with the local community to draw up a sustainable land-use management plan.

16.00 - 16.15	Closing Remarks
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## 15. APPENDIX FIVE: LIST of PARTICIPANTS

Dick Birnie	Macaulay Land Use Research Institute
Barbara Bremner	Scottish Natural Heritage
Duncan Bryden	Scottish Wildlife Trust
George Campbell	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Joan Campbell	Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise
Bill Cattnach	Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department
Kerry Conlon	Dùthchas
Roy Dennis	Consultant
Rory Dutton	Scottish Crofters Union
Karen Eaglesfield	Crofters Commission
Douglas Greig	Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department (Land Use and Rural Policy)
Vanessa Halhead	Dùthchas
Adam Harrison	World-wide Fund for Nature (WWF) Scotland
Janette MacKay	North Highland Forest Trust
Gillian MacKnight	Scottish Agricultural College
Issie MacPhail	Dùthchas
Iain Matheson	Scottish Executive Rural Affairs Department
Sandy Murray	Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise and Strath Halladale crofter
Chris Nixon	Forest Enterprise
David Reid	Reporter
Sandy Renfrew	Crofters Commission
Frank Rennie	Lews Castle College, UHI
Bill Ritchie	
Pat Rodlin	Northwest Council for Community Action and Skerray crofter
Meg Telfer	Dùthchas
Pat Thompson	Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
John Toal	Crofters Commission
Jeff Watson	Scottish Natural Heritage