

Community Profile

Achany

Scottish Community Foundation

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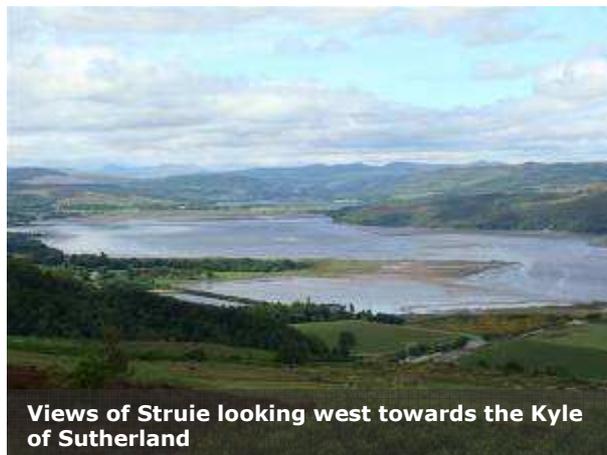
Glossary

CAB	Citizens Advice Bureau
ECDL	European Computer Driving Licence
HA	Housing Association
HIE	Highlands and Islands Enterprise
HMIE	Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education
KOSI	Kyle of Sutherland Initiative
SIMD	Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation
SNH	Scottish Natural Heritage
SNS	Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics
SOA	Single Outcome Agreement
SRDP	Scottish Rural Development Programme
SPTG	Sutherland Partnership Transport Group
SSE	Scottish and Southern Energy
SYF	Sutherland Youth Forum
VG-ES	Voluntary Groups East Sutherland

The Scottish Community Foundation wishes to acknowledge the contributions made by many people in the Kyle of Sutherland to this community profile, particularly the panel members of the Achany Community Benefit Wind Farm Fund.

Executive Summary

The Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund is provided by Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), the developer of the Achany Wind Farm in Central Sutherland. Community benefit is a 'goodwill' contribution voluntarily donated by a developer for the benefit of communities affected by a development where this will have a long-term impact on the environment. The Achany



Community Benefit Fund will support organisations in the three community council areas of Ardgay & District, Creich and Lairg within Highland Council local authority area. It will be a significant local resource, providing a fixed sum of £76,000 per annum for 25 years, rising in line with inflation, accruing from 1st February 2009, plus an additional variable amount linked to the output of the wind farm once it starts generating electricity. The Fund will operate as a single and joint fund supporting community based activity across the three areas, bringing wider benefits to the area and building on links already established between the communities.

This report provides a snapshot of the area, highlighting information and opinion on a range of social and economic issues that have informed the scope and purpose of the Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund. The process for compiling the Community Profile combined desk top research with community consultation, drawing on the Kyle of Sutherland Community Vision 2008 and an Economic Impact Study of Central Sutherland by EKOS, January 2007. The process was informed by the National Standards of Community Engagement.

This Profile should be periodically reviewed during the lifetime of the Fund. As a result it is possible that the purpose and priorities of the Fund will also change to reflect the changing needs and challenges within the area of benefit. During these review periods efforts will continue to be made to consult with local groups and individuals in useful and meaningful ways.

Both the community consultation and desk research highlight the need to have a vibrant local economy that encourages younger people and families to settle in the area. Alongside this there is recognition of the need to build and sustain vibrant communities that support and connect people, whatever their age. Emerging key themes include growing the local economy, harnessing environmental assets, exploring community

management opportunities, developing infrastructure and transport provision, meeting the needs of older and young people and developing the strong community spirit that already exists in the benefit area. Cross cutting issues relevant to all these themes are capacity building, partnership working, community development and volunteering, working across generations and ensuring access and sustainability. Highlighting cross cutting issues can help support the wider strategic purposes of the Fund and help ensure that the Achany Fund is achieving some real longer-term outcomes for the community.

After extensive discussions with the Achany Advisory Panel, a body established to advise the Foundation on priorities or strategies for use of the funds available, and contribute to decisions about grants, the following framework is proposed for the Achany Fund:

Overall aim of the Achany Fund

The Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund invests in activities and initiatives that help to build a vibrant local economy, supports thriving communities and makes the area an attractive place to live, work and visit for people of all ages.

Fund Purposes

The Fund will do this by awarding a mixture of capital and revenue grants that:

- Strengthen and diversify the local economy through support for social enterprises, especially those that explore, test and develop activity that sensitively exploits the area's tourist potential or niche business areas.
- Stimulate new ideas and innovative approaches to generate growth and development and new employment.
- Support the acquisition, development and use of new community assets and maintain and enhance existing ones.
- Ensure that adequate provision and/or services are available for the community that improve their life chances and/or quality of life.
- Support efforts that co-ordinate community activity and optimise local resources and assets.
- Respond to unforeseen circumstances or opportunities that are in keeping with the broad Fund aims identified above.

Fund Priorities

The Fund will support activities that are strategic and sustainable and take a long term view. To help work towards this, applicants are encouraged to also consider how their proposals reflect some of the following priorities:

1. Developing sustainable employment or volunteering opportunities and/or the employability of staff or volunteers.
2. Building their groups and organisations to be more effective.
3. Working in partnership with other organisations that might be local, regional or national and that provide added value (financial or other) to the initiative.
4. Connecting with wider sections of the community beyond the immediate target group.
5. Ensuring that issues of access and sustainability have been considered.
6. Considering how the specific activity can have some reach to the wider geographical area covered by the Fund.
7. Raising a proportion of the total budget for the activity from other sources.

As well as acknowledging the need to periodically review the actual Fund purpose and priorities it will be important to develop a framework for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which the Fund is achieving its purpose. The Foundation will work with the Panel on this during the Fund's first year of operation.

Introduction

The Achany Windfarm Community Benefit Fund is provided by Scottish and Southern Energy (SSE), the developer of the Achany Windfarm in Central Sutherland. The Fund is managed by the Scottish Community Foundation (the Foundation), which acts as the agent of Scottish and Southern Energy. The Scottish Community Foundation is a charity dedicated to strengthening communities by awarding grants that make a genuine difference to the lives of local people.

Community benefit is a 'goodwill' contribution voluntarily donated by a developer for the benefit of communities affected by a development where this will have a long-term impact on the environment. In the UK, community benefit is predominantly associated with energy and building developments. In the renewables sector, wind farm developments have led the way but there is growing discussion around community benefit in relation to wave and tidal power. There is no legal or planning requirement by a developer to offer a community benefit donation and a local authority has no powers

of enforcement if a developer is unwilling to make a contribution. However community benefit is increasingly being recognised both as a strategic investment in communities and a form of longer term compensation for the disruption and inconvenience associated with large scale development work.

The Achany Community Benefit Fund will support community groups and organisations that operate from and support residents of the three community council areas of Ardgay & District, Creich and Lairg in the Highland Council local authority area. This is called the 'community benefit area' or 'area of benefit'. It will be a significant local resource, providing a fixed sum of £76,000 per annum for 25 years, rising in line with inflation, accruing from 1st February 2009, plus an additional variable amount linked to the output of the wind farm once it starts generating electricity. The Fund will operate as a single and joint fund supporting community based activity across the three areas, bringing wider benefits to the area and building on links already established between the communities.

An important step in developing the Fund has been the establishment of the Achany Advisory Panel. This is a group of twelve local people – four from each Community Council area, two of whom are Community Councillors and the other two are residents who are not currently on the Community Council. Since this is a 25 year Fund it is likely that there will be opportunities for many people to get involved at different times. This panel has been established to advise the Foundation on priorities or strategies for use of the funds available, and contribute to decisions about grants. The Panel is well placed to prioritise projects of greatest impact and benefit to the community. The Achany Advisory Panel has also been involved in reviewing this report and making particularly significant contributions to the shape of the Fund presented in Part 3.

This report provides a snapshot of the area, highlighting key data, information and opinion on a range of social and economic issues from which the scope and purpose for the Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund has been identified. Part 1 is an overview of the community benefit area and identifies some of its current opportunities, issues and challenges. Based on these findings, the second part presents a discussion of the findings and makes recommendations about the scope and purpose of the Fund.

Methodology



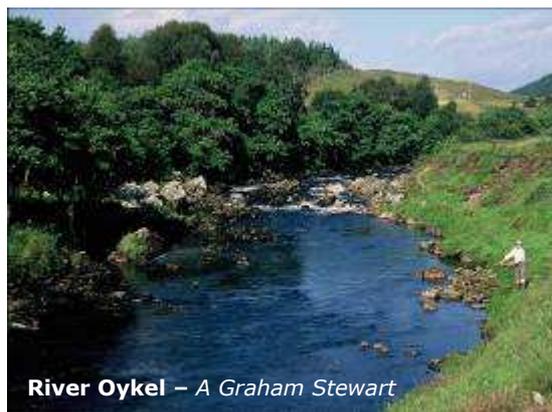
The process for compiling the Community Profile combined desk top research with community consultation. The community consultation element involved two trips to the area for two public meetings, drop-in sessions for individuals before and after each meeting and telephone conversations and email exchanges with other agency staff and local people.

The process was informed by the National Standards of Community Engagement. These standards are the Scottish Government's best practice guidance for engagement between communities and public agencies. They have been well received and widely adopted by national and local agencies, including Highland Council, seeking to engage communities in decisions which affect them about local services and development processes. (See Appendix 2 for further information about how the Standards relate to this Profile)

Early in the process two key reports were highlighted by community councillors as important sources of information – the Kyle of Sutherland Community Vision 2008 and an Economic Impact Study of Central Sutherland by EKOS, January 2007. The Foundation recognised that a range of information was already available providing an overview of the area including its history, information on demographics from the 2001 census, an overview of the local economy and essential services. Both contain useful findings and recommendations which were considered to be still relevant.

Both reports had been commissioned by the Kyle of Sutherland Initiative (KOSI) and were the outputs of significant research and consultation processes, particularly the KOSI Community Vision document. The documents had been distributed to individuals, agencies and community groups throughout the area and were regarded as useful benchmarks of current relevant issues. Although the KOSI Community Vision work began back in 2002 it has nevertheless been an important milestone within the area and a vehicle for progressing on some community led projects including a recycling programme, painting the Bonar Bridge and helping to establish the Youth Development Group. However, the broader intention was always that it would lead to something more sustained in the longer term and be used as the basis for future community development.

However, some gaps were identified in the KOSI Community Vision Document and Economic Impact Study. These relate primarily to health, community facilities, young people and communications. Relevant information around these particular issues was obtained from desktop research and through conversations with individuals/organisations. Information on each of these can be found in Part 2. This research builds



on this previous work to see where a community benefit fund could help address some of the issues and challenges already identified.

The Highland Council Development Plan, LEADER Development Plan and various other Sutherland Partnership documents (who also led on the process for drawing up the LEADER Development Plan), were also reviewed to ensure broader strategic issues impacting on the area were taken account of.

This report therefore draws particularly on the overviews of both the KOSI Community Vision Document and the Economic Impact Study as a way of capturing current critical issues in the area. The findings and recommendations in Part 3 attempt to link in with those from the Vision and Economic Impact Study whilst also linking to other relevant strategic initiatives such as LEADER and the Council's Single Outcome Agreement.

While discussions with community members were an important part of our research process, it is important to note that the consultation was not particularly comprehensive in either its reach or depth. Although it was anticipated that surveys and/or letters would not yield a useful enough return, the two public meetings, drop-ins, follow-up calls and emails were perhaps insufficient in connecting with a very wide cross section of the community including, for example, small businesses. So whilst some very useful contributions were made by a range of individuals representing different ages, experience and interest, these should not be regarded as representative of the whole community benefit area.

However it is equally important to recognise that this Profile is not intended to have an indefinite shelf life and should be periodically reviewed during the lifetime of the Fund. As a result it is possible that the purpose and priorities of the Fund will also change to reflect the changing need and challenges within the area of benefit. During these review periods efforts will continue to be made to consult with local groups and individuals in useful and meaningful ways.

PART 1 – OVERVIEW OF THE ACHANY COMMUNITY BENEFIT AREA

This section presents a brief overview of the community benefit area highlighting some issues that, either currently or in the future, are likely to influence or have an impact on it. The section draws heavily on the EKOS report, the KOSI vision document and the LEADER Development Plan and also reflects some of the information gathered during the consultation work.

1.1 Defining the area of benefit

The beneficiaries of the Achany Fund identified by SSE are residents and groups within three community council areas - Ardgay and District, Creich and Lairg. This area of benefit has been selected based on the short and long term relationships that these communities will have to the Achany Wind Farm in terms of proximity and construction activity - namely, infringement of views and disruption caused by construction and maintenance of the development.



The main settlements within these community council areas are Ardgay, Bonar Bridge, Croick, Culrain, Lairg and Rosehall. Other smaller settlements are Invershin and Spinningdale – although no census data is available for these smaller areas.

Traditionally these settlements form part of an area commonly referred to as the Kyle of Sutherland. Extending for 680 square miles, it forms the inland Central Sutherland area of the North, West and Central Sutherland Ward area, one of 22 wards within the Highland area. North of Ardgay is the actual Kyle, a river estuary fed by the Rivers Oykel, Shin and Carron that flows into the Dornoch Firth.

See Appendix 1 for a map of the community benefit area.

1.2 The broader picture

The area of benefit is within the jurisdiction of Highland Council. Highland Council's Corporate Plan for 2009 - 11 entitled 'Strengthening the Highlands' sets out the Council's strategic objectives for an area that covers one third of the land mass in Scotland, includes 14 inhabited islands and has a widely dispersed population. In place until the next Council elections, the Plan sets out how the Council will distribute their annual revenue budget of £850m and capital budget of £87m across four priority areas - Children and Families, Communities and Older People, Economy and Environment.

The plan details the Council's Single Outcome Agreement (SOA) which presents a framework for how Highland Council will contribute to the Scottish Government's 15 national outcomes. A number of the outcomes are relevant to the priorities identified during this consultation period:

National outcome 1 - We live in a Scotland that is the most attractive place to do business in Europe.

Local outcomes

- To grow more local businesses, including social enterprise.
- Increased productivity in business with growth potential in the key sectors of tourism, food and drink, financial services, energy, life sciences and creative business.
- Balanced population growth across the Highlands.

National outcome 11 - We have strong resilient and supportive communities where people take responsibility for their own actions and how they affect others.

Local outcomes

- A well supported voluntary sector with sustained high levels of volunteering in the Highlands.
- More communities own, manage or have a stake in local assets.
- Improved quality of life through community led action and more people feeling connected to their communities.

The SOA also provides the framework for community planning in the Highlands. Community Planning is a statutory process which helps public agencies work together with communities to try and improve services.

Within Sutherland, the Sutherland Partnership is a local community planning



partnership. As part of Highland Council's formal community planning arrangements, it brings together a host of statutory and voluntary organisations to facilitate community planning and promote collaboration. Voluntary Groups East Sutherland (VG-ES) which supports the voluntary sector in the community benefit area is one of the partner organisations along with Highland Council, Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE), NHS Highland, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH), Forestry Commission (Scotland), North Highland College, Council for Voluntary Service (North) and the Northern Constabulary. The Partnership also convenes a number of forums on Biodiversity, Tourism, Transport and Community Development.

Ward Forums contribute to community planning and have been developed to promote community engagement by enabling public and community representatives to be informed of and to scrutinise Council activities and service delivery. Ward Forums are administered by a team of Ward Managers. Each of the 22 wards has a discretionary budget of £56,000 for local service enhancements and community projects. The North, Central and West Sutherland Ward Forum is the Ward Forum covering the Achany benefit area.

Community Councils are another important mechanism to help facilitate and support community engagement. Whilst they have no statutory powers community councils have an important role in representing the community's views to the Council and other public bodies and responding to local planning requests. The three Community Councils within the community benefit area have had an important role to date in the development of the Achany Windfarm and its Community Benefit Fund.

Across much of Scotland, the LEADER Programme is an important resource which promotes community and economic development in rural areas. LEADER is administered through the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), a £1.6 billion government programme of economic, environmental and social measures designed to develop rural Scotland over the next six years. The SRDP also administers a Rural Priorities programme with 36 related funding packages, some of which have relevance to some of the priority areas of the Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund.

In the Highland region LEADER is delivered across Local Area Partnerships which were developed following community consultation. The LEADER Development Plan for Sutherland, developed by the Sutherland Partnership, sets out plans to implement LEADER in the Sutherland area between 2008-2011. A sub-group of the Sutherland Partnership also operates as Sutherland's Local Area Partnership. Whilst the geography is larger (and includes North West and Central Sutherland, East Sutherland and

Edderton wards) the programme is an important funding stream that, with a requirement for applicants to find match funding, may link at times with the Achany Wind Farm Benefit Fund. The Plan provides an outline of the seven LEADER themes and possible projects identified during the consultation period. Further details are shown in Appendix 3.

Sutherland's unique environmental assets mean that its renewable energy potential is very high and Highland Council is committed to maximising community benefit to Highland communities from renewable energy developments. It was one of the first councils to issue a policy on community benefit in 2003. The council receives regular requests of interest in the development of hydro power and wind farm activity which present



Invershin Hotel - J Butler

important challenges and opportunities for the area. But the Council has been very proactive and had already developed a Community Toolkit in 1994 to assist communities with such proposals. It also has policy on Community Benefit which in summary recommends an acceptable level of community benefit contribution, commits to ensuring separation between the planning process and community benefit negotiations and notes a preferred option for communities themselves to take the lead in negotiations to secure community benefit.

There are currently 24 communities across the Highlands who already have community benefit funds from the renewable energy sector. In the Sutherland area there is increasing wind farm activity with planning applications either submitted or approved and under construction. Within the Kyle Sutherland area there is one operational wind farm, Beinn Tharsuinn, with a further two already approved in the Lairg and Rosehall areas. There have been a further two proposals received for the area; one in the Invercassley area which has been refused and one in Braemore which is in the scoping stage. Data from Highland Council suggests that there are five different developers who have expressed an interest in constructing wind farms in the central Sutherland area.

1.3 Environment

The environmental quality of the Highland region is one of the area's greatest assets; it not only creates opportunities through tourism by attracting large numbers of visitors but also offers employment in forestry, fisheries and agriculture. Nearly 20% of the area is designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), 21% National Scenic area and 15% Special Areas of Concern.

More locally, the KOSI Community Vision Document notes 'the natural wilderness of the Kyle of Sutherland is one of its greatest assets - the scenic qualities of the landscape, the wide range of habitats, species and geological formations and the wild nature of much of the land are all of outstanding quality and increasingly valued.' It goes on to report that 'the Kyle of Sutherland is part of the Dornoch Firth National Scenic Area. The habitats range from tidal estuary to mountain peaks. In between are important river habitats like floodplain, grazing marsh which provides for wintering birdlife. Of equal importance are remnants of pinewood, wet woods and other mixed woodlands.'

Across the community benefit area there are a number of SSSIs and Lairg and Strath Brora Lochs are also designated as a Special Protection Area. This status protects them from development, other damage and also from neglect. A few miles north of Invershin are the Falls of Shin, a popular tourist attraction where salmon battle upstream on their way to their spawning grounds. Around Lairg there are several walks, some of which lead to prehistoric sites such as the Neolithic hut circles at nearby Ord Hill, highlighting the area's rich archaeological heritage. Other important local environmental assets include Ledmore and Migdale Wood, Gearochille Wood, the rivers Oykel, Shin and Carron and a large number of forest trails.

The Ardgay, Lairg and Rosehall Community Plan Summaries within the KOSI Vision Document all highlight the scenery and surrounding environment as an important local asset and there is important work happening across the community benefit area to celebrate, utilise or develop the local environment.

The Lairg & District Community Initiative, with support from the North Highland Forest Trust, is in the process of completing the purchase of Church Hill Woods, a small community woodland in the centre of the village. They plan to upgrade the existing network of paths, secure disabled access to the War Memorial, introduce signage and create a unique seating area overlooking Loch Shin. The seating area is to provide a resting area and also to stage educational, cultural and community events.

In Ardgay, a semi-ancient oak woodland, Gearrhoille Community Wood has been developed as a community woodland. An all abilities path has been partially installed and there are plans to upgrade an old curling pond into a wildlife pond. Securing the woodlands from Mohammed Al Fayed, whose estate the woodland was on, has been a six year process but the deeds have now been signed.

Environmental sustainability is an important local concern. Community members are concerned not only to preserve and utilise natural assets but they are also keen to ensure that any local development is conducted in an environmentally sensitive way.

Since the Assynt Crofters land buy out in 1993 there has been a growing interest in the purchase of assets by local communities assisted by the availability of public funds and Land Reform legislation. Highland Council aims to increase the number of communities who wish to hold and manage community assets and the Community Benefit Fund could assist with this, building on what has already been achieved locally.

1.4 Population

The defined area of benefit has a relatively stable population despite the overall decline in economic productivity of the area since the early 1990's.

Table 1: Population of main settlement areas in Achany area of benefit

	Population 2001	Male	Female
Ardgay	517	251	267
Bonar Bridge	724	336	388
Culrain	90	46	43
Croick	22	12	11
Lairg	879	443	437
Rosehall	204	97	107
Central Sutherland	2,435	1184	1251
Sutherland	13,778	6,767	7,011
Highland	208,914	102,297	106,617
Scotland	5,062,011	2,432,296	2,629,715

Source: 2001 Census of Population

Scottish Neighbourhood Statistics (SNS) data indicates some more recent (2008) population figures of 695 for the Creich Community Council area, 720 for Ardgay and 967 for Lairg. However these must only be taken as approximations as they do not include the data for two settlement zones (SO1003952 and SO1003949) for which postcodes could not be identified but which are assumed to be settlements within the Creich Community Council area.

Table 2 displays the distribution of age groups across the main settlements.

Table 2: Age structure at 2001 census

% population by age	0-4	5-14	15-24	25-44	45-64	65-74	75 + over
Ardgay	3.7	11.1	12.0	23.0	30.4	10.7	9.1
Bonar Bridge	5.1	15.0	7.5	23.1	27.1	11.8	10.4
Culrain	3.1	15.0	6.3	22.5	33.8	14.4	5.0
Croick	3.1	15.0	6.3	22.5	33.8	14.4	5.0
Lairg	4.6	11.1	9.0	22.9	29.5	13.6	9.2
Rosehall	2.7	7.3	6.3	16.8	39.5	16.0	11.4
Central Sutherland	4.3	12.1	8.9	22.5	30.0	12.7	9.5
Highland	5.4	12.9	10.6	27.4	27.1	9.3	7.3
Scotland	5.5	12.4	12.5	29.2	24.5	8.8	7.1

Source: 2001 Census data

In each area just over half of the population is of working age. Elderly people, defined as those of pensionable age, comprise between 10-16% of the population which is higher than the rest of Scotland (8.8%) and the rest of the Highlands (9.3%). The number of those approaching retirement (45-64 yrs) is higher than both the Highland and Scotland averages with numbers of those classifying as younger working age (25—44yrs) as lower than the national average. Children and young people are currently well represented within the community benefit area within the context of comparative Highland figures. However their numbers are predicted to decline and this is a cause of concern.

The Highlands and Islands population is forecast to grow by approximately 7,636 (1.7%) from 2004 – 2024, contrary to a decline expected for Scotland as a whole. However, the Economic Impact Study highlights the projected imbalance in demographics that will emerge by 2024 according to population forecasts as the increase is not split evenly over the age brackets. Although an overall growth of 1.7% is predicted overall for the Highlands and Islands, the number of working age people is forecast to decline whilst those aged 65 and over is forecast to increase. The report states that this will result in major implications for the area's workplaces, qualifications, training and housing market. In addition, projections for young people indicate that by 2031 the population aged 0 - 15 might reduce by 9.1% and might account for 14.1% of the total population.

The Highland Council Corporate Plan 2009-11 states that recent projections indicate that by 2031 the population aged over 75 years might double and account for 16.2% of the total population. These demographics follow the national trend of an ageing population

with North, West and Central Sutherland having the fastest growing elderly population for any ward area in Scotland. Care needs are already increasing in the area due to the fact that people are living longer and there is often reduced family support available. Elderly people now retire into the area often with no support at all. The needs of elderly people are being met by the Bradbury Day Care Centre and Migdale Hospital but there is likely to be an increasing need for local residential care, local respite care and sheltered housing.

1.5 Deprivation

The Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD) 2004 accounts for a range of deprivation factors including employment, income, housing, education, health, geographical access and telecommunications. Although Highland has 17 data zones in the most deprived 20% of all Scottish data zones, none of these are in Central Sutherland.



The most prevalent types of deprivation are Geographical Access to services, Telecommunications and Income. A Highland Council briefing paper on SIMD adopts a cautious approach to the housing deprivation results since the indicators such as overcrowding have an urban bias. The paper suggests that the real issues that cause housing stress in rural areas such as poor insulation, fuel poverty and lack of affordable housing are not included as indicators within the SIMD framework.

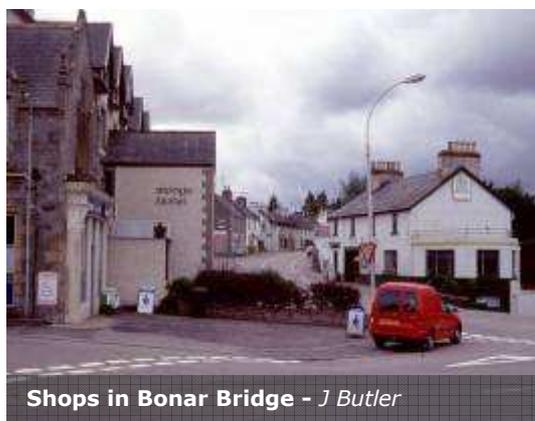
The LEADER Development Plan notes this bias and recognises the hidden deprivation that exists in some pockets of the wider ward 'particularly Bonar Bridge which was identified and visited by a UK Parliamentary Commission in 2007 investigating rural income deprivation'. The SIMD 2004 listed Bonar Bridge as having 136 residents as income deprived, ranking 42nd out of 292 Highland data zones and 1780th out of 6505 Scotland wide data zones. However this is still above the worst 15-20% in Scotland.

Considering deprivation within the context of fragility may be more useful. Highland Council has identified many parts of its area as 'fragile', indicating that they may be in danger of long term decline due to their remoteness, an ageing population, lack of economic opportunity and access to essential services. On the Highland Council's 2003

Fragile Areas Map, the Kyle of Sutherland appears to score between 1-3 on a scale of 0 -7 with 1 indicating most fragile and 7 least.

To counter the threats of fragility, communities and councils need to increasingly consider more cost effective, imaginative and innovative methods of service delivery, such as sharing premises and mobile services. This approach could also be relevant to Achany Fund proposals.

1.6 Economy, enterprise and employment



Historically much of the economic activity in the area was linked with traditional ways of life in agriculture, crofting, fishing and forestry. The KOSI Vision Document provides a useful overview of the area's historical development including the significance of the salmon fishing and livestock rearing. The area still boasts some of northern Scotland's finest salmon angling. Nowadays, as highlighted in the LEADER Development Plan, the public sector and tourism are also important to the local economy. New areas of development include energy, creative industries, life sciences and specialist tourism and small and medium sized enterprises are growing. Key public sector employers include Highland Council, NHS Highland, HIE, SNH and the Forestry Commission.

Table 3 shows the changing business base in Central Sutherland in recent years and suggests an overall decline in Central Sutherland's business base of 11% (1999-2004) but a slight rise in the proportional share of public services and agriculture and fishing. So although traditional industries such as agriculture and fishing are experiencing an overall decline across Scotland, they are still strong in the area of benefit where crofters still largely predominate. Lairg still hosts the annual Lairg Crofters' Show, the only one of its kind left in the world. The Lairg Lamb Sale, which started from humble beginnings over 100 years ago, remains Europe's biggest one day sale in Europe with over 30,000 lambs bought and sold from all over the North of Scotland. The market is still regarded as a barometer of the Highland sheep industry.

Table 3: Change in Business Base in Central Sutherland (1999-2004)

	1999		2004		Change in % share
	No.	% share	No.	% share	
Agriculture & fishing	14	9.3	15	11.2%	1.9%
Energy & water	4	2.7	2	1.5%	-1.2%
Manufacturing	8	5.3	7	5.2%	-0.1%
Construction	16	10.7	14	10.4%	-0.2%
Distribution, hotels & rest.	47	31.3	39	29.1%	-2.2%
Transport & communications	11	7.3	10	7.5%	0.1%
Banking & finance	15	10.0	15	11.2%	1.2%
Public sector	16	10.7	18	13.4%	2.8%
Other services	19	12.7	14	10.4%	-2.2%
Total	150	100%	134	100%	-

Source: Annual Business Inquiry (ABI), 2004 quoted in EKOS Environmental Impact Study

Alongside sheep rearing, angling is another valued industry with a 2007 economic survey of Angling in the Kyle of Sutherland region highlighting the value of angling to local employment and household income. The survey estimated that anglers and their companions annually spend nearly £4million in the area and that angling supports the jobs of over 150 individuals in the area which equates to 13.7% of those in employment in the core fishing area. The survey suggests that angler expenditure supports an annual income flow of over £1.5 million in the form of wages, self-employment income, profits and rents.

Table 4 below shows the area's employment base by drawing on both the EKOS Economic Impact Study and the KOSI Vision Document. The latter provides a useful summary of local employment collated from the 2001 Census data and is presented alongside data from the EKOS report. Whilst the comparisons are not fullproof - since the data is from a different period and sectors are defined differently - it is nevertheless a useful indicator of where employment opportunities have been cultivated and developed in the community benefit area within the context of wider employment patterns.

Table 4: Employees by sector (2004) with comparison information about local employment pattern from 2001 Census data

	Kyle of Sutherland	Highland	Central Sutherland	HIE	Scotland
	From 2001 date	Census	From 2004 Annual Business Inquiry (ABI)		
Agriculture & fishing			7.4%	2.5%	0.6%
Ag, hunting and forestry	11.6%	3.7%			
Fishing & fish farming	3.9%	1.4%			
Energy & water	0.5%	1.0%	1.2%	1.3%	1.6%
Manufacturing	4.3%	9.1%	2.6%	9.8%	10.2%
Construction	10.2%	9.2%	2.6%	6.6%	5.5%
Distribution, hotels & rest.	13.4%	9.3%	19.5%	26.7%	23.5%
Transport & communications	4.2%	7.1%	6.2%	5.2%	5.5%
Banking & finance	1.3%	2.0%	6.2%	9.5%	18.2%
Public sector:	23.9%	25.8%	46.7%	33.3%	29.5%
Admin & defence	3.1%	6.8%			
Education	8.1%	6.6%			
Health & social work	12.7%	12.4%			
Real estate, renting & business	16.4%	9.9%			
Wholesale, retail, vehicle repair	8.6%	14.7%			
Mining & quarrying	1.7%	1.3%			
Other services	4.9%	5.3%	7.3%	5.2%	5.4%

Source: Annual Business Inquiry (ABI), 2004 quoted in EKOS Environmental Impact Study and KOSI Vision Document

This table indicates that within the Kyle of Sutherland (2001) the public sector is the largest employer at 23.9%. Real estate, renting and business are also high at 16.4%. Hotels and catering are an important local source of employment at 13.4% - although the figure is still lower than regional or national figures. Agriculture, hunting and forestry, at 11.6%, are also significant sectors for employment although, as the LEADER Development Plan notes, much of the agricultural employment is crofting which is self employed and often part-time and supplemented by at least one other income.

Using information from Futureskills Scotland, the EKOS Impact study also suggests that the Central Sutherland employment base is forecast to remain relatively static in terms

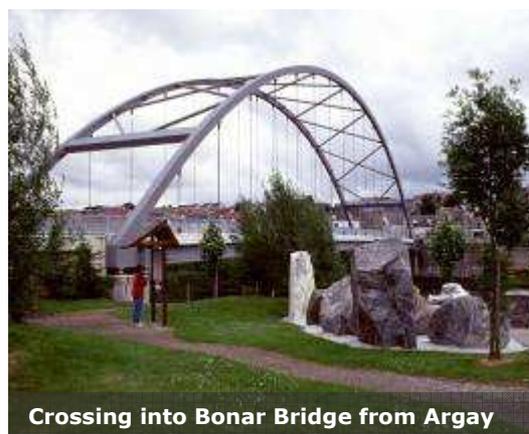
of total employment with distribution, hotels and restaurants and public services predominantly driving the economy.

In general much employment is seasonal or part-time and there are generally limited opportunities for good quality employment unless this is self generated. This results in increasingly fewer young people, including graduates and qualified school leavers, remaining in the area to contribute to the economy, which, being rural, is characterised by lower earnings compared to urban equivalents. It can also mean that those who do work in other urban centres shop near their work and may even take their children to school near their place of work rather than their home village. Villages can become mere dormitories to some residents.

Economic activity – the number of people working, unemployed or available for work – based on Census 2001 figures, suggest that total economic activity in Central Sutherland (61%) is below the comparator figure for Scotland (65%). Alongside this the unemployment rate in the area is also lower when compared to a Scotland wide figure. This does suggest potential for high rates of economic activity when opportunities arise.

Both the EKOS study and the KOSI Community Vision 2008 highlight the adverse affect from infrastructure developments across the Highlands on Lairg and Bonar Bridge as main service centres for the area. Most pertinently, the building and opening of the Dornoch Firth Bridge in 1991 and the improvements to the main A9 has meant that the area is now by-passed unless people specifically choose the inland route through this part of Central Sutherland.

Another key issue was the number of businesses that have closed since 1997 which has in turn affected the availability of local services (petrol stations, grocery stores, hotels) as well as local employment. For example, Lairg's Sutherland Arms Hotel and the Sutherland Transport & Trading Company were both long established businesses, creating employment up until the mid 1990's. Unfortunately, due to poor ownership, changing consumer habits and lack of investment, both businesses collapsed and the buildings have since been demolished. However both sites remain potential development opportunities within the village.



Lairg and District Community Initiative estimate that 'over the last 15 years approximately 80 jobs have been lost from the community with an impact which shapes the services, income, age and skills present within the village'. In July 2007 the Northern Times reported three local retail businesses all closing within a few weeks of each other alongside the relocation of the Scottish Executive's Environment and Rural Affairs Department from Lairg to Golspie. However the area boasts some of Scotland's prime grouse-shooting, stalking and salmon-fishing country and there are a number of local private businesses dedicated to promoting niche tourism in these areas.

1.7 Transport

Historically, as the KOSI Vision Document states, developments in transport played a key part in the history of the Kyle of Sutherland. Bonar grew at the Bonar Ferry where Thomas Telford found the best site for a bridge over the Kyle in 1812. It eased the way for drovers and their cattle between the upland areas and the south by eliminating the need to swim stock over the Rivers Shin, Oykel and Carron. Bridges were built in 1892-3 and 1973. The waterways also generated economic activity with small steamers calling at Bonar Bridge to deliver goods from Tyneside (coal, salt and other goods) as late as the 1930s.

When the road network developed across Sutherland in the 19th century Lairg's prominence grew as it was literally at the crossroads of routes north/south and east/west. Lairg railway station opened in 1868 and local stations in the surrounding settlements followed. The KOSI Vision report states that at its height there were about 30 businesses operating out of Lairg including an electric laundry, brickworks, sawmill and various shops.

Changes to transport infrastructure have, in recent years, contributed to emerging challenges in the area. Improvements to the west coast road route from Inverness to Lochinver curtailed passing trade through Bonar and Lairg which was further affected when the Dornoch Bridge was constructed. This meant road cargo destined north did not have to come inland.

Today, the area is served by limited public transport. A dial-a-bus service, subsidised by the Council, operates in the community benefit area and is run by Macleod's Coaches, a private family business established in 2001. It operates a door-to-door service on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the Lairg and Rosehall area and Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays in Ardgay and Bonar Bridge. The service is used mainly by older people who

don't have their own transport. Council issued travel cards can be used but paying passengers are charged. Apparently the service is rarely used by young people.

The company is under contract to Highland Council offering six services weekdays from Lairg to Tain via Ardgay and a separate Saturday service. Residents have to travel to Tain to pick up the Stagecoach service to Inverness.

Trains pass four times daily from Inverness through to stations at Ardgay, Culrain, Invershin and Lairg on the mainline between Inverness and Thurso. On Sundays there is only one each way. A pilot scheme to operate a commuter train to Inverness has recently been reinstated so there are now five daily services to Inverness from Lairg, Invershin, Culrain and Ardgay. Originally this had not continued due primarily to commuters preferring the more direct and quicker road route in spite of the high cost of fuel. In fact fuel prices in Sutherland can be 10% higher than the UK's national average, with no compensation given by the government due to unavailability and/or infrequency of train, bus and coach services.

However car ownership is not a realistic option for all residents. According to the 2001 Census figures, almost a quarter of households in Sutherland did not have access to a car or van and a further 51% only had access to one car which was likely to be used to transport one person to work each morning – leaving the rest of the household without transport. (Transport Vision for Sutherland)

The LEADER Development Plan suggests that across Sutherland private transport is an essential rather than luxury. Limited transport provision has both economic and social consequences as it limits people's mobility and availability to work outwith the area even though they may wish to remain living in the area and also limits opportunities for people to connect and interact across distances, unless this is done remotely. The limited transport options further affect the area's economy by restricting access by visitors and residents to different services, business and activity.

Sutherland Partnership's Transport Group (SPTG) has developed a Transport Vision for Sutherland which provides a comprehensive overview of Sutherland's transport needs, issues and solutions. The Vision acknowledges that 'to realise, fully, the opportunities which will allow Sutherland to grow and prosper there is a need to promote and deliver a range of transport solutions and improvements. Such solutions and changes will support the rural economy; attract visitors; improve access to goods and services; and ultimately contribute to the promotion of more sustainable rural communities.'
(www.sutherlandpartnership.org.uk)

1.8 Communications



Frosty morning in Spinningdale looking towards the Dornoch Bridge

Two Council run Service Points, in Lairg and Bonar Bridge serve an important communication role for people living within the community benefit area. Although they are essentially the face of the Highland Council they provide information and advice on a wide range of public and voluntary services and organisations. Between 80 and 150 people use these services on a weekly basis, operating almost as a hub of the communities. This is particularly the case in Bonar Bridge where the Service

Point is located within the library. The Service Points are used for Council business and also operate as Registration Offices for births, marriages and deaths. The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) holds weekly clinics in the two Service Points.

Across the Kyle of Sutherland area, the Northern Times, produced in Golspie, is the main source of news and information in the region. More locally, Ardgay has a community newsletter that is produced on a quarterly basis by a sub-group of the Community Council. The newsletter not only provides information on local events and news items but has also been used to consult with local residents on community issues such as community transport. Ardgay Church also produces a magazine called The Bell.

The broadband experienced by people in the Kyle of Sutherland probably differs little from that in other British rural areas. Ageing or inappropriate infrastructure causes problems with continuity of service and with achievable speeds. Lines laid on the ground are vulnerable. Long line runs weaken broadband signal. Exchanges with insufficient population or business bases are low priorities for upgrades and possibly only improved because of the active interest of – in Highland – HIE, and of a Universal Service Obligation. Broadband speed differentials could become such that businesses which rely heavily on it could find themselves at a disadvantage to urban areas.

1.9 Education and learning

Pre-School to Secondary School

Residents from the Kyle of Sutherland use different schools and colleges, most of which are located outwith the area itself. Within the community benefit area itself there are four primary schools (three of which have nurseries attached), no secondary schools and one learning centre. In Ardgay/Bonar area there is provision by the voluntary-run Ladybird club and the Croileagan Playgroup for the 0 - 4 years age group.

Bonar Bridge Primary school has a roll of 42 pupils in P1-7, 9 pupils in Gaelic Medium, eight in the English Nursery and five in the Gaelic Nursery. Lairg Primary has three mainstream classes and supports some children with additional and significant support needs. There are currently 67 pupils in P1-7 with a further 14 pupils in the Nursery. The school has three teaching staff and shares a headteacher with Altnaharra Primary. Gledfield school and its nursery serves the village of Ardgay and the surrounding area. It has 43 pupils and six in nursery. Rosehall Primary has one mainstream class with 11 pupils in P1-7. The school has one teacher, who is supported by various part-time staff. The four primary schools all received favourable HMIE inspections between 2005-6 with generally good links noted with parents, carers and the local community.

There are three 'local' secondary schools attended by children from the Kyle of Sutherland area: Dornoch Academy traditionally receives children from Bonar Bridge, Golspie High School is the traditional secondary school for children from Lairg and Tain Royal Academy serves the catchment area that includes Ardgay and Creich. These trends are changing though and there is less uniformity about which primary schools feed to which secondary schools.

Rolls for the schools are relatively small compared to more populated areas (274 at Dornoch, 351 at Golspie and 547 for Tain) but provision is quite extensive. For example, in addition to the curriculum programme, Dornoch Academy offers a number of extra curricula activities including a breakfast club, evening classes and holiday clubs. Golspie operates a wide curriculum incorporating vocational courses and open learning provision. Operating as a community school the site includes an adjoining leisure complex including swimming pool and games hall and community areas which are shared with the school. Lets are organised by the local Community Association. Tain Royal Academy, in addition to a wide curriculum, has offered an extensive range of extra curricula clubs and activities and has a particularly strong music tradition. It is a community school with an Active Schools Co-ordinator based in the Tain Royal Academy Community Complex.

Dornoch Academy's recent inspection (May 2009) highlighted three examples of good practice around implementing the Curriculum for Excellence, vocational education and partnerships to promote education for all including vulnerable young people. The latter noted the success of placing a full-time youth worker within the school with responsibility for extending both school and community capacity for promoting youth achievement and the health and wellbeing of young people.

Beyond High School – Further Education and Lifelong Learning

Young people and adults who wish to go onto further education have a range of high quality education facilities to choose from including Inverness College, Merkinch Technology Centre and the Scottish University for Industry, previously known as learndirect. However being a remote community, many are a distance to reach which means a long and often costly daily commute or a decision to move away from the area. Some however – such as University of Aberdeen's Centre for Lifelong Learning and the North Highland College - offer a wide range of opportunities through Access, Part-time and Distance Learning courses and which, assisted through ICT developments, are available at learning centres across the Highlands and Islands and the North-East.

Lairg Learning Centre is part of the Sutherland Learning Centre network which is affiliated to the Sutherland Partnership. It opened in 2004 with the aim of supplying or facilitating lifelong learning opportunities to the residents of Central Sutherland, including the whole of the Achany area. It runs a range of non-vocational courses, many of which provide social opportunities to older people. Certificated courses include European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), Handling and Transporting Livestock Short Journey Course and SQA accreditation at various levels. Students are supported while engaged in further and higher education courses. The Centre also runs employability projects designed to help unemployed people through improving basic skills, re-training and confidence building. ESOL classes (English for speakers of other languages) funded by the Highland Adult Literacy partnership are run in Ardgay, Bonar Bridge and Lairg Learning Centre. Two workshops per month are run for children on Saturday mornings. The Centre provides a base for a Highland Council Gaelic Development Worker and runs Gaelic classes at beginner and intermediate levels. The Highland Council Adult Basic Education Service serving the whole of Sutherland is based in Lairg Learning Centre. The Centre provides training/meeting facilities for other organisations. It links with other local agencies, in particular New Futures Sutherland and Working for Families.

1.10 Health

The Sutherland Health Improvement Plan developed in 2007 through the Highland Wellbeing Alliance indicates key challenges and strategies to improve the health and well being of those living in the area. A number of priority themes were identified as particularly important to Sutherland. These include promoting outdoor physical activity and improving access and opportunities, developing a range of initiatives



to promote good nutrition and access to healthy, affordable food, recognising and working on links between wider infrastructure issues (e.g. poor housing) and health, improving mental health and reducing smoking and alcohol misuse.

In terms of health services available locally, Creich Surgery and Lairg Health Centre are the two main health centres. The KOSI Community Vision Document notes that the former has three part-time doctors and shares four Community Nurses and a Health Visitor with the Lairg Centre which has 1.5 doctors. Both offer access to community psychiatric nurses and a chiropodist. The nearest dental service is about 15 miles away.

Migdale Hospital is a valued but ageing cottage hospital in Bonar Bridge with 34 beds and catering mainly for the elderly. Discussions about its redevelopment have been ongoing for 10 years and finally in June 2009 NHS Highland appointed a Highland-based construction company to replace the 150 year old facility with a £8million new facility. It will be built in the centre of the village, close to the Bradbury Centre and the GP surgery at Cherry Grove.

It is hoped that work will start on site in early 2010 and the hospital will be fully operational by 2011. The new building will provide 22 beds in two units – one for older people with mental health needs and the other offering a range of services including palliative care, general medicine and less intensive rehabilitation services. Provision such as this could assist with the anticipated growing number of older people with multiple conditions – including long terms ones such as diabetes, coronary heart disease, arthritis and dementia – and more complex needs. (NHS Highland)

The old building will be sold off but it is likely that any developments are earmarked for affordable housing.

The Bradbury Centre in Bonar Bridge is an important local centre that has been providing support for the over 60s and disabled since 1998. Initially developed as a daycare centre, the work of the centre has expanded to include four daily lunch clubs and a space for evening classes for the wider community. Social workers continue to use the centre on Mondays and Fridays for assessed day-care clients. Approximately 40 - 50 elderly people access the centre each week with about 75 lunches currently provided. For the past six years a grant from the Scottish Government, through the Rural Community Transport Initiative, has enabled people to come from Dornoch, Spinningdale, Edderton, Lairg and Rosehall, and the outlying areas of Bonar Bridge and Ardgay, to the lunch club and to enjoy other social activities in the centre. This grant was withdrawn in 2009 and the Centre has since purchased its own bus and employed a driver to ensure the Centre's services can still be used by those in need. As part of this initiative the Centre hopes to ensure the new vehicle can have wider community use.

1.11 Housing

With a growing population and the continued trend towards smaller household size, there are now more than 96,000 households in the Highlands, an increase of 7.5% between 2001 and 2006. An undersupply of housing is evidenced from relatively high house price increases, with prices increasing by 40% for new build housing and 33% for previously owned houses.

The Council plan outlines the main housing priorities which include ensuring that adequate utilities are available for new house developments. For example, the LEADER Development Plan notes that of 165 new homes in NW and Central Sutherland with either planning permission or identified in the Local Plan, 101 are constrained by water supply or sewage infrastructure.



West towards the Kyle of Sutherland from the Dornoch Bridge

There are private sector plans to ensure 6,000 new houses, with appropriate amenities, are built within the Highland Council area over the next four years. As part of this, 2000 affordable houses for rent and low cost home ownership will be constructed, in line with Council planning requirement 'that all new housing developments in the private sector of ten

or more homes must contain 25% affordable homes'. (Highland Council)

There are four Highland based housing associations operating in the Highlands though only one of them, Albyn Housing Association, has housing stock in Sutherland. Several

national housing associations also have housing stock in the Highlands. While most provide only specialist housing some provide a mixture of general and specialist housing. Of these Trust HA and Key HA have some housing in Sutherland. The KOSI document recognised that crofting areas generally have high levels of owner occupied housing because croft houses are classed as such. The Highland Region is 65.7% - Ardgay, Croick, Culrain and Lairg are approximately 5% lower, Bonar Bridge is 12% lower and Rosehall is slightly above at 66.4% (KOSI Vision Document). The remaining residents live in property owned by the Council or Scottish Homes, another Housing Association, private rented accommodation or are living rent free. The rates of private ownership and renting reflect those of Highland and Scotland as a whole. (LEADER Development Plan)

A small proportion of the Council stock is Sheltered Housing – a 2004 Highland Council Review of Sheltered Housing noted 14 units in Ardgay and seven in Lairg though these may have altered since that time. However, during the consultation process a need was identified for affordable accommodation for locally based working families, younger people and young families that is in desperate short supply. Comments from the public to the Sutherland Housing Plan highlighted the urgent need for affordable provision in Bonar Bridge and Rosehall particularly. But across Sutherland, sometimes described as Europe's last wilderness, housing is a contentious issue and there is ongoing debate about a host of related issues including, for example, the use of croft land for housing and the prevalence of second/holiday homes – 18% in NW and Central Sutherland compared to 6% for Highland and 1% for Scotland as a whole. (LEADER Development Plan) This has driven up prices and also council tax rates.

Across Highland Council there are growing waiting lists for affordable rented housing with more than 11,000 households currently on the Council housing list. Meanwhile levels of homelessness have increased. In 2006-7 more than 2,000 households approached the Council for help; and more than 1,000 were provided with temporary accommodation. However indications of homelessness (which means living in temporary, unsafe or insecure settings), specifically within the Kyle of Sutherland area, could not be obtained. A 2008 Highland Council news-sheet does indicate that within the whole of Sutherland there are only four units of temporary accommodation, one of which is privately leased and three of which are Council property.

1.12 Young People

Outside of the formal education system, there is a sense that young people's needs are not particularly well met. Whilst rural life can provide children and young people with more freedom than their urban-based peers, it can also be frustrating as they get older when opportunities for entertainment and socialising are often limited. In 2007 there had been some low level vandalism in Bonar Bridge which has left a concern within some sections of the community about how much young people's needs are being met.

In 2008 the Bonar Bridge Community Hall committee was concerned that the only regular booking they had for children and young people was a weekly Gaelic Playgroup. They carried out a consultation around use of the hall to inform their business planning and spoke with primary age children during this process. They indicated that they would like the hall to be able to provide some kind of internet café, film shows, art and cookery workshops. The Hall Committee has since applied for a Community Chest grant to purchase equipment for the film showings, to Children in Need for internet café equipment and workshop expenses. This could form a package of pilot activities that could trial a more active use of the hall by this age group.

Within the Achany Community Benefit area the various settlements are linked to different secondary schools and therefore different youth development officers. This reflects the Youth Work Policy (2006, updated in 2008) and sets out the new structure for delivery of statutory youth services across the Highlands taking account of school rolls, rurality and levels of deprivation. This entails a commitment to placing a youth worker in each of the 29 associated school groups or secondary school catchment areas. Bonar Bridge is in the catchment area of Dornoch Academy, Ardgay comes under Tain Royal Academy and Lairg under Golspie. However all three communities are some distance from the various secondary schools (up to 20 miles in the case of Lairg and Golspie) so it is hard for young people to make use of school-based provision offered outwith school times if it doesn't coincide with later buses to transport them back to their home villages.

Outreach or community based youth work has therefore been patchy with limited visibility of youth workers in the wider community. It has also meant that young people – and it is estimated that 70% of school attendees live outside of their school town - do not necessarily have the expectation for more grassroots provision within their communities. However this situation has shifted this year with some partnership working between KOSI Youth Development Group and the statutory youth service team (see below).

There is some informal provision available with opportunities to participate in uniformed groups such as the Boys Brigade in Ardgay and the Scouts, Cubs, Brownies and Guides in Lairg. Other voluntary provision includes youth groups in Rosehall and Lairg and the Kyle of Sutherland Youth Development Group that serves young people in Ardgay and Bonar Bridge particularly. Some of this though tends to be seasonal, as with a Lairg group that only meets during the winter months.

This Lairg group is run by a small team of volunteers in association with a local church. They recently worked on a graffiti project decorating a youth shelter at the school. Another Lairg group also worked on a video project in 2008, producing a short film called 'Wouldn't it be nice...' with support from the local Youth Development Officer. This became a tool for



The Bus – a place for young people to meet

intercultural dialogue on different experiences of living in rural areas when it was sent to youth groups in Brazil and Spain who were inspired to make their own films in response. Momentum around creative media has developed further in Lairg with a recent project co-ordinated by the Lairg and District Initiative securing £5000 from Awards for All to produce a short film about crofting in Lairg. Involving people from different generations, it is now also featured as an exhibition in the Ferrycroft Visitors Centre.

A team of two part-time statutory workers has begun some work in the Bonar Bridge/Ardgay area which has been recognised as an area of particular need within the wider Central Sutherland Ward. They are working for a year with support from the Tain Royal Academy based Youth Development Officer and are supported through the discretionary Ward budget to do a combination of venue based and outreach work based on the double-decker bus acquired by the KOSI Youth Development Group in 2007 which is sited on the South Bonar Estate.

The Youth Development Group had emerged as a sub-group from the wider Kyle of Sutherland Initiative. Driven in part by the commitment and leadership of a handful of local residents, one with professional youth work experience, the Group worked hard to raise the profile of young people's needs and secured funding from the Princes Youth Trust to purchase an old disused bus that could become a space for young people.

Three years later and after renovations supported by the Beinn Tharsuinn Community Benefit Fund, Moray Firth Radio, Tay Charitable Trust and Ardgay Community Council, the Bus now provides five weekly sessions for different age groups with approximately 100 attendances over the week. 15 parents are involved as volunteer helpers. This is a good example of partnership working between statutory and voluntary sectors and could perhaps provide a model for future initiatives.

Youth Policy

Beyond provision in the community benefit area, youth policy is quite advanced in terms of engagement and participation issues. The Highland Council, in partnership with the Highland Wellbeing Alliance is committed to creating increased opportunities for young people to become involved in their communities, in service development and in the decision making processes. A major initiative to come from their development work with young people is the Highland Youth Voice. The Youth Voice is an elected body of young people drawn from every area of Highland. The young people have a wide range of opportunities to 'have their say' and are also involved in taking forward their own agenda and tackling issues that are important to them. Sutherland Youth Forum, for example, is another very active group that meets twice a year and operated one of the first youth banks in the UK.

There are two young people involved in Sutherland Youth Forum (SYF) living in Lairg; there are two young people involved both in SYF and Highland Youth Voice living in the Bonar Bridge area.

1.13 Community activity and community facilities

Local facilities are often one of the defining characteristics of a rural community, providing a community meeting place or centre for what may be quite a dispersed community. Their availability often ensures the survival of fragile communities in rural Scotland. The Youth Bus mentioned above is the latest 'community space' to open – although for a very specific target group. It is certainly an innovative approach to addressing the need for some kind of youth oriented facility in the short term.

Other facilities available for community use include:

- Ardgay Village Hall
- Bradbury Centre, Bonar Bridge
- Bonar Bridge Community Hall
- Four primary schools
- Carbisdale Castle
- Gearrchoille Community Wood
- Youth Bus
- Kincardine Church Hall
- Ferrycroft Visitor's Centre
- Lairg Community Hall
- Rosehall Hall
- Lodge Lochshin Social Club
- Kincardine Old Church
- Culrain Hall
- Football Club/Ground
- Golf Club/Course

The facilities appear to be well used by the diverse range of groups, clubs and voluntary organisations operating in the area. Appendix 4 lists those that were identified during the consultation. The second part of the Community Activity listed in Appendix 4 notes the regular events that happen. The appendix is evidence of a busy and active community sector.

At a Highland wide level, volunteering is higher in the Highland area with 27% of the population involved in local activity once a week. The number of charities is also greater (1200) and there are a growing number of social enterprises (Highland Council Corporate Plan).

At a strategic level Sutherland Partnership, based in Lairg, is an important local agency that has been operational in the area for over ten years and has built up a wealth of experience, knowledge and networks across the community and statutory sectors. The Sutherland Partnership Board of Management includes representation from all of the statutory and voluntary organisations in the area; including Highland Council HIE, NHS, National Farmers Union, CVS North, VG-ES and North Highland College. A sub-group of the Board operates as the LEADER Local Area Partnership, reviewing and recommending requests for funding.

The partnership organises four thematic groups to address community development, tourism, transport and biodiversity. The two main partnership projects currently running are the North West Highland Geopark and New Futures Sutherland/Working for Families.

The Geopark, situated on coastal west Sutherland covers five community council areas. It celebrates the geological heritage of the area and facilitates community activity to support sustainable business development. This initiative may be a useful source of learning for future tourist related enterprises the Achany Fund may support. New Futures Sutherland/Working for Families are two initiatives that support specific target groups (families, women and young people) with support to enter into the employment market. New Futures is funded by BIG Lottery and Working for Families is Scottish Government funded. Some of the people who are supported through these initiatives live in the community benefit area.

As well as its ongoing facilitation around community planning, the Partnership also convenes a number of forums on Biodiversity, Tourism, Transport and Community Development. These are important local sources of debate, information exchange and learning and it will be important that applications to the Fund have an awareness of how potential projects may link in to the business of some of these Forums.

Voluntary Groups East Sutherland (VG-ES) is also an important part of the third sector infrastructure at the strategic level, providing advice, support and training to community and voluntary organisations in the area. However the consultation process did not identify the different level of engagement local groups in the benefit area have with VG-ES.

PART 2 – DEVELOPING THE PURPOSE AND PRIORITIES FOR THE ACHANY WIND FARM COMMUNITY BENEFIT FUND

2.1 Findings and recommendations from the KOSI vision document and the economic impact study

The KOSI Community Vision Document was the outcome of a research project which used photographs taken by residents throughout the Kyle of Sutherland area to record the positive and negative aspects of living in their local community.

Common issues were raised in each of the four villages and from these a set of objectives were developed which could then be addressed in relevant ways at the village level through community plans. These are reproduced in the table below.

Table 5: Kyle of Sutherland Vision – Themes and Objectives

Theme	Objective
Local services and business development	Support existing business and services and facilitate new business development.
Tourism and heritage	Improve local provision for tourism with a particular emphasis on local heritage and activity based holidays.
Leisure and recreation	Ensure real access to a range of leisure options which contribute positively to community health and social opportunities.
Waste management	Work together to reduce waste, increase recycling and get rid of litter.
Road safety and access	Tackle existing problems together to improve road safety and access.
Village and township maintenance	Facilitate a local facelift where key locations need tidied and maintained.

The EKOS Economic Impact Study was commissioned to inform a proactive approach to development in the area. The Economic Impact Study also highlights that the primary industries of agriculture and fishing are still strong in the area despite an overall decline across Scotland. However whilst they are significant, the public sector is the largest employer at 23.9%. In addition the public services sector is an important driver of economic growth.

The priorities emerging from the economic audit are to attract working age people to the area and to retain the younger working-age generation to contribute to and further

strengthen the local economy. There is also a need to improve the skills and qualifications base to increase the competitive advantage in the labour market, especially in the tourism sector where higher level skills and quality of service will need to attract new visitors to the area.

The principle strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the local economy identified during the consultation and business survey are reproduced below. They concur broadly with the findings from the community consultation discussed in the next section.

Table 6: Central Sutherland – Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats

<p>Strengths</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Natural assets • Clean and safe environment • Sense of community • Proximity to employment opportunities in Inverness 	<p>Weaknesses</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited quality accommodation and catering facilities • Lack of affordable housing for key workers • Ageing, service dependent population • Lack of public transport network • Decline of traditional industries • Over dependence on tourism • Limited collective and collaborative marketing • Lack of local political representation
<p>Opportunities</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing a local food cluster • Genealogy related tourism • Carbisdale Castle as important local asset • All year round utilisation of Loch Shin • Increased market for recreational activity • Potential for self employment opportunities especially in IT through available broadband access 	<p>Threats</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of private sector investment • Continued loss of young, economically active people • External factors such as increases in interest rates, petrol prices and public liability insurance • Sunday observances – limited business hours discouraging the weekend break market

The report concludes with the following recommendations:

- Increase membership of KOSI
- Establish strong links between Central Sutherland tourism-related businesses and the North Highland Initiative
- Development of eco-cultural tourism
- Establishment of a local food cluster
- Collaborative marketing approach
- Theme based learning journeys
- Theme based interpretative signage

- Identification of developmental land

These recommendations relate to the first three themes emerging from the Vision Document – namely local services and business development, tourism and heritage and leisure and recreation.

2.2 Findings from the community consultation

The recent community consultation process reflected similar sentiments with a strong emphasis on needing to grow the local economy and work towards a more sustainable future for all community members with promotion of tourism as one way to achieve that.

Part of the dialogue with community members during the consultation phase involved a prioritisation exercise around themes that a Community Benefit Fund could support. The exercise involved individuals in small groups at the two public meetings, drop-in sessions and in conversations with other residents or workers.

In total (just under) 50 people contributed from which the following priority themes emerged:

- Community Management (some form of infrastructure to support groups, pool resources, expertise and knowledge and build capacity)
- Community Capacity Building
- Growing the local economy
- Support for specific groups (young people, older people, families)
- Community facilities
- Infrastructure (support for housing, transport & communications)
- Environment
- Arts & Culture, Education & Training, Health & Well Being, Sport & Exercise

People were also asked about the types of projects that they felt could be funded:

Table 7: What types of project should the Achany Fund support?

	Is this a priority for the wind farm fund?
Feasibility studies, consultancy and research	Not a high priority – quite a large amount of this had already gone on in the area and the critical thing is to now move to the next stage of implementation.
Travel from the area for networking, learning visits etc.	This was recognised to be of some value. Learning from others is important with ideas from other areas that could be replicated or developed.
Bringing people to the area for courses, presentations or skill sharing	This could be a useful use of resources to help build local capacity and expertise.
Small-scale community activity – e.g. running costs of clubs, groups	This was recognised as important – local groups always have ongoing costs, especially if they don't generate much of their own income but are nonetheless providing an important service.
Equipment for local groups or projects	Recognised that it is sometimes necessary to purchase large equipment to keep them going.
Small capital/building works (<£50K)	Definite value in this. Distinct preference to ownership not renting and suggestions that applicants seek match funding.
Large capital/building works (>£50K)	Recognised as a priority for the area but some degree of caution about the role of the Community Benefit Fund for these types of projects.
Salaries for community workers	High priority for the Fund if it is to help drive economic development locally.
Running costs for community facilities or services.	High priority – suggestion to support such projects in their initial stages as they plan towards sustainability. Example given of self-financing community transport scheme.
Information and publication – newsletters, websites etc.	High priority – people need to feel connected with each other and know what is going on.
Events and festivals	Seen as an important way of getting people into the area.

Groups within the Ardgay and District and Creich Community Council areas already have experience of the Beinn Tharsuinn Fund that supports small scale community activity across ten community council areas. To date this has focused on funding for immediate activities and projects – which is actually the predominant use of community benefit funds in other areas too – supporting local infrastructure improvement (for example, facilities or heritage related), supporting local groups (primarily with events or short-term project activity) and other recreational activity. A similar Fund related to another Wind Farm development will become available to the Lairg Community Council in early 2010.



Lairg shops on the Main Street – J Butler

Contributors to the consultation were keen to emphasise that the Achany Fund should have a purpose that was more strategic and focus on longer term interventions that could then generate income for the community and support economic growth.

There was recognition that the Fund should support both capital and revenue costs where appropriate although these could be capped. Capital costs refer to any build aspects of a programme or project such as land purchase and building or refurbishing a facility. Capital costs also relate to purchasing equipment above a certain cost. Revenue costs are about the day-to-day running costs of a service or project and can include, for example, salaries, expenses, rent, subsistence, materials and training.

When asked about specific projects that the Fund could support a range of responses were received that included both capital and revenue costs but were an ad-hoc mixture of strategic and more immediate ideas:

- Research into clearance sites and families
- Transport facility to replace that currently funded by HC which is being withdrawn. Currently for Bradbury but wider community transport might be considered.
- Football pitch and playing fields
- Kayaking and sailing
- Integrated community transport
- Community newsletter
- Bus shelters
- Small business support

- Affordable local housing
- Swimming pool – nearest is Golspie or Brora – though unlikely to ever be a self supporting venture and would cost a tremendous amount
- Process towards becoming a 'Transition Town'
- Village hall energy efficiency upgrade

2.3 Emerging themes from the community consultation

Local Economy

The decline of the local economy was regularly highlighted as a real concern during the consultation. A priority from the KOSI Vision Document was around supporting existing business and services and facilitating new business development and the EKOS report identified a number of economic development opportunities related to the tourism and food sectors. The Fund is well placed to respond to this in a practical way by providing start-up or developmental support to well researched business opportunities that strengthen and diversify the local economy and encourage inward investment. Consideration is being given to the types of businesses or enterprises that the Fund could support including social enterprises.

Enterprise ideas are likely to be in development and the Fund could play a role in supporting these by also offering **small business grants** for things like organisational reviews, development and business planning and marketing planning, capacity building and skills development and feasibility studies.



Creation of **local employment opportunities** is one tangible way of measuring local economic growth. The Fund presents a good opportunity for investing in developments that facilitate job growth through creating salaried posts within established or emerging organisations. Such posts may well require the postholder/s to undertake a mix of strategic and operational level activity. This in turn can mean that appointing and retaining successful candidates to such positions, especially in smaller rural communities is challenging. Whilst sustainability of posts is important it is also important to recognise that skills required for some posts may mean recruiting on a part-time or sessional basis or even contracting specific elements to local specialists.

Environmental Initiatives

Linked to enhancing the local economy, the consultation unsurprisingly revealed a strong emphasis on the beauty of the local natural **environment** and how this could be sensitively harnessed for the community's economic benefit.

When asked about the good things about the area the most popular responses were to do with the environment: 'the air - peace and quiet - close to nature - wild outdoors - lots of outdoor activities - it's remote and isolated - relative freedom for children.' But whilst angling and hunting related activities are successfully promoted – though to a relatively specialist holiday-maker – the wider tourist potential of the area has yet to be optimised. Wild Rides is a local business offering horse-riding and husky dog sledging. The Ferrycroft Visitor Centre is a valued resource and there are a significant number of **local assets** including walking routes, Migdale Loch, Spinningdale Old Mill, and cycle paths that could be developed and co-ordinated within an integrated tourist strategy. The Lairg and District Initiative Eco Croft project is a good local example of broader integrated approach - 'a social enterprise involving tourism, education and community'.

Community Management

The Fund could consider supporting initiatives that develop **community ownership** of local assets, particularly in relation to land. By encouraging community-based options for the potential ownership and use of local environmental assets especially, the Achany Fund could increase the capacity of communities to take forward their own development.

The community is already well served by community facilities though it is recognised that some investment in their maintenance and/or running costs may be required. Therefore assets in terms of buildings may be less of a priority. However it is important to note that the additional renewable Energy Efficiency Fund, that forms part of the community's agreement with SSE, will play an important role in ensuring community buildings are increasingly energy efficient.

Infrastructure and Transport

The consultation revealed that as well as enjoying the scenic benefits of the area, residents are affected by the challenges of rurality, especially in relation to transport and affordable housing, which are not adequate to meet the needs of communities.

At a strategic level the Fund could consider increasing transport provision across the benefit area whilst ensuring that this is within the context of and aligned to the ongoing work of the Sutherland Partnership's Transport Vision for Sutherland and the earlier KOSI Vision Document. The latter identified a need to review current transport provision

and demand including community based options, consideration of the needs of key groups (notably young people, the elderly and the disabled) and maintenance of the existing transport infrastructure.

Older People

As already indicated, there is a real concern – both locally and at a wider strategic level - about the projected demographic changes in Sutherland over the next few decades. It is likely that the imbalance will skew future statutory and voluntary sector resources towards the increasing needs of an elderly population. The Highland Council plan, for example, notes that 'while increased life expectancy is a sign of better health and improved living conditions generally, the Council will have to adapt its services to counter the vulnerability of older people, particularly those living alone with a limiting long term illness.' However, it is likely that amongst the growing elderly population there will be increased numbers of particularly vulnerable and isolated community members whose needs may not be met through statutory services. Highlighting the specific needs of older people seems relevant. The growing elderly population is also a potential resource for the area particularly in terms of voluntary action and building community spirit. Their contribution to building community spirit is already significant.

Therefore any Fund purpose related to meeting the needs of the elderly should not just reflect a service delivery/welfare approach but also encourage applicants to consider how the proposed intervention builds the capacity of older people to engage with wider community activity. Encouraging intergenerational initiatives could be one way to develop this and some of the earlier community-based film work in Lairg is evidence of this.

Young People

A similar approach could be useful for helping to address the needs of younger people who were identified through the consultation as another particularly 'high needs' group. Although provision has recently improved with the deployment of youth workers in Bonar Bridge and the opening of the bus facility, developing meaningful engagement and involvement opportunities for young people is still a critical need across the community benefit area. This is not just a short term diversionary need but should contribute to longer-term efforts to stem the declining population in the 15-29 age group. If this is not addressed by a wide range of strategies (not just the Achany Fund), any efforts to build sustainable communities within the benefit area or indeed across wider Sutherland could be thwarted.



As already indicated, the KOSI Youth Development Group has been an important champion in developing provision to meet young people's needs. Opening the bus as a meeting and activity place is an important step. With support from local benefactors, the group have also purchased the site where the bus is parked and have always aimed to establish a more permanent facility. The Achany Fund could help build on the good

work that has already started here and look at how KOSI Youth Development Group can be further supported to develop a more strategic and sustainable approach to meeting young people's needs in the wider benefit area.

Certainly despite the encouraging political climate supporting young people's empowerment and Sutherland's progressive work in this area, the rate at which young people leave the area once they turn 18 is of concern to residents in the benefit area. Both the economic strategy and 2008 Vision Document acknowledge this and whilst the milestone of turning 18 often catalyses young people to consider moving on, the Achany Fund is well placed to contribute to efforts to make the area an attractive place for young people and young adults.

Strengthening Communities

The KOSI documentation noted community spirit as an asset in each village and the EKOS SWOT analysis also identified 'sense of community' as an asset. This consultation also had community spirit identified as a good thing about living in the area, with respondents discussing the 'sense of community' that exists and also the importance of local events such as gala weeks, crofters show and Mayfest. Although this has been acknowledged in the KOSI Vision objectives and the EKOS report recommended capitalising on this, it has not been fully developed. Building the area's economic and social capital (which is about the links, ties, bonds and networks that exist between people to strengthen a community) could therefore be a relevant strategic purpose for the Fund.

At a wider strategic level the importance of strengthening communities was evident in Sutherland Partnership's 2004-9 strategy where some measures of community are also helpfully identified in relation to people's activity, community sector, social economy, individual organisations and support, infrastructure and dialogue. It could be helpful for the Panel to have further discussions with Sutherland Partnership about their experience

of these measures and how they have assisted in assessing the impact of their work and investments.

Local co-ordination

Whilst capacity building is identified below as a cross-cutting issue, a specific example of community level capacity building identified during the consultation was the need for some local infrastructure/ community management mechanism to co-ordinate, convene and support efforts to help realise the area's potential. KOSI has perhaps sought to play this role in the past but there is a need for revitalising capacity and resources. This could be in the form of supporting a new or existing organisation to play this role – and the Foundation's work supporting the 'repositioning' of organisations could be useful here – or supporting different types of co-ordination activity (for example, an area wide 'Achany' newsletter) that is actually delivered by different groups. It is worth noting that one of the challenges in developing these types of initiatives is the ability of the local area to attract and sustain individuals with the requisite skills. It is also important to note that KOSI and the Lairg Initiative already have had experience in recruiting and managing project staff therefore it is important to build on that experience and consider which local organisation/s have the capacity to take on this role.

2.4 Cross-cutting issues

A number of issues emerged during the consultation process which could be regarded as 'cross-cutting'. This means they are not necessarily linked to a particular theme or sector but have relevance to all the other key purposes and some of the needs identified during the consultation. In addition they are issues that groups applying to the Achany Fund should consider factoring into their project or proposed intervention – whatever the specific focus. The cross-cutting issues are capacity building, partnership working, community development and volunteering, working across generations and ensuring access and sustainability. Highlighting cross cutting issues can help support the wider strategic purposes of the Fund and help ensure that the Achany Fund is achieving some real longer-term outcomes for the community.

Capacity building

Capacity building refers to activities that **strengthen groups and organisations** and help them improve what they seek to do. Capacity building is relevant to organisations of all scales and sizes that are committed to improving their effectiveness. Capacity building efforts may include training, exchanges, other learning opportunities, new equipment or resources, recruiting staff or volunteers. Building the capacity of the community within the benefit area was considered an important priority for the Fund to address. This can include both the capacity of established or new organisations and the capacity of individuals themselves. The need for capacity building is linked to concerns around changing demographic patterns and a desire to ensure that sufficient skills are embedded within the community to contribute and add value both economically and socially. The emphasis would be on developing longer term investment rather than short term interventions.

Partnership Working

The Sutherland Partnership has been at the forefront of developing partnership working across Sutherland so the concept of groups and organisations working collaboratively is already well established in the area. To further capitalise on the proposed strategic nature of the Fund it could be useful to consider ways that partnership working between organisations could be encouraged by the Achany Fund. There could even be an additional criteria around welcoming joint or collaborative bids between organisations – although there will always be the need to identify a main applicant. This could potentially **encourage and facilitate links between organisations** and across the community council areas, very much echoing the ‘one Fund’ approach adopted by the community councils involved in the Achany development. This positive collaborative approach will assist in the development of strategic interventions that should complement other funding opportunities in the area such as the Beinn Tharsuinn and forthcoming Lairg Funds.

Community Development and Volunteering

The communities within the area of benefit are dynamic, vibrant communities. The list of groups in Appendix 4 is testament to the amount and diversity of community activity, much of which is done by volunteers. However at times there were suggestions that much of the core activity involves small numbers of people who commit to any number of initiatives, committees or projects. Within the context of a declining younger population and a growing elderly population it is therefore critical that groups test out ideas for increasing the numbers of those involved in delivering services (assuming that overly specialist skills are not required) or contributing to the life of a group or organisation. Another cross cutting issue could therefore be around promoting

opportunities for engagement in the applicant organisation. Or to put it another way – **how will a particular intervention also support and enable new people to get involved in that group or organisation?** This kind of additional priority would also help ensure that the Fund was seeking to support the longer term development of local groups and organisations beyond simply the lifetime of a particular project.

Working across generations

Related to this could be a specific invitation to widen opportunities for young people within existing or new initiatives. This could also encourage an **intergenerational** dimension to the Fund which could help address the misperceptions that do sometimes exist across different generations. Whilst this wasn't identified as an acute issue within the community benefit area, it did seem that there was relatively little work of this nature ongoing in the area.

Access and Sustainability

Finally, access to transport is a critical factor affecting people's quality of life in the area. All applicants should consider how to ensure their proposed project or intervention is accessible and plan for additional costs in providing or arranging transport for users/members. However, linked to this is a need to address environmental sustainability and the Fund could consider developing a checklist to support applicants in ensuring they have taken account of the carbon footprint of their proposed project.

2.5 So what kind of grantmaking is relevant to the Achany area?

Grantmaking can be done in different ways. Some funders simply give out grants that are not tied to particular outcomes. This is sometimes referred to as 'giving'. The Foundation's own Community Grants Programme has, historically, reflected this approach. The local Beinn Tharsuinn Community Benefit Fund is another 'giving' fund. Some funders identify a particular area of work they want to promote or specific outputs they want achieved and then invite proposals to match this. Funding is awarded on the basis of the best fit. This is referred to as 'shopping' and is in part how some voluntary sector organisations secure contracts to deliver services from statutory agencies. A third style of grantmaking is 'investing'. This is when grants are awarded on the basis of long term outcomes identified by a funder as particularly significant.

However whatever type of grantmaking happens it is always important to work within an eligibility framework which outlines criteria that applicant organisations or groups must meet. See Appendix 6 for a proposed eligibility framework for the Achany Fund.

The consultation work has revealed a community that is clearly ripe for some significant interventions to enhance its long term viability and sustainability. From the outset there has been a sense that people are very keen to build on the work of KOSI and harness the Achany Fund to drive forward some well considered developments that will begin to bring tangible benefits to the area. It could be useful therefore to promote the Achany Fund as a strategic resource for the community and that this is reflected in a



Sunset over Strathcarron from Bonar Bridge

grantmaking style that predominantly reflects an investment approach.

This has implications for how active a body the Panel wants to be in relation to ensuring the Fund's purposes are met. One commentator has suggested that a funder can be 'responsive' – and just respond to requests coming in, 'compensatory' – making up deficits, filling gaps and topping up or 'interventionist' – which is more about initiating relationships and developments and inviting proposals. In short being interventionist means a more engaged way of operating with high expectations around a return on investment, which are monitored and measured. Certainly the Achany Panel has the requisite skills and drive to adopt this interventionist approach that would complement an investment approach to grantmaking.

2.6 Conclusion

Both the community consultation and desk research highlight the need to build a vibrant local economy that encourages younger people and families to settle in the area. Alongside this there is recognition of the need to sustain vibrant communities that support and connect people, whatever their age.

In conclusion therefore, and after extensive discussions with the Advisory Panel, the following framework is proposed for the Achany Fund:

Overall aim of the Achany Fund

The Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund invests in activities and initiatives that help to build a vibrant local economy, supports thriving communities and makes the area an attractive place to live, work and visit for people of all ages.

Fund Purposes

The Fund will do this by awarding a mixture of capital and revenue grants that:

- Strengthen and diversify the local economy through support for social enterprises, especially those that explore, test and develop activity that sensitively exploits the area's tourist potential or niche business areas.
- Stimulate new ideas and innovative approaches to generate growth and development and new employment.
- Support the acquisition, development and use of new community assets and maintain and enhance existing ones.
- Ensure that adequate provision and/or services are available for the community that improve their life chances and/or quality of life.
- Support efforts that co-ordinate community activity and optimise local resources and assets.
- Respond to unforeseen circumstances or opportunities that are in keeping with the broad Fund aims identified above.

Fund Priorities

The Fund will support activities that are strategic and sustainable and take a long term view. To help work towards this, applicants are encouraged to also consider how their proposals reflect some of the following priorities:

- Developing sustainable employment or volunteering opportunities and/or the employability of staff or volunteers.
- Building their groups and organisations to be more effective.
- Working in partnership with other organisations that might be local, regional or national and that provide added value (financial or other) to the initiative.
- Connecting with wider sections of the community beyond the immediate target group.
- Ensuring that issues of access and sustainability have been considered.
- Considering how the specific activity can have some reach to the wider geographical area covered by the Fund.
- Raising a proportion of the total budget for the activity from other sources.

It is also important to build in flexibility in the framework to allow the Panel to respond quickly to unanticipated or immediate demands for support.

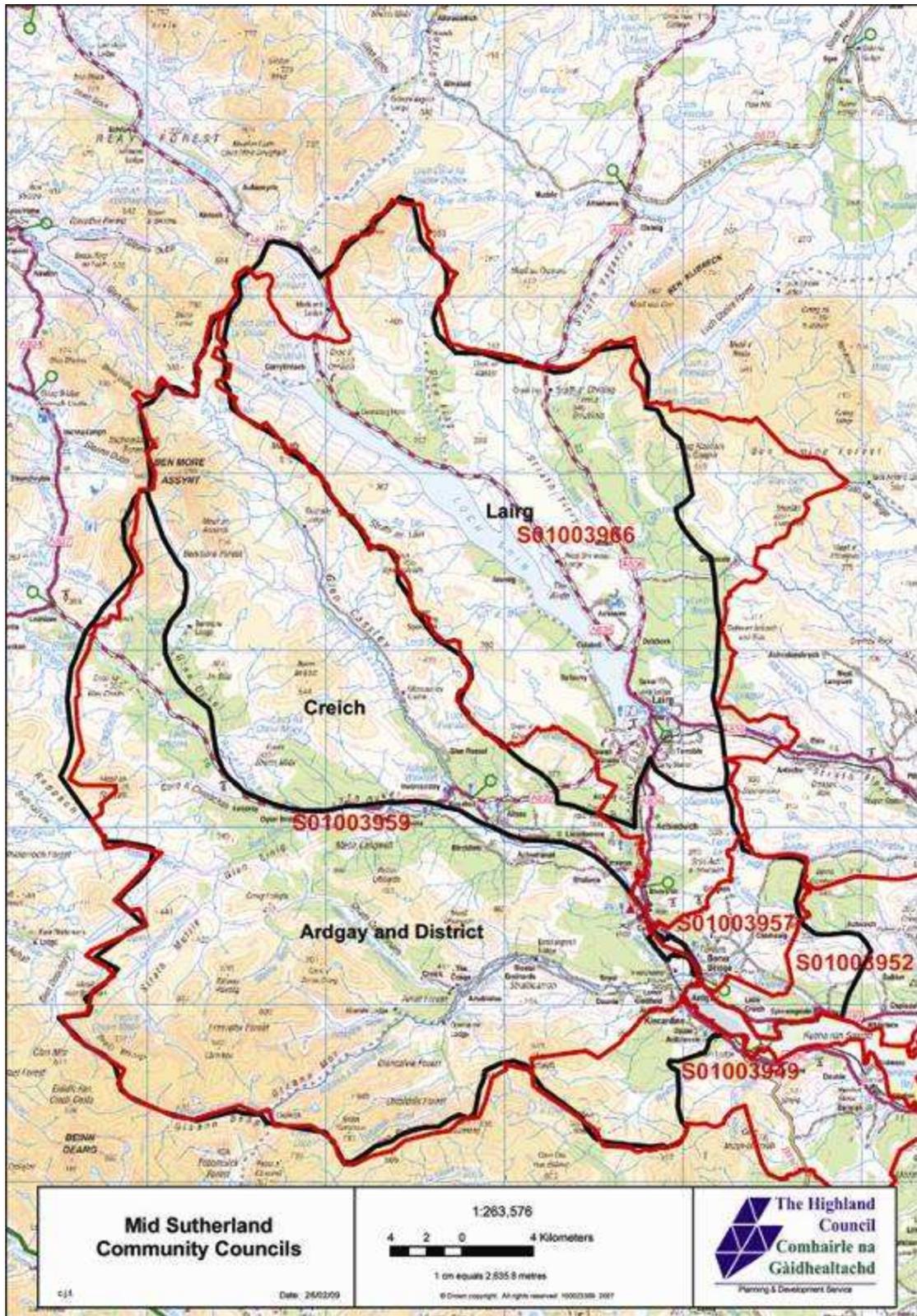
However such requests will need to be considered thoughtfully within the broader aims of the Fund.

As well as acknowledging the need to periodically review the actual Fund purpose and priorities it will be important to develop a framework for monitoring and evaluating the extent to which the Fund is achieving its purpose. The Foundation will work with the Panel on this during the Fund's first year of operation.

However the priorities associated with the Fund may develop and change over the 25 year period. For example, at this stage the consultation has identified that smaller scale activity could be met through other funding sources but this could change over time. The Foundation recommends that this Profile is periodically reviewed to ensure that the Fund reflects the changing local needs of the communities it serves.

APPENDIX 1

Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Area Map



APPENDIX 2

Community Benefit and the National Standards for Community Engagement

Context

The Scottish Community Foundation will promote use of the National Standards for Community Engagement in its work to support the development and maintenance of community benefit funds. Supporting the development of the Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund - which will benefit the residents of the geographic areas represented by the Ardgay & District, Creich and Lairg Community Councils - is our first attempt to do this.

Rather than just promote the Standards to the Panel and encourage the Standards to be reflected in their new role as grantmakers, we want to reflect use of the Standards at all stages of our engagement with the Achany community. The Standards therefore are relevant to different parts of a wider partnership process including:

- developing the Community Profile (important for the Foundation to model standards and integrate them into the relationship from an early stage);
- as a check when the Fund profile is being agreed;
- as a check when publicity/communication material about the Fund is produced for the wider community;
- as a tool to assist with measuring how effectively the Fund is meeting its purpose.

Relevance to Community Profile

The Community Profile work is underpinned by the seven National Standard principles which the Foundation will adopt and adhere to in the community profile and wider community benefit work.

INVOLVEMENT: We will identify and involve the people and organisations who have an interest in the focus of the engagement.

- We will seek to ensure that all groups of people whose interests are affected by the emergence of the Community Benefit are informed about the consultation and have the opportunity to be involved and represented in the profile process.
- We will seek to ensure that local agencies and groups actively promote the consultation process to people who experience barriers to participation.
- We will seek to ensure that local agencies and groups promote the involvement of people affected, but who may not yet be organised into their own groups.

- We will request that those we consult with want to be involved, have authority and legitimacy regarding those they represent and will feedback to those they are representing.

SUPPORT: We will identify and overcome any barriers to involvement

- We will seek to ensure that there are no practical barriers to engaging in the consultation and will take into consideration: access to premises, communication aids, timings of meeting, care issues of dependents etc.
- We will raise the issue of financial barriers with the Community Councils to ensure that there are no financial barriers for participants.

PLANNING: We will gather evidence of the needs and available resource and use this to develop a Community Profile to inform the Fund purpose and scope

- We will clarify the purpose of the Community Profile i.e.: what we want to achieve through compiling it.
- We will inform each participant about the purpose of the consultation and process it is contributing to.
- We will encourage and facilitate participants to express their views openly and honestly.
- We will work to an agreed and public timescale.

METHODS: We will agree and use methods of engagement that are fit for purpose

- In our consultation work we will use a range of methods including desk-based research, focus groups and 1:1 discussions.
- In the face to face consultation, we will use a range of tools to encourage participation and enable diverse views to be expressed.
- In the face to face consultation, we will always explain what participants are being invited to do and why.
- We will review the effectiveness of the tools we used and critically reflect on what we learn in relation to information relevant to the Community Profile as well as wider issues around community consultation and the specific tools used.

WORKING TOGETHER: We will agree and use clear procedures that enable the participants to work with one another effectively and efficiently

- The Community Profile work will model the way the Foundation intends to work with the Community Councils to establish and support the Achany Community Benefit Fund.
- When conducting the Community Profile research we will:
 - be open and honest with those we engage with on the Community Profile work
 - behave towards any community member in a positive, respectful and non-discriminatory way
 - recognise the often voluntary time commitment being given by participants
 - communicate clearly and listen carefully to the views of individuals and organisations, taking account of minority and less popular views
 - use resources efficiently, effectively and fairly
 - support the Community Profile process with efficient administrative arrangements.

SHARING INFORMATION: We will ensure that necessary information is communicated between the participants.

- We will ensure that all groups of people whose interests are affected by the emergence of the Community Benefit are informed about the consultation and the opportunity to contribute.
- Any information we produce about the Community Profile process will be accessible, clear and understandable. If necessary we will seek to produce it in a range of formats.
- Information will be made available in good time for participants to make any arrangements should they wish to contribute.
- Any confidentiality issues will be respected by the Foundation staff.

WORKING WITH OTHERS: We will work with others with an interest in the Community Profile

- We will identify other structures or organisations within the area that may have views to contribute and ensure they receive further information about development of the Fund.

IMPROVEMENT: We will develop actively the skills, knowledge and confidence of all the participants

This standard will have more relevance once the Fund is established.

FEEDBACK: We will feedback the results of the Community Profile to the wider community and agencies affected.

- The final profile could be made available to the public and we will discuss with the Community Councils different and appropriate ways of doing this.
- We will ensure that the profile promotes positive images of all population groups in the community and avoids stereotypes.

MONITORING & EVALUATION: We will monitor and evaluate whether the Community Profile achieves its purpose and meets the national standards for community engagement.

- We will monitor the Community Profiling process as we are doing it, checking back continually on these indicators.
- At the end of the process we will evaluate the process for compiling the Community Profile, the output produced and outcomes achieved. This may not be a formal process but it will be recorded.
- We will share any learning about developing Community Profiles internally within the Foundation and externally where appropriate.

APPENDIX 3

Other sources of funding available in the area

LEADER

LEADER is part of the Scottish Rural Development Programme (SRDP), aimed at promoting economic and community development within rural areas. LEADER is a bottom-up method of delivering support for rural development through implementing a local rural development strategy. Support will be aimed primarily at small-scale, community driven projects that are pilot and innovative in nature. The current LEADER programme runs from 2008 - 2012. There are seven LEADER priority themes identified:

- culture and heritage; local culture, events
- learning opportunities; community based adult learning, youth learning, youth projects, improving communication across generations, training in capacity building
- access to facilities, activities and services; village halls, sports facilities youth facilities, community transport
- land environment and the countryside; promotion and interpretation, access and recreation , local produce
- renewables; renewable energy projects for community facilities
- tourism; tourism infrastructure, advertising and marketing
- social enterprise; support for local community services.

An initial projects list within the LEADER Development Plan includes the following three which are specific to the benefit fund area:

- Sutherland Summit; which will bring together all public, private and third sector representatives with Scottish Government Ministers
- Bonar Bridge Community Hall; to transform the hall into an environmentally friendly hall
- Sutherland bio diversity project scheme; projects will receive a financial contribution from LEADER funds.

The SRDP also administers a **Rural Priorities** programme with 37 related funding packages, some of which have relevance to the some of the priority areas of the Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund.

Highland Council: North West and Central Sutherland Ward Discretionary Budget

This is the third year that the Ward Discretionary Budget for North West and Central Sutherland (Ward 1) has been successfully used to support local projects. The awards have enabled many groups and organisations to progress with their projects and attract other funding which, with the discretionary budget, are valued at £171,527.

Recent awards to groups within the community benefit area included:

- Lairg & District Initiative - £1250 for the Lairg May Fest.
- Lairg Crofters Show - £1750 to purchase new holding pens.
- Bonar Bridge Community Hall - £2000 for kitchen upgrade.
- Gearrhoille Community WOOD - £756.83 for purchase of IT equipment.
- Gledfield Primary School - £500 for purchase of IT equipment.

Highland Council: The Communities Project for Highland Biodiversity

This provides funding for 24 local projects that conserve or enhance the natural heritage and encourage communities to look after it. There are seven local biodiversity groups one of which covers the Sutherland area. This is a partnership project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, Highland Council, Scottish Natural Heritage, Highlands & Islands Enterprise and RSPB Scotland. In the Sutherland area there are currently three projects in operation – an invertebrate audit, a marine audit and village wildlife audit.

Benn Tharsuinn Community Benefit Fund

Distributed through a number of community councils in the designated benefit area including Ardgay & District and Creich Community Councils.

Community Land Unit, HIE

Offers financial support to increase the role of communities in the ownership and management of land and land assets, and the sustainable management of these resources for the benefit of the community.

Community Energy Scotland

Provides support, advice and funding on renewable energy projects.

Forestry for People Challenge Fund

The Forestry for People Challenge Fund is intended to help groups realise the potential contribution of local woodlands to the health, learning and strengthening of communities. Eligible work could include guidance, contribution towards staff time,

feasibility studies and health education projects. Administered by Forestry Commission Scotland under the Scotland Rural Development Programme.

The Crofting Counties Agricultural Grant Scheme

Administered by the Crofters Commission, the scheme provides assistance towards improving the viability of rural business on crofts and similar scale agricultural holdings in the Crofting Counties, and to achieve other benefits such as improved animal health and welfare.

APPENDIX 4

Community Activity identified during the consultation process

a) Groups currently operating across the community councils areas of Creich, Lairg and Ardgay

Ardgay & Creich meeting

- Boys Brigade
- Badminton Club
- Kyle of Sutherland Heritage Society
- Gearrchoille Community Woodland Association, Ardgay
- Scottish Country Dance
- Dornoch Firth Group
- Bradbury Daycare Centre, Bonar Bridge
- History Society
- Art group
- Wildlife Watch
- Feis a' Choalais
- Bowling Club
- British Legion
- Cameo
- Bonar Bridge OAP Fund
- Whist
- Gaelic Playgroup
- Children's Christmas Party Committee
- Creich Community Council
- Gala Week
- Golf club – Bonar and Ardgay
- Arday & District Community Council

Lairg meeting

- Art Club – Lairg based
- Indoor Bowling
- Whist on a Mondays in winter & autumn
- Badminton in the winter
- Rifle Range
- Youth Club based in school gym but out of school hours
- Scouts and Cubs use Lairg Community Hall
- Brownies and guides use Lairg Community Hall

- Dance Club on a Wednesday night
- Piping
- Lairg and District Community Initiative
- Lairg Learning Centre activities for adults and children (various)
- Lairg Football club
- Ardgay and Bonar Pipe Band
- Luncheon Club weekly run by volunteers
- Friendship Club
- Family First Sutherland (operates out of Golspie)
- Lairg Gaelic Choir

Other sources

Scottish Crofting Foundation – Kyle of Sutherland Branch

b) Events that happen regularly/ annually in Creich, Lairg and Ardgay identified at public meetings

Ardgay & Creich meeting

- Invercharron Games
- Croick Pilgrimage
- Dornoch Firth Group of churches various social and fellowship events
- Bradbury Christmas Party and Summer Outing
- Kyle of Sutherland Gala Week
- Bonar / Ardgay Children's Christmas party
- School Funday
- Culrain Christmas Party
- Bird Ringing
- Struie League (badminton)

Lairg meeting

- Lairg Gala Week every second Saturday in July to raise funds for Xmas events
- Indoor Bowls competition
- Lairg Show in August
- Sheep sales including largest sale of lambs in Europe in August
- Christmas parties for children and adults
- Light up Lairg – December
- Lairg Music Festival
- Altnaharra Fun Day
- May Fest
- Lairg Lunch Club
- Bonar Bridge OAP Christmas Lunch and Summer Outing

APPENDIX 5

Public Consultation Attendance Details

Achany Wind Farm Community Fund: What's Your View?

Public Meetings

Ardgay Public Hall

31 March 2009

Attendance: 20

Lairg Community Hall

7 April 2009

Attendance: 5

Drop-in sessions

Bonar Bridge Community Hall

1 April 2009

Attendance: 7

Lairg Community Hall

8 April 2009

Attendance: 6

Over these days, representatives of the following organisations attended:

- Ardgay Badminton Group
- Ardgay Bird Group
- Ardgay & District Community Council
- Ardgay Community Transport Initiative
- Bonar Bridge Historical Society
- Bonar Bridge Community Hall Committee
- Bonar Bridge OAP Group
- Bonar Bridge/Ardgay Golf Club
- Bradbury Centre
- Creich Community Council
- Dornoch Firth Group
- Feis
- Gearrchoille Community Woodland Association
- Gledfield Parent Council
- Heritage Centre

- Highland Council
- Kincardine Church
- Kyle of Sutherland Heritage Society
- Kyle of Sutherland Gala Group
- Kyle of Sutherland Initiative
- Kyle of Sutherland Youth Development Group
- Lairg Community Council
- Lairg Initiative
- Lairg Music Festival; Committee
- LEADER Funding Committee
- Parent Council (unidentified school)
- Press & Journal
- Scottish Country Dancing Club, Ardgay Hall
- Sutherland Partnership

Subsequent conversations/ email exchanges were had with:

- Ward Manager
- Area Youth Development Officer
- Staff member at Macleod's Coaches
- Staff at Bradbury Day Care Centre, Bonar Bridge
- Director, Sutherland Partnership
- Staff at the two Service Points in Lairg and Bonar Bridge
- Youth Development Officers

APPENDIX 6

Eligibility Framework for the Achany Wind Farm Community Benefit Fund

Within the spirit of transparency, good grantmaking practice encourages funders to publish any eligibility requirements for their programmes. This identifies any conditions that applicants must fulfil to apply for a grant. The Foundation applies the following eligibility criteria to other current community benefit funds they currently administer:

- Applicants need funding to support projects or activities consistent with the Fund purposes identified.
- Applicants have a constitution (governing document or set of rules) and are set up on a not-for-profit basis. However applicants do not need to be registered charities to apply.

Applicants are able to apply for or hold grants from both the community benefit fund in question and other grants administered by the Scottish Community Foundation.

Some programmes administered by the Foundation are only open to organisations with an annual income of less than £250,000. In this instance it seems reasonable for this not to form part of the eligibility criteria for the Achany Fund because it is the purpose and activities of an organisation and its fit with the Fund purpose that is more important. What has emerged however of more concern is how steps can be taken to ensure that local fundraising efforts are not curtailed as a result of the Fund being established alongside ensuring the Fund levers in additional resources to the area. To encourage this, an additional criteria could be added:

- Applicants seek to ensure that a percentage of the total project cost is sourced from other funding sources. The percentage amount can be discussed and negotiated at the assessment stage.

The final guidelines could also state that only in exceptional circumstances would 100% funding be considered.

Linked to eligibility is the need to be clear about what the Fund will not support. This is helpful because it gives applicants as full a picture as possible about whether it is worth submitting an application. Other community benefit funds administered by the Foundation will not support the following types of activity:

- Projects which do not benefit people living in the defined community benefit area.
- Individuals, or groups without a constitution.

- The advancement of religion or politics (including requests to support the core activities of religious or political groups).
- The repayment of loans or payment of debts.
- Costs already incurred or activities which will take place before we have made a decision on an application (retrospective funding).
- Payments towards areas generally understood to be the exclusive responsibility of statutory authorities.
- Applications that solely benefit flora and fauna. Applicants are invited to demonstrate the direct benefit to the local community and/or service users in cases where the grant application is concerned with flora and fauna.
- Anti-Wind Farm/renewable energy activities, including activities contrary to the interests of Scottish and Southern Energy.

These criteria have been endorsed by SSE and the Foundation recommends these criteria be adopted for the Achany Fund.

APPENDIX 7

Documents and reports referred to during the research and consultation process

Highland Council

- Community Plan; Strengthening Communities
- Education Culture and Sport Report on Integrated Transport Coordination Unit
- Highland Council/HIE Report and Toolkit on working with Windfarm Funds
- The Highland Council – Community Benefit
- Role of Ward Forums
- CRF Report 2008
- Highland Council Corporate Plan 2009/11
- Youth Work Policy May 2006
- Implementation of Youth Work Policy – Review May 2008

NHS

- Making Highland Healthy – The Annual Report of the Director of Public Health for 2007-8 Dr Eric Baijal

Sutherland Partnership

- The Sutherland Health Improvement Plan 2007
- Transport Vision for Sutherland
- LEADER Development Plan for Sutherland 2008-2013
- Sutherland Partnership Annual Report and Financial Statements 2007-8, 2008-9

Kyle of Sutherland Initiative

- Community Vision 2008
- Economic Impact Study of Central Sutherland, EKOS Ltd Jan 2007

Others

- Bonar Bridge Community Hall Consultation with primary children 2008
- Bonar Bridge Community Hall Community Chest Application 2009
- 1991, 2001 Census data (various sources)
- An Economic Survey of Angling in the Kyle of Sutherland Region for the Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust, Glasgow Caledonian University March 2007
- Kyle of Sutherland Fisheries Trust Newsletter (issue no. 3, Dec 2007)
- Kyle News (issue no 1 Winter 2008/9)
- Northern Times archive articles (various)
- Press & Journal archive articles (various)
- VG-ES Community Directory