



Draft September 2024

# Wester Loch Ewe Local Place Plan



# Acknowledgements

Preparation of this Local Place Plan was facilitated by the Wester Loch Ewe Community Council in partnership with the Wester Loch Ewe Trust on behalf of the local community, with financial assistance from The Highland Council's Community Regeneration Fund.

Special thanks to the many local people who helped to develop this Plan.

*Natasha Hutchison and Louise Pearson, on behalf of Wester Ross Consulting, Plan facilitators - September 2024*



Photo L Pearson

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# Executive Summary

The Wester Loch Ewe Local Place Plan was created to reflect our community aspirations, gathered through community engagement in 2024.

## **Our vision includes:**

**suitable and affordable homes** for all ages;

making **transport safer and more joined up**;

ensuring that our valuable **community services** are maintained or improved;

and that **improved digital connectivity** will help strengthen our opportunities to increase and diversify business and communication.

This local plan represents a community-led vision for creating a sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant future for Wester Loch Ewe.

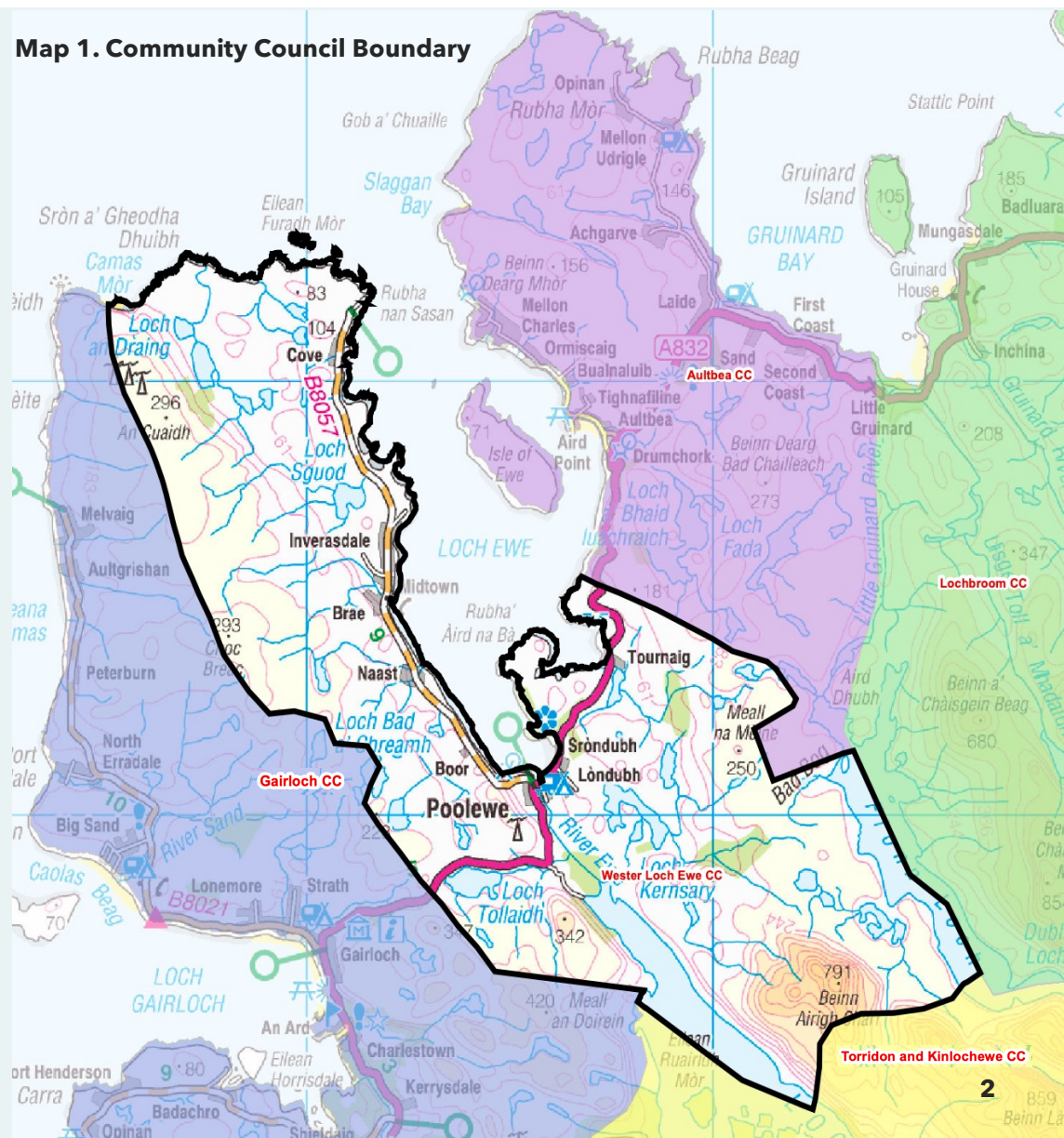
# 1. Introduction

The Wester Loch Ewe Local Place Plan was created to reflect our community aspirations, gathered through community engagement in 2024.

This plan is designed to preserve the cherished aspects of our community while shaping its future for long-term sustainability. Our goal is to support our young people in staying here and finding employment. We aim to make the area appealing and welcoming for working families to relocate here. We envision a vibrant community where people can earn a living, maintain our cultural heritage and identity, and ensure the sustainability of local services and facilities.

Each proposal has been evaluated in the context of Scotland's National Planning Framework 4 ([note 1](#)), ensuring alignment with national development priorities. We have also considered local and regional policy contexts. Our plan represents a community-led vision for creating a sustainable, inclusive, and vibrant future for Wester Loch Ewe.

1. [www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/](https://www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/)



# Who is the plan for?

This plan is designed for local residents, community groups, businesses, the Highland Council and its Community Planning Partners, the Scottish Government, national agencies, and potential investors.

The vision, calls for action and maps in Section 3 of this Local Place Plan reflect the policy agendas contained in the statutory development plan, particularly National Planning Framework 4 (**note 2**) and the West Highland and Islands Local Development Plan (**note 3**) as its most recent components.

## Community-Led Planning for a Sustainable Future

This marks a pivotal opportunity for the community to shape its future. It reflects our vision for the area—how we want it to evolve, what it will offer to current and future generations, and the values that define our way of life.

2. [www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/](http://www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/)

3. [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local\\_and\\_statutory\\_development\\_plans/582/west\\_highlands\\_and\\_islands\\_local\\_development\\_plan](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/582/west_highlands_and_islands_local_development_plan)



Photo L Pearson

# ENGAGEMENT

Community engagement for the Local Place Plan was conducted in mid-2024, following the National Standards for Community Engagement ([note 4](#)) and the Scottish Government's draft How To Guide ([note 5](#)) for communities creating Local Place Plans.

**1 workshop with the community council and development trust** to review priorities from the Community Action Plan. These were converted into topics for drop in sessions and the survey.

**4 staffed drop-in sessions in May/June 2024:** publicised via flyers, posters, social media, and word of mouth. Just over 20 people participated in the drop-in events (the total population of the Community Council area is around 460) and submitted 54 comments.

**1 youth workshop** with 25 participants in Gairloch High School, where children from the Wester Loch Ewe Community attend.

**Surveys were distributed** to each household (approximately 275) and made available online. There were 42 responses.

4. [www.voicescotland.org.uk](http://www.voicescotland.org.uk)

5. [www.ourplace.scot/local-place-plans](http://www.ourplace.scot/local-place-plans)





**A strategic vision:** Outlining long-term community goals.



**A roadmap for action:** Defining steps to achieve those goals.



**A guide for development:** Shaping land and building use to meet local needs.



**Data-driven:** Based on insights gathered by the community.



**Aligned with the Community Action Plan:** Ensuring coordination of local efforts.

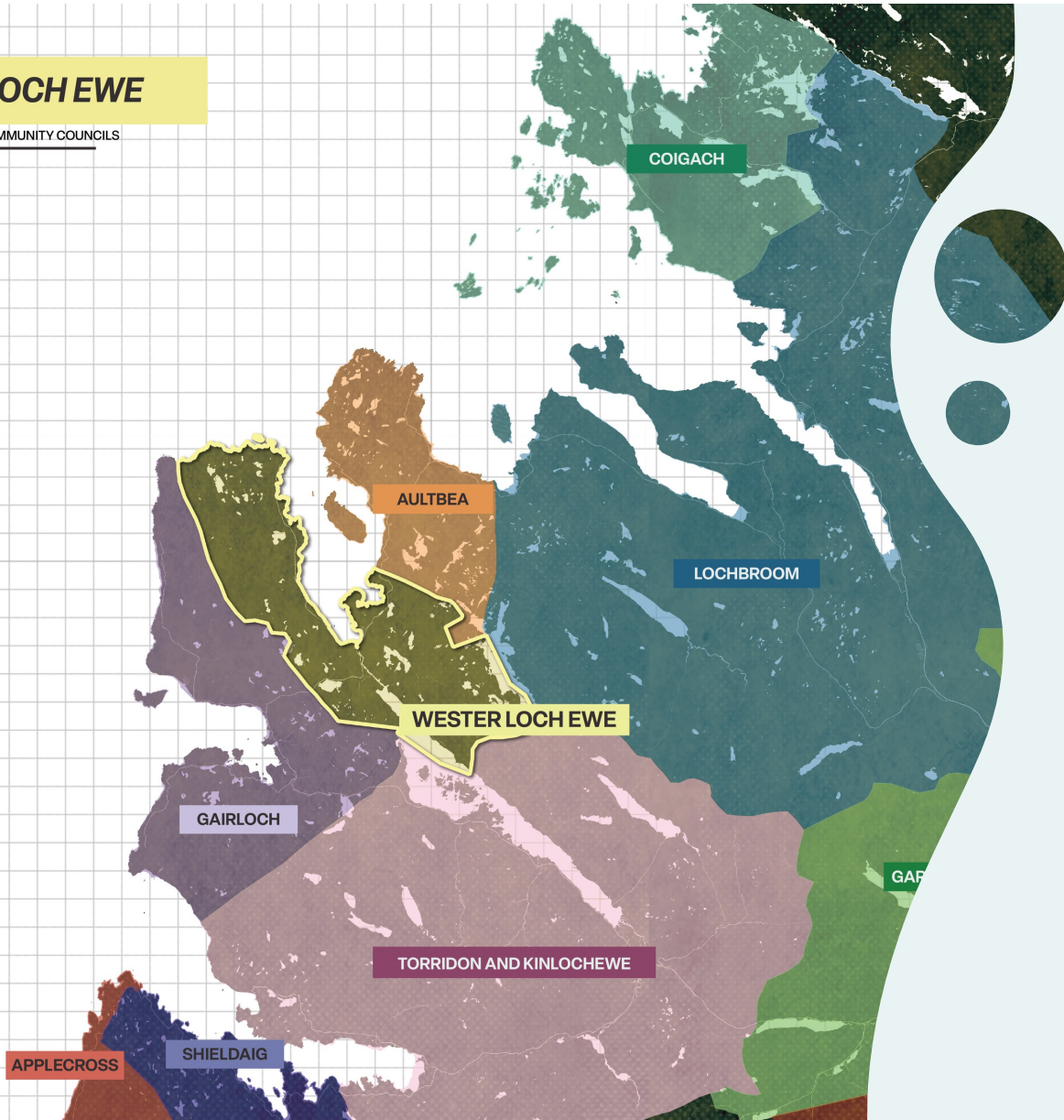
### Key priorities include:

- 1. Housing** that is suitable and affordable
- 2. Transport:** Improve paths, public transport and safety
- 3. Services and Facilities:** Better access to services, supported for community centres, and public amenities.
- 4. Digital Connectivity** that is improved to support remote working, local businesses, and community sustainability



# WESTER LOCH EWE

& SURROUNDING COMMUNITY COUNCILS



Map 2. Wider Context

## 2. WESTER LOCH EWE TODAY

Wester Loch Ewe forms part of a larger peninsula that is shared with the Gairloch Community Council. Adjacent community council areas include Torridon & Kinlochewe in the south, with Aultbea and Lochbroom in the east.

An estimated 460 people lived in the Wester Loch Ewe Community Council area in 2020, according to the Highland Council 2020 Population Estimates.

Between the 2011 census and 2020, our estimated population increased by 2%. Our average age also grew older, with the number of people aged under 16 reducing by 41% and the number aged 65 or over increasing by 64%.

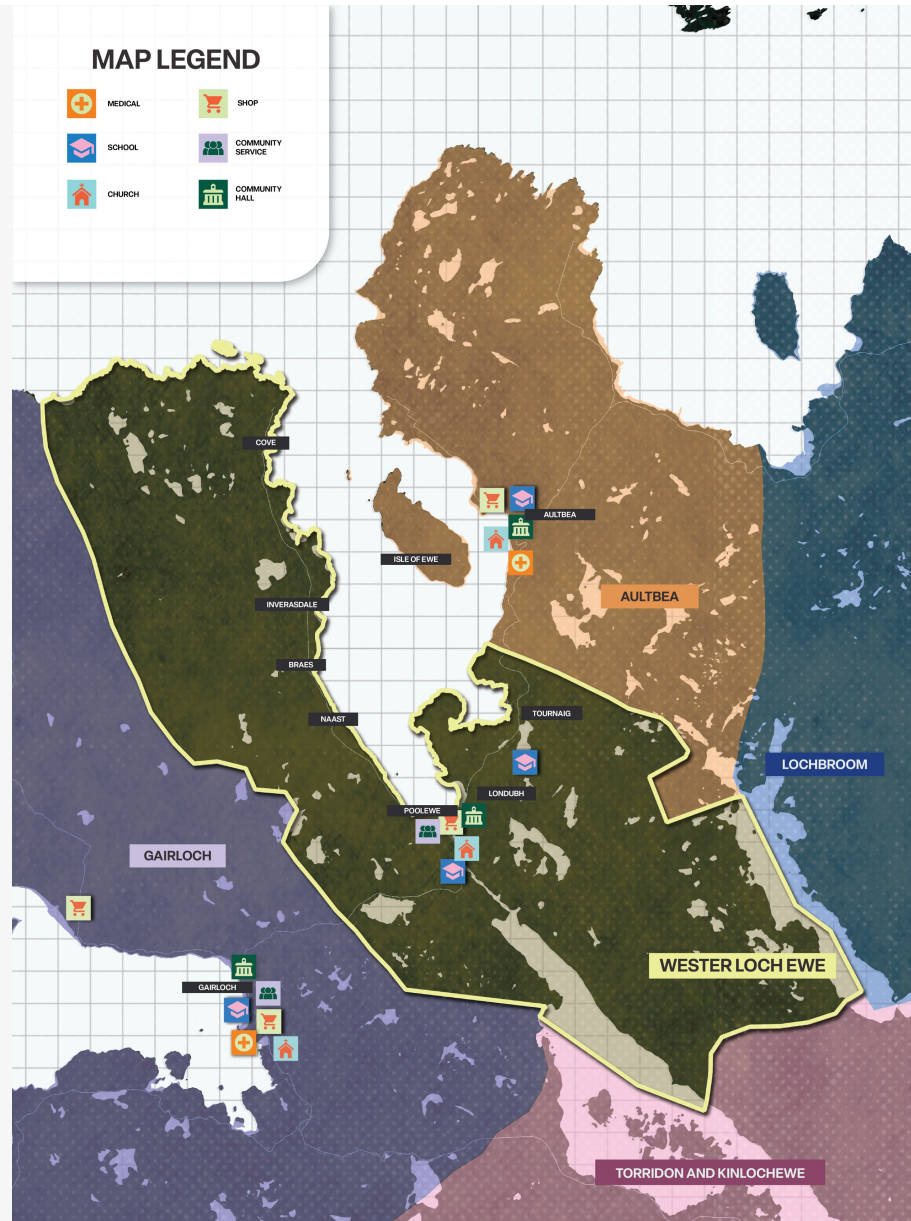
	Total	Age 0-15	Age 16-64	Age 65+
<b>2020 Estimate</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>279</b>	<b>142</b>
<b>Change 2011-2020</b>	<b>up 2%</b>	<b>-41%</b>	<b>-6%</b>	<b>up 64%</b>

Population is concentrated along the western and southern shores of Loch Ewe. Small crofting settlements from north to south are linked by the B8057 and include Cove, Inverasdale, and Naast. In the south, Poolewe is on the A832 and has a primary school, hotel, village hall, campsite, cafe and small shop. Further east, the small settlements of Londubh and Tournaig are situated on either side of Inverewe Estate, owned by the National Trust for Scotland.

We take great pride in our heritage, particularly the vital role Wester Loch Ewe played during the Second World War as a key base for the Arctic Convoys.

We have a special relationship with our landscape too. In addition to several nature designations, the land is actively managed by a thriving crofting community that helps preserve its beauty and sustain its productivity for future generations.

**Map 3. Community Facilities in and near Wester Loch Ewe**



## 3. OUR PROPOSALS

This section of the Local Place Plan covers the actions associated with our mission of **“Strengthening Community, Together.”**

We want a thriving and age-balanced sustainable community where families feel empowered to live and work.

The views gathered were collated and put into themes, and priorities emerged. The steering group reviewed proposals, adding context and detail where required.



# SAFER ROUTES



We want to improve the quality of the transport infrastructure to make it safer and easier to get about, whether it be by foot, cycle, car, boat or other public transport.

Photo L Pearson

# 3.1 Safer Routes

## ROAD MAINTENANCE

### **3.1.1 Increase locations and provision of grit piles along the B8057 during winter months**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 23 Health and Safety, 9 Infrastructure First*

### **3.1.2 Verge maintenance, ditch clearing, and better drainage on the B8057 to improve sight-lines and prevent further road degradation.**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 23 Health and Safety, 9 Infrastructure First*

## REDUCED SPEED LIMIT

### **3.1.3 Extend 30 mph speed limit on the A832 from the top of Croft Brae to beyond the entrance of Inverewe Gardens.**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: Health and Safety, 9 Infrastructure First*

## TRAFFIC CALMING

### **3.1.4 Improve sight-lines and create safe off-road viewpoint at Tollaidh**

*NPF4 Policy Alignment: 30 Tourism, 23 Health and Safety*

## IMPROVE PATHS AND TRACKS

There is a strong consensus on the need to have more and better-maintained paths and tracks for both walkers and cyclists to enhance safety and promote healthier, more environmentally friendly transport options.

### **3.1.5 Safe cycle and footpath between Poolewe and Gairloch to foster more connected communities**

*NPF4 Policy Alignment: 13 Sustainable Transport, 30 Tourism, 11 Health, Wellbeing, and Safety*

## JETTIES AND SLIPWAYS

### **3.1.6 Repair breakwater at Cove Harbour and improve facilities for working and leisure boats**

*NPF4 Policy Alignment: 9 Infrastructure First, 2 Climate Emergency, 23 Health and Safety, 14 Coastal Development*

### **3.1.7 Replace slipway at Inverasdale as it is currently too steep for safe usage**

*NPF4 Policy Alignment: 9 Infrastructure First, 23 Health and Safety, 14 Coastal Development*

An aerial photograph of a coastal community. In the foreground, a modern building with a red roof and light-colored walls sits on a small paved area. A red car is parked nearby. The building is surrounded by green grass and some trees. In the background, a large body of blue water stretches to the horizon, with rolling hills and mountains under a cloudy sky. A white vertical line is on the left side of the image.

# OUR COMMUNITY

Our vision is of a thriving, sustainable, and inclusive community with a strong focus on attracting young families by providing affordable and suitable housing.


An aerial photograph of a coastal landscape. A winding road or path leads through a grassy area towards the water. In the foreground, there is a fence made of wooden posts and wire. The background shows a large body of blue water and distant mountains under a cloudy sky.

Photo L Pearson

# 3.2 Our Community

## HOUSING

### 3.2.1 Prioritising local young people, families, and key workers, and offering a mix of rental and ownership options for housing.

In 2023, the GALE Housing Needs Survey (note 6) covering communities in Gairloch, Wester Loch Ewe and Aultbea indicate that a combination of low-cost home ownership and low-cost rental 2- and 3-bedroom homes would be the most appropriate mix for all three areas. Potential locations are indicated in the extract of the Highland Council West Plan (note 7) in Appendix 1.

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 17 Rural homes, 16 Quality homes*

## GREEN SPACES

### 3.2.2 The Poolewe village green should be kept as a natural space for all to enjoy

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 14 Natural Environment*

## CULTURE AND TRADITIONS

### 3.2.3 Creation of a cycle / footpath between Poolewe and Cove for safer local transport and interpretation of WW2 heritage trail

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 10 Sustainable Transport, 11 Health, Wellbeing, and Safety, 7 Historic Assets and Places, 30 Tourism*

### 3.2.4 Continue to evaluate and administer support for productive and active crofting; for example affordability and support for young crofters

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 29 Rural Development, 7 Historic Assets and Places, 3 Biodiversity*

### 3.2.5 Burial ground at Londubh needs to be extended

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 6 Design, Quality and Place, 9 Human Rights and Equality*

6. <https://galeactionforum.co.uk/housing-needs-survey/>

7. [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development\\_plans/582/west\\_highland\\_and\\_islands\\_local\\_development\\_plan](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/development_plans/582/west_highland_and_islands_local_development_plan)





# OUR SERVICES & FACILITIES

Our services and facilities are valued, but there is room for improvement. Access to healthcare services, public transport options and the maintenance of public toilets are our top concerns.

Photo L Pearson

# 3.3 Our Services and Facilities

## HEALTH SERVICES

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### 3.3.1 Urgent need for local dentist practice

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 19 Health and Well being*

## COMMUNITY CENTRES

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Instead of creating new centres, there is a strong suggestion to make better use of the existing ones.

### 3.3.2 Improved funding and practical support for the upkeep and operation of current community centres.

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 19 Health and Well-being, 25 Community Wealth Building*

## PUBLIC TRANSPORT

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Reliable public transportation between Wester Loch Ewe and outlying areas is essential for the long-term sustainability of our community as a vibrant and appealing place to live.

### 3.3.3 More frequent local bus provision to neighbouring communities

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 13 Sustainable Transport, 8 Local Living, 2 Climate Emergency*

### 3.3.4 Regular bus service to Inverness; integrated with train times at Achnasheen

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 13 Sustainable Transport, 8 Local Living, 2 Climate Emergency*

### 3.3.5 Reinstate mini-bus to cover weekend and evening services

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 13 Sustainable Transport, 8 Local Living, 2 Climate Emergency*

## 3.3 Our Services and Facilities

### PUBLIC TOILETS

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#### **3.3.6 Poolewe toilets to be maintained, brought up to modern standards regarding accessibility, and made financially self-sustaining**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 19 Health and Well Being, 30 Tourism*

### TOURISM FACILITIES

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#### **3.3.7 Installation of waste and disposal facilities for campervans (location undetermined)**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 9 Infrastructure First, 19 Health and Well Being, 30 Tourism*

#### **3.3.8 Reinstatement of Ranger service to educate visitors and manage the impact of tourism**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 30 Tourism, 14 Natural Environment*

#### **3.3.9 New pontoon installation to encourage more yacht tourism (e.g. Cove or Boor)**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 30 Tourism, 9 Infrastructure First, 14 Coastal Development*

### WASTE AND RECYCLING

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#### **3.3.10 Extended weekend hours at recycling centres**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 12 Zero Waste, 8 Local Living*

#### **3.3.11 More frequent emptying of bottle banks**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 12 Zero Waste, 8 Local Living*

### RECREATION

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#### **3.3.12 Improve the play area at the Old Inverasdale Schoolhouse**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 21 Play, Recreation and Sport, 19 Health and Well Being, 8 Local Living*



# DIGITAL CONNECTIVITY

## 3.4 Digital Connectivity

Although there have been some advancements in digital connectivity, major challenges persist with mobile phone reception and broadband speeds, especially in the more remote parts of Wester Loch Ewe. There is a real need for additional infrastructure, but this needs to be taken in consideration of environmental impacts. Reliable telecoms are particularly important for attracting and retaining young people and supporting remote working, local businesses, and job opportunities, all of which are vital for the long-term economic sustainability of the community.

### FURTHER INVESTMENT & DEVELOPMENT

#### **3.4.1 Continue to monitor planning applications for new telecoms mast proposals in the community council area (i.e. Shared Rural Network (note 8))**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 9 Infrastructure First, 14 Natural Environment, 17 Rural Homes and Rural Communities*

#### **3.4.2 100% coverage and availability of super-fast broadband**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 9 Infrastructure First, 14 Natural Environment, 17 Rural Homes and Rural Communities*

#### **3.4.3 Consideration of subsidies for satellite broadband in areas where this is no coverage.**

*NPF4 Policy alignment: 9 Infrastructure First, 14 Natural Environment, 17 Rural Homes and Rural Communities*

Not everyone in the community struggles with digital connectivity, and there is some concern about the environment impacts new masts may create.

#### **3.4.4 Increase the powers of local decision making before national policies are implemented (i.e. Shared Rural Network)**

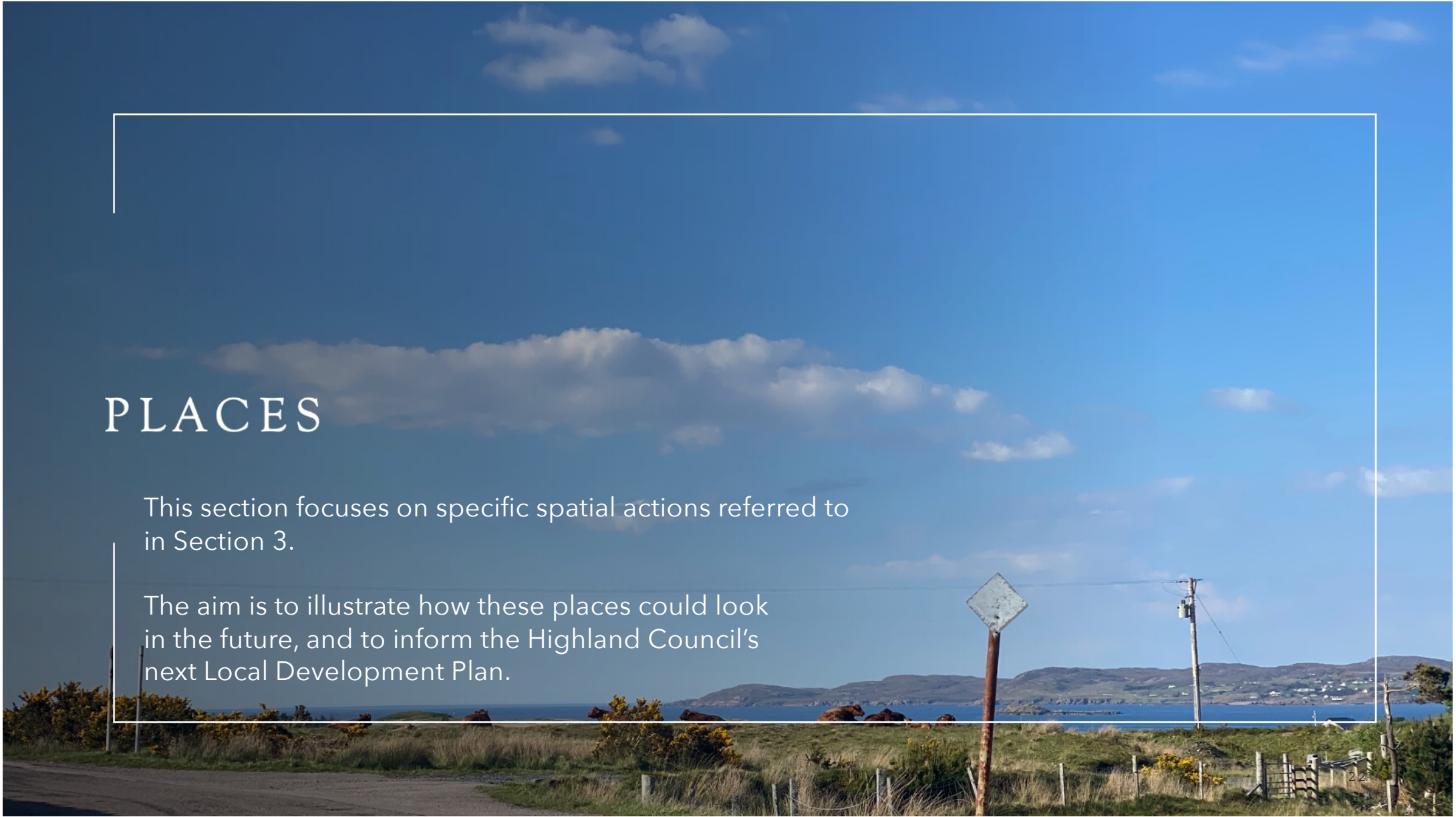
*NPF4 Policy alignment: 25 Community Wealth Building*

8. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/shared-rural-network-srn-progress-update-september-2024/shared-rural-network-srn-progress-update-september-2024>

# PLACES

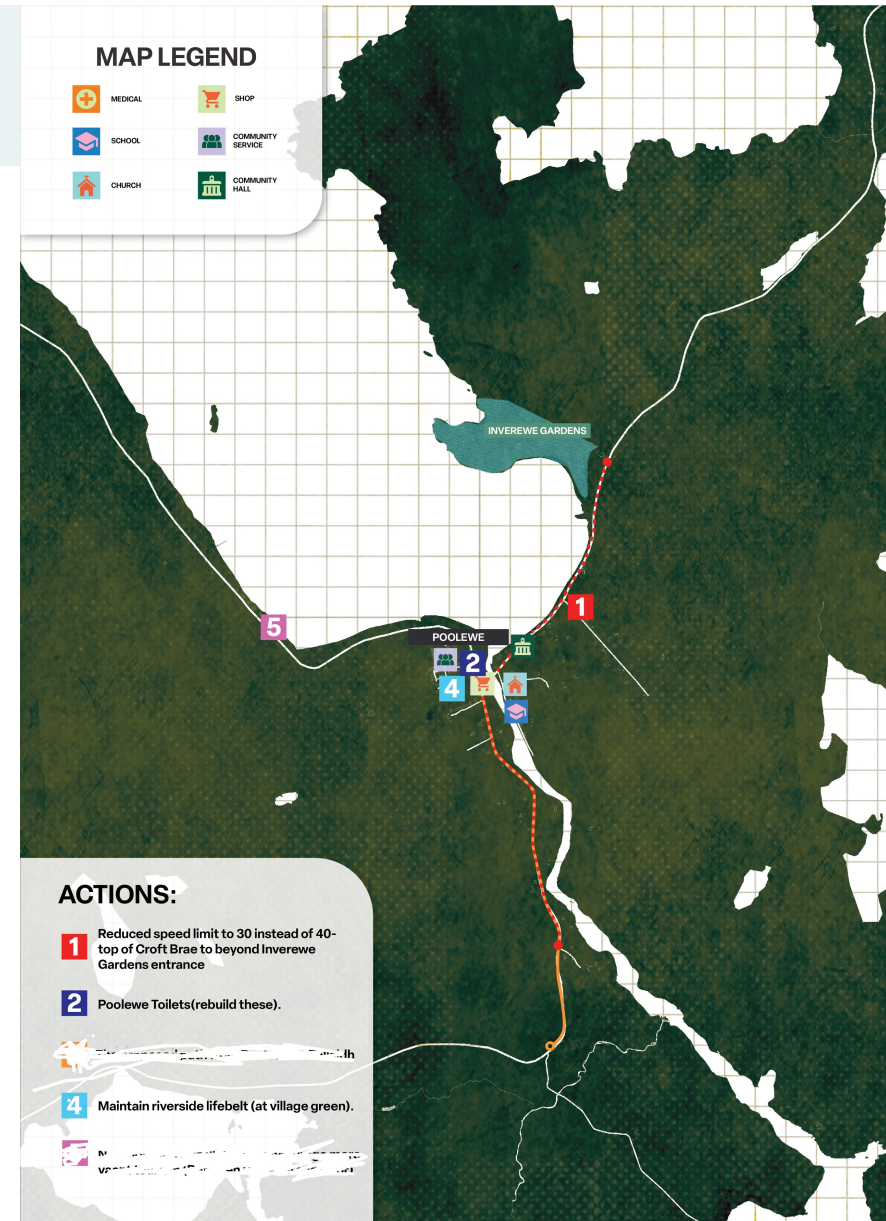
This section focuses on specific spatial actions referred to in Section 3.

The aim is to illustrate how these places could look in the future, and to inform the Highland Council's next Local Development Plan.



# 4. Places – Poolewe

1. Extend 30 mph speed limit on the A832 from the top of Croft Brae to beyond the entrance of Inverewe Gardens.
2. Rebuild public toilets at Poolewe
3. Extend Burial Ground at Londubh
4. Poolewe Village Green not for development  
(map amendments to come)



# 4. Places – Peninsula

- 1. Verge maintenance, ditch clearing, and better drainage on the B8057 to improve sight-lines and prevent further road degradation.**
- 2. Increase locations and provision of grit piles along the B8057 during winter months**
- 3. Repair breakwater at Cove Harbour**
- 4. Height Restrictions at Firemore Beach**
- 5. Replace slipway at Inverasdale**
- 6. Improve play area at Old School House in Inverasdale**





# Next Steps

The next phase of this Local Place Plan includes a 28-day notice period for feedback from councillors, community councils, and the public, with events to ensure broad engagement. After reviewing submissions, the steering group will incorporate any necessary changes, and the final plan will be submitted to Highland Council by the end of October.

For further information, please contact  
[louise@wrb.scot](mailto:louise@wrb.scot)



## APPENDIX 1. NPF 4 Policy Alignment (note 9)

Actions were evaluated against NPF 4 outcomes and took into consideration our location within the North and West Coast and Islands Regional Priority Area, which has specific focus on remote coastal communities. This includes:

Preparing for unique challenges related to climate change, particularly coastal erosion and sea-level rise. Our Plan addresses this by focusing on infrastructure improvements, like the repair of Cove Harbour breakwater and improving slipways, aligning with emphasis on **climate resilience and protecting coastal areas**.

We want a more balanced population via affordable housing, supporting local businesses, and improving digital connectivity– to ensure that **remote areas remain viable places to live and work** by promoting **local living** and rural homes.

We want to improve tourism infrastructure such as pontoon installations to promote yacht tourism, while protecting sensitive natural environments – to make sure **tourism is more sustainable and a force for good for local communities**.

Improving public transport links, creating safer roads, and enhancing digital infrastructure aligns with priorities for the North and West Coast to **improve access and connectivity**, particularly in areas where geographic isolation hampers economic growth and community well-being.

9. [www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/](http://www.transformingplanning.scot/national-planning-framework/)

## APPENDIX 2. Extract from West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan (note 10)

### Poolewe | Poll Iù

**4.17** Poolewe is located at the head of Loch Ewe at the mouth of the River Ewe. It lies within the Wester Ross National Scenic Area (NSA) which is one of the finest landscapes in Scotland. The northern end of Poolewe is characterised by "estate policies" woodland associated with Inverewe Gardens and a dispersed crofting landscape whereas more modern, dense development is located in the north west of the settlement.

**4.18** Future development in Poolewe is constrained by the presence of the loch to the north, the River Ewe which provides a focus for the settlement and woodland to the east. The presence of the National Scenic Area also means that development must be sensitively sited to successfully integrate with the landscape.

**4.19** New housing development is focused to the north of the village as well as more central infill and consolidation opportunities. Larger scale industrial and business development is directed to the former coal yard to the west of the settlement.

**4.20** Important natural heritage designations include the Wester Ross Marine Protected Area and the Wester Ross NSA.

### Placemaking Priorities - Poolewe

- Protect important open view points and amenity spaces, in particular the riverside area in centre of village.
- Crofting area at Londubh is distinct from the more clustered development towards the centre of the village. Existing settlement pattern here should be retained.
- Design and layout of new housing development to the north of village should reflect status as entrance to village.
- Enhancement of green networks to provide improved opportunities for physical activity and access to the outdoors.
- Safeguard, through appropriate siting and design, areas protected or otherwise important for nature conservation or landscape qualities, in particular the Wester Ross NSA and the Wester Ross MPA.

10. [https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local\\_and\\_statutory\\_development\\_plans/582/west\\_highlands\\_and\\_islands\\_local\\_development\\_plan](https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/178/local_and_statutory_development_plans/582/west_highlands_and_islands_local_development_plan)

Proposed Housing Locations – extract from West Highlands and Islands Local Development Plan

**PE01: Shorefield**

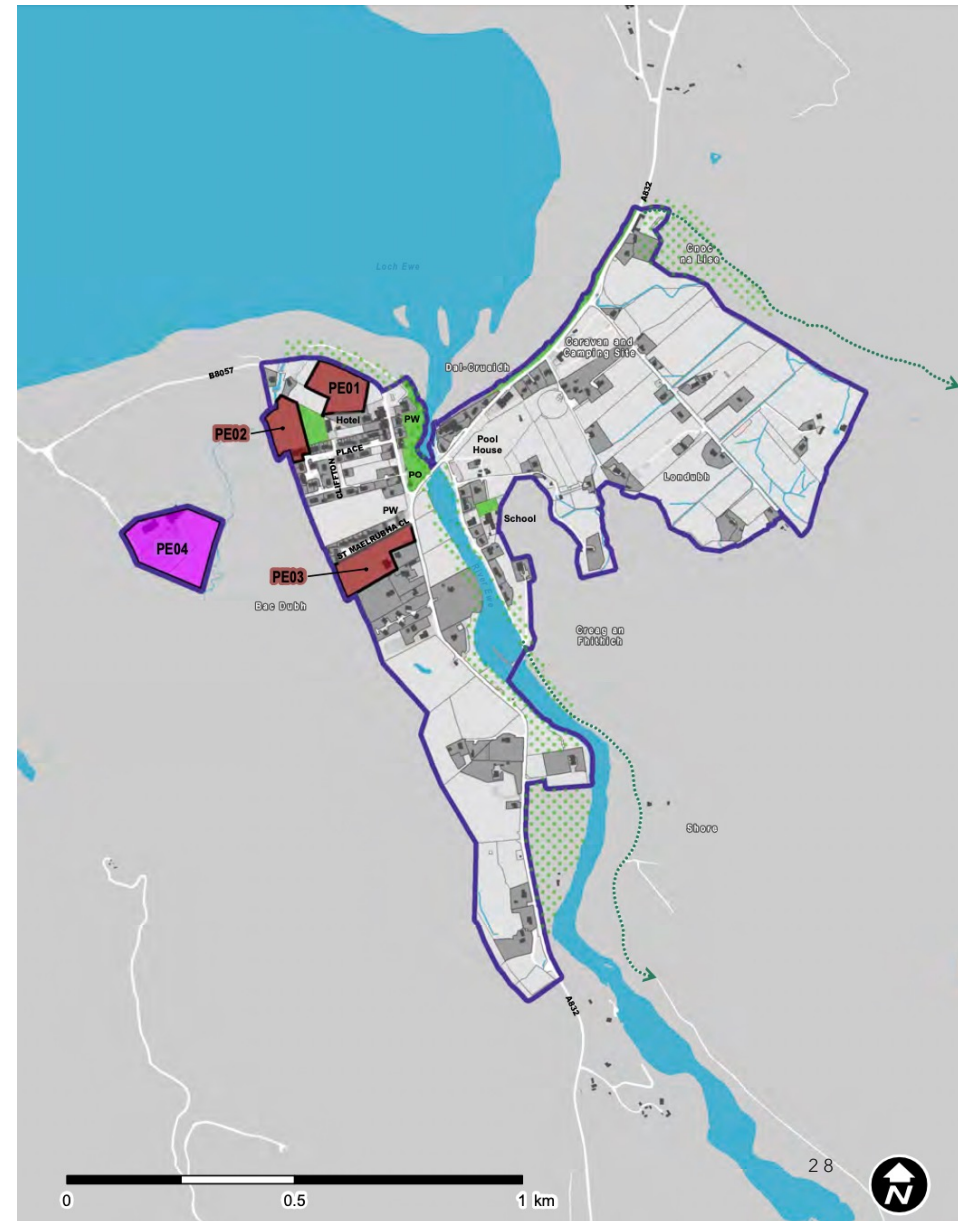
**Use:** Housing **Area (ha):** 1.1 **Indicative Housing Capacity:** 8

**PE02: Builders Yard Field**

**Use:** Housing **Area (ha):** 0.9 **Indicative Housing Capacity:** 10

**PE03: Land South of St Maelrubha Close**

**Use:** Housing **Area (ha):** 1.2 **Indicative Housing Capacity:** 5



## Our community – Main Themes, Actions and Priorities

The following ideas and actions were created and prioritised by the members of the local community who attended the numerous Planning for Real drop-in sessions, workshops and online surveys. These have been categorised into five key themes;

- housing
- local economy and employment
- community facilities
- environment
- transport and safety

Shared themes and ideas from each Community Council area have been prioritised following community consultation and potential partners suggested with the results summarised in the following tables. The Community Organisations Directory is a list of community organisations who may

be approached to help with local projects. If your organisation would like to be included please contact [cap@galeteam.co.uk](mailto:cap@galeteam.co.uk)

**Extract from GALE Community Action Plan 2023** p.37 (note 11)

Housing  
Local Economy and  
Employment  
Community Facilities  
Environment  
Transport and Safety

11. <https://galeactionforum.co.uk/community-action-plan/>