



January 2025

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 – January 2025



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.

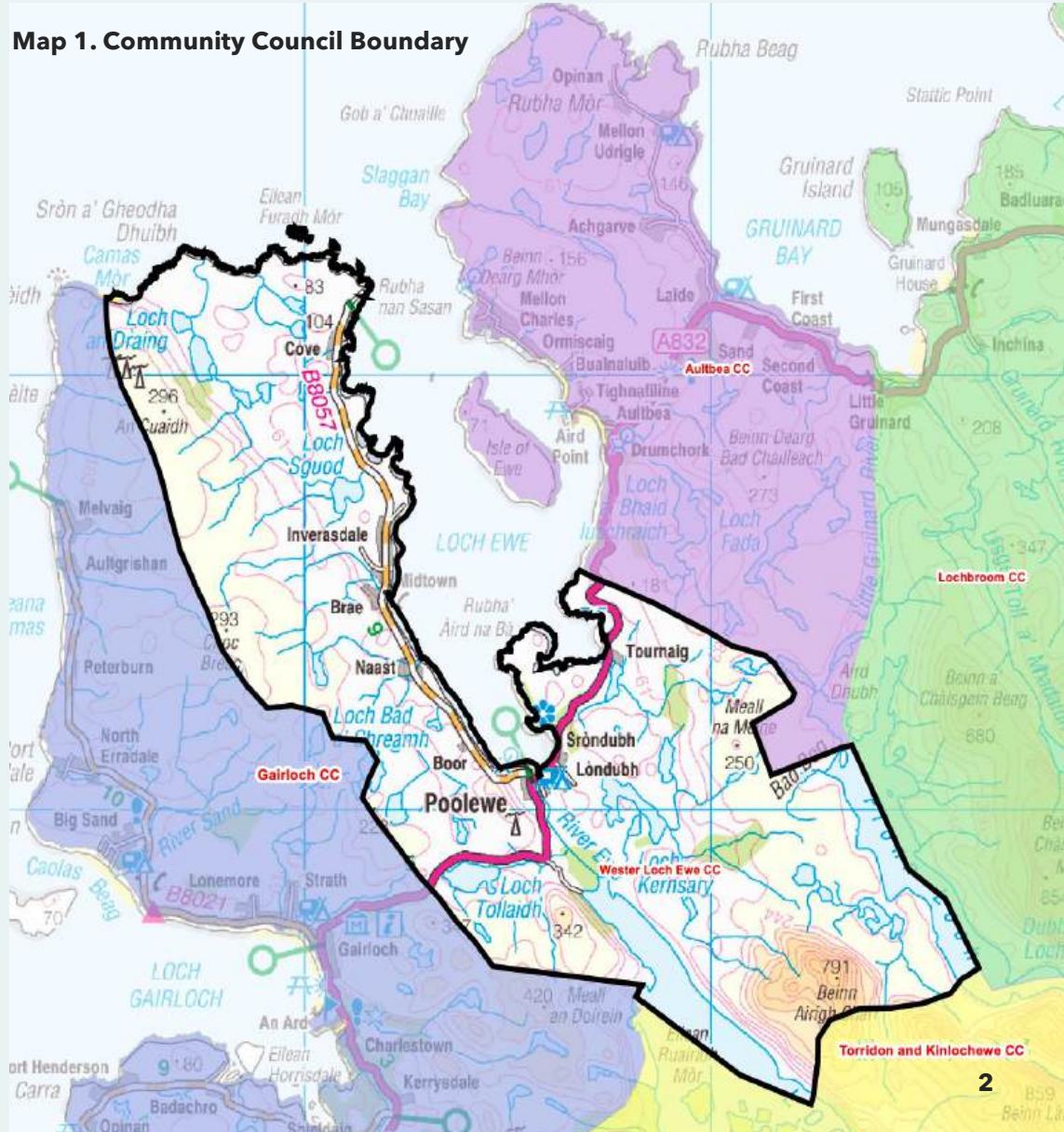
1. Introduction

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.

Map 1. Community Council Boundary



1. 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/

3. 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 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.



A steering group was formed involving the Wester Loch Ewe Community Council and Wester Loch Ewe Trust. Regular update meetings were held during the plan's development.



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 41 responses.



2 staffed drop-in sessions in October/November 2024: publicised via flyers, posters, social media, and word of mouth. 15 people participated, with a further 15 comments.

4. www.voicescotland.org.uk

5. 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+
2020 Estimate	460	40	279	142
Change 2011-2020	up 2%	-41%	-6%	up 64%

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, two cafes, a garage, swimming pool, two church buildings and small shop. Further east, the small settlements of Londubh and Tounaig are situated on either side of Inverewe Estate, owned by the National Trust for Scotland. We are dependent on services and facilities in Gairloch (and to a lesser extent, Aultbea), including essentials like medical care, pharmacy, and opportunities for work and community activities.

We take great pride in our history which includes 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, much of our land is managed by a 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

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3.1 Safer Routes

ROAD MAINTENANCE

3.1.1 Increase locations and provision of grit bins 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

3.1.3 Reinforce key roads against flooding risks from rising sea levels and spring tides including: B8057 into Inverasdale & the A832 between Poolewe Village Hall and Inverewe Garden

NPF4 Policy alignment: 2 Climate Emergency, 23 Health and Safety, 9 Infrastructure First

REDUCED SPEED LIMIT

3.1.4 Reduce speed limit on the A832: 40mph from top of Croft Brae to Loch Ewe Service Station (Jimmy's Garage), then 30mph extending to just past Inverewe Garden

NPF4 Policy alignment: Health and Safety, 9 Infrastructure First

TRAFFIC SAFETY

3.1.5 Single track passing place signs need to be replaced (where non-existent) and otherwise maintained

NPF4 Policy Alignment: 30 Tourism, 23 Health and Safety



Image: Spring tides flooding the B8057 Photo: S Macleod

3.1 Safer Routes

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 greener transport options.

3.1.6 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

3.1.7 Improve and maintain the Core Path between Tollaiddh and Slattadale - currently in poor condition due to erosion

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

3.1.9 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

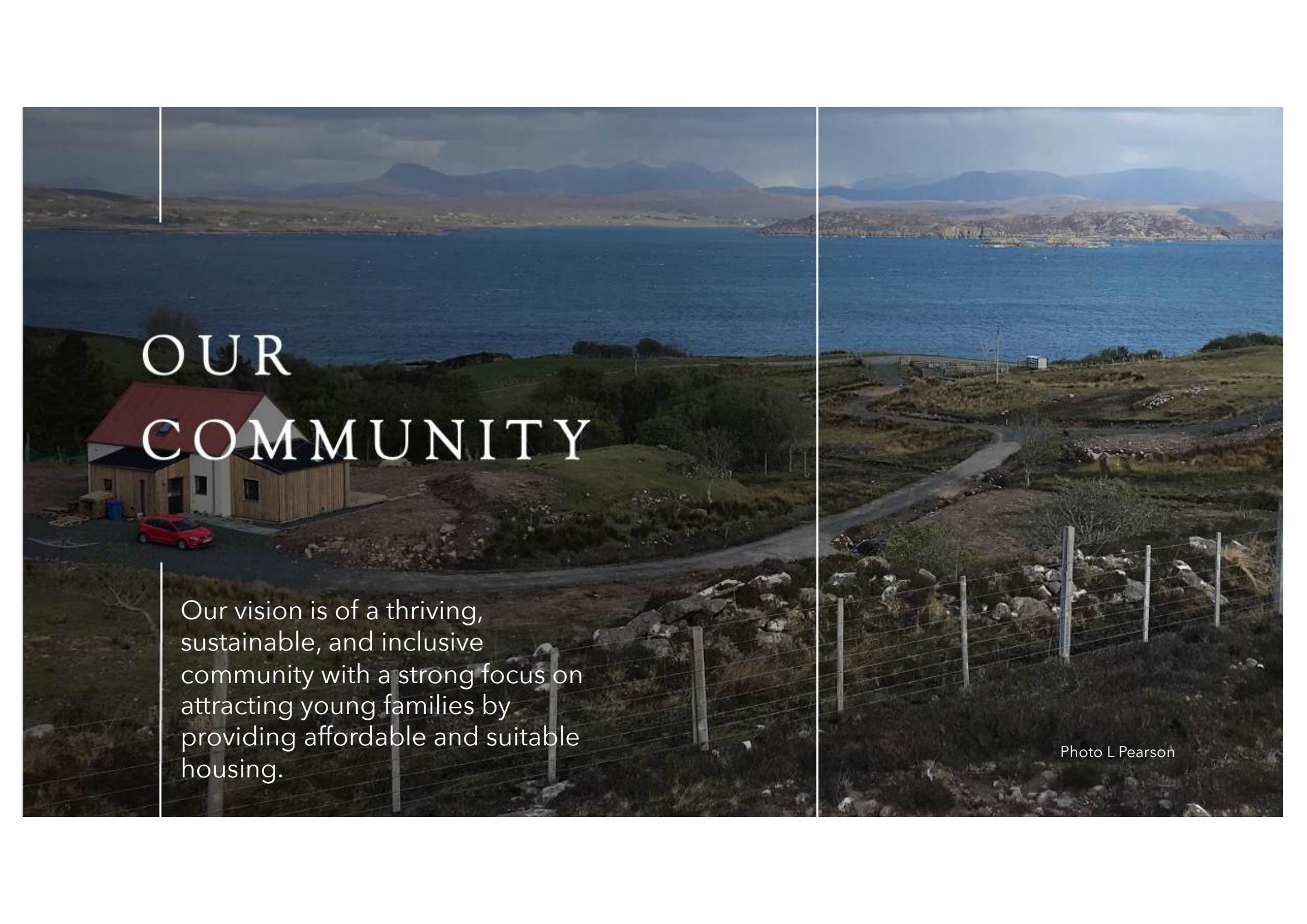
3.1.10 Replace the pier at the mouth of the River Ewe

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

JETTIES AND SLIPWAYS

3.1.8 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



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.

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 indicates 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 an open 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 Support and promotion of Gaelic language in public spaces

NPF4 Policy Alignment: 7 Historic Assets and Places, Policy 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



Photo L Pearson

3.3 Our Services and Facilities

HEALTH SERVICES

3.3.1 Urgent need for local dentist practice

NPF4 Policy alignment: 19 Health and Well being

COMMUNITY CENTRES

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

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

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

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

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

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.

The Cliff Hill mast in Poolewe is critical for mobile signal in many parts of Wester Loch Ewe, but its reliability is poor, with limited backup power, lengthy repair times, and only 2G service for O2 and Vodafone. If the mast fails, many residents are left without any signal. 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 environmental 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>

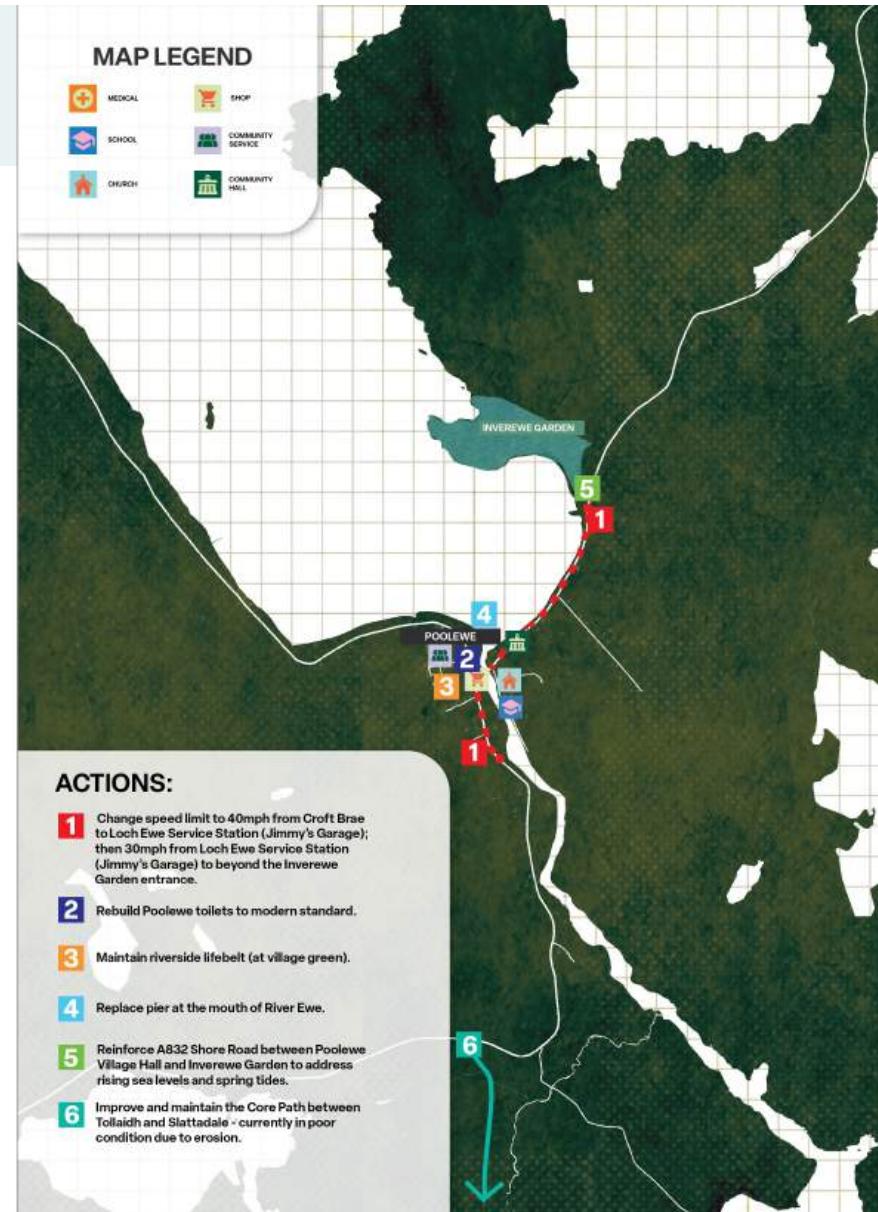
PLACES

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. Reduce speed limit on the A832: 40mph from top of Croft Brae to Loch Ewe Service Station (Jimmy's Garage) then 30mph extending to just past Inverewe Garden**
- 2. Rebuild public toilets at Poolewe**
- 3. Poolewe Village Green not for development**
- 4. Replace pier at the mouth of River Ewe**
- 5. Reinforce A832 Shore Road between Poolewe Village Hall and Inverewe Garden to address rising sea levels and spring tides**
- 6. Improve and maintain the Core Path between Tollaiddh and Slattadale**



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 bins 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 The Old School House in Inverasdale**
- 7. Reinforce B8057 from Poolewe to Inverasdale to address rising sea levels and spring tides.**



Summary of Engagement



1 Workshop and
1 School Session



270 Surveys
Delivered



41 Survey
Responses



6 Drop In Sessions
with 35 attendees



109
comments



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/

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 Garden 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

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

PE01: Shorefield

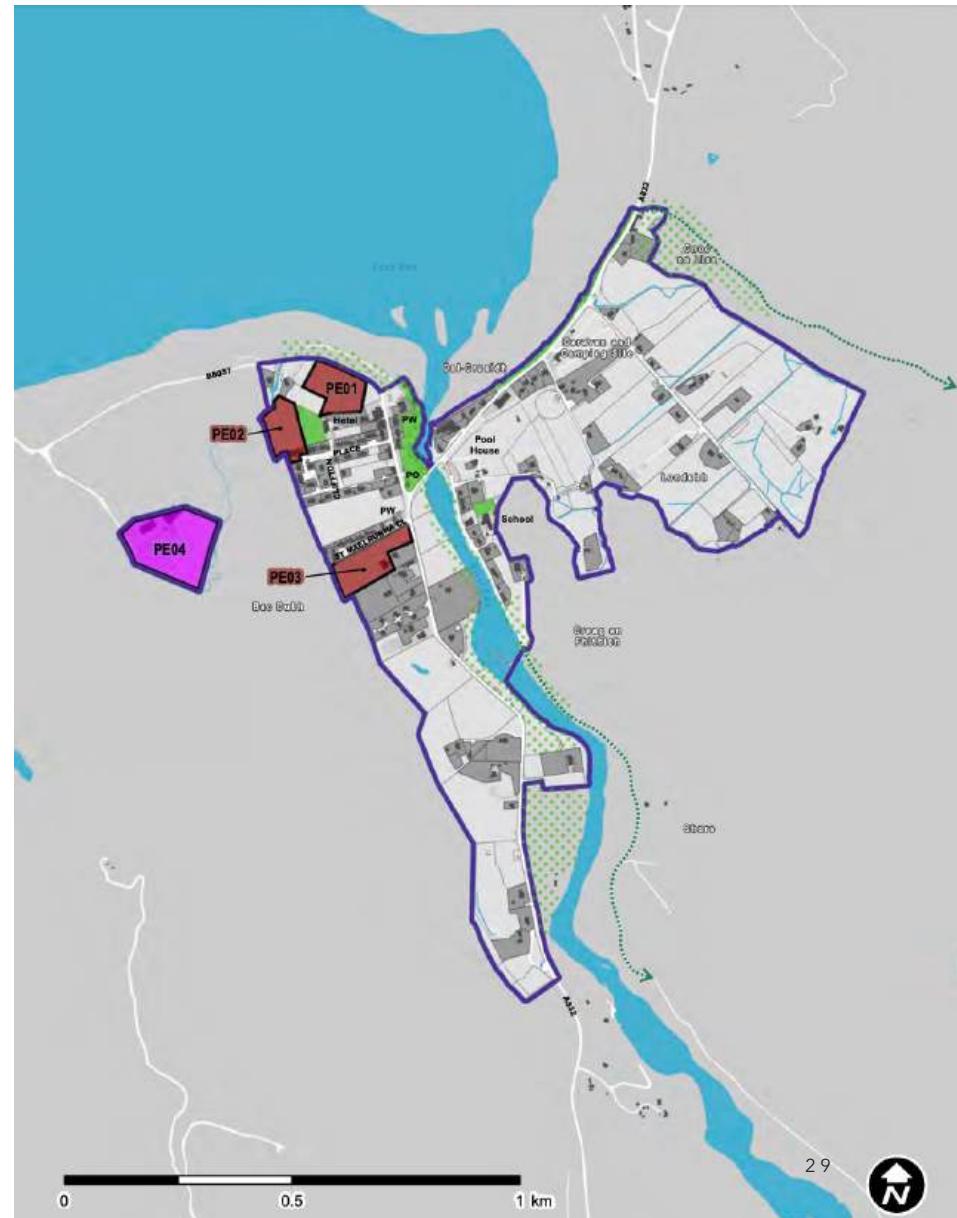
Use: Housing **Area (ha):** 1.1 **Indicative Housing Capacity:** 8

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

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

Please refer to the link below to view the plan in full.

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

