

Glen Urquhart Community Council

Local Place Plan 2024-2034

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Commissioned by
Glen Urquhart Community Council
Soirbheas
GURCA

**Glen Urquhart
Community Council**

Soirbheas
Investing in the communities of Glen Urquhart & Strathglass



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Executive Summary

Glen Urquhart is home to around 2,077 residents, a number that has slowly grown over the past 20 years. Its appeal comes from its proximity to Inverness and its scenic location near Loch Ness. The population is well educated and in good health, compared to Scottish averages. The local community values both the natural environment and the safety of their community. The local schools are achieving good results and have some spare capacity.

There are, however, significant threats to the Glen Urquhart area, which can be defined as fragile, characterised by a lack of young people, economic opportunities, public transport issues, visitor management, and geographic challenges.

This Local Place Plan identifies priorities & actions to help make Glen Urquhart a better place to live in, work in and visit.

As part of this plan the following key **social, economic or environmental issues** were identified:

- poor geographical access (cost, time and inconvenience of having to travel to access basic services)
- disparity in housing quality, energy efficiency and affordability
- a shortage of housing for, in particular, young people and those on a lower income
- lack of investment in amenities for a growing village e.g. business units, village hall, central hub.
- an aging population who are likely to require specific support and services.
- a large influx of tourists during the summer, but not significant spend across the local economy
- access from Drumnadrochit to Loch Ness and Glen Urquhart Castle
- broadband coverage can be patchy (especially in more rural areas)

The Glen Urquhart area has been divided into four areas for the purpose of the mapping and descriptions within this Local Place Plan: Drumnadrochit, Balnain, East Glen Urquhart and West Glen Urquhart.

The following actions were identified to improve the **land use** in the area:

Drumnadrochit
Designated safe swimming area in Loch Ness
Safe access to Loch Ness including a bridge
Reduce speed limit to 40. Improve speed signage.
Move Great Glen Way route off-road
Areas for community growing
Treatment plant - move outlet pipe to exit at loch
Footpath through to forestry at base of Polmailly to create circular walk
Footpath to Urquhart Castle
Potential additional car parking
Proposed Community Health and Well-Being Centre with a focus on shinty

Balnain
Area designated for no more housing
Improved access to Loch Meiklie
New electric bus route from the village
Encourage more water usage, e.g kayaking
Improve path through to Torshee, circular route

East Glen Urquhart (EGU)
Reinstate hill path
Cycle path to A82
New electric bus route
Reinstate common grazing
Hinterland to be protected - restrict development

West Glen Urquhart (WGU)
Create safe, active travel routes along the glen
Restrict holiday pods and new build
Landscape protection

The following opportunities to **develop and manage assets/buildings/land** were identified:

Drumnadrochit
Creating a thriving high street with local produce & businesses
Remove / relocate new bus stops
Restore the Benleiva Hotel & reopen as hotel
Potential new site for Glen Urquhart Childcare

Balnain
New location for Men's Shed
Proposed location for new small local shop
Trying to keep the primary school open
Ensuring the maintenance & upkeep of hall to ensure frequent usage

East Glen Urquhart (EGU)
Larger cafe
Encourage more crofting

West Glen Urquhart (WGU)
Potential to enhance/promote Corrimony Cairn

Glen Urquhart has the potential to develop its many strengths and thrive as a community. It has a growing population, a tourism industry that can be further developed, a high street and local businesses that could be revitalised, capturing the visitors that pass through the area to stay longer and purchase locally.

By following and implementing the Local Place Plan, improving the land use and developing and managing assets / buildings /land the Glen Urquhart community would benefit in the following ways:

- children would have more of their needs met through improved assets
- young people would have the ability to stay in the area
- young families would be able to stay / move to the area
- more people of working age could find long-term employment locally, reducing the environmental impact of commuting
- older people would be enabled to live longer in their own homes

Social / community / economic and environmental benefits:

- businesses would thrive, encouraging more investment in the area
- increased community cohesion and resilience
- increased agency and control over Glen Urquhart's own development for the community through the ownership of further assets
- new opportunities for community gatherings and events
- more activities for younger and older people
- improved health and wellbeing for local people and visitors through a wider / improved range of infrastructure and activities (such as improved active travel networks) and opportunities to socialise (through improved activities)
- increased community resilience through the generation of a steady income stream
- positive visitor management, enhancing visitor experience and providing year round economic benefit to the community
- seeking community benefit from local renewable energy generation schemes



1. All about this Local Place Plan

This Local Place Plan has been developed by the community of Glen Urquhart. It serves as their roadmap for the next decade, aiming to preserve the aspects they cherish about Glen Urquhart whilst enhancing the area for the future by enabling their aspirations through impactful yet deliverable actions.

What is a Local Place Plan?

- Introduced by the 2019 Planning Act, they set out a community’s aspirations for its future development.
- They are community-led, mapping and recording proposals for the development or use of land and buildings, as well as other prioritised activities.
- Once registered with the Highland Council, it will influence the next Local Development Plan, planning applications, and can be used in funding bids.

Who has produced the plan?

The Local Place Plan work is being lead by the Glen Urquhart Community Council (GUCC), with the support from Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association (GURCA) and Soirbheas, for the Steering Group. SKS Scotland CIC and John Gilbert Architects were commissioned to undertake research, community engagement and to prepare the Local Place Plan for the final approval of the Steering Group and the Highland Council.

Why do we need a Local Place Plan?

The Community Action Plan produced in 2022 identified the community’s aims and how we can achieve them. The Local Place Plan is taking this to the next level, using mapping as well as documenting the areas that community would like to protect, community needs, and areas that could be developed to help achieve community aspirations. These can be used to help attract and guide funding as well as influencing the new Highland LDP and planning applications.

The steps taken to prepare this plan:



2. Glen Urquhart: our place & community

This Local Place Plan covers the Glen Urquhart Community Council area, which covers around 230 sq.km, with a population of 2,077 (approximately 1500 households). The area runs alongside Loch Ness, from Brackla Burn on the north to Alltsigh Burn on the south, going as far as Corrimony and Millness up the Glen.

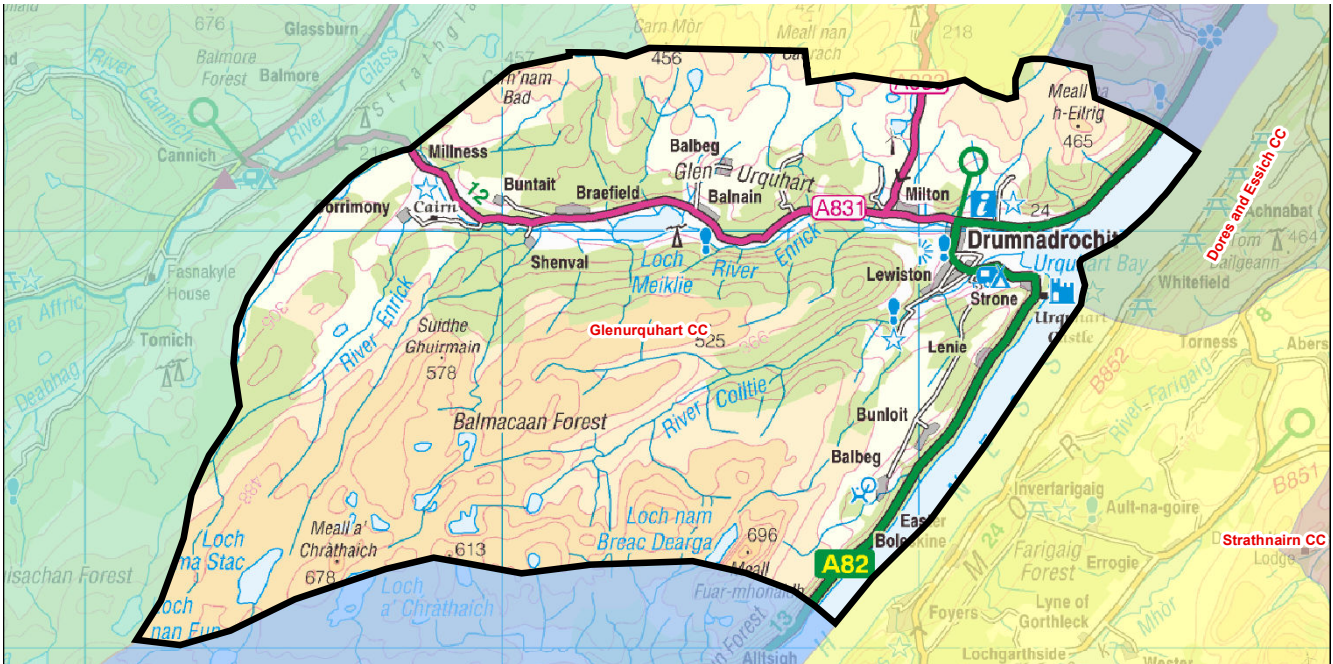


Figure 1 Glen Urquhart Community Council Boundary (April 2011)



Figure 2 Wider context map

Scotland's Towns Partnerships¹ notes that;

"this type of small town is extremely mixed in terms of demographics. There are particularly wide ranges of people, housing and activities. The number of older couples with no children is higher than average. There is a mix of professional and non-professional jobs, and part-time and self-employment are both important for a significant proportion of residents. Socioeconomic status is higher than in other types of town and there is a mix of professionals and non-professionals, those with higher and lower educational attainment."

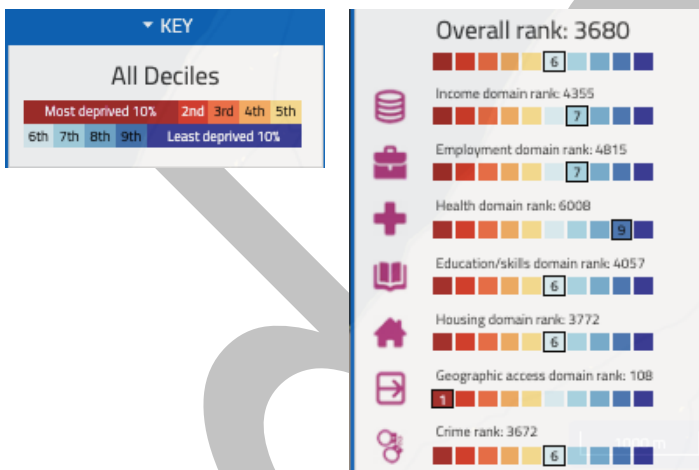
¹ [Understanding Scottish Places - Drumadrochit](#)
Glen Urquhart Local Place Plan

2.1 Community Needs Analysis

The [Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation \(SIMD\)](#) shows that Drumnadrochit and the Glen Urquhart area rank very poorly in geographic access, which captures the issues of financial cost, time and inconvenience of having to travel to access basic services. Within some of its areas it also records its housing domain² as being in the bottom 50% in Scotland.



Figure 3 SIMD map showing dispersed settlements in Glen Urquhart, with an overall ranking of '6'



The ranking table (left) also shows that education/skills, housing and crime are recorded as being good (in decile 6), income and employment are in decile 7 and the health of people in Glen Urquhart is very good (in decile 9).

2.2 Population

Drumnadrochit is the largest town in the Glen, with a population of 1,160³ (2021, estimate). The Highland Council produced a report⁴ in December 2023 that states that slight population growth across the region as a whole "masks significant regional disparities", with the population of Sutherland expected to fall by 15 per cent by 2040.

Numbers among younger groups are said to be decreasing Highland-wide, while at the other end of the spectrum there was a rise of more than 60 per cent in those aged 75 and over between 2001 and 2021 due to its attractiveness as a retirement destination.

² Housing Domain - the sum of people in households that are overcrowded or have no central heating, divided by the total household population from the most recent census.

³ https://www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/scotland/highland/S19002127__drumnadrochit/

⁴ Assessing Future Population Related Challenges in the Highland Council

The report goes on to state that:

“approaches to population decline and changing demographics need to be nuanced and geographically sensitive.”

The Highland Council

Aging population and out-migration of young people

The Scottish Government carried out a study of rural deprivation⁵, which found that an ageing population and out-migration of young people – which appears to be happening in Glen Urquhart - are typical of rural areas. For example, projections show that the proportion of people over the age of 75 is expected to increase by 108% in Aberdeenshire and in the Shetland Islands (2014 to 2039). Urban areas are expected to see smaller increases e.g. 66% in Aberdeen City and 54% in Glasgow (SRUC, 2014).

2.3 Housing

The housing stock in many rural areas in Scotland is regarded ‘not fit for purpose’ (SRUC, 2014). This is mainly due to the lack of suitable affordable housing available, lack of modern housing and single occupancy homes.

Social and economic impact on the area:

Out-migration of young working people

The lack of affordable housing means that young first-time buyers are priced out and have to leave the area (SRUC, 2014). This increases the dependency ratio⁶.

Lack of affordable housing causes staff shortages

As low-income workers are **unable to afford housing**, small businesses and service providers are unable to source staff (SRUC, 2014).

Homes with low energy efficiency ratings

Older or non-gas heated homes, which are more common in rural areas, have **lower energy efficiency ratings** (Scottish Government, 2016b) and are expensive to heat compared to urban homes with mains gas.

Fuel poverty

Higher fuel costs place low-income households at risk of **fuel poverty**. Approx. 55% of households in Highland Council area experience fuel poverty (Scottish Government, 2014).

Two major housing developments are currently being built in Drumnadrochit:

- [Springfield](#) (situated in the heart of the village) will offer a selection of 2 bedroom cottage apartments and 3 & 4 bedroom homes priced from £153,000 to £445,000.
- [Borlum Meadow](#) (by Compass), are building 2, 3 and 4 bedroom houses from £220,000 to £312,000.

There has been opposition to these, particularly regarding the Springfield development, with criticism including the houses being too big and not including enough affordable houses. Planning for the revised proposal to build 47 new houses was rejected by the Highland Council in February 2024 but the Scottish Government backed Springfield’s appeal in June 2024.

The Highland Local Housing Strategy 2023-2028 confirms the ongoing pressure on social housing, but also considers projected future housing demand across all tenures. It considers “accessible and sustainable housing” as being one of its 5 key themes, reflecting the critical role housing plays in sustaining communities and promoting economic growth.

⁵ [SIMD - Rural deprivation Evidence Summary](#)

⁶ Dependency ration - the number of people aged 65 or more per a hundred people aged 15-64.

Programme commitments include:

- Building quality, affordable, energy efficient, and accessible homes;
- Develop housing options that help vulnerable and elderly adults to be cared for close to home and community;
- Work with partners to develop key worker housing opportunities to sustain public services and economic growth.

Communities Housing Trust

The Communities Housing Trust based in Inverness, recently carried out a housing survey in Glen Urquhart (summer 2024), which 124 residents responded to. The feedback and analysis largely correlate with the information gathered for the Local Place Plan. The table below shows which tenure would best suit their needs, and the full draft summary of the survey can be found in appendix 1.

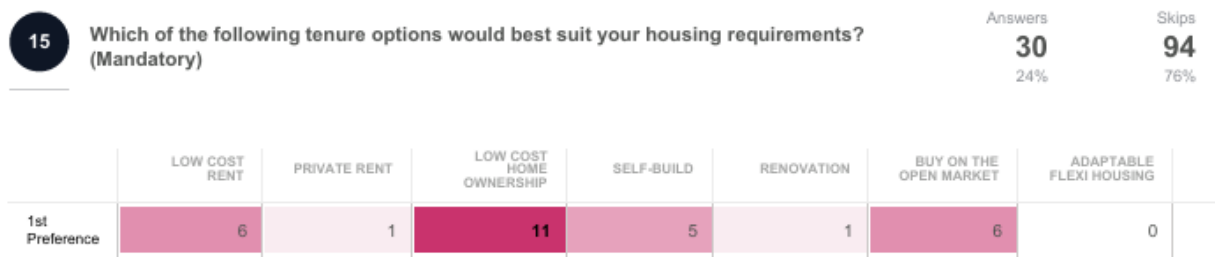


Figure 4: Communities Housing Trust

2.4 Services

The Highland [Council Area Profile](#) shows that the population of Highland is increasing slightly and is also ageing, which is in line with Scotland as a whole. It can therefore be expected that Glen Urquhart will need to consider increased needs of older people into the future, including opportunities to meet socially and take part in community activities.

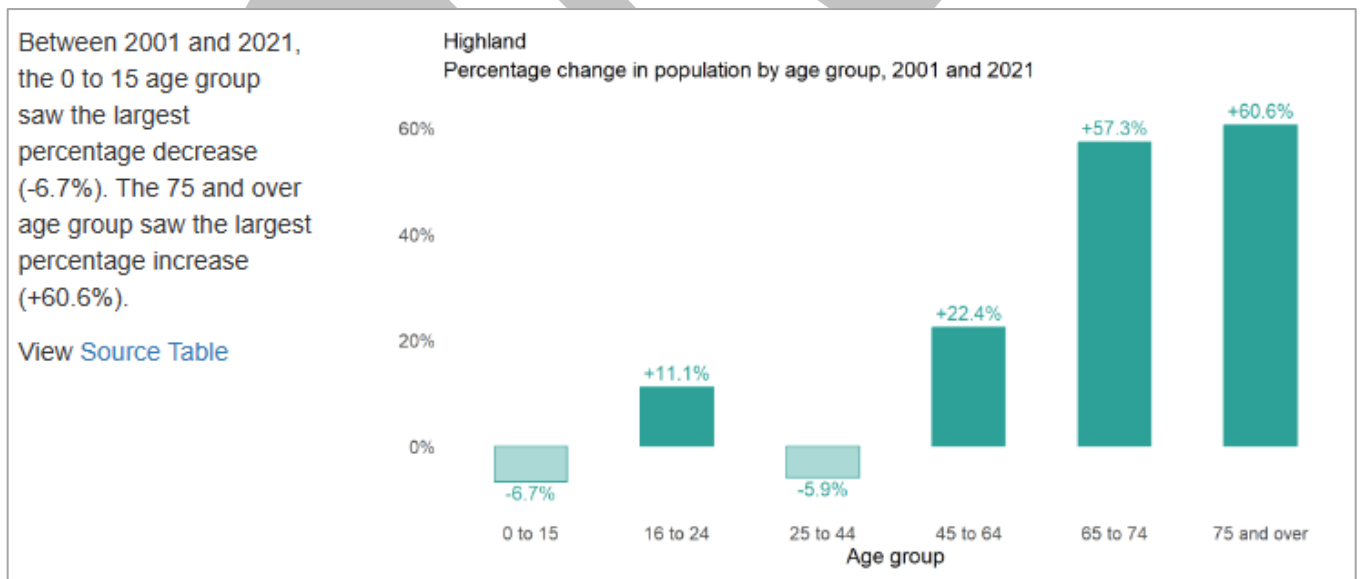


Figure 5 Highland Council Area Profile graph

Healthcare

Drumnadrochit Medical Practice is in the village centre, with 3 GP's a practice nurse and 2 healthcare practitioners. There are no dental, physiotherapy or podiatrist services presently in Glen Urquhart, with Inverness being the closest with a number of practices. Drumnadrochit has a pharmacy. The nearest hospital is in Inverness, a half hour drive.

Schools

Glen Urquhart is served by:

- Drumnadrochit High School, a six-year comprehensive secondary school with over 200 pupils.
- Glenurquhart Primary School has approximately 145 pupils.
- Balbain Primary School has a school role of under 20.

Previous research⁷ notes that by 2031 Glen Urquhart Primary School will be close to (or above) capacity. The High School and Balnain Primary School are at and will continue to operate, beyond 2031, at less than half capacity.

Nurseries/childcare

The Glen Urquhart Childcare Centre is a community run group formed in 1995 (when the Council run nursery was threatened with closure) for children in the Glen Urquhart area. It offers wrap around care for children aged 3-13 years inclusive. This includes breakfast club, government funded nursery sessions for 3-5 year olds, daycare, out of school club and holiday club. The Centre is open during term time: Monday – Thursday 8am-5.30pm and 8am-4pm on a Friday and has a Holiday Club open 8am – 5.30pm. There are also several registered childminders in Glen Urquhart.

Shops and eateries

Glen Urquhart's shops are located in Drumnadrochit, with a Scotmid Coop and a pharmacy. There are numerous retail outlets aimed at tourists, including a whiskey gift shop and a Celtic crafts shop. The town also has a selection of café's, a pub and a couple of restaurants, many of which are only open during the tourist season.

2.5 Economy

Glen Urquhart's economy is centered around Drumnadrochit, where the majority of the population lives.

Scotland's Towns Partnerships⁸ compares similar sized towns in Scotland (in Drumnadrochit's case, Golspie, Earlston, Chryston and Dufftown) and finds similarities and differences. It notes that Drumnadrochit has similarities to these towns in terms of the number of charities, children in secondary schools, jobs, public sector jobs, shops, GP's and dentists, but it has more children in primary schools. It has similarities in the diversity of jobs.

Number of people per shop

122

▼ Less
than similar towns per head of population

Diversity of retail offer (%)

3

▼ Less
than similar towns per head of population

Number of tourist beds

109

▲ More
than similar towns per head of population

On the negative side, Drumnadrochit has significantly less diversity in its retail offer. It also shows residents travel further to reach their workplace than similar sized towns, and significantly further to the nearest hospital.

⁷ <https://www.soirbheas.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Information-Sheet-1-Community-.pdf>

⁸ <https://www.usp.scot/Town?mainTownName=Drumnadrochit>

Investment Zones

The northeast of Scotland was identified by the UK and Scottish Government in 2023 as one of the country's two investment zones, which are “designed to deliver economic growth, more high skill jobs, investment, and future opportunities for local people”. They will each benefit from an overall funding envelope of £80 million over a five-year period, while making the most of both reserved and devolved policies as is the case with Green Freeports.

The delivery of investment zones will build on the success of the joint UK and Scottish government agreement for two Green Freeports in Inverness and Cromarty Firth and Firth of Forth, to create jobs, drive growth and level up the country.

Backed by up to £52 million in UK Government funding, the Freeports are expected to bring forward an estimated £10.8 billion of private and public investment and create over 75,000 new, high-skilled jobs.

The potential impact of this on Glen Urquhart is difficult to determine as it lies outwith the zones, but it is hoped that the large-scale investment's ripple effect will help stimulate the local economy as well as that of Inverness.

Employment

Glen Urquhart has a higher-than-average concentration of retired residents: 25% of the resident population. On average, around 13.8% of the 2011 census respondents were retired. It also has a larger than average concentration of residents that were in part-time employment - 17% of the resident population. On average, around 13.7% of census respondents are in part-time employment.

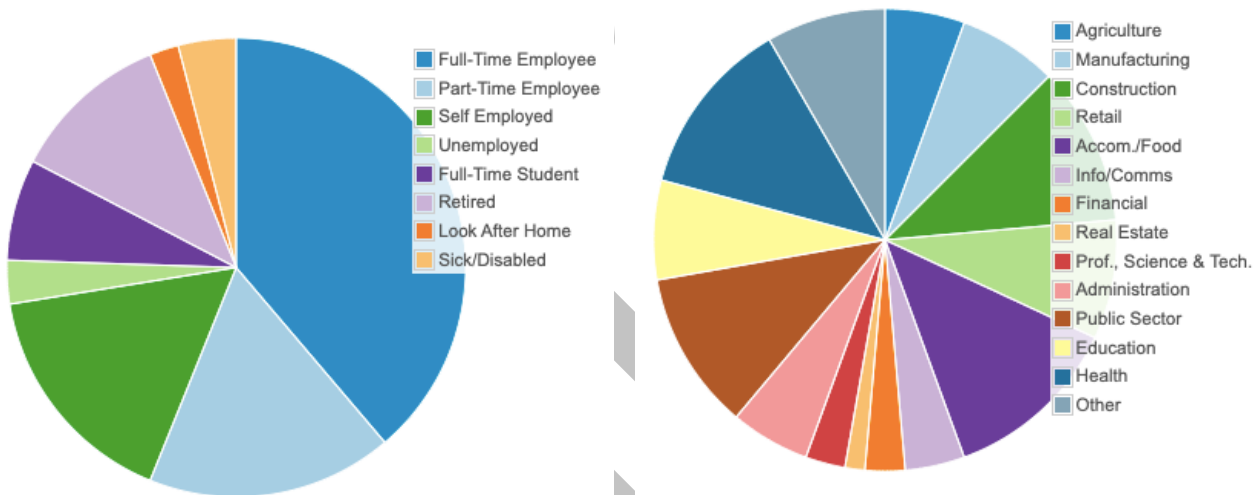


Figure 6 Graphs⁹ from Street Check showing employment and industry stats gathered from the 2011 census (their most recent reference)

⁹ <https://www.streetcheck.co.uk/postcode/iv283yg>

Summary

- A higher proportion of older people live in rural Scotland, particularly in remote rural areas;
- Those in rural areas are less likely to live within 15 minutes' drive of key services, particularly those in remote rural areas;
- People in rural areas are more likely to drive to work/education;
- Rural households are more likely to spend over £100 per month on fuel for their cars than households in the rest of Scotland;
- Rural areas have less energy efficient housing than the rest of Scotland, with a median energy efficient rating of 53, compared to 61 in accessible rural areas, and 68 in the rest of Scotland;
- In remote rural areas 33% of households are in extreme fuel poverty compared to 12% in accessible rural areas and 11% in the rest of Scotland.
- The budget that households need to achieve a reasonable living standard in remote rural Scotland are typically 10-40 % higher than elsewhere in the UK

2.6 Natural environment and recreation

Urquhart Castle



The castle has over half a million visitors each year, most of whom pass through Drumnadrochit to access it. If people are driving independently to it, this can cause congestion in the village, roads and parking between the two sites. Tour bus and boat traffic, however, has little direct benefit to local businesses as they do not stop at the village.

There is a lack of safe connectivity between the site and village, (in sections the path is on the A82) which makes accessing the Castle on foot or bike from Drumnadrochit dangerous.

Historic Environment Scotland, which owns and manages the Castle, meets regularly with GURCA and is aware of the issues around accessing it and are currently carrying out a consultant led project.

Projects that would benefit both the Castle and Glen Urquhart include:

- An active travel route alongside Loch Ness from Drumnadrochit to Urquhart Castle.
- Development of water traffic and access points to Drumnadrochit and Urquhart Castle.
- Increased parking options (min 150 bays) in Drumnadrochit, with increased local services (café, toilets etc) and electric shuttle bus to the Castle.

Woodland areas

The following woodland areas in Glen Urquhart all have Management Plans provided by the Woodland Trust, to “maintain their intrinsic key features of value and to reflect those of the surrounding landscape”.

- Glen Urquhart is a Highland glen with a mix of planted, conifer forest and native, broadleaved woodlands, with many areas suitable for walking. There are waymarked walks in Craigmorie woodland and a network of forest roads along the glen which are ideal for active travel.
- Divach is an oakwood on the slopes of the Divach burn above Drumnadrochit, managed for conservation.
- Balmacaan is part of a major concentration of ancient woodlands.

- Urquhart Wood Bay (the 'Cover') is an ancient wet woodland. Tree species include alder ash bird cherry and white willow. Footpaths form a rough figure of eight through the centre of the wood. It is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Walking / cycling paths

There are multiple walks in Glen Urquhart as the map to the right shows. There are also cycling routes generally rated as 'expert'. There are no tracks specifically for younger children or amenities such as pump tracks / skating areas.

The safety of many of several routes is compromised by the heavy traffic on the A82.



Swimming pools

The nearest swimming pool is in Inverness, 15 miles away.

Village Centre

Residents of Glen Urquhart are eager to see the heart of Drumnadrochit village, particularly the area around the currently vacant Benleva Hotel, supported and revitalised. They view the buildings, businesses and green spaces as important and valuable assets for the community.

2.7 Transport

There is an hourly bus service between Drumnadrochit and Inverness, which takes between half an hour and an hour. Anecdotal evidence has indicated that these are often cancelled. 58% of respondents to the community survey (see appendix 2) do not believe that they have accessible and reliable public transport.

This is extremely challenging for a community that is recognised as having very poor geographic access by the Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (it is in the most deprived 10% in Scotland for this domain, which captures the issues of financial cost, time and inconvenience of having to travel to access basic services).

3. The Bigger Picture

The Glen Urquhart community's Local Place Plan integrates broader policies as well as local plans, aiming to achieve their aspirations while reflecting planning policy goals for sustainable, liveable, and productive places as outlined in the national plans.

3.1 National Planning Framework

National Planning Framework 4 (NPF4)¹⁰ is the national spatial strategy for Scotland. It sets out Scotland's spatial principles, regional priorities, national developments and national planning policy.

Spatial Principles:

- A transition to **Net Zero**, that is fair and inclusive.
- **Conserving and recycling assets** by using existing buildings, spaces, infrastructure and services, locking in carbon, minimising waste, and building a circular economy
- Supporting **liveable places** by ensuring easy access to local services, greenspace, learning, work, & leisure.
- **Compact urban growth** to optimise land use for services, carbon storage, flood management, & biodiversity.
- **Rebalanced development** by targeting growth in declining areas and managing it sustainably in high-demand areas.
- **Rural revitalisation** by encouraging sustainable growth to rural communities.

3.2 Local Development Plan

Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2, June 2024

We have referenced the Local Development Plan (LDP) relating to the main areas of Glen Urquhart. Below is a summary of the relevant areas:

Drumnadrochit¹¹

The LDP states that Drumnadrochit is not suitable for significant further growth, "*we believe that a cautious approach to future growth is sensible*", with reasons stated:

- Reliance on car travel for accessing larger facilities and work,
- Public transport or active travel improvements are not cost effective.
- Local water and sewerage capacity is limited, and expansion is not planned.
- Physical constraints of the steep hills
- Areas of flood risks
- Restricted access to the A82
- Importance of preserving greenspace

The LDP advises the completion of current development projects and better use of current available land.

Placemaking Priorities for Drumnadrochit:

- Consolidate the village by supporting the completion of its central development sites.
- Secure an improved range, quality and location of commercial and community facilities.
- Improve active travel accessibility to these more centralised facilities.
- Preserve the greenspaces and green corridors and enhance their role as active travel routes.

Balnain¹²

The LDP lists Balnain as a "Growing Settlement", providing facilities for a scattered population throughout Glen Urquhart. The plan highlights an opportunity to develop local tourist facilities and accommodation on the back of an increase in promotion of the A831 tourist route and the Western Glens, and based on Glen Urquhart's archaeological, fishing and forest based recreation assets.

¹⁰ [National Planning Framework 4](#)

¹¹ Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2, section 148 to 150

¹² Inner Moray Firth Local Development Plan 2, section 275

Placemaking Priorities for Balnain:

- Support further small scale housing development where it will help underpin local community facilities.
- Direct most future development north of the A831 so as to protect the outlook west across open ground bordering Loch Meikle and avoid land at risk to flooding or erosion.
- Respect the limited local waste water treatment capacity.
- Support community initiatives to enhance local amenities, including management of the woodland beside the school, refurbishment of the play area and creation of a visitor
- Better signage of local attractions and places of interest, and improved priority for active travel movement.
- Better protect and enhance local greenspaces and Green Networks as conduits for the movement of people, wildlife and flood waters particularly along and across watercourses and woodland areas.

3.3 Locality Plan

Locality Plans are produced by Community Planning Partnerships who identify areas within the local authority area which experience the poorest outcomes. There is currently no Locality Plan for this area.

3.4 Local Energy Plan and Transport

Drumnadrochit's **Local Energy Plan**¹³ was launched in September 2018. It proposes thirteen actions based around four key themes: energy efficiency, energy generation, transport, and smart energy systems.

- Promote energy efficiency and opportunities for support in demand management and resource efficiency
- Provide support and advice around tariff switching
- Heating oil club
- Continue programmes of fabric improvements and insulation within residential property
- Use of Solar (photovoltaic) PV and battery storage at Day Care Centre
- Develop a solar PV and/or solar thermal array
- Small scale hydro
- Promotion of use of heat pumps and other renewable options in new build properties
- Use heat from wastewater
- Real time transport information
- ULEV shuttle bus to Inverness and Community use
- Electric vehicle development

This plan directly led to the Transport Feasibility Study¹⁴ in 2019. The proposed solutions to local issues include:

- **A Walking Bus** within Drumnadrochit to encourage active travel for the primary school
- **Developing safer paths** in to allow for active travel and safer routes to school
- **Expansion of the EV charging network** in Glen Urquhart and Strathglass
- **Increase Ride Sharing provision** – formalising and expand
- **Car share scheme**
- **Improving the Public transport information availability**
- **Introducing e-bike hire**
- **Introduce a Community Transport Scheme**
- **Establishing a Transport Hub**

¹³ <https://localenergy.scot/wp-content/uploads/attachments/drum-lep-summary-july-2018-final.pdf>

¹⁴ <https://www.soirbheas.org/transportandenergy/>

3.5 Active Travel Improvement Plan

An **Active Travel Improvement Plan** (draft) was compiled by AECOM during the first half of 2024, in conjunction with the Aird Ward and NC78 active travel feasibility studies. It is for use by the Highland Council to take forward as potential active travel improvement schemes. The development of the plan was informed by site reconnaissance, undertaken by AECOM personnel in September 2023.

The general objective was to identify potential opportunities for:

- Improving local core path networks, inclusive of connections, within the Aird Ward.
- Improving local access to the Great Glen Way and National Cycle Network Route 78 from catchment settlements. This has potential to collaterally deter cyclists from using the A82 trunk road, where possible.
- Improving safety within the connection paths which run alongside the A82 trunk road to landmarks, such as Urquhart Castle.

These opportunities have all been highlighted during engagement with the community for the LPP and are referenced accordingly in the maps summarise in section 5.

The LDP does not support active travel plans to link the area with Inverness:

“improving public transport or active travel provision to Inverness would not be cost effective relative to the extra population that could reasonably be accommodated in Glenurquhart”¹⁵

3.6 Community Action Plan

The **Glen Urquhart Community Action Plan** was published in March 2023. An [action plan](#) was developed to help achieve the primary outcomes identified by the community as being priorities:

- A more active and sustainable community
- Better health and well-being opportunities
- More affordable housing and energy efficient homes
- A greener, fairer and more inclusive sustainable economy
- Getting about the community (active travel)
- Better digital connectivity
- Supporting local culture, sport and heritage
- A place that is nature-rich and climate-conscious

These outcomes closely align with the research carried out to inform the Local Place Plan and will feed directly into the proposals within the LPP.



4. What does our community want?

4.1 Community Engagement Summary

Full details of the community engagement process carried out for this LPP is given in appendix 2.

- 171 community survey responses, 9% of residents
- 38 residents at 2 community events
- 28 children at the local school took part in an aspirational planning session
- 56 business, community organisations, landowners and other key stakeholders contacted
- Information distributed via door-to-door deliveries, posters, flyers, social media and websites.

The wide reaching and effective community engagement undertaken has enabled us to define the main community needs for our Local Place Plan. It has helped us answer:

- What do we want to achieve in Glen Urquhart?
- What does the Glen Urquhart community want to retain?
- What does the community value?
- What does the community want to improve?
- What difference will these proposals for change make to the community?

4.2 Survey Key Points

The **natural environment** is highly valued by the community; woodlands, walks and the low pollution.

77% recognised the **safe environment for families** to raise children and give them a good education.

75% of people felt they had **good access to health care**.

General: Respondents were less positive about shopping & recreation facilities, public transport & job opportunities.

Travel: An improved bus timetable, better road safety, improved pavements and cycle paths were requested.

Employment: Less reliance on tourism, studios/workshops to help create new opportunities

Retail: Many comments suggested the local shops were not adequate for their needs (Scotmid too small), requesting more variety e.g. butchers, farm shop, beauty, etc.

Access to Loch Ness: for locals and to improve the experience of visitors and boost the local economy.

Housing: 64% of respondents believe the area needs more affordable housing.

Facilities: A local swimming pool and community gym were the most popular requests

Heritage: The natural heritage of the landscape is highly valued, with concern about new buildings, deer and neglect having a negative impact on it.

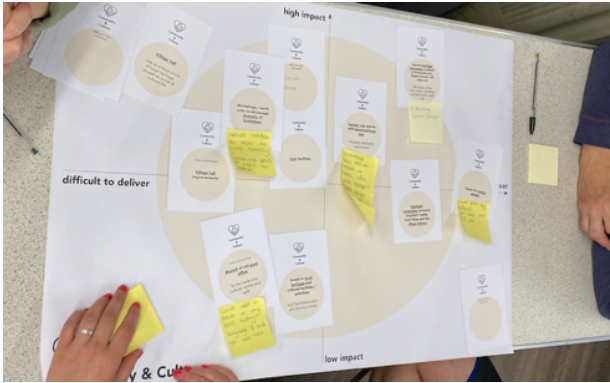
Full survey analysis is given in appendix 3.

4.3 Workshop Summary

Two activities were carried out during the workshop and community drop-in sessions. The results helped form the final maps and action plan.

Themes - themes from survey were placed on a graph showing the deliverability / impact graph on your table (see appendix 4).

Mapping exercise – marking their preferences for the location of new buildings, paths, activities etc. (see appendix 5)



Key points:

Map Area	Aspirations
Drumnadrochit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Restrict further development in order to preserve the rural character of the area. Improve shopping facilities and showcase local produce Areas for local growing, small scale farming and grazing Improve footways & cycle paths by upgrading terrain & moving away from the road 40mph speed limit along the northern road that runs through Drumnadrochit Better connectivity: prepare dilapidated bridges, providing improved, safer access. Create a new electric bus route that would service the wider area.
Balnain	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increase & improve local amenities. Fully functioning Men’s shed. Changing facilities by the River Enrick, to promote active lifestyle activities. Retain the primary school
East Glen Urquhart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reinstate common grazing & crofting. Protect the Hinterland & restrict development of the surrounding rural area. Better connection across the GUCC area, with focus on a new electric bus route & a cycle path that links to the A82.
West Glen Urquhart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote local history Improving existing access to the existing natural resources. Celebrate the Corrimony Cairn more with upgraded signage & improved Interactive exhibits or signage for visitors. Improve signage for local forest walks. Natural attractions like arboretums & gardens Improved surfaces for accessible, active travel across the glen.
Wider Glen Urquhart Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise the preservation & maintenance of the existing rural habitat. New build housing should be sensitively considered & numbers should be kept minimal to preserve the rural feel of the area. New housing should follow a local vernacular & reflect the rural character. New housing should be affordable & prioritise housing locals. Limit holiday properties in the area to keep the number of locals as high as possible. A retrofitting scheme & resources & guidance for retrofitting existing homes.

4.4 School Engagement

The 2024 P7 class at Drumnadrochit Primary School presented their ideas for the local area.

There was unanimous support for a local swimming pool where they can learn to swim. The children spoke eloquently about the importance of learning to swim due to their close proximity to the water. Local children often “hang-out” by the Cover which is on the water. They felt transport to Inverness (the Aquadome is the nearest pool), cost and waiting lists was a barrier for a lot of people.

Other ideas included:

Transport:

More buses, less cars.

“No night bus, leads to drunk driving in the village”

Shops & services:

Toy shop, pet shop and smoothie shop.

A local vet.

More public toilets near the shop and playpark.

Parks & Leisure:

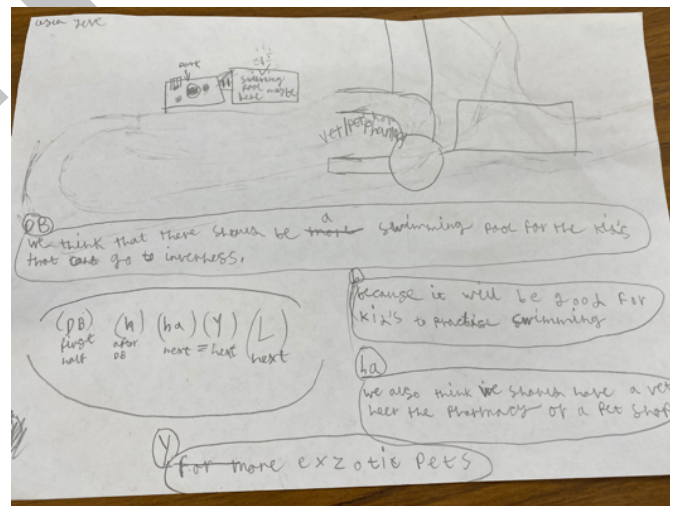
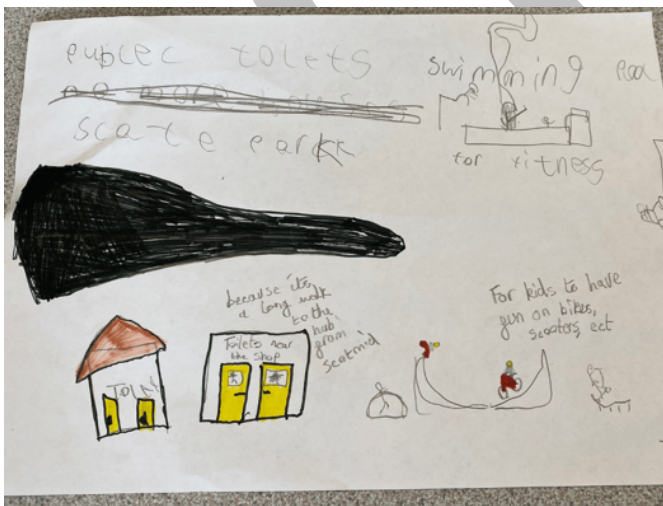
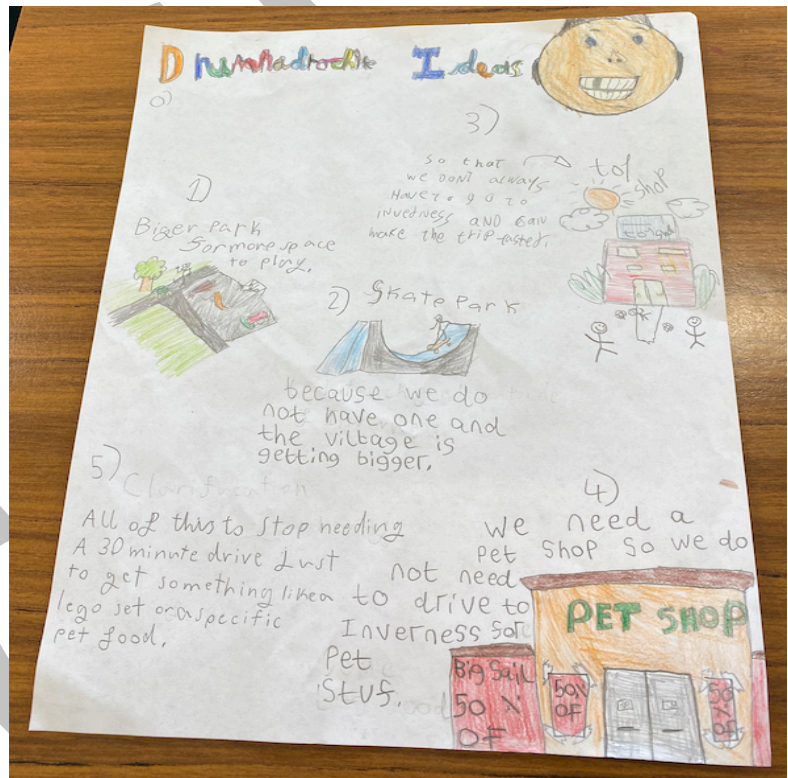
A swimming pool and gym.

Bigger play park, skate park, basketball hoops.

Leisure centre – where the pharmacy is.

Pump track

Mini golf – behind the exhibition centre (needs repairs)



5. Our Local Place Plan

The first exercise undertaken in the community workshop was to consider the actions which could be carried out in Glen Urquhart, what impact they would have on the community and how achievable they were. The data was analysed and final graph axis produced, which help illustrate the feedback. These graphs are in appendix 4.

5.1 Mapping



The full list of maps can be found in appendix 5. Below is a summary.

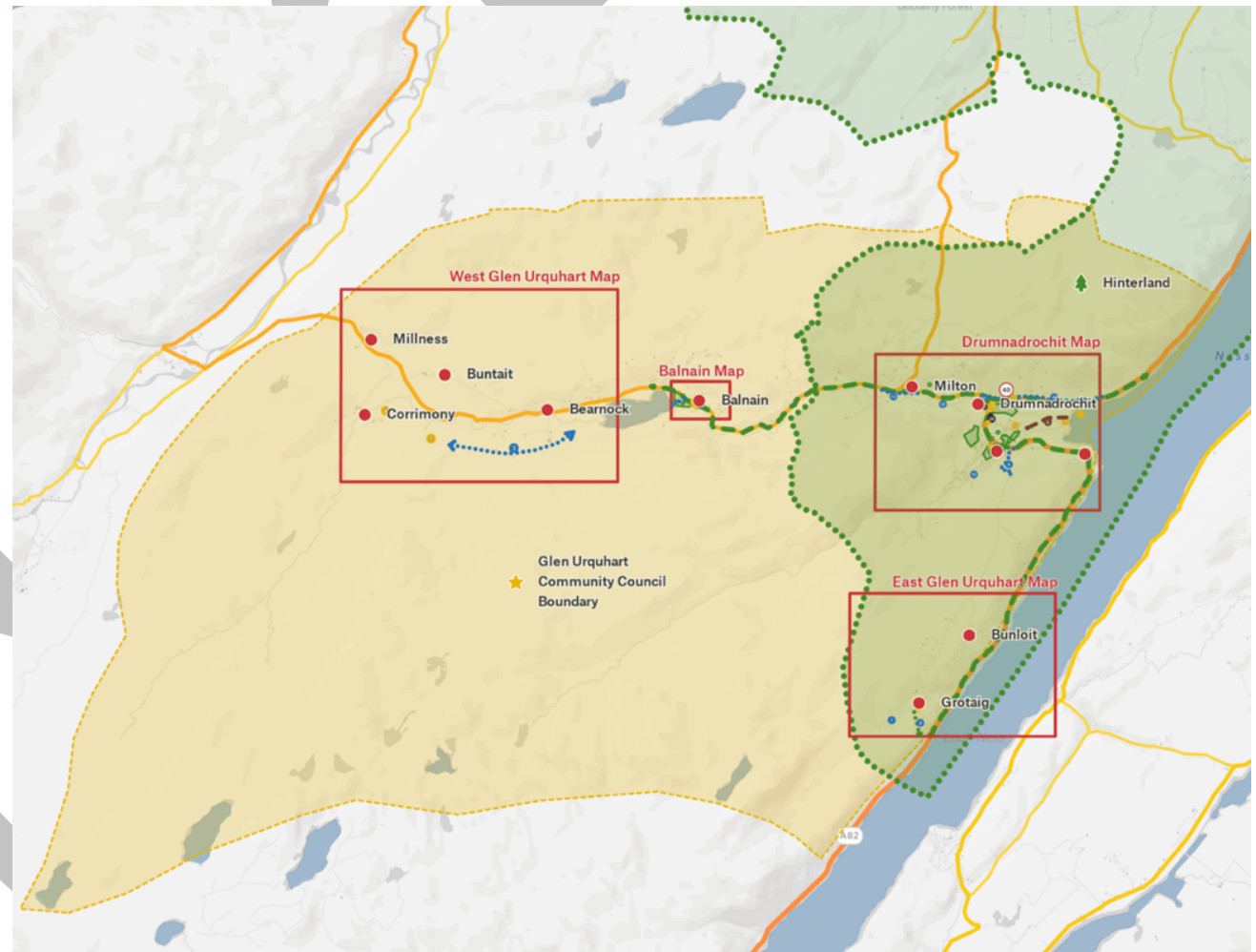
The maps below were generated by the community during a series of workshops, a survey and discussions.

Figure 3 The Glen Urquhart Community Council area is show above, with individual mapping areas highlighted.

Nb. It is important to note that the Glen Urquhart community would strongly urge its inclusion on consultations on renewable energy proposals, which clearly would have a significant impact on the people that live there, visitors to the area, local businesses etc. This includes proposed future wind turbine development, pump storage schemes, solar panels etc. More information is available on the [Highland Council website](#).

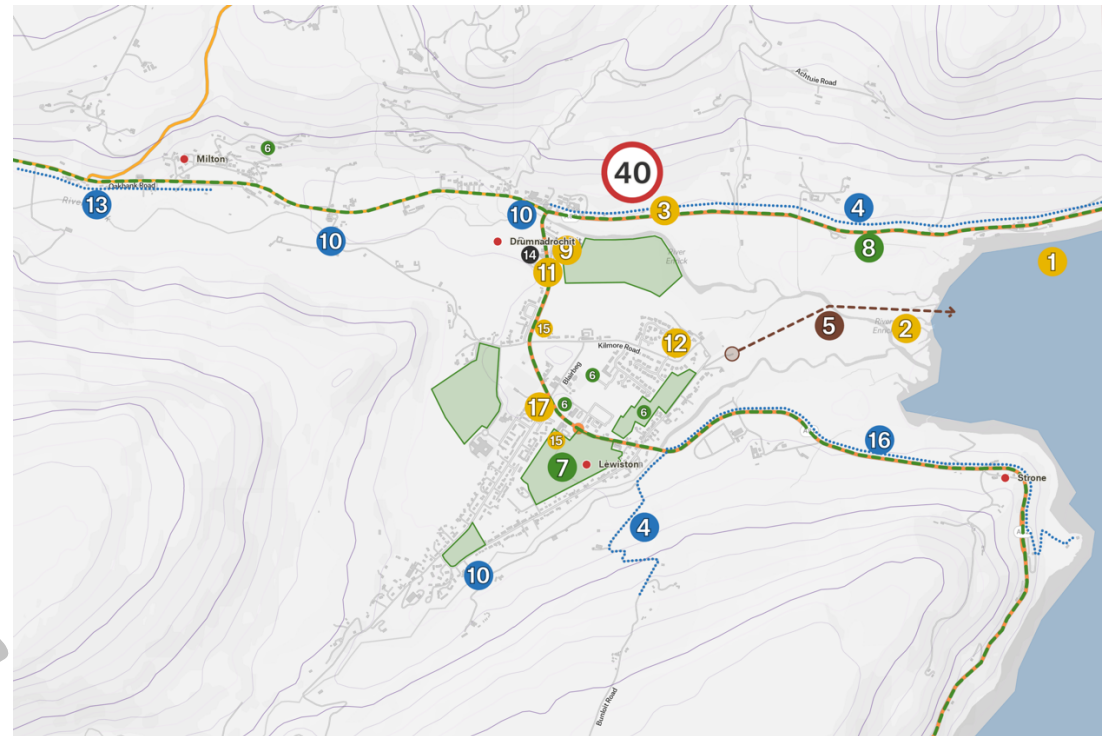
Key

-  Glen Urquhart Community Council Area
-  Protected Hinterland as Defined by The Highland Council








Drumnadrochit:

1. Designated safe swimming area
2. Safe access to loch including a bridge
3. Reduce speed limit to 40. Improve speed signage
4. Move Great Glen Way route off the road
5. Treatment plant - move current outlet pipe to exit at the loch
6. Areas for community growing
7. Community growing meadow
8. New electric bus route
9. Creating a thriving high street with local produce & businesses
10. Restore bridges to improve local access
11. Remove / relocate new bus stops
12. Restore the Benleva Hotel & reopen as hotel
13. Footpath through to forestry at base of Polmaily to create circular walk
14. Potential additional car parking
15. Potential new site for child care centre
16. Improved pedestrian route to Glen Urquhart Castle
17. Proposed location for new Community Health and Well-Being Centre



Key

	Community Life
	Connectivity
	Green Space & Nature
	Service or Utility
	Green space designated for no further development

Balnain:

1. Area designated for no more housing
2. Improved access to Loch Meiklie, help link residents
3. New location for Men's Shed
4. Proposed location for new small local shop
5. Trying to keep the primary school open
6. New electric community / school bus route from the village
7. Encourage more water usage - wild swimming, kayaking etc
8. Ensuring the maintenance & upkeep of hall to ensure frequent usage

Additional general Balnain comments:

- Improve path through to Torshee, create a circular route

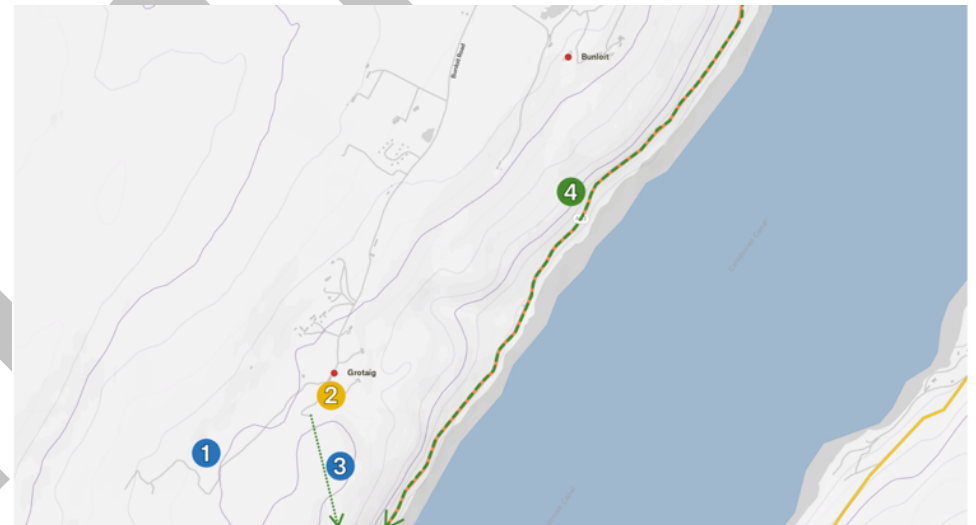


East Glen Urquhart (EGU):

1. Reinstate hill path
2. Larger cafe
3. Cycle path to A82
4. New electric bus route

Additional General EGU Comments:

- Reinstate common grazing
- Encourage more crofting
- No more housing
- Hinterland to be protected - restrict development

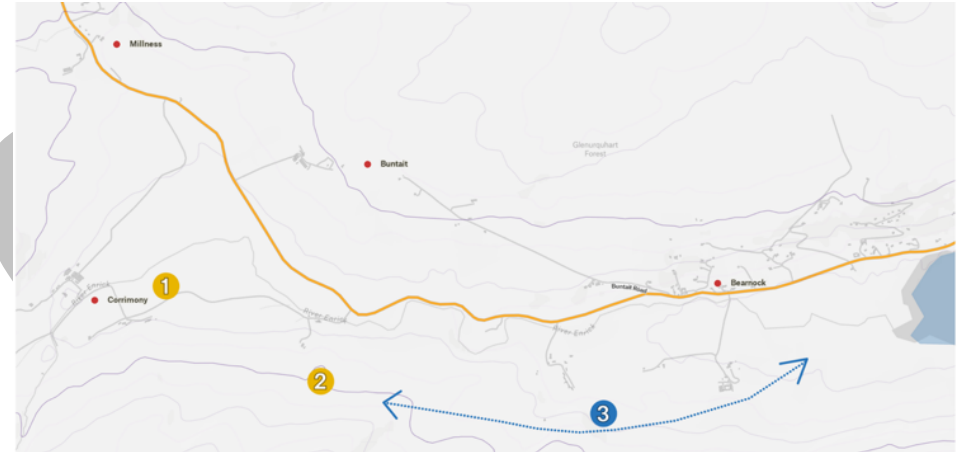


West Glen Urquhart:

1. Make more of Corrimony Cairn
2. Improve signage of FLS Tracks
3. Improved surfaces for more accessible, safe active travel along the glen

Additional General WGU Comments:

- No more holiday pods south of the A831, restricted building (housing) too.
- Landscape protection & maintaining for the river.
- Arboretum & gardens with good access, preference to be near Loch Ness



Amendments being sought to the Local Development Plan: None

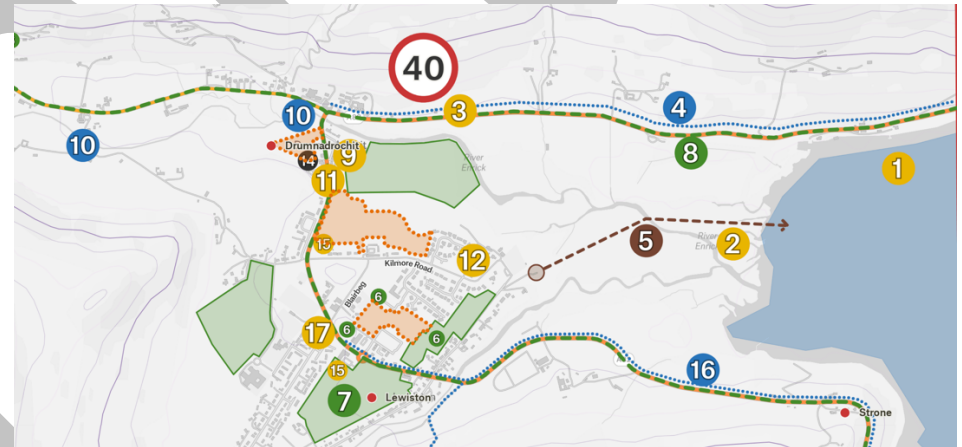
There are no amendments requested.

The map shows the areas designated for housing in orange and the areas the community wishes to preserve in green.

Two housing projects are currently underway in Drumnadrochit, so the community was unable to request a change of use of this land.

Green areas - no further development.

Orange areas - designated for housing by the Local Development Plan.



5.2 Action Plan

The themes and actions derived from all community consultations have been consolidated into an action plan, organised according to the structure of the Community Action Plan. This can be found in appendix 6.

6. Implementation / Making It Happen

6.1 Partners

Working collaboratively is at the heart of this LPP, and the community groups which helped to produce this Local Place Plan. Glen Urquhart Community Council (GUCC), Glen Urquhart Rural Community Association, (GURCA) and Soirbheas have strong, long-standing working relationships with many important stakeholders and partners. It is important that these are maintained and developed to help deliver the actions arising from this plan.

A list of partners is given in appendix 7.

6.2 Funding opportunities

A list of funding opportunities which can be used as a reference as to where suitable funding may be located for some of the aspirations presented in the Local Place Plan is given in appendix 8.

7. Evidence of compliance with Regulation 4

The proposed Local Place Plan and information notice were sent on dd/mm/yyyy to:

List of Councillors to whom the proposed Local Place Plan was sent

List of Community Councils to whom the proposed Local Place Plan was sent

8. Contact Details

Contact details provided in a Supporting Statement must be generic, and contain no personal email/postal address and no phone numbers.