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Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust
Creating a better future together



Lochalsh Collaborates

BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR LOCHALSH

Lochalsh Local Area Profiles

Created by

The Lochalsh Collaboration
The Voice of Lochalsh

Led by Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust
supported by SCDC and SLCVO




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These community profiles were compiled by community council and community trust members and other volunteers in each of the seven community council areas of Lochalsh and printed in CommUnity News over 2020–2021.

These profiles form an important snapshot of baseline figures and information about community assets and organisations in 2020/21.

Data has been compiled using local knowledge, to the best of the ability of volunteers who have a very deep knowledge of their community—a knowledge which was enhanced by the many community efforts to support community members during the Covid pandemic and lockdowns.

A photograph of a mountain landscape. In the foreground, there is a grassy slope. A rocky, scree-covered path leads up towards a large, rugged mountain peak. The mountain has green grass on its lower slopes and rocky, dark grey peaks. The sky is a clear, pale blue.

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Collecting that info
to see our priorit**



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Lochalsh Local Area Profiles

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Dornie & District Community Council Area Profile

The work on collating information for local community profiles is being led by community councils, or community trusts, working with other local groups. The data has been turned into percentages to anonymise the information in small communities.

Community description

Dornie & District has a total population of 367 and is the largest community council area in Lochalsh by geography. However within the community council boundary there are large areas which are unpopulated. Dornie and the wider district has lots to offer and a lot of community activity centres around Dornie hall and village shop which act as a hub for many community activities. The community on Loch Long centres its activities around Killilan Hall.

(See the article on Loch Long for more information).

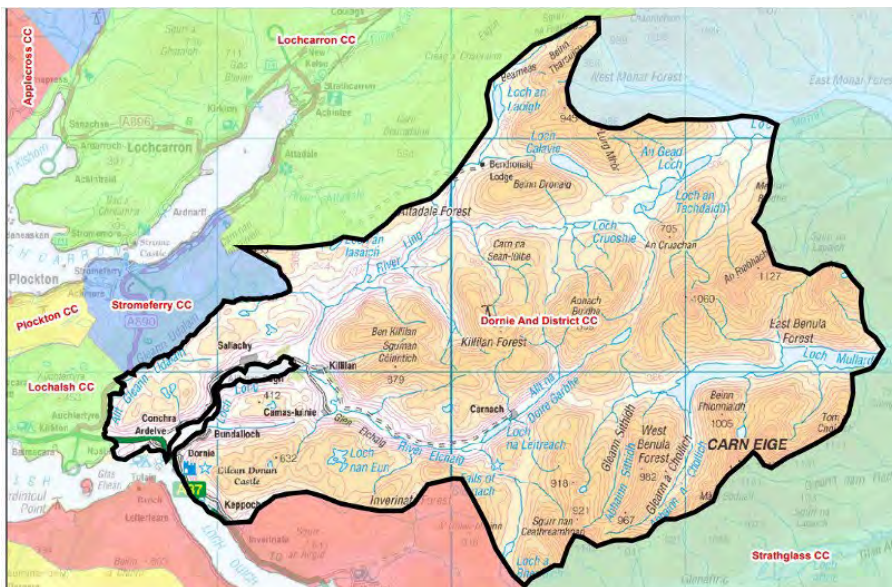
There are lots of voluntary groups that get things done around the area. There is also a growing awareness of the environmental impact people have on the area. A newly set up Shore Care group on Facebook is a good example

of community action. The members are encouraging litter picking and beach cleans, it will be great to see more community action when permitted.

The area has recently had fibre internet installed so connectivity is improving which brings business opportunities and increased working from home. This will hopefully encourage a more diverse age range but also allow more young people to remain in the area or be able to return after study. These young people are an important asset to our community and should be not lost.

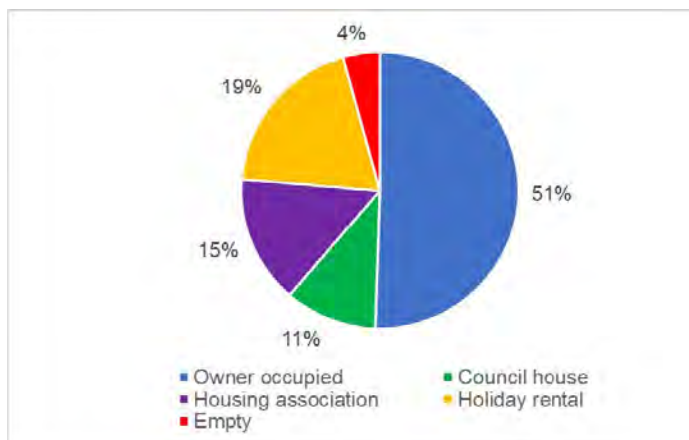
Access to affordable housing is of course a big underlying issue and there are no straightforward answers unfortunately. The Skye and Lochalsh Housing Association has built houses on croft land and has the space to expand the development at St Duthac's Drive.

The Lochalsh Collaborates project offers a great opportunity to improve our community and encourage people to engage with community projects. 2020 saw the community come together, helping others and reducing food waste with our blessings box. It would be great to see this community spirit continue and increase. Groups in the area would love to see new faces get involved and there are lots of opportunities to develop new ideas and activities.

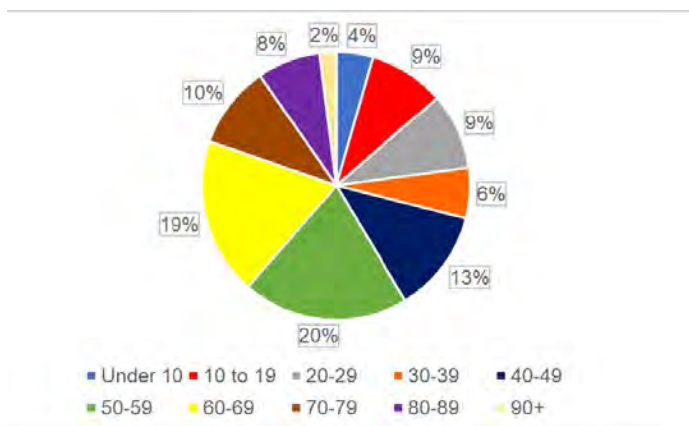


Housing

The housing numbers in Dornie and District show that 26% of the housing stock is social housing, made up of a mix of council houses, LHA rental houses and two LSHA shared equity homes. The percentage of social housing in the area is higher than in any other area in Lochalsh, apart from Kyle, where it is 32% of the housing stock. Owner occupied houses account for 51% of the housing stock. The number of empty houses is comparatively high at 4% of the housing stock, and with holiday rentals at 19%, together, this makes up 23% of the total housing stock. The number of non-residential houses is, however, lower than in some areas of Lochalsh.

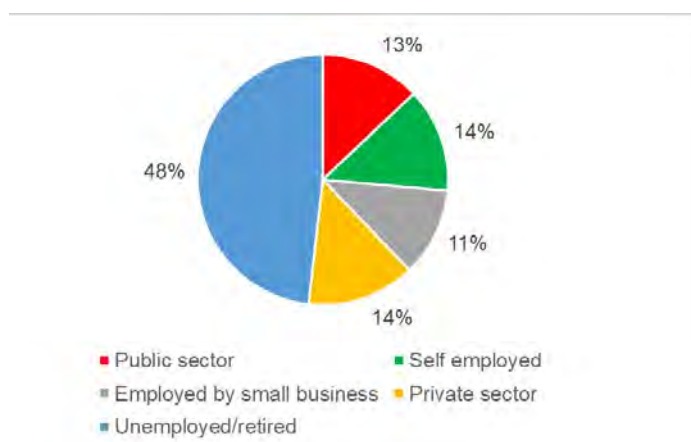


Population



Dornie & District population numbers show that 39% of the population is over 60, whereas only 14% of the population is under 19. Working age adults represent 47% of the population, however more than half of this group is in the 50-59 age group. It is clear that this is an ageing population with under 50s representing 37% of the population and under 40s only representing 26% of the population.

Employment status



The employment figures for the area show that for those who are working, there is a fairly even split between being self-employed, employed by public sector, by a small business, or by a larger company in the private sector. However, 48% of the population is either retired or unemployed.

Land Ownership

There are 3 main estates in the Community Council Area: Nonach; Conchra and the biggest make up a collection of estates known as Inverinate, Killilan, West Benula and Glomach.

Nonach is owned by the firm of Nonach Partners with a board of trustees residing outwith Lochalsh. Conchra is owned by Baroness Miranda van Lynden, head of the MacRaes of Conchra and chairperson on Chonchra Charitable Trust. The largest estate comprised of smaller estates is owned by Smech Management, with the benefactor believed to be Mohammed bin Rashad al Maktoum. This information is up to date as of 2002 taken from www.whoownsscotland.org.uk.

Conchra Estate has recently undertaken a large woodland plantation scheme. There will also be a number of owner-occupied crofts and house and garden grounds too.

Crofting and Farming

There are seven crofting townships – Ardelve, Altnasoth, Bundaloch, Camuslongart, Camusluinie, Dornie and Sallachy. The crofts are a mixture of owner occupied and tenanted from the Estates mentioned above. There are active crofters raising livestock and growing produce, a number have polytunnels and some have diversified into other areas such as providing holiday accommodation.

Employment definitions

Self-employed - working for themselves, no company.

Large Company/private sector- headquartered outside of our area with a large number of employees

Public sector—NHS, Highland Council, Emergency Services etc

Employed by a small company - few employees, mostly local to our area

Owns own company - works in the company and may employ others, local to the area

Other - at home, home maker, may or may not be working part-time.

Retired - not working.



Photo of Loch Alsh, Loch Long and Loch Duich. The lochs meet just near the Eilean Donan Castle and this area is called the Aite Mhor (the meeting place)
Photo by Mhairi Matheson.

Dornie children's activities

Dornie Play Group is parent led, who hold weekly sessions on Tuesday mornings (in normal times). The group is for new-borns up to nursery age, but older siblings can attend occasionally. The group can be found on Facebook and will hopefully start up again when restrictions allow this.

There had been a 3D youth club run by parents, but this was wound up several years ago due to the ages of children within the area.

Dornie also has a separate Christmas Party committee who host the annual Christmas party. In 2020 the group did a Santa Door stop delivery instead of the annual party. Again, this committee is run by volunteers.

There is a small play park located at St Duthac's drive which was installed as part of the housing development by Skye and Lochalsh Housing Association. The park is secure and best suited for toddlers.

Airdferry Resource Centre

Airdferry Resource Centre in Dornie which provides day care for the older adults in the South Skye and Lochalsh area is currently closed due to the on going pandemic. This service is considered a lifeline to many within the community, providing carer respite, companionship, a hearty meal and stimulation in the form of varied daily activities. On the whole the people who attended enjoyed the service offered at Airdferry remaining until they were no longer able to attend.

Over the past year and a half when we saw the unit closed once to assist An Acarsaid with their staffing issues, Airdferry attendees were given the option to travel to Broadford but many did not take that option and chose to remain at home.

Airdferry closed again when the Covid pandemic made it unsafe for vulnerable adults to attend, which is Airdferry Resource Centre reopened in 2022. It is hoped that the unit will re open in the not too distant future, providing once more a service to the people of the community who benefit from the input of others to make their daily life easier. Airdferry is an excellent facility and is missed so much by the attendees and the respite it gives to families on a day to day basis. The staff of Aird Ferry are always so grateful for the support they receive from the community.



Right—Airdferry Resource Centre, also in the picture are the SLHA flats, photo by Karen MacRae

Services, retail, hospitality, tourism

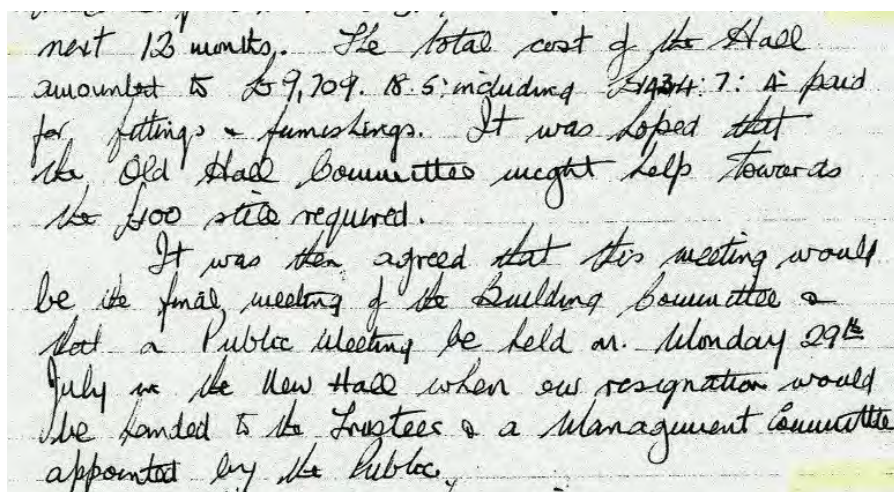
Services in the area include a community hall and toilets which are open to the public, a day care centre, a hairdresser, painter and decorator, accountant and osteopath clinic. Retail outlets include Dornie shop and post office, animal feed service, bakery and gin distillery. There is also a tourist and gift shop at the castle.

Hospitality in the area includes a hotel, pub, two coffee shops, a pizza takeaway, a small café at the bakery and the café at Eilean Donan Castle.

Tourist provision includes a caravan camping site, bed and breakfasts, Air BnB short stay accommodation, self-catering accommodation, and Eilean Donan Castle (with café and shop).

Dornie Village Hall

The main facility in the village which is owned and managed by the community is the village hall. Over the last 60 years or so it has been the main focus for the community. Without this facility many of the best of our community's activities could not have taken place. In the late 1950s a group of local people identified the need for a new hall as the building then in use was no longer 'fit for purpose' as we say today! Many people around the village and in the surrounding area were recruited to help in one way or another and the project was begun as shown in the minutes of the meeting held on 18th December 1959. When the site was finally agreed and fundraising got under way, building could begin. Local tradesmen were recruited and work proceeded apace until the building was completed in 1963. Final minutes of the building committee show the total cost - an amazing £9709-18-5.



next 13 months. The total cost of the Hall amounted to £9,709. 18. 5. including £434. 7. 4 paid for fittings & furnishings. It was hoped that the Old Hall Committee might help towards the £100 still required.

It was then agreed that this meeting would be the final meeting of the Building Committee & that a Public Meeting be held on Monday 29th July in the New Hall when our resignation would be handed to the Trustees & a Management Committee appointed by the Public.

The hall was then ready for use and a triumphal opening ceremony took place in early July 1963, followed the next weekend by the first of many successful concerts and dances! In the intervening years the hall has made possible a very great variety of activities for the local residents.

Many happy couples have celebrated with their wedding dance in the hall. Many touring bands have hosted hugely successful dances. Many New Years

have been celebrated in the hall with crowds so large that dancing was all but impossible!! Concerts, parties and dances have entertained the community but the hall has also been put to use for more serious purposes such as elections, meetings, interviews, fundraisers for many organisations, art shows, lunch club and play group to name but the most frequent. The RAF mountain rescue squad have used the accommodation for years and continue to find the facilities valuable for training weekends. Dornie badminton club enjoyed years of success using the hall for home games. The Drama club also met in the hall which is well equipped the stage lights for such activities. The youth club also used the facilities for a large range of activities, having to construct a specially designed protective cover to avoid damaging the aforesaid lighting!



Dornie Village Hall with slipway for kayaks and small craft, photo Karen MacRae

As the years passed, there was a need for substantial improvements and in the early years of the 21st century the hall was closed to allow for large scale renovations including a large new kitchen and new toilets positioned in such a way that they can be opened to the public when not in use by hall users. With the support of all the local community and a substantial grant from the National Lottery, the renovated hall is now set up to meet the needs of the present day users and continues to be a popular and well used facility bringing together the Dornie community and providing a venue for many other organisations.



The opening of Dornie Hall, 1963

Dornie Projects Group

Another community managed organisation is the Dornie Projects Group which was set up to support any members of our community who wished to develop any project of value in the community and needed financial support. The finance comes annually from NHS Highland as rent for the ground where the Aird Ferry Centre is sited. There was also a significant one-off payment from Scottish Water who required access to community ground for new tanks when the last housing development took place in the village. Various projects have already attracted funding such as the Brookside Garden and other tubs and flowerbeds around the village which enhance the overall appearance of the village and the approaches. The Christmas Tree project also helps the appearance when none of the gardening sites look very great!! Plans to site some sculptures around the village are in train at the moment supported by the Project Group and awaiting some clarification from Highland Council over planning issues. The Projects Group, consisting of a number of village folk, are always willing to listen to and consider new ideas from members of the community.

Profile of Loch Long

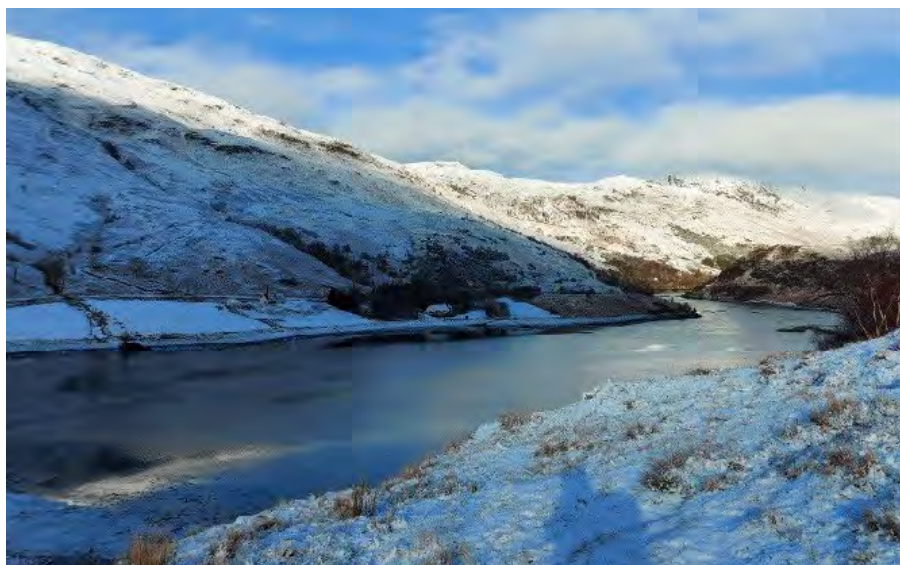
Loch Long is the small sea loch that you pass over if you are heading to Inverness from Skye along the A87. As Eilean Donan Castle appears on your right and Dornie village on your left, you cross the end of Loch Long where it joins Loch Alsh and Loch Duich. Many people pass by the end of the road without ever knowing what lies up our Glen.

There are currently seven inhabited settlements along the Glen: Conchra, Allt-na-Subh, Sallachy, Loch Long Head, Nonach, Kilillan and Camusluine. There are also one or two houses dotted in between. We estimate a current population of 80 adult residents and 22 children living in the 71 dwellings counted. At least 16 of these are permanent holiday homes.

The number of children in the Glen has fluctuated throughout the years, falling to just one child only at the beginning of the noughties. The children that reside here currently catch the school bus and travel to Auchtertyre and Plockton, but previously would have attended the local School next to the River Ling; the old schoolhouse is now a permanent home. In 1972, when one current resident started at the school, there were a total of

35 pupils. By the time she finished that had diminished to just 7. Prior to that school opening after the 1872 Education Act, local children would have received their education at Schools based in both Sallachy and Camusluine.

Our adult population is a mix of working adults and retirees. Approximately 1/8 of our adults work at Eilean Donan Castle, and many others are employees at the Killilan and Inverinate Estate. We also boast accommodation providers, suppliers of wood and grounds work, builders and the go-to man for diggers and machinery. We are also fortunate to have many artistic and creative community members who both work and volunteer locally. We even have a resident weather watcher, who provides us with monthly weather statistics from his garden weather station at Loch Long Head.



Loch Long, photo Karen MacRae

Loch Long has a good mix of long term, established residents and families as well as newcomers to both the area and Scotland. The Glen prides itself on making people welcome. Isabel M. Nicholson, formerly of Camusluine, wrote in her book 'Beloved Over All Glen Elchaig in Kintail' (written in the late 1990s) that "up until the time of the Second World War one can say that the chief pastime of the Glen people was visiting friends and neighbours." Not much has changed! The Glen residents enjoy any excuse for social interaction and can often still be found (pre-COVID of course!) visiting each other's homes as well as attending whist nights, dancing lessons and recently a cinema club up at Killilan Hall. They also have a variety of annual events such as the Glen bonfire night and Christmas Party. In the years when there were very few children in the Glen, the residents elected to provide Christmas gifts for the pensioners rather than forego the event.

History of Loch Long

Historically the Glen has its fair share of stories and characters to recall; many of which are included in the aforementioned book by Isobel Nicholson. One such story relates to old Graveyard at Killilan and is the story of St Fillan and the White snake:

In the year 734 the princess Kentigerna (she was a daughter of the King of Leinster in Ireland), her brother Comgan and her son Fillan settled in Kintail after having had fled uprisings in Ireland that followed the death of Kentigerna's husband and Fillan's father. Fillan loved the area around the head of Loch Long and even though he travelled extensively throughout Scotland and Europe he always felt this to be a special place. According to legend, many serpents lived here, amongst them a white one, the serpent's king.

Fillan, of royal blood himself, had been told by a French magician to take the snake king and bring him to France. He did so, trapped the snake and managed to escape the venom of the others trying to pursue him. In France, the magician put the white snake in a pot with boiling water. He then had to leave the house to attend to an important matter and made it quite clear, that Fillan was not to touch or drink any of that liquid. Of course, Fillan fell asleep, the kettle boiled over, the potion touched his finger, he stuck the finger in his mouth and so drank some of the liquid. It bestowed the power of healing and Fillan not only became a saint, but he also became a famous healer. Legend has it that the people of Kintail are the healthiest and strongest in the country. Thanks to Fillan and the serpent king. On his death he was taken to the graveyard near Killilan and buried there. No traces are left today. But Fillan has left a poem he composed on Tulach nan Deur, a hill nearby.

“I am sitting here on the Hillock of Tears

Without skin or toe or sole; King of the wide world,

Far is France from the head of Loch Long”.

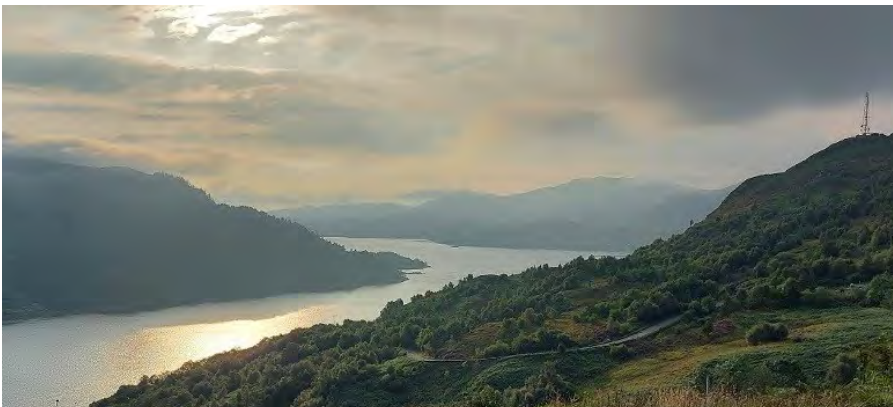
If you visit the burial ground today one of the graves lies in the opposite alignment to all the others; this is believed to be that of St Fillan who established a religious cell here in the 8th Century; hence the name Killilan – the church of Fillan. Other Glen place names and their meanings are:

Loch Long: loch of ships; Allt-na-Subh: stream of the berries; Sallachy: place of the willow (also previously known locally as An Leitir: the slope).

Conchra: cattle fold; Camusluine: Bay of ships.

This brief profile is merely a small scratch on the surface of what makes Loch Long such a fantastic place to live. Thanks to local residents for providing facts, figures and materials to make putting this profile together possible.

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From Carrbrae, photo Karen MacRae



Bundaloch evening, photo Shona MacLennan



Dornie from the bridge, photo Karen MacRae

The history of Dornie

18

Dornie and Bundaloch were two of several planned villages in the West Highlands. Dornie was to be established as a fishing and trading station. The area offered sweet grazing for black cattle and a rich supply of herring showed great promise. Plans were drawn up by David Urquhart in 1794 for the then proprietor, the Earl of Seaforth and in 1801/2 was surveyed by William Cumming for the new proprietor, Sir Hugh Innes. Dornie at this point consisted of eight stone houses and sixteen to seventeen mud houses.

Dornie would extend from a little S.E. of Eilean Donan Castle. It was intended to build forty nine houses. At the same time plans were drawn up for Bundaloch with the intention of building fifty seven houses. The plans included the names of the streets. Dornie – Francis St., Caroline St*, William St., and Princes St. while Bundaloch would have streets named Helen St., Mary St., and Queen St..

By 1812 Dornie had a population of 4–500 people and the thriving village boasted several industries. The herring fishing provided enough cured fish for the whole area and occasionally sent any surplus to Glasgow. Several sailing ships of up to 200 tons were built in Dornie including the “Maria” and “Isabella” 1852, “Magdalena” 1856 and “Donan Castle” 1866. These ships were built by a family named Macrae and were owned and commanded by members of the family. There was also a thriving shoe making industry and a winter industry of net making.

Dornie also served as the centre of trade for the whole of Lochalsh and Glenshiel, having the only two shops in the area. However, by the end of the 19th century most of these industries had declined and Dornie’s importance as a trading centre diminished as shops were established in other parts of the district.

*This street is named as Charlotte St. in the leaflet “Dornie: Its Castles and Antiquities” (referenced below)

References:

“Dornie: Its Castles and Antiquities” by Thomas Wallace EsQ. FGS. Ed. F.S.A. Scot. F. EIS taken from leaflet: “Transactions of the Northern Association of Literacy and Scientific Societies”

Dornie from the archives by Catherine MacPhee, Skye and Lochalsh Archives



Francis Street, Dornie. The British Fisheries Society laid out the village in 1794 as a fishing and trading station, on land belonging to Colonel Francis Humberston Mackenzie of Seaforth. Note the shadowy silhouette of Eilean Donan Castle to the right of the middle tree in the background, indicating that the photograph must have been taken after 1932.

Dornie Bridge from the archives by Catherine MacPhee,

Until the 1870s, many of the population of Dornie were involved with the herring industry, both curing and selling, but boat building and net and shoe making were also popular trades. The village was bypassed by a bridge over Loch Long in April 1940.

Dornie Bridge, situated at the meeting of Loch Duich, Loch Alsh and Loch Long, was officially opened on Tuesday 30th April 1940 and replaced a ferry which had served Dornie, Ardelve and Totaig. When the project was proposed in the late 1920s, the local community was split between those who viewed the construction as positive in making more accessible the route to Kyle of Lochalsh and the Isle of Skye, and those who felt the bridge would destroy the scenery surrounding Eilean Donan Castle and preferred a new road following Loch Long and linking with a route to Inverness.

There were still several problems to surmount including opposition to the design of the bridge and the necessity of incorporating an opening span to ensure that Loch Long remained a viable waterway. The outbreak of World War II saw a reduction in available labour which further delayed the project.



A bridge operator, Mr John C Matheson from Auchtertyre, was hired in March 1940 and paid a salary of £3.10s per week. He was required to reside in Dornie, be available daily from 7am to 11pm, and provide a suitable replacement if he was unavailable. The structure itself was 750 feet long, with a roadway of 16½ feet, and a walkway of 5 feet. It was supported by 15 reinforced concrete spans with a 40 foot clear waterway.

Tolls came into effect on 1st May 1940, but were abandoned in 1946. This bridge was replaced with a much larger two lane structure in 1991. This photograph shows a substantial building on the construction site, possibly a rock crusher.

St Duthac's Dornie

St Duthac's serves a huge area, from Glenelg to Applecross and the whole of Lochalsh and Kintail. There is normally a weekly Sunday Mass and mass on religious holidays.

The first Catholic church on this site was built in 1703. The present building dates from 1860 and its architect was Joseph A Hansom. He was for a time in partnership with the architect who designed the Houses of Parliament, Augustus Pugin. The Church bell is dated 1861 when the build was completed. The Grade B listed building has been largely restored. Much of this funding has come from the community.

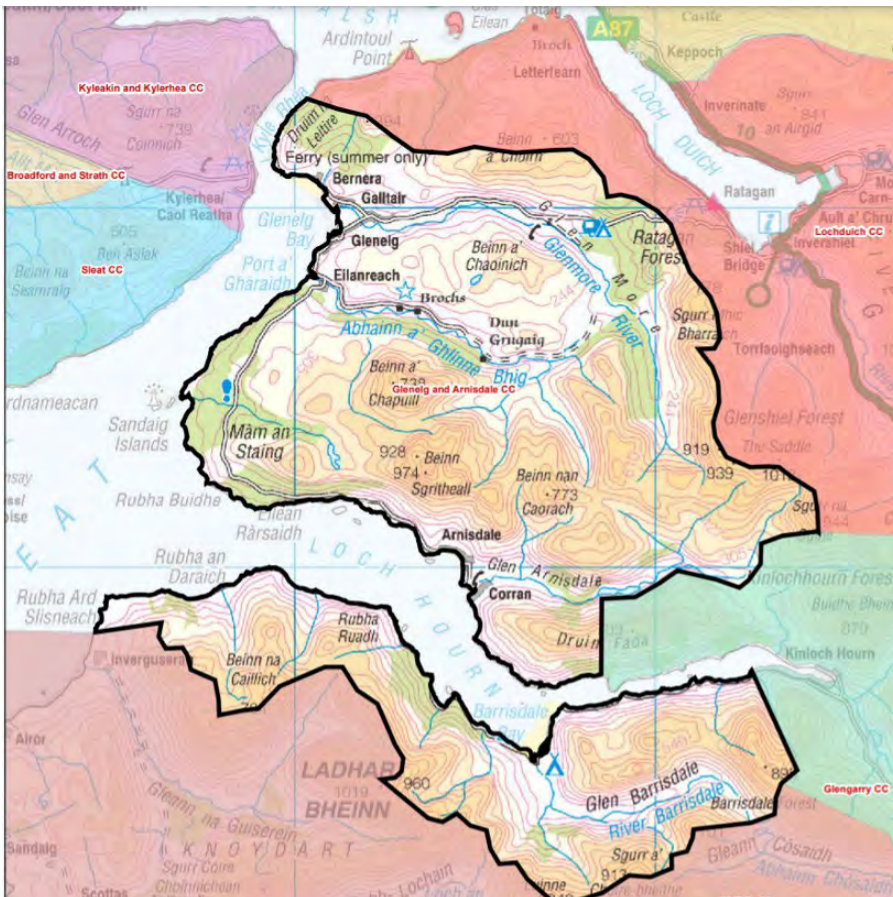
There was formerly a nunnery and convent school on the south-west side of the chapel but it was demolished early last century. The stones are believed to have been repurposed for the castle restoration. The school served an even wider area than the current congregation serves.



Glenelg & Arnisdale Community Council Area

The work on collating information for local community profiles is being led by community councils, or community trusts, working with other local groups. The data has been turned into percentages to anonymise the information in small communities.

Community description



Glenelg and Arnisdale Community Council and Development Trust covers the same area, taking in Moyle, Beolary, Scallasaig, Galder, Bernera, Village, Quarry, Eileanreach, Glenbeag, Arnisdale and Corran. The total resident population in this area is 249 and there is a traditional mix of crofting, although many crofters have main employment or self-employment, tourism related

activities and self-employment alongside residents being employed in a range of public and private sector organisations from large employers such as Highland Council, NHS and MOWI through to a whole range of small businesses and self-employed people.

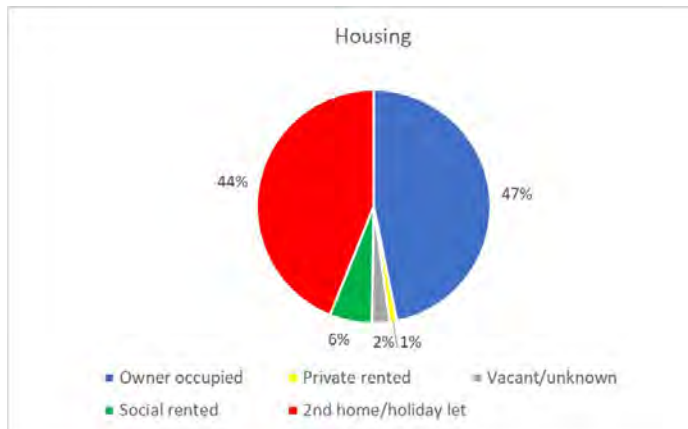
Glenelg is the largest of the villages in the community council area and has Glenelg's only campsite



Glenelg village (above) and Glenelg panorama (below)

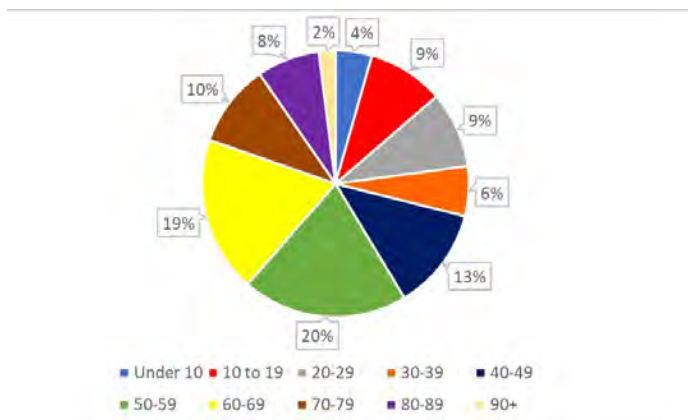


Housing



There are around 215 houses in the Glenelg and Arnisdale Area. 2002 saw the completion of 6 new homes built by Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association, extending the street of Allt Ruadh. This was a great boost for the village. At present there are another 4 homes to be built for affordable rent, which is due to commence in 2021. Shortage of available housing continues to be a major issue.

Population



As part of this profile exercise, we have put together estimated population numbers for the Glenelg and Arnisdale Community Council area. These estimates put the current population at 249 with around 34 school or pre-school age, 119 of working age and 96 of retirement age.

This will be captured more accurately as part of the next formal national census but does however give an insight into the make-up of the community and shows for example that 59% of the population is over 50.

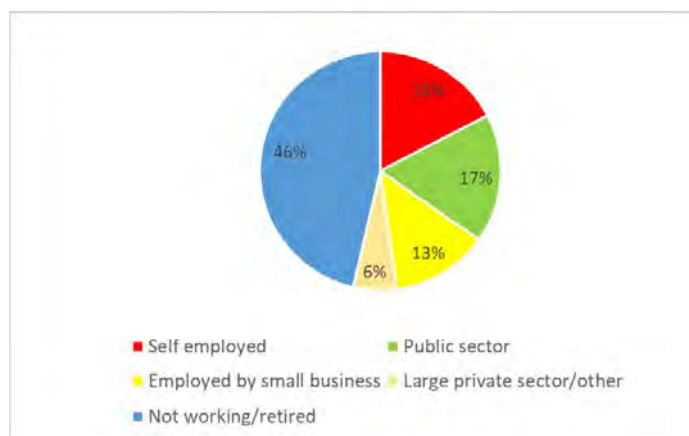
Services, retail, hospitality

While the majority of retail and other services are located in Kyle of Lochalsh, there are a number in the Community Council area. There are Bed and

Breakfasts around the village. The campsite is situated in Moyle, Way Out West Cafe in the Village Hall, Eolach, the Shed and Highland Kilt Cushions are situated in the village. Also in the village, we have the Village shop, post office and the famous Glenelg Inn. We also have Cosaig Growers and the bike shed.

In Glenbeag, we have the recently built new brewery – Dun Brewery, post office in Arnisdale and situated at the end of the road in Corran, Sheena's tea hut.

Employment status



These numbers include seasonal workers who work between different sectors depending on the time of year and of those who work multiple jobs year-round. It should of course be noted that like other rural areas, the tourism sector is very important to the local economy and employs many directly and indirectly. The challenge continues to be developing a balanced economy with good quality employment opportunities out-with tourism.

Employment definitions

Self-employed – working for themselves, no company.

Large Company – headquartered outside of our area with a large number of employees Public sector—NHS, Highland Council, Emergency Services etc

Employed by a small company – few employees, mostly local to our area

Owns own company – works in the company and may employ others, local to the area

Other – at home, home maker, may or may not be working part-time.

Retired – not working.

Wildlife and website

Glenelg is renowned for its stunning scenery and wildlife, this is captured by all our local photographer enthusiasts. These can be seen via the facebook page – Glenelg and Arnisdale Tourist information or of course you can pop on to the website – www.glenelgscotland.com which is full of information regarding the area

Glenelg & Arnisdale Community Trust by Catriona Cameron

The Glenelg & Arnisdale Development Trust covers the same area as the Glenelg & Arnisdale Community Council. This locality was recognised as being particularly fragile and the, then government granted it inclusion in the Initiative at the Edge program as developed in 2004. Its structure is that of a Company Limited by guarantee and a registered charity. The board currently consists of 6 Directors and treasurer. The trust has been involved in several projects, with the most recent projects being, the refurbishment of the football field and community play park. We also have the ongoing local community broadband and pier which is an ongoing management project.



Funding from Capital One £75k "grounds for improvement" competition was won by Glenelg Football club after, then Local Development Officer Erica Macdonald applying to the competition. This enabled much need drainage work to be carried out to the pitch in 2014. The pitch was restored to a playable condition for the 2018 season. This proved to be a great boost to the football club who went on to have one of their most successful seasons.



The new play park was installed in the summer of 2017 and has been a huge asset to the community. It has been well used by all children in the village and local area along with the many tourists that visit the area each year. This was all made possible due to funding and community fundraising.

Funding for the infrastructure of the broadband project was received from Community Broadband Scotland, along with many donations. The first subscriptions were taken in October 2016. We now have approx 100 customers and are looking into system upgrades and expansion prospects.

We are always looking for new members. Membership is free and open to all residents of Glenelg and Arnisdale.



Glenelg & Arnisdale Health Centre

On the 29th of October 2002, in the glorious autumn sunshine, the newly built health centre for Glenelg and Arnisdale was opened. This was a major day for the tiny west coast community. The opening ceremony was attended by a large proportion of the small population, including children from the local primary school. The bright red ribbon was cut by Dr. Zelaya who had retired, having been a GP in the village for 8 years. The health centre was funded by the Highland Primary Care NHS Trust as part of its capital programme. It has two consulting rooms, nurses' office and treatment room. To date we have two doctors, receptionist and cleaner. This building is a great asset in our community and is a base for visiting nurses.



Glenelg twinned with Mars

Our tiny highland village had the honour of being the only place on Earth to be “twinned” with a namesake on another planet. It’s a strange and unique story that all started back in 2011 when NASA launched a rocket to Mars. The mission to land the car sized rover, “curiosity” on the planet at a landing site named “Bradbury”. From there it would travel to its objective, a geological feature they named “Glenelg”. The landing on August 6th, 2012 was like a sci-fi event in itself and eventually “curiosity set course for Glenelg (Mars) with an estimated arrival date of October 20th 2012. The Space, Stars and Mars “opening” and Glenelg “twinning” was conducted by Dr. Bonnie Dunbar, Prof John Brown and then Local Development Officer Emma Maclean cutting the ribbon. For the main event the marquee was full as Prof John Brown, Astronomer Royal for Scotland introduced the talks. The “live link” to Doug McCuistion, Director of the NASA Mars Space Exploration Program put on a fascinating presentation of the Mars Missions, past, present and future, including mock photos comparing Glenelg (Earth) with Glenelg (Mars).



It then passed on to Dr. Bonnie Dunbar, a veteran astronaut of 5 shuttle flights accumulating in over 50 days in space. She gave an enthralling story of her life and how she became an astronaut and her views on how space travel and exploration will evolve in the future. A stunning sign was unveiled by Bonnie Dunbar and John Brown “Honouring the historic journey of NASA’S Rover ‘curiosity’ to Glenelg, “Mars”. A Martian ceilidh was held at night to continue the celebrations. 500 “goody” bags were filled with lots of great gifts, one of which was a flash drive which included a recorded message to the people of Glenelg from the late, great Sir Patrick Moore, wishing them all the best for the Space, Stars and Mars day. This is one of the last recordings he made before passing away just a few weeks later.



The specially commissioned “Space, Stars and Mars” sign can be seen on the side of the Glenelg Community Hall and the “Twinned with Glenelg (Mars)” road sign can be seen when driving into Glenelg.



Transport

We have a bus service provided by Macrae Kintail who provide transport to Kyle on a Monday and Tuesday and they also run on a Friday on request.

BUG (Bus Users Group) – Dial-a-bus evening service which links with selected city link services and provides transport to Glenelg, Arnisdale and Corran

The Isle of Skye Ferry

The Glenachulish is the last manually operated turntable ferry in Scotland. The ferry is ideally suited for this crossing and is part of our heritage. There has been a car ferry service crossing the Kylerhea straits since 1934. However, the closest point to the Isle of Skye has been a crossing point for hundreds of years. The MV Glenachulish originally built in 1969 for the Ballachulish crossing prior

to the bridge being opened in 1975. At peak tides, speeds of 10kts have been measured and the narrow sea crossing of under 600 metres can look more like a stretch of river rapids than a sea crossing.



People come from all across the world to visit and sail over the sea to Skye on this little ferry. Sometimes they even get married on it. More often passengers spot seals, otters, herons or our local sea-eagle. The ferry runs from April until October, weather dependent and employs around about 12 employees. Over the winter months the ferry, is stored at Kishorn boat yard and any work/renovations take place while there. In 2019 we saw the opening of the new shore station and in September, a big birthday bash was held to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the MV Glenachulish. The lighthouse at the top of the slip, houses, tourist information about the ferry and the area, and tea, coffee and biscuits, ferry merchandise is also available.

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The crossing has been recognised as a site of special interest, 'as an illustration of progress in social and economic history'. The ferry has been awarded a 'Red Wheel', a National Transport Trust Heritage Plaque in recognition of the status. This will be unveiled later this year. There are only four other Red Wheel plaques in Scotland, including the Glenfinnan Viaduct.

The Glenelg brochs

Situated south of the village, in Glenbeag are the outstanding brochs, Dun Telve and Dun Troddan. They are unusually close together for brochs standing

just 500m apart. Further along the glen, beyond Balvraid, there is another Iron Age defensive structure located on the side of the glen. This third site is a different design to Dun Telve and Dun Troddan and simply consists of a “U” shaped wall built outwards from the sloping side of the glen. It is harder to get to. The brochs are not complete, but parts of the walls stand 10 metres high and approximately 1/3 of the outer walls are intact. Enough of the structure remains for you to identify the distinctive features of a Scottish broch, such as the inner staircases leading to different levels of floor within the brochs inner and outer walls. These brochs are among the best examples that you can visit on the Scottish mainland and they display the surprisingly refined construction techniques of the Iron age.

The similarity of broch construction throughout Scotland has led to speculation that they were built by teams of skilled stonemasons who travelled the country. Their excellent state of preservation attracted attention from an early date, but they are also noteworthy for their design, scale and quality of build. Dun Telve still stands to more than 10m in places. Dun Troddan is shorter, at 7.6m but is better preserved. They are well worth a look and another well photographed tourist attraction in the village.

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Dun Telve broch in Glen Beag

Community owned or managed assets

Key community assets include the village hall, the community play park, playing field and pier, all of which are solely run by volunteers.

Glenelg Village Hall

Glenelg Village hall opened in November 1959 and it has been the centre of village life since then. It was demolished and rebuilt, opening in March 2004. Owned and run by the community, it holds a variety of events throughout the year. The hall is well-used by local groups, for Christian fellowship, bowling, youth clubs, football, keep fit, both brigades, meetings, annual concerts, ceilidhs, weddings and fundraising events among other things. It is also home of the Way Out West Cafe. The hall houses public toilets, a shower and payphone. The hall is split into 4 parts, the foyer and toilets, main events hall, kitchen and meeting room. Stage, lighting, drapes and pa system available for hires. The Community hall has now become home of the village defibrillator.

Glenelg Barracks

The barracks were constructed between 1717 and 1723 as part of a campaign by the British government to subdue the local population which had risen up in arms in the Jacobite rising of 1715 and which would do so again in 1745. The barracks were designed by Andrew Jelfe and John Lambertus Romer of the Board of Ordnance or possibly their predecessor James Smith and built by Sir Patrick Strachan. Some of the stone used in the construction was taken from a nearby broch. The Government Troops who were garrisoned here during the Jacobite uprisings were also intended to control the crossing to Skye. The barracks are now in ruins, a state which they appear to have entered by the close of the eighteenth century, shortly after the withdrawal of troops in 1797. The Barracks is protected as a scheduled monument and are a well photographed icon and one of Glenelg's famous landmarks.





The new Glenelg village hall

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The old Glenelg village hall

Community organisations & activities

There are several active community groups in Glenelg and Arnisdale. Keep fit, bowling, football, Art and youth clubs. Over the years there have been various other clubs including, Gaelic classes, badminton, Whist drives, which sadly no longer run due to the low numbers of people.

Glenelg War Memorial

The war memorial was erected in 1920 to a design by Sir Robert Lorimer. It is one of the most remarkable structures in the west coast of Scotland. It was

presented to the community by Lady Scott of Eileanreach, designed by Robert Lorimer and sculpted by Louis Deuchars. It is well worth a walk around to study the detailed symbolism. The first name on the list of fallen is Valentine Fleming, proprietor of Arnisdale and the father of Ian, the creator of James Bond. It is well photographed and in some of the most recent pictures can be seen with stunning northern lights in the background.

Moyle campsite



The campsite in Moyle

Moyle Campsite is situated on a working croft in the remote glen of Moyle. This is the only campsite in the village of Glenelg. The site has five hard standings and space for tents. Fresh water and a chemical disposal point. Toilet and Shower facilities are also available. It also has 4 electric hook ups available.

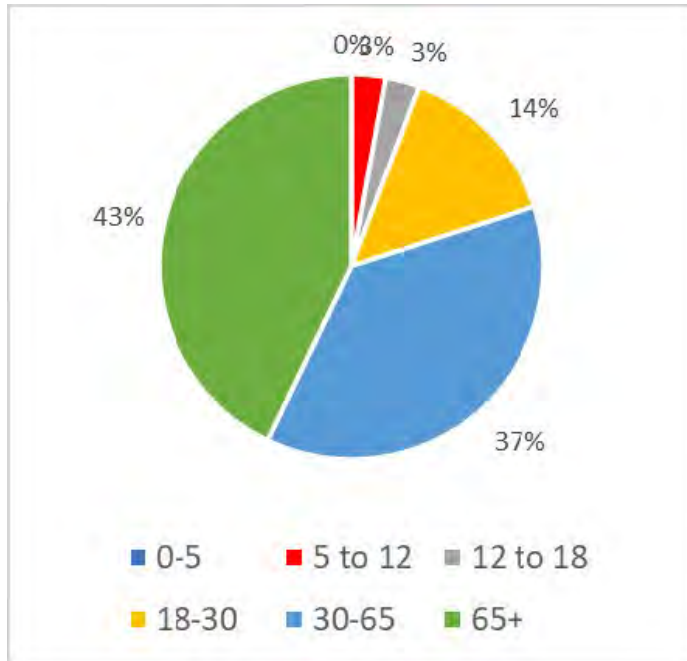
Special focus on the community around Loch Hourn

The small community around the shores of Loch Hourn is part of Glenelg & Arnisdale Community Council area. However, as the most isolated community in Lochalsh and the furthest from services – 10 miles from Glenelg and 36 miles from Kyle – a special focus helps to highlight both the challenges it faces, and the efforts by the community to combat its distance from services. These statistics on population, housing and employment are included in the overall data for Glenelg & Arnisdale local area profile. This subset of the data for this small community has been broken out of the overall data and is presented separately here.

Description of the area

The village of Arnisdale lies on the north side of Loch Hourn and is the largest settlement on the shores of the Loch. On the South side lies the rough bounds of Knoydart. There is a scattering of houses along the Knoydart shore, the largest settlement being Barrisdale. Loch Hourn with its steep sides is the closest there is in this country to a Norwegian fjord. It is also the deepest saltwater loch in Scotland. In days gone by the loch was famous for herring fishing. People visit the area for its remoteness and beautiful landscape and to climb Beinn Sgritheall which towers behind the village of Camusbane.

Population



The average age is 57, with under 18s representing only 6% of the population, and no under 5s. Over 65s make up 43% of the population



Above, Camusbane, below, Sheena's tea hut, pre-Covid

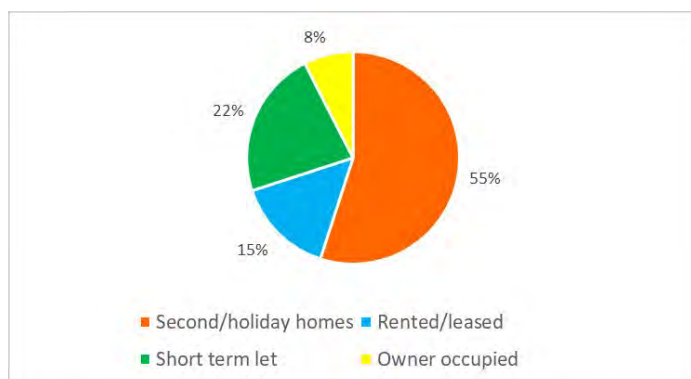


Employment

The Mowi fish farm have 11 full time employees. 3 of the 11 live in Arnisdale the other 8 travel to work from Glenelg or further afield. Arnisdale estate has 1 full time job and employs people on a part time basis if and when required. Sheena's Tea Hut has one self-employed job. There is also some part time cleaning and catering work in holiday homes. The post office has one part time job.

Housing

There are 35 permanent residents. The total number of houses is 40. 55% of houses are second/holiday houses, 15% of the housing stock is rented/leased houses. Short term let/Airbnb houses account for 22% of the housing stock. There is no social housing.



Education

There are no pre school or primary school age children in Arnisdale. There are two children 12-18 in college/secondary school. There are two attending secondary school/college and two at university. Children of primary school age attend school in Glenelg. Children of secondary school age attend school in Plockton where they have to stay in the hostel during the week. The school in Arnisdale closed in 1957, due to dwindling numbers.

Crofting

There are two crofting townships, Camusbane and Corran. All the crofts are relatively small compared to crofts elsewhere. Both crofting townships have common grazings. The Camusbane township has 17 crofters and the Corran township has 8 crofters. There has been a mini revival in crofting activities in recent years. The Camusbane township crofters have recently established a crofter forestry native woodland scheme on the township common grazings and have planted 22,000 trees.

Transport links

There is no scheduled bus service to and from Arnisdale. There are however two council subsidised on demand bus services. The Macrae service runs once a week (Friday) to Kyle and the BUG (Bus users' group) service runs on demand five days a week to connect to National services. Both services must be pre booked by phone 24 hour in advance.

Land ownership

The vast majority of land is made up of sporting estates owned by absentee landlords. The John Muir Trust own a property on the South side of Loch Hourn. Some crofters have purchased their crofts from Arnisdale estate.

Facilities, services and access to retail

There are no shops in Arnisdale. People get their weekly shopping delivered from the shop in Glenelg or use the Macrae service on a Friday to go to the Co-op in Kyle. We also have a locally owned tea hut in Corran. There is also a fishmongers and butchers van that comes to the village once a week. The nearest pub is ten miles away in Glenelg.

We have a first-class internet service with a fibre connection to the houses in the village of Camusbane and soon to be installed to the rest of the network in Corran. We have a post office with limited opening hours. The nearest medical centre is in Glenelg. There is no reliable mobile phone coverage in Arnisdale or around the shores of Loch Hourn.

Community owned or managed assets

The Ceilidh House and Heritage Centre was opened in 2008 and offers an insight into the area and its history and also houses public toilets. Situated in Corran, is the lovely ceilidh house, the walls inside are decorated with some great story boards with a wealth of information on the history of the villages. The ceilidh house holds small events such as weddings, plays and music gigs. Across from the Ceilidh House is a row of old fisherman's sheds used when fishing was a mainstay in the area before the fall of the herring industry.



The Ceilidh House and Heritage Centre

Community organisations

Friends of Loch Hourn group. (FoLH) The purpose of the group is the advance of environmental protection and ecological sustainability with particular reference to Loch Hourn and surrounding area. There is also a Glenelg and Arnisdale Gun Club.

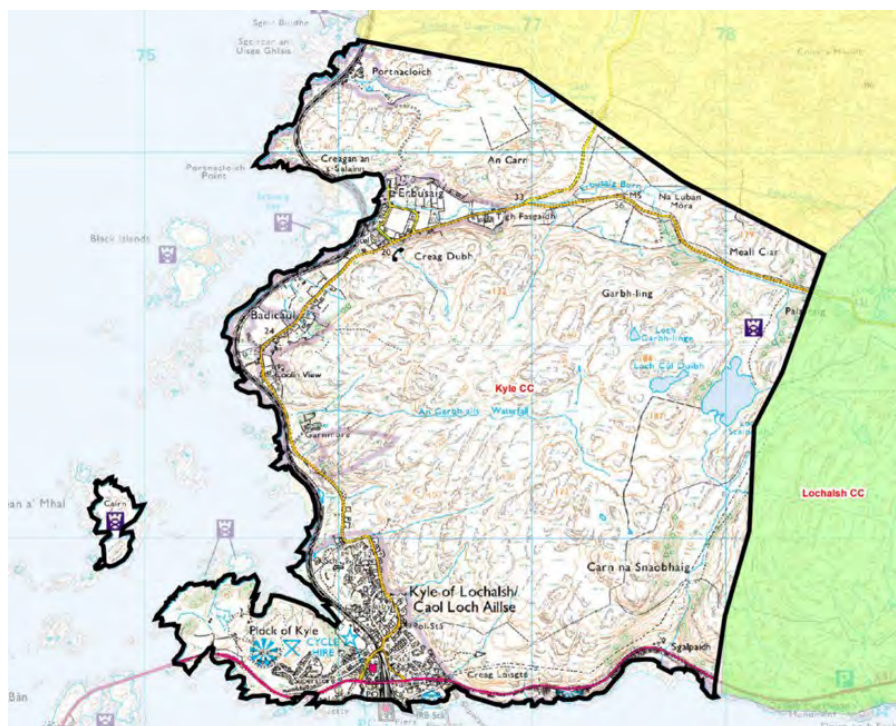
Kyle Community Council Area Profile

Covering Kyle of Lochalsh, Badicaul, Erbusaig

The work on collating information for local community profiles is being led by community councils, or community trusts, working with other local groups. The data has been turned into percentages to anonymise the information in small communities.

Community description

Kyle Community Council, covering the villages of Kyle, Badicaul and Erbusaig, is the most westerly of the areas in Lochalsh. It has a population of just over 750 people.



Kyle is the largest settlement in Lochalsh. Up until the nineteenth century, it consisted of one farmhouse and a few small dwellings but this changed when the railway line was completed in 1897. After then it grew in size with houses being built on any available land. Kyle also grew in importance with it being the end of the railway line and becoming the main port for ferries running to the Outer Isles as well as to Skye. Even when the direct ferries to the Outer Isles were transferred to Ullapool, many businesses benefitted and flourished as a result of those waiting for the Skye ferry. Throughout this time, Kyle was also the main centre for Lochalsh, having facilities such as bank, pharmacy, doctors' surgery, garages and a wide range of shops.



Erbusaig has a history going back to the days of the Vikings, indeed it is named after a Viking called Erb. Badicaul and Erbusaig are crofting townships. The land around the villages forms part of the Balmacara Estate owned by the National Trust for Scotland. The Plock, the land to the west of Kyle, is in community ownership.

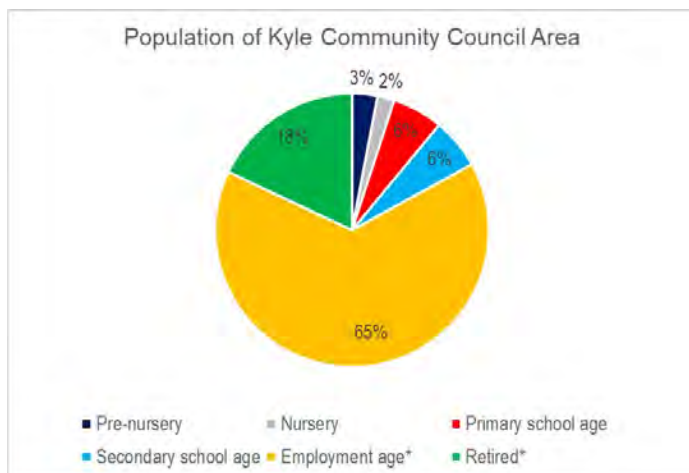
We are fortunate that the expansion of Kyle was recorded in the many photographs taken over the years by Duncan MacPherson, the local pharmacist. The little relatively flat land was developed first without any particular pattern. In recent years, although there has been a demand for housing, the terrain has been a hindrance to development.

The opening of the Skye Bridge had a significant effect on Kyle. Apart from the physical changes due to the construction of the approach road, the main change was that traffic was passes through the village, often without stopping, with the adverse effect on the businesses. This situation is not helped by the lack of parking due to the terrain. Enterprising folk continue to try to redress this situation.

The BUTEC establishment, commonly known as 'The Base', is one of the largest employers in the area, with the number of visiting personnel contributing to the economy of Kyle.

Population

It is difficult to put an accurate figure on the population within the Kyle Community Council area since it has been nearly 10 years since the last census. Estimates put the present population of around 760 people, of whom there are 50 of secondary school age, 59 of primary school/nursery age and just over 20 pre-nursery. There is a higher percentage of retirees living in Badicaul and Erbusaig than in Kyle. Despite the difficulties for such a large demographic, the research was able to collect 87% of the demographics and employment figures from a representative range of the area and we have extrapolated that data to create these percentages.



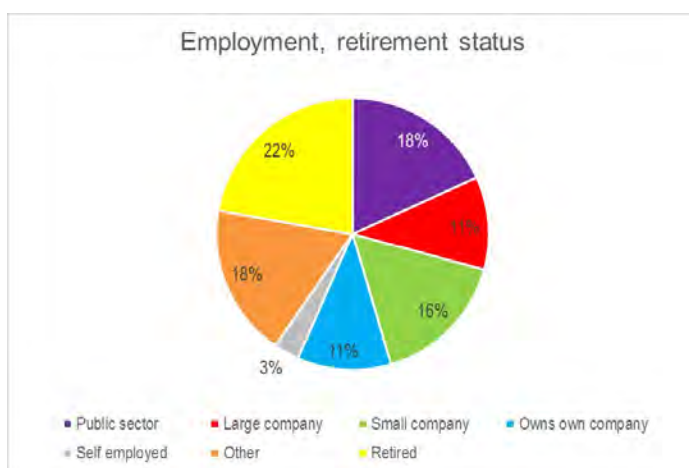
* Based on data collated for 87% of the population

Employment

An analysis of the employment status of individuals in the three villages produced the following results:

The figures indicate that 60% of the adult population is employed, either for the public sector, businesses and organisations or in their own business. Of the employed people, the largest numbers work in the public sector or for large organisations. In the self-employed categories, the number of lone-workers is significant compared to those employing staff.

Many of the businesses in Kyle provide employment for the wider Lochalsh catchment area.



* Based on data collated for 87% of the population



The centre of Kyle, including the chemist, butcher, Mace Stores and health centre. The village is bisected by the busy A87.

Employment definitions

Self-employed – working for themselves, no company.

Large Company – headquartered outside of our area with a large number of employees e.g Royal Mail

Public sector—NHS, Highland Council, Emergency Services etc

Employed by a small company – few employees, mostly local to our area

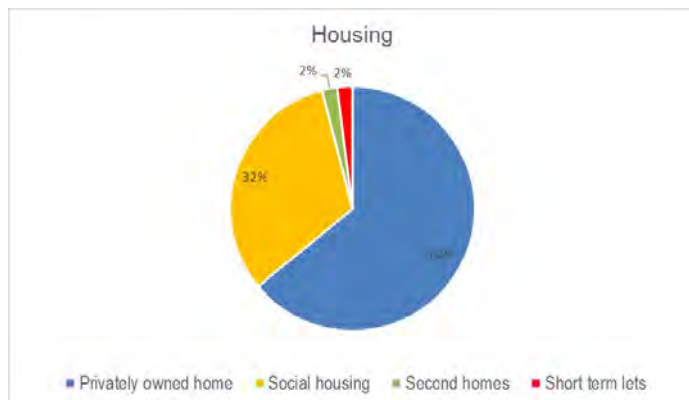
Owns own company – person works in the company and may employ others again local to the area

Other – at home, home maker, may or may not be working part-time.

Retired – not working.

Housing

There are 502 dwellings in Kyle Community Council area, made up of a mixture of detached houses and bungalows, semis, terraced and flats. The vast majority of the housing in Kyle is occupied as family homes, with relatively few being second homes (the majority of which are in Badicaul and Erbusaig) or short term letting. There is a higher percentage of flats and of social housing in Kyle than in the rest of Lochalsh. The social housing is owned by Highland Council, Lochalsh & Skye Housing Association (LSHA), and Link Housing, whose 12 houses are managed by LSHA. Unlike other areas of Lochalsh, 70 or 14% of the housing stock is flats, of which 63 are social housing.



The crofting township of Erbusaig, looking across to Skye



Kyle Main Street, with bank, a range of retail outlets and offices on the left and Duncan MacPherson Court (owned by LSHA) on the right.

Services, retail, hospitality

Kyle acts as the focal point for the whole of Lochalsh because of the range of services and facilities available in one place. Health services include a health centre, a doctors surgery, two dentists, an optician and a pharmacy. There is a hairdresser and a beauty salon. For postal, financial and legal services there is a post office, Royal Mail sorting office, a bank and a solicitor and estate agent. Services provided by Highland Council include a Service Point, Kyle Primary School and Kyle Harbour.

Kyle is well served with retail outlets, in comparison to other villages in Lochalsh. For food there is a Co-op supermarket, a butcher, a fish shop and Mace Stores. There is a footwear shop, a clothing shop, a craft shop, a design and framing service and an artist's shop/workshop. In addition, there are three garages, a hardware shop, and a carpet shop.

There is also the Railway Museum, the office of the Scottish Crofting Federation, a fishery pier, a part-time vet's surgery, a naval architect and a fish processing factory.

There is a range of hospitality establishments, including 3 hotels, 4 bars (3 of them in the hotels), 4 restaurants/cafes and 4 takeaways. There are also 10 bed and breakfast and guest houses with signage as well as short-term letting rooms and houses for visitors which are advertised online.

Transport

Kyle is served by Citylink daily bus services to Skye, Inverness and Glasgow. There is also a local Stagecoach service to Broadford and Glasnakille, via Kyleakin. Four trains run daily to and from Inverness. Although much slower than going by road, the route is popular with visitors and the views from the train as it follows the coast are greatly admired. There are two taxi companies based in Kyle, one of which also hires cars, as does one of the garages.



The railway station

Community owned and managed assets

Kyle has a wide range of community owned and managed assets which include the village hall, the leisure centre, the playing fields, two play areas (one in a poor state of repair). There are also three churches, two of which have halls and one other meeting place. Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust (KLCT) owns the Plock, which currently has footpaths and the trust has received funding to carry out an ambitious programme of development of this asset. It also owns the Toll Office, which is now the office for the Trust which has received funding to refurbish the building to include a community shed and a more accessible meeting room. The Trust also owns a public electric vehicle charging point, which is beside the toll office, as well as the public toilets and launderette and pontoons in Kyle.

There are two community notice boards in the centre of Kyle, one for the community council and one for KLCT.

Community groups and activities

There are several active community groups in Kyle, some of which are constituted and some informal groups. All have stopped at present due to Covid-19, but all hope to resume when possible. These include the Youth Club, Play Group, Bowling Club, the Kyle Gala group and the Christmas Party group.

In normal times, there is a range of leisure and sporting activities available in Kyle, including Tai Chi, kick boxing, Zumba and spinning classes for adults and youth club, Zumba, dance, football and shinty for children, as well as activities offered by the Leisure Centre.



Kyle Village Hall

Kyle Village Hall was built over 80 years ago with an extension being added in the 1980's. Throughout its lifetime, the Hall has played an important part in village life.

Until the Covid-19 situation arrived, the hall was used by groups or clubs, including Bowls, Kick Boxing, Tai Chi, the Youth Club, dance, Zumba and other exercise classes. A recent addition is the static bicycles used for very popular spinning classes. The meeting room is used by organisations such as the Community Council. The public library was also housed in the building until it was moved into the Service Point. In recent years at least one of the meeting rooms has been let as office space. The Youth Club has for several years had a dedicated space. The Hall is also available for occasional lets, whether it is for private functions or for fund raising events.

Kyle Primary School makes use of the Hall for their concerts and for shinty and football practices. The annual Christmas Party is organised by a separate committee which also organises the Halloween party. It is great to see children of all ages having so much fun in the large area that is the Main Hall.

Lochalsh Leisure Centre

The Lochalsh Leisure Centre is a community-owned facility which sits in the heart of the village of Kyle. A registered charity, the Centre provides swimming and gym facilities for the whole of Lochalsh and South Skye.

We employ 8 people to run the facility, led by the centre manager and have a volunteer board of 4 trustees who oversee the work of the charity.

We offer a wide range of activities for all ages, abilities and budgets and believe we

offer something for everyone from the causal swim to the dedicated fitness fanatic.

Pre-lockdown we saw up to 4000 people walking through our doors every month, which is amazing and shows how central the facility is to our community. We sincerely hope that, as the “new normal” becomes apparent, we can get back to this sort of monthly usage.

The last couple of years have been a challenging time for the centre. We have embarked on a major refurbishment to address a catalogue of maintenance issues that once threatened closure of the centre. These included swimming pool regrouting, shower refurbishment, upgrade of our electrical and plumbing systems, upgrade to our biomass boiler and the replacement of our roof. This was all made possible by a massive community effort in raising almost £64,000 and thanks to careful budgeting, we will now be able to paint the outside of the building and have our carpeting replaced as well.

On behalf of myself, the staff and the trustees, I would like to say a massive thank you to all of our supporters. You know who you all are, from our members who have been able to continue paying their membership fees throughout this difficult time, to the generous donations from business and individuals, to the skill of local tradesmen and finally, my great team here at the centre.

With reopening, there are a lot of changes to how we operate to ensure the safety of our staff and customers. These changes will necessarily restrict the numbers using the centre daily, what facilities can be accessed by customers and the times we can open. To this end and to manage this we have a new online booking system ready for use from September.



Access to the centre for all customers is by appointment only and pre-booked online; we will not be able to accept any walk-in business or telephone bookings.

Please keep checking our Facebook page and website for further details, including specific information on when and how bookings will be taken.

Charlene Maguire, Leisure Centre Manager

Kyle Playgroup

Kyle Playgroup meets (or rather did before Covid-19) in the Church of Scotland hall on a Friday morning, 10 am – 12 noon. It caters from new-born through to pre-school aged children and, because it functions during the school holidays, occasionally slightly older children make an appearance as well. Prior to the Covid-19 lockdown, there were on average 10 –15 youngsters attending, not only from Kyle but also from across Lochalsh and Kyleakin.

The toddlers are engaged in a range of arts & crafts and play activities, with seasonal themes especially at Christmas and Easter. The programme is put together largely by the parents, some of whom have experience and training in child development. There is also a monthly input from CALA (Care and Learning Alliance), a third-sector organisation offering help and support to playgroups.

The sessions provide an opportunity for these young children to mix together and gain social skills, such as learning to share. A snack is provided half way through the session which further helps these aims. The sessions are also an opportunity for parents to meet and socialise.

Loch Duich Community Council Area Profile

Covering Allt a' Chruinn, Cluaine, Letterfearn, Inverinate, Invershiel, Morvich, Ratagan, Shielbridge.

The work on collating information for local community profiles is being led by community councils, or community trusts, working with other local groups. The data has been turned into percentages to anonymise the information in small communities.

Community description

Loch Duich Community Council (LDCC) covers a large geographical area of 267.1 sq kms, with the majority of housing being situated on the shoreline of Loch Duich, and a small number on the inland loch, Loch Cluaine.

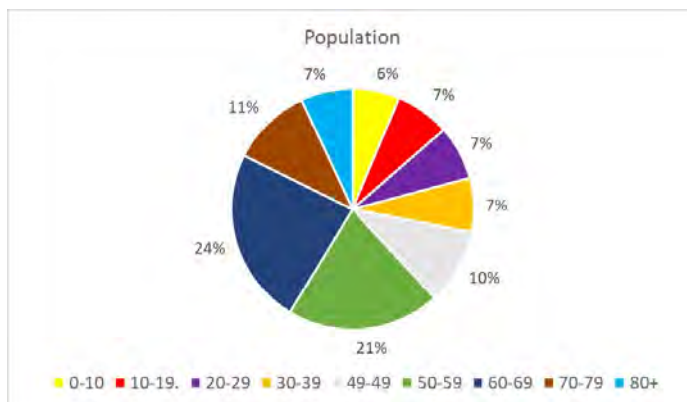
It is the most southerly of the community councils in the Lochalsh area, sharing boundaries with Dornie, Glenelg, Strathglass, Fort Augustus and Glenmoriston & Glengarry Community councils.

There are 7 distinct communities: Inverinate, Morvich/Innis a' Chroie, Ault a' Chruinn, Kintail/ Invershiel/ Shiel Bridge, Ratagan, Letterfearn and Cluaine. There are an additional 2 individual homes at Torrlaoighseach and Achnagart.

There is a resident population of 317, with a high percentage in the over 60 age range.

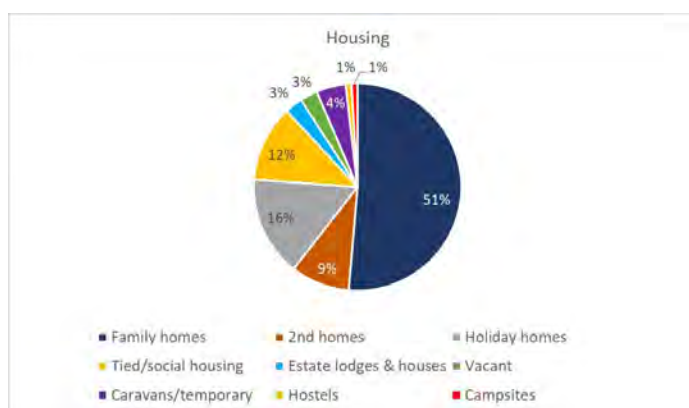


Population



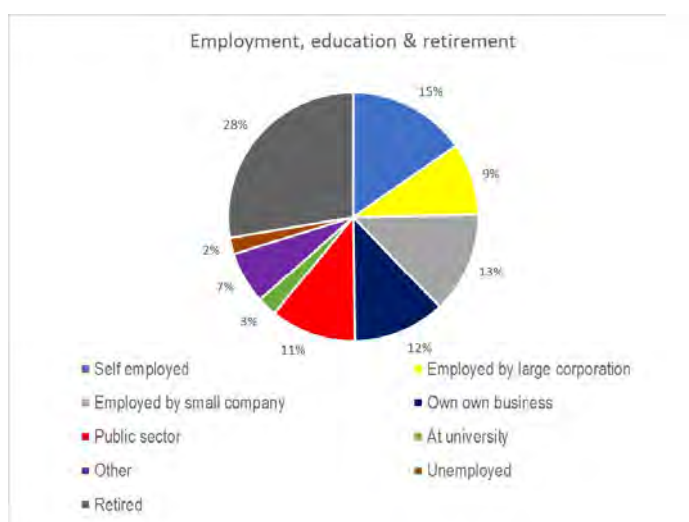
An analysis of the demographics in Loch Duich area indicate that this is an ageing population. The over 60 age group represents 42% of the population, while under 30s only represent 20% of the population. The largest age group is 60-69 which represents 24% of the population, whereas under 10s is the smallest age group with only 6% of the population.

Housing



Just over 50% of the housing stock in Loch Duich is privately owned family homes. The number of publicly provided social houses is a small proportion of the housing stock with only 8 council houses and one LSHA house, a much smaller number of publicly provided social housing than most other community council areas of Lochalsh. It is notable that while caravans or temporary structures represent 4% of homes, 3% of the housing stock is vacant houses. The Loch Duich area is also notable for the number of estate lodges and houses, with four lodges and other ancillary housing.

Employment, education, retirement



It is striking that the largest group of the adult population is retired, at 28%, and that 40% of the working population is self-employed, own their own business or is employed by a small company. A comparatively small number of people are employed by the public sector in comparison to some other areas of Lochalsh, perhaps reflecting the distance from the main population centre in Kyle.

Services, retail, hospitality



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The area has one hotel – Kintail Lodge Hotel and The Wee Bun House takeaway, and for retail, Inverinate Service Station and shop, Kintail Crafts, which also has groceries and off-licence alongside crafts, Chocolates of Glenshiel and Loch Duich Plants for flowers and a wide variety of gardening needs. The Shiel Filling Station & Shop is currently closed.



Loch Duich Primary School, with a school roll of 16, is in a cluster arrangement with Glenelg Primary School. Secondary pupils attend Plockton High School.

Community owned or managed assets



In normal times, the community managed Inverinate & Loch Duich Community Centre is in frequent use by a large range of groups. These events and groups include indoor bowls, lunch club, highland dancing, Church of Scotland, Free Church, keep fit, chiropodist, shinty training, badminton (private hire by a small group) and martial arts. It is also regularly used for coffee mornings and car boot sales.

Ratagan Swimming Pool by L. Adam

The open-air pool, which measures 5 metres in diameter, was opened in 1986.

A local parent had seen it advertised in the Inverness Courier for £300, consulted with another parent about buying it although there was no ready money to buy it, no swimming pool committee and no time to raise funds. However the money was acquired on loan and the pool was bought!!

A public meeting at which a committee was formed, was quickly arranged to explain what had been done and within 2 weeks the pool was up and running and the loan repaid.

That summer, after the Glenshiel Gala, 6 local men undertook a sponsored "walk" from Kyle to Ratagan with the spaceship which had won the best non-motorised vehicle at the Gala. On their arrival in Ratagan the late Mrs Isabelle Campbell opened the pool and a fun day with food, drink and live music followed. In those days the pool had no cover so the children weren't in it for long before their lips went blue. Over the years an enclosure and heating system have been purchased.

The upkeep of the pool is financed by local fund-raising and donations and it is maintained by volunteers. Over the years many local children and their parents have learned to swim in it.



Ratagan Swimming Pool, inside its enclosure.

Ratagan & Inverinate Forests by Grant MacIntosh

The Forestry Commission was formed in 1919 for the purpose of increasing timber production depleted by the war efforts. Ratagan was one of the first forest areas primarily for timber production but over the years there are now many other aspects for multi-uses of the forest areas including many outdoor activities and wild-life management.

Ratagan was the first forest area but many other surrounding areas were later added: Inverinate, Glenshiel, Dorus Duain, Letterfearn, Ardintoul, Bernera, Moyle and Loch Hourn.

In the early years there were local offices in Inverinate and Glenelg as well as Ratagan. They were all eventually amalgamated as one office at Ratagan.

In the 1970's and 80's Ratagan produced pulpwood for the Pulp Mill at Corpach and as the trees grew more and more saw logs were produced for sawmills at Fort William, Nairn and Boat of Garten. Some special logs which were shipped from Kyle, were sold in the 80's to Germany. Logs were also shipped to Ireland and pulp to Finland and Western Scotland. In the early days pit props were produced and a small sawmill was based at Ratagan. In the early 1980's some 52 staff worked from Ratagan: Wild-life Rangers, Forest Craftsmen, Mobile Mechanics, a Road Squad and Contractors.

Swedish timber houses were built at Ratagan, Inverinate and Glenelg; all are now in private ownership. Forest Nursery producing predominantly spruce plants were managed locally.

Materials, plants and workers were transported to Ardintoul by boat, as there was no road access at that time.

With changes in government policy over the years Loch Hourn was sold and latterly Inverinate, Glenshiel in rationalisation programmes.

Currently one of the biggest winches in the UK is operating in Ratagan as it is extracting Douglas Fir, planted in 1929 and some of the specialist logs are

being sold for niche markets. Some of the logs weigh over 8 tonnes. The work is being carried out by Duffy Skylining.

The local Forestry Office is now based in Achmore and the main District Office is in Inverness. The EU Roads Improvement Scheme has helped improve the Glenelg and Shiel Bridge road for timber transport.

Further information can be obtained by searching Google for Duffy skylining and Ratagan and Inverinate Forests.



Recently cleared forest in Ratagan, towards Letterfearn.

The Kintail Hills by John Talbot

We are fortunate to live in one of the finest areas for anyone who enjoys the great outdoors. The choice of hills is vast, we have Munros, Grahams, Corbetts, each one unique in its own right.

Kintail is renowned obviously for the iconic Five Sisters, known all over the world, but that is just a small part of the area's attractions, as we have numerous other ranges and hills. There are also unspoilt glens and remote places, above all, magnificent scenery.

Other ranges include the South Cluanie ridge which is a long day's traverse, and a Mecca for Munro baggers, entailing a full day's hike. If done from the West to East gives, it gives you a good watering hole at the Cluanie end to slake your thirst. The Saddle and Forcan Ridge is very popular and challenging. Add to that Ben Attow, or Ben Fada, which is its old name – the list is endless.

There are also many interesting tracks through the hills, estate pathways, old drove roads, or access routes between communities before the advent of modern roads. The best of these, and my favourite, is Glen Lichd/Glen Affric, now known as the Kintail/Affric trail, the route of the Highland Cross, that unique athletic challenge. I know every stone of that path by name, having stubbed my toes on them numerous times. Every time I go through, there is

something different to see. Although the hills remain the same, they can look so different with the way the light catches them in the sunlight, and even in unfavourable weather. This way brings you into the magnificent Affric hills and incredible Glen Affric with its beautiful Scots pines.



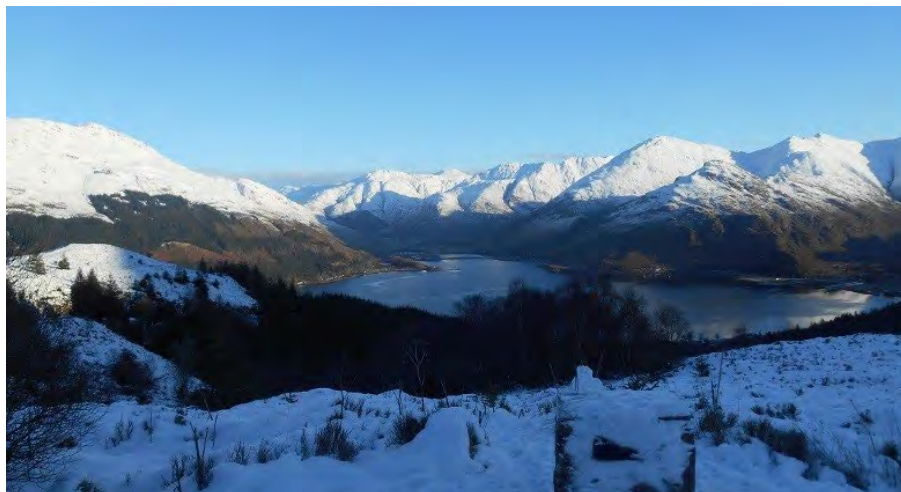
The Forcan Ridge from the Saddle

Nowadays, it is becoming very popular to traverse the country by linking up these routes to make a long-distance trail, similar to what is found in other countries. We are very lucky to have no restrictions, or very few, on where you can go – our 'right to roam'. The hills in this area are a bit more gentle, and well-covered in vegetation, than, for instance, those on Skye, which are more rocky, craggy and also a Mecca for climbing, but it important to always keep in mind that any hill or wild place can so easily become dangerous.

Whether your choice is hillwalker, scrambling or climbing, it is all here. Obviously, our hills are more suited to experienced hill walkers/light scrambling and the Skye hills are ideal for very serious climbers. Another point to take into consideration that as well as the hills being dangerous, the weather can change so quickly in a very short time. It has been known for sleet showers to occur, even in June, so the best advice is always to listen to local knowledge, take navigational aids and suitable clothing, even if it is warm and sunny at sea level.

Having grown up and lived in this area virtually all my life, and having spent many happy hours wandering and climbing all the local, and some not so local hills, I have noticed over the years an increase of visitors coming to enjoy our hills, which I feel can only increase more in future years. One thing that has become obvious is the lack of suitable parking in some of the most popular places, resulting in cars being left on the verge of the road, causing problems to normal traffic flow. Surely the council could, by extending some of the existing lay-bys or making new ones, help to alleviate the problem, and everyone would be happy.

Finally, we welcome all to come and enjoy this special part of the country, but please remember to respect it, keeping in mind the Countryside Code: "Take nothing other than memories and photos."



Loch Duich and the hills looking magnificent in the snow.

100 Years of Morvich Sheep Stock Club by Toto Maclellan

Tucked away round the corner in Glen Lich, working away in all weathers on the steepest of mountains, is the tough but tiny team known as the Morvich Sheep Stock Club.

Many of you will remember the five 'fathers' of the club, Sandy Macrae Brae Cottage, The Geanie, Ali 'Hanna, Johnny McLeod and Murdie Carn. Even their names remind the present members of hot summer days, hard work and laughter. Shearing was done by hand in those days, so the weather had to be good, it was the school holidays, friends and cousins came to play and help, the Geanie had his two sticking plasters across his nose to avoid sunburn, you got a hair-raising trip in the sunshine along the bumpy road in the back of Murdie Carn's lorry, and everybody was in a good mood. Happy days!

But that wasn't the start of the sheep club, nor the end, so let's take a look at what came before, and at the passage through the generations that has brought us to the present day.

The Club was formed in 1921, some years after Queen Victoria had commissioned Lord Napier's report on the 'Condition of Crofters and Cottars in the Highlands and Islands of Scotland.' Crofting townships were first created and formalised on the back of his findings. Quite a few people in the township had sheep at that time, which for practical reasons ran as one flock, but over the years, due to old age or change of focus, sheep and shares were sold from one person to another among the community until eventually only the five men named above were left to carry the club forward, to pass it on to the next generation, and then to us. This year, 2021, is the 100th anniversary of the forming of the club, so we've not done bad.

The Club today runs 600 North Country Cheviots, but until comparatively recently, the flock was much larger, at one thousand ewes. In the late 1990's The Department of Agriculture rolled out the Countryside Premium Scheme, under which the Morvich Sheep Stock Club was asked to reduce their flock from 1000 to 600 ewes, to aid regeneration of habitat. In return, compensation would be paid of the sum that would have been made from the sale of cast ewes over ten years.

Although it went against the heart to part with sheep that had been raised and cared for since their birth, the money gained was well spent. It was used to fence a much-needed high park above the flood plain, situated between Carn Gorm and Aultachruinn, to benefit the club, and to maintain and repair the dilapidated walls of the Big Park, to benefit any of the local crofters wishing to use it. The club were indebted to Donald John Hector Macrae for his help with this project – in his heyday known as the man with every tool for every job! The Morvich flock has been kept at 600 ewes ever since.

These are the current members of the club today, and the course that brought them here through the generations:

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The club's stalwart, Colin Fraser, who spent his childhood and teenage summers helping with the Blackface flock on his grandfather's croft at Valamus, Isle of Lewis, took on Johnny McLeod's croft from Johnny's son, Duncan, to whom he is related by marriage.

Duncan McLeay took on the croft of his grandfather, Alexander 'Sandy' Macrae, after his uncle, Donnie Sandy passed it to him. Donnie was the secretary and full-time shepherd to the club for his whole life up to that point. Duncan's years of gathering in Glen Lich honed his calf muscles so well that he has bagged every Munro in Scotland.

John 'The Geanie' Macrae's croft passed to his nephew, 'Alistair Sandy' Macrae. He passed it on to his daughter Toto Macrae, who ran a farm near Stirling with her husband until she was widowed 12 years ago. Her family now manage the farm, and the Morvich lambs born in May go down there for wintering in their first year, to benefit from the milder southern grass and weather.



100 years of Morvich Sheep Stock Club continued

The only characters left to mention are the sheep! Though most Cheviots are a bit of a doddle compared to the isolated Blackies of Valamus, they are not all so. Our 'work area' is three miles long and three thousand feet high on each side, and the sheep are in two distinct groups, those that run on the back of the Five Sisters, who see walkers and work vehicles, and are reasonably people-friendly, and those on Ben Attow, who see only the shepherds and are as wild as the heather. The young Ben Attow hogs spend a few days in Stirlingshire gathering on all the high points looking for a Munro, and the first year they came, fences never before needed for lowland sheep were hastily erected after three of them saw no difference between the River Forth and the River Croe, and swam across, leading the local shepherd to comment "They're not very civilised sheep, are they?"

But then by contrast, on the more genteel side of the glen, we have one sheep that comes back into the shed after being sheared every year, and drinks any cups of tea left unattended! Rain or shine, there's always something to make you smile in Glen Lichd!

Tasks like gathering and shearing need a bigger work force than three, and thanks are owed to many people who help us out when their own work allows, most notably Steven Fraser, and Colin's sons Jordan and Morgan, but also to Faquhie 'Doc' Macrae and his son, Scott Renwick and his sons, Young Farqhar DA, Gavin McDonald, Jochan and James McLeod, Ross McMillan, Graham Mckenzie, Jamie Broadfoot, Alan Hill, Rhiannon, young Finlay Clarke and the Inchachroe children Grace, Liam, Anna, Leah and Finlay Croe, who turn up valiantly every shearing time, and many, many more people who have come to help out at gatherings over the years.

And that's the story of the Morvich Sheep Stock Club. There's an old adage that says it takes one generation to create a business, one generation to build it, and one generation to neglect it. We're proud that we are continuing to stay true to the legacy of those that came before us, and are proving that adage wrong. And hopefully the five old dignitaries leaning on their crooks looking down at us are proud of us too.

Here's to the next 100 years!

Achnagart weather station by Glenys Macmillan



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Rainfall observations at Achnagart began in June 1967 when the late John Ross volunteered to keep records for the Metrological office. Until 1971, every morning at 9:00 hrs GMT (10:00am BST) the readings were recorded in inches on a card. Any general weather conditions e.g. snowfall, hail, thunder and lightning, floods and dry spells etc. were also noted. The details were then entered on a monthly form which was posted to Edinburgh. As a reward we used to get the odd pen or a mug.

During a dry spell of weather Johnny was amazed to discover one morning that the rain gauge was nearly full. It is not uncommon to get a shower overnight, but this seemed to be excessive as the ground was still dry. There was much head scratching as the day progressed and eventually the dogs got the blame for doing their business in the rain gauge. Later it transpired that it was not the dogs who had caused the mischief but our own dear children.

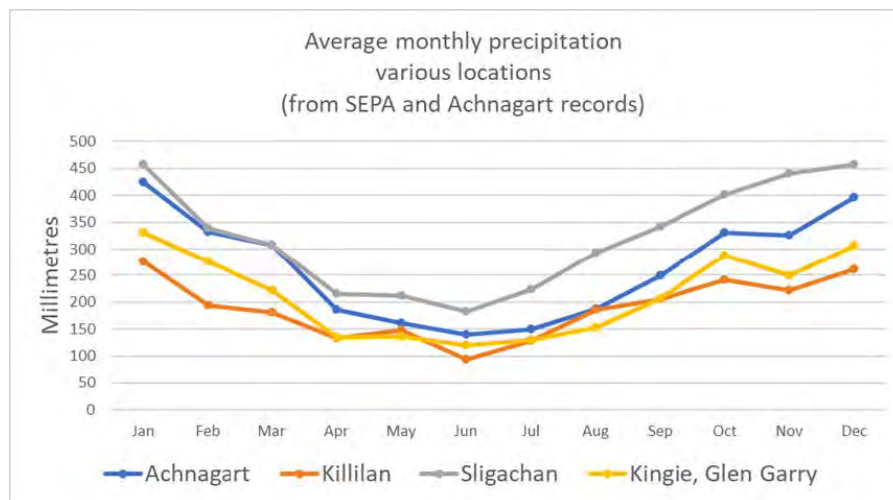
I took over responsibility for keeping the records from Johnny in 1993. Data was recorded electronically from April 2007. During early 2012 the site at Achnagart was made automatic with readings of precipitation, temperatures and humidity data being sent back to Exeter every 12 hours. Using their remote access facilities, they can now collect data at any time.

Because Achnagart does not have mains electricity the instruments are now powered by a solar panel with a storage battery. In the days of my electronic recordings the wind direction and strength, total cloud (from 0 to 10), state of ground, snow depth, sleet, hail, gale, thunder and lightning were all assessed by the observer and entered into the records. The automatic site does not have the necessary equipment to collect this information so nowadays the records are not so complete. The site is 15 meters above sea level.

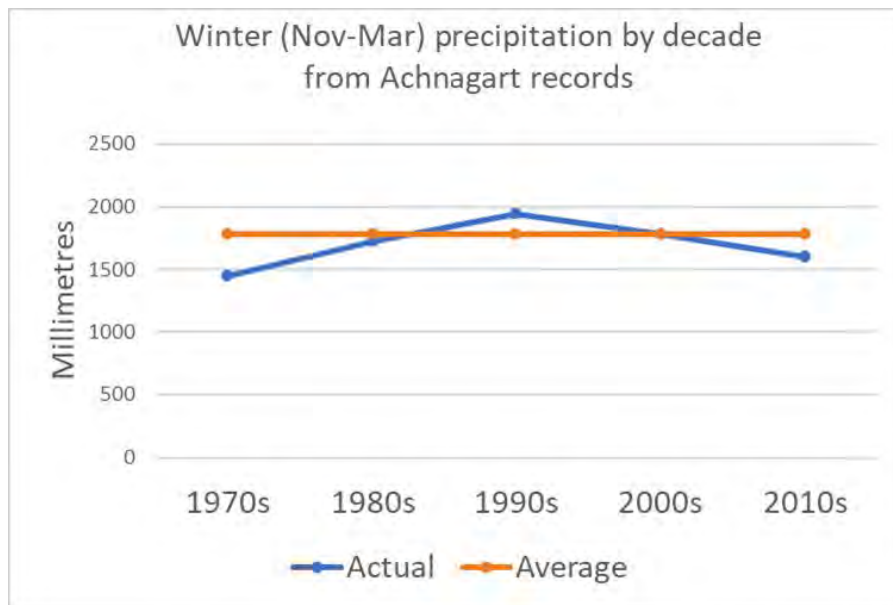


The Five Sisters of Kintail

Rainfall



Our five wettest months are January, February, October, November and December.



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As you can see there is not much variation from the averages.

The summer (1st June until 31st August 2017) at Achnagart was in the headlines for being the soggiest place in Britain with 711mm (28 inches) of rain whereas Drumnadrochit, which is only 40 miles away, was the driest place in the country. This year for the same period, we had 460.8mm (18.1 inches).

It is the hills that knock the rain out of the clouds in the prevailing westerly wind, and if you live to west of the mountains then you will have less rain. If you live in the glens then you need to like rain, or at least be prepared to tolerate it, and have a good set of waterproofs.

In the year 2000 a couple of amateur observers also kept records locally with the following results:

Reraig	1,985mm	(78.1")
Ault a Chruine	2,449mm	(96.4")
Achnagart	3,180mm	(125.2")

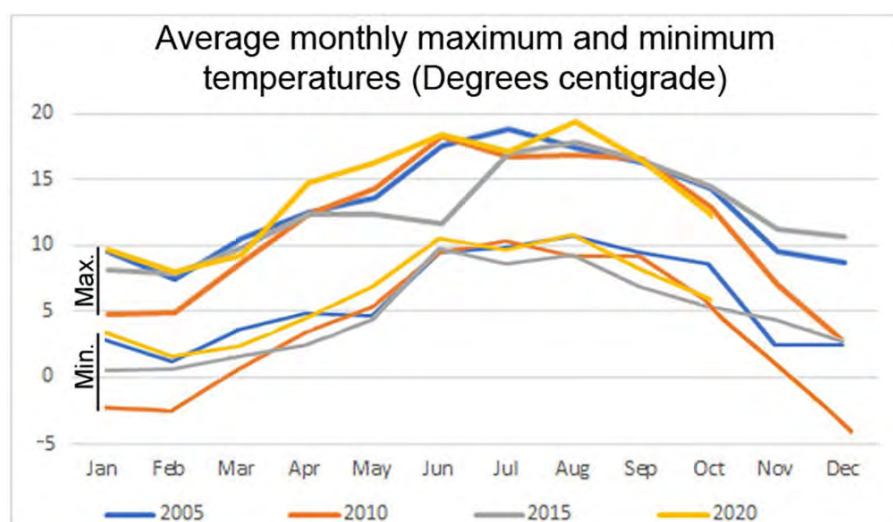


Although Achnagart was mentioned at the end of October by the TV weathermen for having 462mm (18.2") which was 140% of normal rainfall, both January and February this year had more at 655mm (25.8") and 472mm (18.6") respectively. As a contrast, November last year was the driest November since 1967 with only 57mm (2.2"). We've clocked up 1,311mm (122.5") this year so far. The average since 1968 (over 51 years) is 3,147mm (123.9").

The 10mm gauge used from 1987 to 2012

Temperatures

In March 2003 a Stephenson's screen was installed at the site which housed four thermometers: a 'dry' bulb, a 'wet' bulb for humidity, a maximum in which the marker remained at the highest point in the 24 hours, and a minimum bulb. These allowed both temperature and humidity to be recorded.



Without continuous automatic recording it is not possible to produce average temperature figures, the best that we can do is give average maximum and minimum temperatures for each month as shown in the table above. This table compares the temperatures for the years 2005, 2010, 2015 and 2020. We can see that we had a warm spring and early summer this year, and that we had a miserable summer in 2015.

Lowest temperatures -13.7°C on 23rd Dec 2010

- -10.6°C in Mar 2006
- -10°C in Jan 2010

Highest temperatures 30.6°C on 8th Aug 2003

- 30.5 in July 2006
- 30.1 July 2005

and up to 30.0°C in Jun, July 2019.

Over the last eighteen years the average maximum temperatures for our summer (June, July and August) has been just over 18 °C.

Plockton and District Area Profile

Covering Craig, Duncraig, Achnandarach, Duirinish and Barleyport, Drumbuie and Plockton

The work on collating information for local community profiles is being led by community councils, or community trusts, working with other local groups. The data has been turned into percentages to anonymise the information in small communities.

Community description

Plockton and District Community Council and Community Trust cover the same area taking in the villages of Craig, Duncraig, Achnandarach, Duirinish and Barleyport, Drumbuie and Plockton. The total resident population in this area is around 400 and there is a traditional mix of crofting, fishing and tourism related activities alongside residents being employed in a range of public and private sector organisations from large employers such as the Butec Base in Kyle, Highland Council and NHS through to a whole range of small businesses and self-employed people.



Plockton is the largest of the villages in the Community Council area and has a primary and secondary school. The primary school provides education in both English and Gaelic and also hosts a Gaelic medium nursery. Plockton High School covers a large catchment area and is home to the National Centre of Excellence in Traditional Music.

Plockton and District Community Trust

We decided to set up a Trust to take forward some of the projects identified in the Community Council's 'The Road Ahead' community consultation in 2017, and the growing awareness that communities are increasingly getting themselves organised, setting their own agenda and pro-actively working to address local priorities.



Map of Plockton and District Community Council and Community Trust area

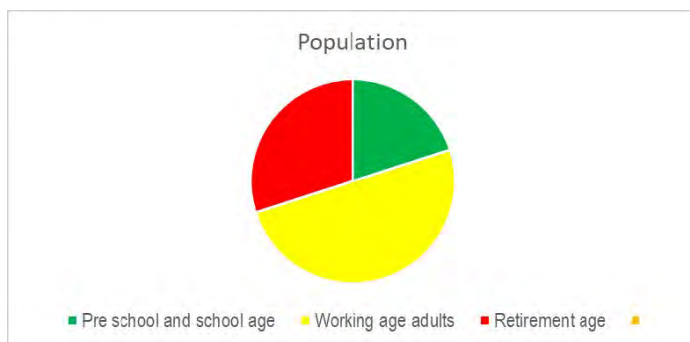
We're just getting established and as yet don't have a firm plan of action. This needs to be agreed by our membership so our priority for the moment is to welcome more members. Voting membership is open to residents in Achnandarach, Craig, Drumbuie, Duirinish, Barleyport, Duncraig and Plockton. Non-residents can join as associates and we have a junior membership for those aged 12-15 yrs. Membership is free and you can apply online at www.plockton.com

Becoming a member does not mean lots of meetings or having to take on duties, unless of course this is something you wish to do. We already have a strong group of volunteers offering to do the work and our door will always be open to new volunteers who wish to get actively involved. What we really need is more members as without local support from across our area we won't be in a strong position to serve the broad needs of the community. If you haven't done so already, please join now so we can press on with electing our first Trustees who can then take forward the work of the Trust on everyone's behalf.

Population

As part of this profile exercise we have put together estimated population

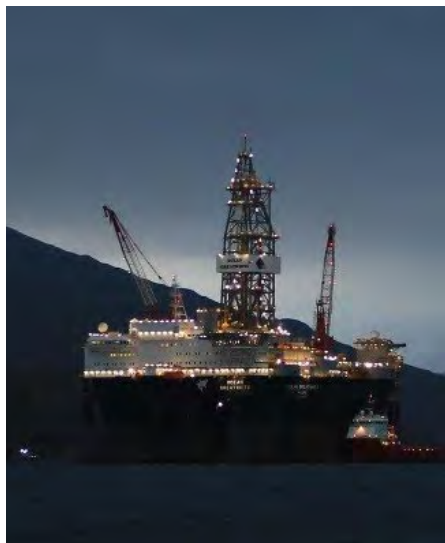
numbers for the Plockton and District Community Council area. These estimates put the current population at around 400 with around 80 school or pre-school age; 200 working aged and 120 retirement age. This will be captured more accurately as part of the next formal national census but does however give us an insight into the make up of the community and shows for example that almost one third of the population are of retirement age.



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Oil rigs and Drumbuie

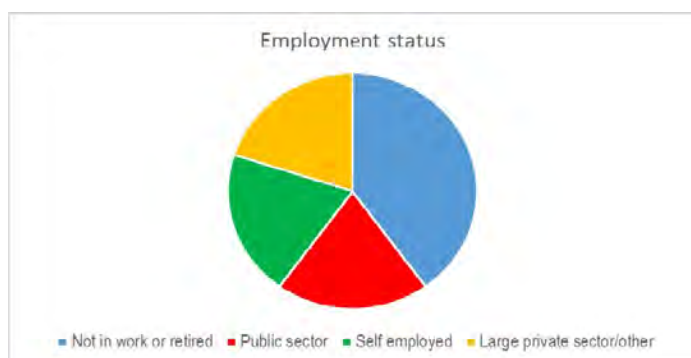
What connects the two photos below? The photo on the right is from 1972 of District Nurse Jane Mackenzie with the Help Drumbuie Campaign Sticker which reads "Support the S.W.R.A.G fighting fund." SWRAG = South West Ross Action Group. The photo on the left is of the Ocean Great White in Kishorn.



Employment status

The analysis of the employment status of residents in the area showed that between 60 – 65% of the adult population is in work and of those employed, around 25% is employed by public sector, 25% in small businesses, 25% self-employed and the remainder split between large private sector businesses and 'other'. These numbers will include seasonal workers who work between different sectors depending on the time of year and those who work multiple jobs year round.

It should of course be noted that like other rural areas the tourism sector is very important to the local economy and employs many directly and indirectly. The challenge continues to be developing a balanced economy with good quality employment opportunities out-with tourism. This includes capitalising on home working opportunities by ensuring all our villages have access to high speed broadband as at present a number of homes across the area still have poor quality broadband.



Employment definitions

Self-employed - working for themselves.,

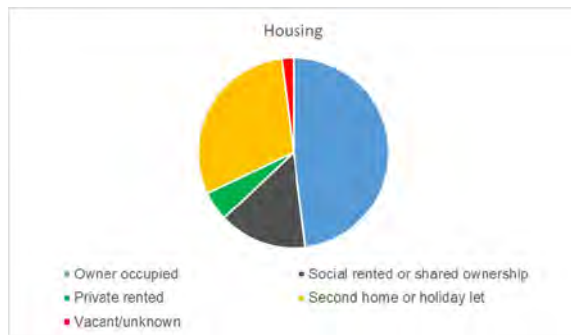
Public sector - headquartered outside of our area with a large number of employees e.g NHS, Highland Council etc

Employed by a small business - few employees, mostly local to our area

Large private sector business/other - large company usually headquartered outside our area
Not working/retired - at home, home maker, carer, retired, etc

Housing

There are around 290 dwellings in the Plockton and District area with 48% of these being owner occupied, 15% being social rented or shared ownership, 5% being long term private rented, 30% being either second home or short term holiday let and the remaining 2% showing as vacant/unknown.



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These figures cover the whole area and when broken down further show particular pressures on housing stock. For example, Bank Street in Plockton has 66% of dwellings shown as either second home or holiday let.

2010 saw the completion of 24 new homes built by Lochalsh and Skye Housing Association on common grazings at Burnside, Plockton. This has been a great boost for the village and it is notable the number of children that can be seen playing outside. However, shortage of available housing continues to be a major issue in the area.



Harbour St, Plockton

Community organisations and activities

There are several active community groups in Plockton and District including a sailing club, historical society, horticultural society, drama club and bowling club. There is also an active playgroup and nursery.

Over the years there have been various other clubs including the Plockton

football club, hockey club and badminton club which unfortunately are not operating at the moment. This is in part due to the low number of younger people in the district and this also affects clubs such as the sailing club which has really struggled in the last year or two to secure volunteers for positions.

Each of the clubs has been important in the community and could have a story written about each one. To pick just one, the badminton club used to have 2 teams and played at the village hall and all over the area as far afield as Gairloch, Glenelg and Sleat. Charlie MacRae recalled that once playing badminton at Kyleakin the match wasn't completed as the team had to rush to catch the last ferry back to Kyle and once while playing at Lochcarron before the bypass was built, a special ferry was provided at Strome to get the team home.



Above the Plockton badminton team, with Charlie MacRae, below, the Plockton football team



Community-owned and managed assets

Key community assets include the village hall and the harbour, both of which are run solely by volunteers.

Village Hall

Plockton village hall was built in 1933 has been the centre of the life of the village and wider district since then. The hall secretary Charlie MacRae is now in his 60th year in the role having taken this on in 1961, and he is still learning.

The hall is well used by local groups for yoga, drama, table tennis, meetings, the Sailing Club annual concert, ceilidhs, weddings and playgroup among other things. When the hall was first built the constitution did not allow any drinking of alcohol on the premises. This rule did not stand the test of time however and in 1934 at a local wedding the hall chairman gave special dispensation for guests to have one drink each and of course their glasses were never emptied!

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Plockton Village Hall, 1934 above, and 2020, below



Harbour Association

The Plockton Harbour Association was established to manage the harbour, moorings and pontoons in the interest of the community. There are 2 pontoons and a number of resident and visitor moorings used by yachts and the local fishing fleet. The second pontoons were added in 2006.

The Harbour Association not only looks after the harbour but also owns and manages the public toilets and also runs the community paper shop staffed by volunteers daily.



Above, one of the pontoons, below (L) one of 3 hotels in Plockton and (R) the Duirinish defibrillator



Transport

There is an airstrip, used by light aircraft, for MOD and Army exercises and as a busy refuelling station for emergency Air Ambulance and Search and Rescue helicopters. The Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh train line runs through the area with stops at Duncraig, Plockton and Duirinish. Several trains run in both directions daily.

Services, retail, hospitality

While the majority of the retail and other services are situated in Kyle of Lochalsh there are a number in the Community Council area. There is a garden centre at Duncraig, and a rare breeds farm at Craig. There are Bed and Breakfasts across the whole area, a café in Duirinish and situated in the village of Plockton there is a village shop, a library, a community run paper shop, gift shops, three hotels, and a restaurant. Sadly the post office in Plockton has recently closed following retirement although it has been suggested that this could find a home alongside another service or business in the village.

There are also two pontoons and a number of visitors' moorings run by Plockton Harbour Association for the use of local fisherman, small boat owners and visiting yachts. The Plockton Harbour Association, which is entirely volunteer run, own, maintain and run the Public toilets at the carpark.

The area has 3 defibrillators with 2 located in Plockton and the most recent one situated in Duirinish through the fundraising efforts of Morag Mackenzie and the Croft Café located in the old phone box.

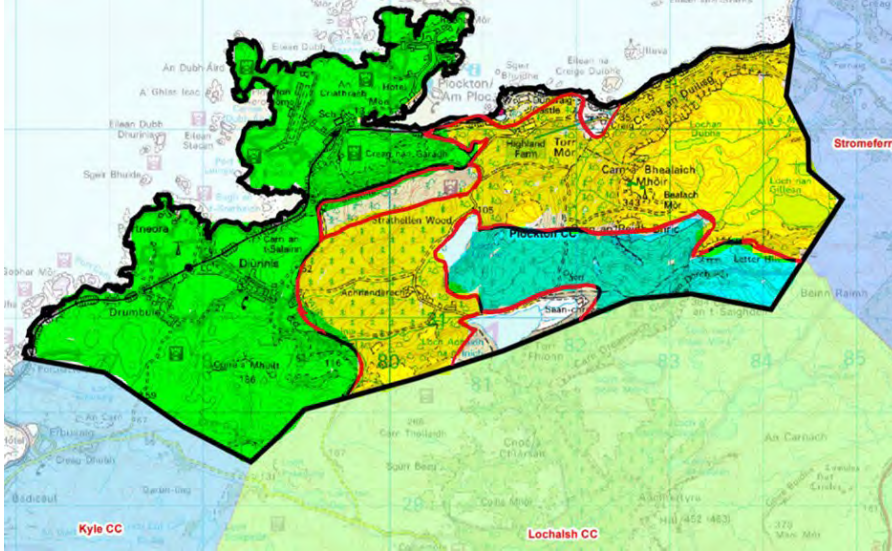
At one time across the Plockton and District Community Council area there was a butchers, hairdressers, shoemaker, taxi service, petrol station, station master and a dentist.

Land ownership & usage

There are three major landowners in our area: National Trust for Scotland (green), Achnandarach Estate (yellow) and South Strome Estate (blue). Land use is predominantly forestry other than the NTS land where this is crofting.



There are four crofting townships – Drumbuie, Duirinish, Port An Eorna, and Plockton – each with extensive areas of common grazings. The grazings are a mosaic of heather moorland, acid-rich grassland, bog and semi-natural woodland. There are 60 crofts which collectively comprise around 95 ha of improved ground. The vast majority of crofts remain tenanted. The national average for owner-occupied crofts is 29% whereas ours is just 7%. Our level of croft occupation (residing on or within 32km of the croft) is an impressive 94.5% whereas the national average is 86%. Population retention and growth is a key benefit of crofting in our community and across the Crofting Counties.



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Crofting remains very active in each of the townships and many crofters have benefitted from the NTS's Traditional Croft Management Scheme in recent years. This encourages rotational cropping and retention of cattle to enhance the increasingly rare crofting landscapes and associated rich habitats and wildlife. This crofting landscape has been created by generations of crofters working the land and this way of life remains an integral part of our community and culture today.



Lochalsh Community Council Area Profile

Covering Balmacara, Reraig, Glaick, Kirkton, Auchtertyre, Nostie Bridge and Avernish

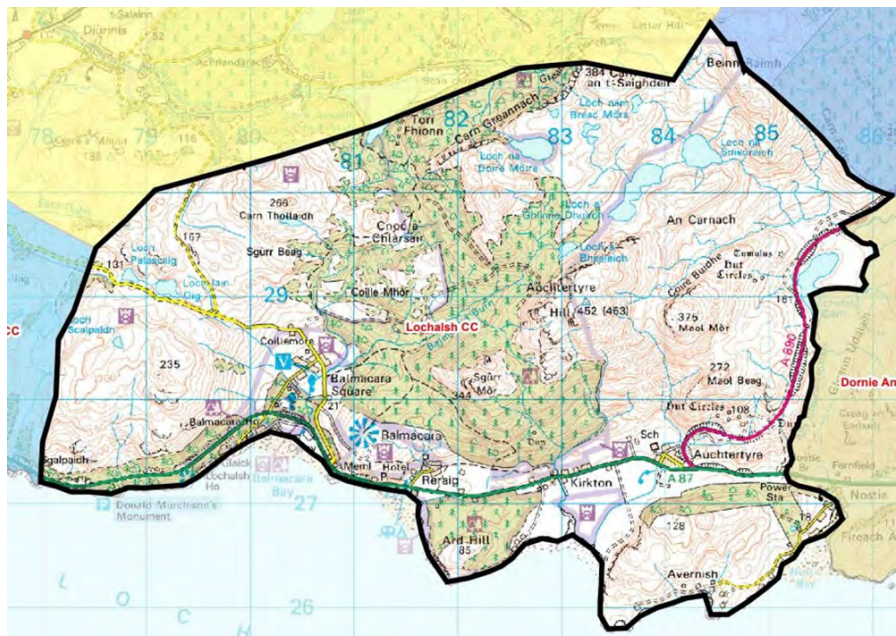
The work on collating information for local community profiles is being led by community councils, or community trusts, working with other local groups. The data has been turned into percentages to anonymise the information in small communities.

Community description

Lochalsh Community Council covers an area of 29.1 sq km along the wonderful varied north shoreline of Loch Alsh. The area comprises seven distinct communities – Balmacara Square, Reraig, Glaick, Kirkton, Auchtertyre, Nostie Bridge and Avernish all linked by the busy A87 trunk road and each with its own identity. We have also, with Dornie CC's concurrence, included Nostie in this profile as it naturally sits within our area.



Glaick is beautifully located by the shores of Loch Alsh. The NTS Woodland Walks are delightful, extending to the west of the area providing visitors with wonderful views through the trees over the loch to Skye and Kyle Rhea. The dwellings mainly run along the shore and are a mixture of family and holiday homes and guest houses between Lochalsh House at one end, which is also the Balmacara Estate office, and Balmacara House at the other end, used by the MOD mainly for armed services training accommodation. The Balmacara Cemetery is off the access road to Balmacara House.



Map of Lochalsh Community Council area

Balmacara Square is the largest hamlet in the area built around the pretty mill pond. In the attractive Steadings, as well as residential dwellings, there is a cafe, deli, gift shop, art gallery and NTS information centre. The Steadings and the area around the mill pond are owned and managed by the NTS. The Old Mill, owned by the community, is derelict despite attempts over the years to renovate it for community use which have failed due to the high costs involved. The adjacent Woodland Park which was originally a forestry camp site is now much used by the community for various activities including dog walking, orienteering, outdoor teaching and is the centre for marked walks further afield. It used to be the location for the popular Balmacara Country Day. Highland Council own the playpark and maintain it with the help of the local community.



Reraig is the hub of the area, centred on the Spar village store and the Balmacara Hotel now under new ownership and currently being extended. On the A87 they cater for not only local people, but for many tourists passing through to Skye. The layby opposite and on the shore offers a lovely picnic area with tables and planted barrels maintained by the Community Council. On the signposted walks above Reraig, old gun emplacement platforms can be seen which were used to defend the anchorages in the loch in WW2. Ard Hill is a small hilly peninsula with a maintained walk and mountain bike path circuit. A new outdoor activities adventure centre is located at the west end of Reraig. Kinlochshiel Shinty Club have a new pitch at Reraig with plans to build a new clubhouse on the site.



The opening of the shinty pitch

Kirkton, the smallest hamlet, has the wonderful Kirkton Bay, a salt marsh with lots of interesting flora for instance sea asters, ragged robin, and bog cotton. The church hall here is used by various community groups for meetings, art classes etc. Of historical interest is the community barn, a listed building which solves the problem of how to dry hay in a damp climate: it has vents on either side designed to draw air into the shed while keeping the rain out. The barn has beautiful and well maintained wattling. Kirkton Church, now a private dwelling has an important local graveyard which is part of the War Graves Commission. The church itself dates back to 1807 replacing a 17th kirk, but there is a well-preserved medieval grave slab of a medieval knight in armour. The site of the church may date as far back as the 8th Century as there are records of a church dedicated to St. Congam in Lochalsh.



A children's map of Kirkton produced with Sarah Longley

Auchtertyre village is by-passed by the A87 being located on a section of the old road. The Auchtertyre Primary School serves the surrounding area, including Achmore, Balmacara and Dornie. It has a current role of 55 pupils and also a nursery which is housed in the old school nearby. Across the main road is the Lochalsh Business Park run by HIE. UHI has a learning centre here which plays a vital role in widening access to education for the community throughout Lochalsh. Above the village extensive forestry replanting is being carried out. Controversially, there is currently planning permission in principle granted for a project of 38 new dwellings and infrastructure adjacent to the primary school.



Nostie is at the road junction for Avernish and is bounded by the Allt Gleann Udalain. This river provides Nostie Bridge power station with water via a pipeway from higher up its course at Lochalsh Dam. Nostie Bridge is a relatively early example (1948) of the development of smaller scale one off hydro power schemes. The building was designed by James Shearer and pays particular attention to vernacular Scottish themes with its use of local stone and the hipped roof. Shearer wanted the building to blend seamlessly into the landscape, and as a consequence of this he commonly used local stone and traditional building methods. The little Episcopal Church at Nostie, St Donan's, was built in 1963 by its architect, Eric Stevenson with his own hands, and the help of his family and the congregation. The interior of the church is simple, reflecting its Celtic roots, the main feature being stones from the river, on the east wall of the church, behind the altar, set in patterns representing the Celtic Saints.



Avernish is a peninsula extending a mile or so into Loch Alsh. Much of the land is given over to crofts and common grazing. All the houses are on the road which runs alongside Nostie Bay on the southwest side of the peninsula. Over the past 15 years the number of dwellings has doubled in this much sought after quiet location. Beyond the end of the road the path takes one to the point which is a haven for wild life, has interesting historical features in the numerous old ruins found here, and has fantastic views up the loch to Kintail and down the loch to Skye. A popular route for walkers, runners and cyclists. The Nostie Islands in Nostie Bay can be reached at low tide.

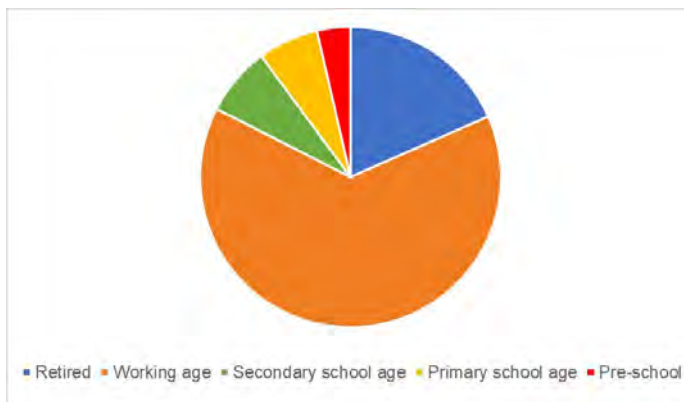


Above, the Avernish shoreline, L the interior of St Donan's church, Nostie

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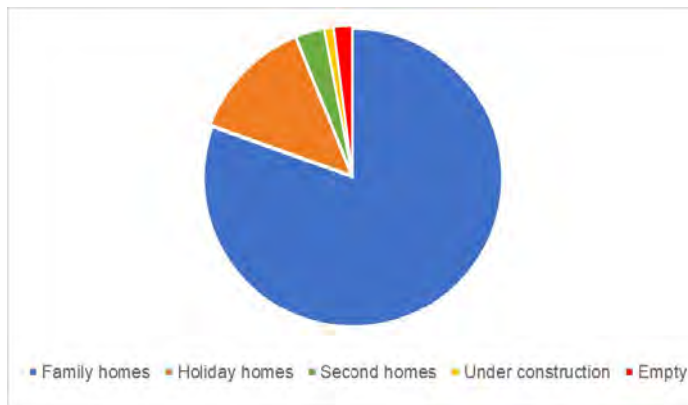
Population

337 people live permanently in this area of which 64.1% are of working age, 18.4% retired, 17.5% are under 18s, of which 7.4% are secondary students, 6.5% are primary school children while 3.6% are pre-school.

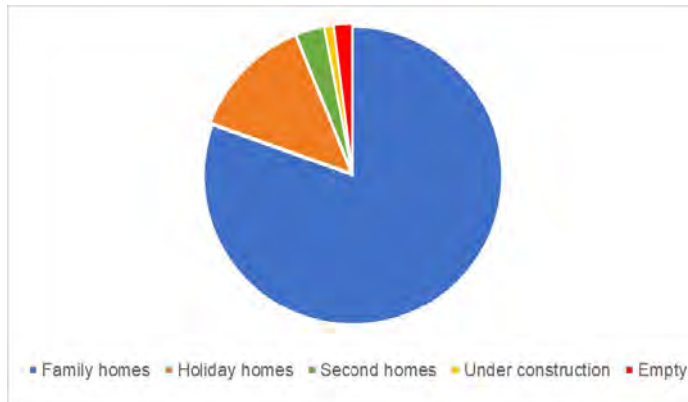


Housing

There are 194 dwellings in the area. 80.4% are family homes, 13.4% are holiday homes, 3.1% are second homes, 1% are new build under construction and 2% are empty. Of the family homes 15% are single occupancy.



Employment /Working age adults



Of the working population 67% work for larger firms or in the public sector, 11% are self-employed, a further 12% have their own business, 4% are employed by small companies, while 6% are not economically active being at home, a home maker or carer etc. These figures do not include retirees or school age children.

Employment definitions

Self-employed - working for themselves, no company.

Large Company/Public sector - headquartered outside of our area with a large number of employees e.g. Royal Mail, Scottish Water, banks, NHS, Highland Council etc

Employed by a small company - few employees, mostly local to our area

Owns own company - person works in the company and may employ others local to the area Other - at home, home maker, carer etc

Land ownership & usage

The major landowners in the area are the Forestry Commission who cover about a third of the area, the National Trust for Scotland whose Balmacara Estate takes up another third, the privately owned land to the north and east of Auchtertyre currently being reforested about 7 sq km and Lochalsh Estates about 2sq km at various locations in Avernish and Auchtertyre.

The land is used for forest operations, crofting and common grazing, a farm at Auchtertyre and the rest for the hydro scheme, housing, schools and Business Park.

Transport

CityLink run 5 buses each way between Skye and Inverness, Fort William and beyond to Glasgow pass along the A87 with stops in our area. There is a local summer bus to Eilean Donan Castle also on this route. MacRae Kintail bus services route 712 runs on different days to Kyle and Broadford Hospital. The nearest train stations are Kyle, Plockton and Stromeferry, all on the West Highland line.

Local issues

Issues of major concern to the community are – the speed of traffic on parts of the A87, the wrongly sited new bus shelter at Kirkton affecting the safety of accessing the school bus, and the effect of the recent planning in principle permission for housing development at Auchtertrye on the Primary School and village infrastructure, the condition of the minor roads throughout the area.

Services, retail, hospitality

There is a Post Office in the Spar at Reraig but other services like doctors, dentists, chemists, police, emergency services fire, ambulance coastguard, lifeboat are all outwith the area in Kyle, 4 miles away. The nearest A&E hospital is in Broadford on Skye.

As well as the Spar shop in Reraig, there is Beth's Delicatessan and a homeware and clothing shop in Balmacara Square. There is one hotel in Reraig – Balmacara Hotel, Beth's café in Balmacara Square, and several bed and breakfast establishments. There is a small tourist centre and an art gallery in the steadings at Balmacara Square, run by the NTS.

The local economy

This depends very much on tourism which benefits holiday rentals, B&Bs, gift and provision shops, the cafe and hotel, and outdoor activity centres. Forest operations and crofting add to the economy of the area.



Local Area Profile: Lochalsh Community council area Community groups and activities

The Lochalsh Community Council did meet regularly before the pandemic and will do so again when safe. These are open meetings to which all are welcome (within current guidelines). The above issues and many others are addressed in an attempt to represent the communities wishes to the appropriate bodies.

The community council also has arranged beach cleans, village clean ups and working parties, and plant and maintain floral barrels at strategic locations throughout the area.

Kinlochshiel Shinty Club play at Reraig and Kirkton and manage the pitches. The Kirkton pitch was gifted to the club by Katherine Grant.

The church hall is used by several groups including two art groups, a yoga group and a support group.

Many groups based outside the area use the woodland park for various outdoor activities and learning.



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Balmacara House, archive photo



Tending the community council floral barrels

Repairing the playground fence in Balmacara Square

The Last Bog Cotton by local artist Sarah Longley

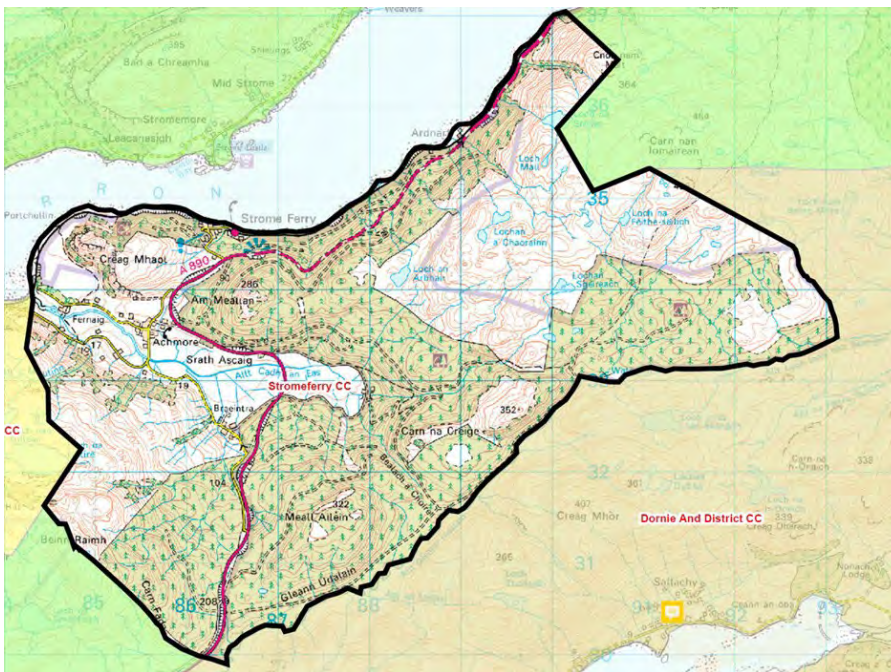
Stromeferry & Achmore Local Area Profile

The work on collating information for local community profiles is part of the community consultation exercise being undertaken by the Lochalsh Collaboration. This baseline community data will be used to highlight questions that need to be asked in the questionnaire, and to provide baseline information for the Community Action Plan, to be written next year. The collection of data is being led by community councils, working with other local groups.

Community description

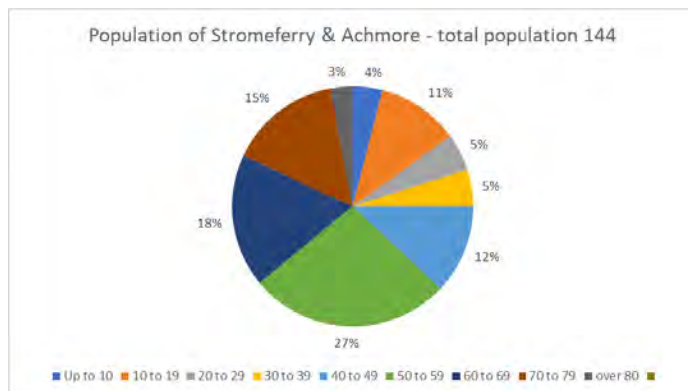
Stromeferry and Achmore Community Council is the northern most the Community Councils in Lochalsh. It has shared boundaries with Lochacarron Community Council to the North, and Dornie, Lochalsh and Plockton to the South. Stromeferry & Achmore Community Council covers an area of 29.7 sq. kms and there is a resident population of approximately 144 with 81 residential dwellings and 3 house plots in the Strome area, of which one is under development. The other non-residential buildings are a Community Hall and the Forestry Office in the centre of Achmore.

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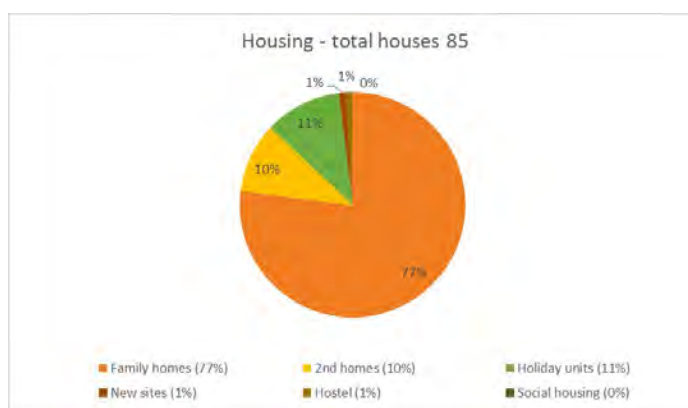


Population

Stromeferry & Achmore has a total population of 144. While 11% are in the 10-19 age group, there are 4% in the under 10 age group, suggesting that the numbers of children being born or moving into the area are decreasing in comparison to 10+ years ago. The other two smallest deciles are the 20-29 (5%) and 30-39 (5%) age groups, which suggests that young people are migrating out of the area after the end of school. The data suggests an ageing population, with under 50s representing 37% of the population, while over 50s represent 63% of the population.

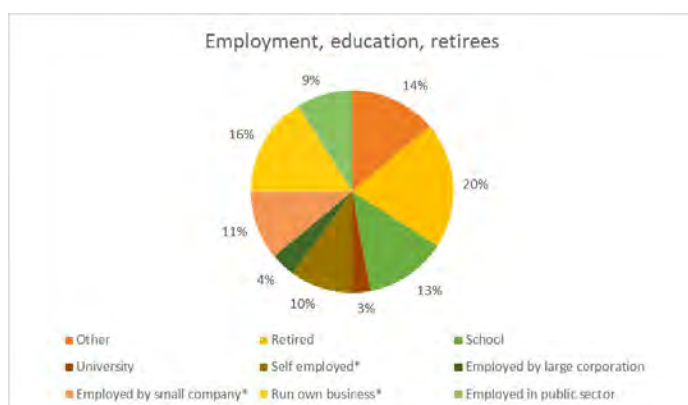


Housing



Family homes make up 77% of Stromeferry and Achmore's housing stock, however, it is not known if any of the previous council housing remains part of the social housing stock. There is no other social housing. It is not known how many, if any, of the family homes are available for long term rental. Homes that are not permanently lived in make up 22% of the housing stock, of which 10% are second homes and 11% are holiday units.

Employment and education



Employment & education definitions

Self-employed - working for themselves, no company.

Large Corporation - headquartered outside of our area with a large number of employees e.g Royal Mail

Employed by a small company - few employees, mostly local to our area

Owns own company - person works in the company and may employ others again local to the area

Other - at home, home maker, may or may not be working

Retired - not working.

School - up to 18 years

University - not yet graduated so counted as part of the family unit living in the area

The working population of Stromeferry and Achmore is 41% of the total population. This number includes part time income generation such as those who rent out a single room to those who are employed by a large corporation. Many people have more than of people who work in small companies, self-employment or running their own business is notable, making up 37% of the total figure. It is also notable that of these three categories, 53% are linked to hospitality and tourism, while 8% of the working population are involved in part time agriculture.

Land ownership & usage

There is a wide mix of land ownership and tenure in the area. Most of the hill ground above the Plockton road (Beinn Raimh up to Braeintrà) is managed by Tillhill Forestry for private owners who are not resident in the area. The planted hill ground around the Glen and onwards towards Ardarnaff is owned by the public agency Forestry and Land Scotland. The flat land in the Strath Ascaig valley is owned by three local families and by the Fernaig Trust which manages the 110 acres of community-owned land, including 10 small holdings and also allotments. A local family owns part the hill ground Creag Mhaol - and the rest of this area belongs to Forestry and Land Scotland.

The strip of land between Loch Carron shore and bounded by the railway line is croft land and accommodates six registered crofts - most of the dwellings have been decrofted.

The valley is home to cows, calves, sheep, horses, hens and pigs and they mostly co-exist with the wildlife - roe deer, geese, pine martins, badgers, buzzards and foxes. The livestock owners have to be particularly diligent during the lambing season to protect their lambs.



The fields and land owned by Fernaig Trust and local families, surrounded by forestry on the hills

Transport



The Inverness to Kyle of Lochalsh train service stops at Stromeferry, with a request stop at Attadale. It is a good service in the main but you cannot get back from Edinburgh / Glasgow on a Sunday due to trains not connecting up. There is no footpath between Achmore and Stromeferry, so that anyone accessing the station from Achmore has to walk along the road.

There are bus links from Kyle to North Skye, east to Inverness and south to Glasgow, but no transport links directly from Stromeferry and Achmore to Kyle or Strathcarron. The bus can be picked up in Auchtertyre (7 miles away) or Strathcarron (8 miles away).

People without their own transport or unable to drive have to rely on private hire companies or taxis as there is no Community Car Scheme in our area. Cars are the main form of transport, with many households needing a car per working adult to get to and from work. Bicycles are used, including to access the train service, mainly by people who do not have a car and need to be able to get out and about, and get to and from work. They are also used for leisure / exercise.

On foot, there are paths connecting some of the communities / villages and

most people accept that they have to walk along the roads. However, there are no shops or services within walking distance, except for events and classes at Achmore Hall and the allotments, and the railway station at Stromeferry.

Services, retail, hospitality



The only publicly provided facilities are a working telephone box in Achmore and a post box in each of Achmore and Stromeferry.

All residents in Stromeferry and Achmore have to travel up to 10 miles to Kyle for all health related services – the doctors in the health centre, dentist, opticians and pharmacy.

There is a good range of small shops in Kyle with the CO-OP as our only supermarket offering. Lochcarron also has local services such as shops, garage, restaurants, post office, and sports facilities. Parking in Kyle is limited, and parking slots are hard to get in the summer season. Residents also have to travel for hospitality and leisure – the nearest community with hotels, pubs and restaurants is Plockton which is 7 miles on the coastal road, or 8.5

miles to the Balmacara Stores, and café and deli in Balmacara Square. There is a leisure centre in Kyle.

Education

Local children attend Auctertyre or, if they wish to be taught in Gaelic, in Plockton Primary School and then Plockton High School. There is a branch of the West Highland College – University of the Highlands – in Auctertyre which offers a wide variety of courses.

Community groups in Stromeferry & Achmore

1ST LOCHALSH CUBS:

Cub Scouts are young people (boys and girls) aged 8 – 10½. 1st Lochalsh Cubs usually meet on a Tuesday night from 6.30 to 8pm in Achmore Village Hall. The Cubs enjoy learning outdoor skills, camping, fitness and being creative. Every year the Cubs go on at least 1 camp; last year joining 'The Howling' National Camp at Scout Adventures Fordell Firs, near Dunfermline.

The Cubs love to welcome visitors and learn new skills. If you are interested in coming along or know a young person who is interested in joining the Cub Pack, please contact Andrew McGrath (Akela) andrewmcgrath12@me.com or Kate Biss (Raksha) kate.biss@yahoo.co.uk



Fernaig Community Trust, Achmore

The Fernaig Community Trust (FCT) was set up in 1998 to give the community access to local land and to involve people in the decision making relating to this land. The FCT is a company limited by guarantee with charitable status and is managed by a board of directors from within the community.

In the year 2000 with the help from HIE and by selling two house sites to the Highland Small Communities Housing Trust we were able to buy-out 110 acres of farm land which we turned into ten small holdings. These are let on rolling 5-year tenancy agreements to local people to raise mostly sheep and cattle.

There are also areas of native woodland and in 2018 the Trust completed 1.7km of attractive public access footpaths running from Achmore Bridge to Braeintra and a picnic area is under development. The Trust has a 'concordat agreement' with Forestry and Land Scotland on the Strome Woods that ensures there is consultation and involvement in its management for the benefit of the community. The Trust also designated an area of good arable land for use as allotments between Braeintra and Achmore.

Community Council

There is an active Community Council of 7 which meets the last Wednesday of the month and do their bit to fulfill their remit of cascading inform to all members of the community by various means – Facebook page, electronic copies of minutes, notice boards at Strome ferry and Achmore plus a leaflet box by the notice board in Achmore. The CC will take up issues which are relevant to the community once the originator has exhausted all avenues available to them. The Community Council receives a grant of around £470.00 per year from the Highland Council to cover meeting costs, insurance, and all other running costs.



Strome ferry and Achmore Hall

Strome ferry and Achmore Community Hall

The Strome ferry and Achmore Community Hall is located in the centre of the Achmore area of the Community and is surrounded by a stone walled, well tended garden with a mixture of grass and shrubs. The Hall belongs to the community and cared for and managed by trustees and a voluntary hall committee of 10 which meets 1st Tuesday of the month. The hall was renovated with some redesign taking place in the early 2000.

It consists of a large hall, atrium, and a meeting room and is capable of hosting supper evenings through to larger wedding parties as it has a fully equipped catering kitchen with a serving hatch to the main hall. In addition to the table and chair layout the hall has a full set of raked seating available; so the space can be transformed into a music venue for gigs or ceilidhs or an intimate theatre experience. The hall is licensed for up to one hundred people.

There is an open green space across the road from the hall which is available for community use – playing area for the kids and stall area for the Gathering. This land is provided for community use by one of the local families and to quote Neil MacRae "the green has trained many a good shinty player" including him

CMNet CIC Broadband

CMNet CIC is a Community Interest Company established in April 2013 by a group of volunteers with the objective of providing speeds 10x faster than those available through the BT exchange and to do so for 10% less than the 2013/14 BT charge. To achieve this goal CMNet CIC had to get its communication links from the Plockton Exchange which in 2013 was a 8Mbps exchange in comparison to the capped Strome ferry & Achmore exchange of 0.5mpbs.

CMNet took advantage of the government's Community Broadband Scotland scheme which contributed 89% of the capital costs to buy equipment.

In 2016 the Plockton Exchange was upgraded to fibre giving a download speed of 80Mbps and an upload speed of 20Mbps from one line and this allowed CMNet

CIC to reconfigure lines to cut costs and increase speeds to Next Generation Broadband standards with 30Mbps download and 15Mbps upload. In 2018 the Stromeferry and Achmore exchange was upgraded to fibre so CMNet CIC are taking advantage of this upgrade and are in the process of ordering an additional fibre connection which will hopefully be delivered in July 2020.

In 2017 the Scottish government started its R100 (Reaching 100%) programme to deliver 30 Mbps to every premise in Scotland; the initial date for completion was the end of 2021. Scotland was split into three areas to allow companies to tender. BT was awarded the contract for South and Mid. The North (which includes the Highlands) has not yet been allocated and is currently subject to a legal challenge from one of the potential suppliers. The rollout is now unlikely to be finished by the end of 2023.

Today CMNet is the only provider in the area that can deliver Next Generation speeds (30Mbps or more) to all of its subscribers, i.e. Achmore, Fernaig, The Glen, Craig, Stromeferry, North Strome, Ardaneaskan and Ardnarff. There are still a third of potential subscribers left to connect and now the COVID-19 lockdown is being eased most of these should be completed by the end of 2020. Like all community groups CMNet needs the continued support of people in the area.

Hopefully that support will continue until all the premises provided by CMNet are covered by the R100 rollout and have an alternate option for Next Generation Broadband at a reasonable cost. This is scheduled to be delivered by the end of 2023 but may be delayed to 2024, or 2025, or ...

And once an area gets infrastructure such as a good quality of broadband, it opens up opportunities for people to create, develop or expand their business, as is already happening in the area.



The CMNet mast, providing an enviable standard of broadband to its customers, established and run by a community-owned social enterprise.

In Summary

Stromeferry and Achmore may be a small community with few facilities and services but we make up for the lack of these by being a very proactive community who are self-reliant and willing to volunteer to establish organisations, in some cases build infrastructure to support and enhance life in our area. However, for our area to develop it needs a higher level of infrastructure, services and facilities that more populated areas take for granted.

Lochalsh Local Area Profiles

BUILDING A BRIGHTER FUTURE FOR LOCHALSH



Scottish Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba
gov.scot



www.lochalsh.uk

Kyle & Lochalsh Community Trust is a registered company and charity, Scottish Charity No. SC043360, Company number SC430036