our land, our people and our place in the future

NORTH SUTHERLAND ACTION PLAN 2001

Dùthchas
Our Place in the Future

Contents

GLOSSARY

ADBS - Agriculture Business Development Scheme
CASE - Caithness and Sutherland Enterprise
CASTAG - Caithness & Sutherland Angling Group
CC - Crofters Commission
CCDS - Crofting Community Development Scheme
CnAG - Comunn na Gaidhlig
DCS - Deer Commission Scotland
FC - Forestry Commission
FE - Forest Enterprise
HC - Highland Council
HIE - Highlands and Islands Enterprise
HISP - Highlands & Islands Special Programme
HL&P - Highland Light and Power
HOST - Highlands of Scotland Tourist Board
HSCHT - Highland Small Communities Housing Trust
IAAO / IATE - Iomairt Aig an Oir / Initiative at the Edge
MEP - Member of the European Parliament
MLURI -MacAulay Land Use Research Institute
MP - Member of Parliament
MSP - Member of Scottish Parliament
NHC - North Highland College
NHFT - North Highland Forest Trust
NOSH - North of Scotland Hospitality
NOSWA - North of Scotland Water Authority
NSCFT - North Sutherland Community Forest Trust
NWYI - North West Youth Initiative
RFS- Reforesting Scotland
RSPB - Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
RSS – Rural Stewardship Scheme
SAC - Scottish Agricultural College
SAC - Scottish Arts Council
SCU - Scottish Crofters Union
SEPA - Scottish Environmental Protection Agency
SERAD - Scottish Executive Agriculture Department
SIP - Social Inclusion Partnership
SNH - Scottish Natural Heritage
SORD - Sutherland Opportunities Returners Database
SP - Sutherland Partnership
SP & RES Ltd. - Scottish Power and Renewable Energy Systems Limited
SQBLA - Scottish Quality Assured Beef & Lamb
S&SE- Scottish and Southern Energy
STAG - Sutherland Teenage Action Group
STB - Scottish Tourist Board
SWT - Scottish Wildlife Trust
UHI - University of the Highlands & Islands Millenium Institute

Introduction

It has been widely acknowledged that this Strategy is a very powerful vehicle through which to organise support and resources for the implementation of the community ideas generated and highlighted through the Dùthchas process. This Action Plan documents how a start will be made on implementing the Strategy. In this version a start can be made on developing plans for Strategy Objectives and Actions. As work progresses, further detail will be developed.

Throughout the implementation it must be remembered that the Strategy and Action Plan provide a unique way of bringing opportunities to communities in an accessible way. While innovation will be necessary in securing the necessary funding for project implementation, sight should not be lost of the strong impact which can be achieved when relatively small amounts of money are made available for local projects.

This Action Plan documents the information available to date on the following:
- Implementation Structure
- Phasing of Actions
- Support Partners
- Relevant initiatives & policies
- Assessing Sustainability
- Funding
- Targets
- Measuring Impacts

1. Implementation Structure

The North Sutherland Area Advisory Group

This Strategy and Action Plan is being implemented in North Sutherland by the North Sutherland Area Advisory Group. This Group has resolved to:

- broaden membership in order to be as representative as possible across the whole area
- find a suitable name for this reorganised group which will take strategy implementation forward
- use this 'relaunch' to highlight the reorganised group's aims and draw in more volunteers

Staffing

Project staff will be employed by CASE for the first two years. This job shared post will be funded by CASE and Highland Council, with support from Scottish Natural Heritage and Initiative at the Edge. The existing staff members – Meg Telfer and Kerry Conlon - will remain in post. In this time they will:

- help the North Sutherland Area Advisory Group to reform and relaunch as described
- support the Strategy and Task Groups in implementing projects identified through the North Sutherland Area Strategy 2001
- Help and support any additional projects which fit the sustainability criteria
- work with all parties to identify suitable funding sources

Responsibilities

These will be dealt with as follows:

- CASE, Highland Council and the reorganised North Sutherland Area Advisory Group take care of day to day business – implementation, staffing and finance
- The reorganised North Sutherland Advisory Group and the Strategy Groups take care of Strategy and policy issues – priorities, direction and measuring progress
- The Project Staff concentrate on making things happen – developing Strategy Group projects, sourcing suitable funding and developing plans for future projects
- Farr Secondary School and UHI will look at how to measure impacts

2. Developing the Action Plan

Projected Phasing

Figure 1 illustrates the Projected Implementation Phases.

PHASE 3 - 2005
Implement Phase 3 projects
Monitor progress of Phase 3 against Projects Targets
Review priority issues
Identify new Strategy Groups
Prepare action plans
Identify Phase 4 projects

PHASE 2 - 2003
Implement Phase 2 projects
Monitor progress of Phase 2 against progress measures
Monitor impact of Phases 1 & 2 against the Status
Indicators and Performance Measures
Undertake new community appraisal
Review priority issues
Identify new Strategy Groups
Prepare action plans
Identify Phase 3 projects

PHASE 1 - 2001
Implement Phase 1 projects
Monitor progress of Phase 1
against Progress targets
Review priority issues
Develop Actions & First Steps
for Phase 2 projects
Identify new Strategy Groups as required
Prepare Phase 2 Action Plans
Identify funding for Phase 2 projects

As work progresses new ideas and therefore, new projects will emerge. The North Sutherland Area Advisory Group, Strategy Groups and staff will incorporate these into the Action Plan in accordance with the sustainability principals which have underpinned the work to date. Links will also be made with the Task Groups already active in most of the 11 communities and other relevant community groups so that the benefits of a strategic approach can be maximised. In the course of implementation these crucial links will be built on.

3. Into Action: Phase 1

This section details Prioritised Strategy Objectives and Actions by Strategy Group. For each Action the following is identified:

First Step
The first jobs which need to be done in order to implement the Action. In some cases more work needs to be done to identify what exactly is needed

Support Partners
These are groups, agencies and organisations which have offered support to help make progress and maintain networks. It is important to note that this category includes two different types of partners. One is agencies already involved in the Dùthchas Project as Partners or members of the North Sutherland Area Advisory Group. The other includes groups and organisations working locally or nationally on relevant issues. Early in Phase 1, approaches will have to be made to these organisations in order to secure their help continued support to ensure that implementation is complementary to the efforts of these groups. Discussions will have to take place with agencies which were Dùthchas Partners to maintain continuity in North Sutherland.

Relevant Initiatives
Since this is a strategic approach, useful links to other strategies, initiatives and policies need to be identified and maintained.

Help Offered to Date
There has already been advice and expertise offered by Partners with an interest in particular Objectives or Actions. This information does not exist in detail for every Objective and Action. Other help and strategic alliances will be created as work progresses. The information available at present is listed at the end of each Strategy Group section.

Young Returners.

Objectives & Actions happening NOW or in the near future

Group Vision:

"To create a vibrant and enterprising community which will be inherently attractive to all age groups"

Objective 1: To encourage a commitment to devolved jobs in the public sector and ensure employment and/development agencies have a local presence.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Agency workers to be employed locally	Raise awareness of the importance of this to communities	CASE, HC, SNH, SIP	SIP, CASE, SP
Agencies to make more use of local bases • Develop the opportunity for the partnership members to join in and help create full time posts • Compile a local skills and facilities database to assist this progress	Discuss with key agencies	**ditto**	SP compiling a Young Returners Data Base, SORD
Lobby to achieve this, armed with appropriate facts and figures	Contact MSP	Community Councils	
Objective 2: To sustain and improve current recreation provisions for all ages, including village halls, and to meet the particular needs of young people by involving them in planning and implementation, with the co-ordination of community transport, combining the school, social work and community transport across the area.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Co-ordinate activities & link them with the transport.	Ascertain how to maintain and extend the gains already made	SIP SP HC	SIP Community Transport Local Transport Strategy
Involve young people in deciding what activities to be taken.	Arrange a programme of events with incentives	Highland Council Community Education, NWYI, STAG, SIP	SORD' Agenda for Action for Young People in Highland, Youth & Wellbeing Alliance Officer, Highland Youth Voice
Recruit volunteers and train them	Already started. Establish how to maintain this.	SIP CASE, SP	Wellbeing Alliance
Objective 3: To promote the availability of old housing for renovation as well as new build, to allow young families to rent.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Housing audit of availability and demand.	Ask Scottish Homes and local housing agencies for advice and assistance.	Scottish Homes, Albyn Housing, HSCHT	Empty Croft House Scheme, Scottish Homes, Albyn Housing, HSCHT

Young Returners Group: Offers of Support to Date

Highland Council

The work of this Group relates very well to Highland Council's current initiatives and the Highland Council therefore fully supports this. Of particular relevance is the Agenda for Action for Young people in Highland, developed by the Wellbeing Alliance. The Local Transport Strategy is also of relevance.

Contact Point: Highland Council Youth & Wellbeing Alliance Development Officer

As strategic housing and planning authority, the Highland Council may be able to help with Objective 3. The Rural Partnership for Change Pilot may also be helpful in housing issues.

The work of the Social Inclusion Partnership has particular relevance to this group's work. Contact point: Highland Council SIP Manager and the local staff member

Scottish Homes

The work of Scottish Homes is supportive of this Group in the following ways:

Scottish Homes Regional Objective 2: 'To increase Housing supply to support wider community regeneration focusing on fragile areas.'

Scottish Homes Regional Objective 3: 'To promote social inclusion among young people by helping them to achieve their potential'

Scottish Homes Regional Objective 5: 'To increase housing supply to improve the quality of the built environment and support area sustainability'

Also:
Albyn Housing
Highland Small Communities Housing Trust

Local Produce

Objectives & Actions happening NOW or in the near future.

Group Vision: *"To process, package and add value to local produce"*

Objective 1: Identify, improve and add value to the primary product.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Identify existing products / potential products & possible providers	Create a data base	CASE, HC, North Highland College Network 21	Pilot blueberry trial Seed tattie pilot
Relevant visits (UK)	Cumbria - done Orkney	Dùthchas	
Objective 2:Establish marketing and promote an identity			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Logo / label for north coast – corporate identity: • Open competition for logo design • Design a strategy for - Marketing the logo; Distributing the 1st Edition; Retaining provision • Website of local product/produce availability	Advertise competition	CASE, HC Dùthchas Seedcorn	Orkney Gold SQBLA
Gain a reputation for local produce through local hotels & shops	Approach local businesses and assess potential market	CASE, HC, NOSH	ADBS,CCDS; NOSH
Evaluate & emphasise the environmental qualities of the area	Education	SNH, CASE, HC	Local Area Biodiversity Plans Local Produce Seminar
Objective 3: Adding value to produce/training.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Bring training into the area	Identify relevant courses & trainers	North Highland College, CASE	
Training for managing a business & dealing with expansion	Identify clients	CASE, HIE, HC	

Local Produce Group : Offers of Support to Date

Highland Council

The council is fully committed to working with partners to put in place a package of measures to support crofting, fishing and forestry. Adding value to local produce is a clear element of this. Contact point: Highland Council, Sutherland Area, Development Manager.

SNH

SNH are committed to supporting environmental aspects of local production. Contact point: Local Office

Forestry

There is considerable support for using natural resources for local benefit, from the forestry agencies and partnerships working in the area - FC, FE, NHFT, NSCFT, Highland Birchwoods. Contact point: Local Offices

Tourism

Local tourism initiatives are keen to support the use of local produce. Contact point: HOST, NOSH

Far North Training have offered support with appropriate courses

There have been offers of support for this group from individuals locally and farther afield.

Cultural and Natural Heritage

Objectives & Actions happening NOW or in the near future

Group Vision:

"To establish a viable community for people of all ages, through building on aspects of our natural and cultural heritage."

Objective 1: To develop a strong and active social culture for the mutual benefit of residents and visitors.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Developing the Feis movement in the area	On-going	SAC, IAAO, SIP, Feisean nan Gaidheal	Feis Air an Oir, Feis Cataibh
Traditional music project	On going	SAC IAAO, SIP, Feisean nan Gaidheal	Feis Air an Oir, Feis Cataibh
Objective 2 To improve the quality of interpretation of the natural and cultural heritage of the area with the involvement of all the community			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Ranger service for <u>whole</u> area	Establish remit and scope of service and how many Rangers would be required	SNH, HC,CASE, RSPB	Bettyhill Action Group
Linking projects to improve visitor experience	On-going	HOST, HISP, HC, SNH, RSPB, CASE	Strathnaver Trail, Bettyhill Action Group
Objective 3: To promote and enhance the area and it's high quality culture, archaeology, scenery, wildlife and outdoors activities.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Local tourism marketing group		HOST, CASE, RSPB, NOSH, SNH	
Publications - Portal Website (with links)	Demonstration project - begun		
Develop " green" tourism businesses		Tourism and the Environment Project, HOST, SNH	Green Tourism Business Scheme

Cultural & Natural Heritage: Offers of Support to Date

Highland Council

Council policy is fully supportive of the Objectives of this group. Links may be made with the Highland Interpretive Project.
Contact points are: Highland Council Gaelic Development Officer, Senior Countryside Officer and Area Development Manager.

SNH

SNH shares the vision of this group and the related objectives. Their priority would be to support green tourism and wildlife tourism. SNH strongly support the proposed Countryside Ranger initiative. SNH are prepared to support the gathering and presentation of information on natural heritage and access. SNH could contribute to appropriate web site training.

STB

STB are supportive of the group by their representation on a variety of relevant tourism programmes. They are prepared to offer advice and support and relevant training programmes.

SEPA

Offer support through SEPA publications, data and staff time may also be available for educational purposes.

Contacts (for advice): Scottish Museums Council, Highland Interpretive Strategy, National Museums of Scotland (Outreach Programme), Highland Heritage Network, Historic Scotland, National Trust for Scotland.

Essential Services

Objectives & actions happening NOW or in the near future

Group Vision:

"To capitalise on existing facilities and skills by developing them imaginatively and creatively to provide sustainable services"

Objective 1: Sewerage ~ To provide sustainable public sewerage systems in communities and give assistance in upgrading individual septic tank systems.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Set up a demonstration project with the Environmental Research Unit, North Highland College	Complete	Environmental Research Unit, North Highland College	SEPA, NOSWA
Objective 2: Transport ~ To develop regular, accessible public transport to link communities and to provide access to essential services and recreation.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
To acknowledge the developments so far in community but to lobby for a long-term sustainable community transport system.	Press, MSP, MP, HC	SIP, SP, HC	
Objective 3: Information Technology ~ To provide an integrated telecommunications ICT network for the area.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Co-ordinate systems throughout the area and provide professional support.		HC	
Objective 4: Child/dependent care ~ To provide an adequate child/dependent infrastructure in order to release community potential.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Development of Crossroads Care	Lobbying	Community Councils	

Essential Services Group: Offers of Support to Date

Highland Council

The Council policy supports the use of developing technologies for sewerage systems. The Council is committed to working with communities in the provision of transport services through the Local Transport Strategy.
Contact Point: Highland Council Principal Transport Officer.
HC are also giving support through the Social Inclusion Partnership and Rural Partnership for Change.

SEPA

SEPA offer support by way of staff time and advice to everyone who seeks it. They are keen to promote the use of treatment systems such as reed beds in remote rural areas. SEPA will help in identifying solutions and will support requests for funding. Contact point: SEPA, Business Park, Thurso

Scottish Homes

Scottish Homes is supporting the development of housing in the area. Contact point: Scottish Homes, Beechwood Business Park, Inverness

NOSWA

In kind support is available for a variety of community projects. Contributions to workshops and seminars are available. NOSWA also supporting the provision of sustainable public sewerage systems. They also have a community grant scheme.

SNH

SNH are willing to support schemes looking at reed beds or other natural methods to improve waste management.

Sustainable Landuse and Renewable Energy

Objectives & Actions happening NOW and in the near future

Group Vision:
"Wise stewardship of the land with long term benefits for local communities,
achieved through integration of current and innovative land management practices."

Objective 1: <u>Renewables</u>: To promote and support a balance of energy/ resource conservation and development of appropriate renewable energy with adequate community controls and benefit from renewables development			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Examine feasibility of resources that could be developed in North Sutherland area and undertake a sustainability cost-benefit analysis	Approach - Environmental Research Unit (UHI & North Highland College) to do feasibility study? also H L & P, S & S E, S P & R ES Ltd.,	SNH, HC, CASE, FE	
Develop an information directory on funding, technology and operational structures and procedures		CASE, HIE & relevant businesses – Wavegen, Ingenco	
Objective 2<u>: Forestry</u>: To develop forest resource that is based on multiple benefits including : community participation/ownership; landscape diversity; ecological diversity etc.			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Look at best practice examples elsewhere	Involvement in community woodland network & events	FE, NHFT, NSCFT	Millennium Forest Scotland, Woodland Grant Scheme
Develop a woodland network within the area (now set up)	DONE	NHFT, NSCFT, FE, FC, Highland Birchwoods	
Work to secure community involvement in forest design, management and utilisation	On-going	NHFT, NSCFT, FE, FC, Highland Birchwoods	
Objective 3: To promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices			
Action	**First Step**	**Support Partners**	**Relevant initiatives**
Look at and identify best practice examples of sustainable land use and learn from others	Demonstration Action: Workshop	Workshop list	The Land useWorkshop
Draw up an agreed Dùthchas Area (N. Sutherland) sustainable land use plan (blueprint) based on actions prioritized after reviewing the content & conclusions from the workshop with a recommended delivery mechanism (i.e. support and funding in place)	Work on actions identified which can be taken forward immediately	RSPB, SNH, MI, URI, SWT, SCU, SERAD, NC, SAC	The Workshop

Objective 4: Sporting management: To harmonise sporting management with other land uses (e.g. recreation, access, agriculture, forestry, conservation) and encourage and support wider ownership of sporting interest with benefits for the whole community.			
Actions	First Step	Support Partners	Relevant initiatives
Actions to be developed	Approach local landowners	SNH, Community Land Unit (HIE), CC, SERAD, Deer Management Groups, DCS, RSPB, SCU, CASTAG, District River Boards	

Sustainable Landuse & Renewable Energy: Offers of Support to Date

Highland Council

The Council fully support the Group's proposals for a sustainable land use plan and offer support through their Energy & Engineering Services, their Forestry Officer, and the Head of European and Strategic Planning

SNH

SNH supports the work of this group in principal. Contact point: SNH Local Office

SEPA

Staff will give support and advice.

FE

FE support the work of the group in principal.

Support was evident from the majority of those attending the Sustainable Land Use Seminar.

4. Future Objectives: Phase 2 & 3

As the Strategy and the Actions required to implement it are not in any way static and will be open to new ideas as progress is made, it is likely that many of these Future Objectives will change.

Below is a brief description of how they stand at the moment

Young Returners: Future Objectives

- To promote the availability of old housing for renovation as well as new build, to allow young families to rent.
- To encourage private and community enterprise through training & access to financial assistance
- To provide 'life long' learning opportunities from nursery to tertiary within the community, tailored to the needs of the individual
- To ensure the imaginative use of resources and upgrading of existing facilities, including village halls

Local Produce: Future Objectives

- To identify, improve and add value to the primary product.
- Establish marketing and promote an identity
- Adding value to produce/training

Cultural and Natural Heritage: Future Objectives

- To develop a strong and active social culture for the mutual benefit of residents and visitors.
- To improve the quality of interpretation of the natural & cultural heritage of the area with the involvement of all the community
- To promote and enhance the area and its high quality culture, archaeology, scenery, wildlife and outdoor activities
- To protect our marine resources
- To maximise local employment based on the natural & cultural heritage

Essential Services: Future Objectives

- Sewerage - To provide sustainable public sewerage systems in communities and give assistance in upgrading individual septic tank systems.
- Transport - to develop regular, accessible public transport to link communities and to provide access to essential services and recreation
- Child /dependant care- to provide an adequate child/dependant infrastructure in order to release community potential
- Roads- upgrading of all public roads, with regular maintenance and improved pedestrian facilities
- Water - to ensure the provision of a modern water treatment plant providing supplies to all north coast communities
- Elderly - to provide genuine care which includes social interaction with their own community
- Health - to ensure a comprehensive range of health care and education centres on communities

Sustainable Landuse and Renewable Energy: Future Objectives

- Renewables: To promote and support a balance of energy/resource conservation and development of appropriate renewable energy with adequate community controls and benefit from renewables development
- Forestry: To develop forest resource that is based on multiple benefits including, community participation/ownership, landscape diversity, ecological diversity etc.
- Agriculture: To promote and support diversification within the agricultural sector
- Landscape: to recognise the inherent value of natural and cultural landscapes through a process that involves local people
- To encourage appropriate grazing levels (stocking density) and stock management practices in harmony with the natural environment
- Recreation: To promote and support the development of access opportunities/facilities in harmony with other land uses
- To use natural resources for local economic benefit, in preference to imported resources
- To harmonise this strategic plan with other mainstream plans
- To promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices

These objectives already have a raft of actions prioritised by the strategy groups, required to help them happen. Offers of help from support partners are already in place. These actions are not listed as changes inevitably will occur, as the strategy is developed.

5. Assessing Sustainability

The Strategy Groups have already made good use of the Sustainability Checklist below in developing their Demonstration Projects. The value of this checklist is that by using it to shape each step and each project, value is added to what is being done. The checklist helps in carrying out projects in a more sustainable way and hence provides better results for local communities.

Without this sort of checklist it is too easy to overlook some of the economic, social and environmental impacts which actions may have. The checklist helps maximise positive impacts and reduce or avoid unexpected negative impacts.

Dùthchas Sustainability Checklist

The purpose of this guidance is to help local groups think about the effects that different projects will have on the local economy, community and environment. Using this list should help to decide in which ways projects contribute to the four Sustainability Goals which underpinned The Dùthchas Project. These are:

1. **making the most of natural and cultural resources without damaging them;**
2. **retaining a viable and empowered community;**
3. **reducing problems of remoteness by delivering local needs locally and reducing dependence on external inputs; and,**
4. **avoiding harmful effects on other people, places and future generations.**

In first thinking about a project, it is useful to consider whether it:

- is viable in the long-term
- improves opportunities for the local economy
- uses local resources and provides benefits for the local community
- avoids harm to the environment

Projects can then be compared against the following more detailed criteria:

ECONOMY	Yes/ No	Comments
1. Creating additional spending, wages & profits in local area		
2. Creating / safeguarding local jobs & training opportunities		
3. Linking local production & consumption (recycling local income)		
4. Supporting jobs of suitable quality e.g. skills, longevity, year round, locals/incomers, broadening the local economic base		
5. Using & promoting local resources, & reducing use of imports		
6. Involving affordable long-term maintenance costs		
COMMUNITY		
1. Involving local people in managing & maintaining the project		
2. Using / developing local knowledge & skills		
3. Increasing co-operation & decision-making in the community		
4. Providing benefits for all sectors of the community		
5. Supporting local services, amenities & infrastructure		
6. Strengthening the local cultural heritage		
ENVIRONMENT		
1. Avoiding loss of natural resources		
2. Minimising negative impacts on landscape & wildlife		
3. Promoting energy efficiency & recycling		
4. Raising awareness & enjoyment of the environment		
5. Protecting threatened species		
6. Enhancing wildlife & landscape		

6. Funding

During the next two years the staff will be investigating suitable funding options for implementation as projects are developed. Some Strategy Groups may choose to become constituted and seek charitable status if this course of action will make it easier to secure suitable funding for their work. In the meantime, as already discussed, CASE and Highland Council are funding the staff posts for two years. This provides the opportunity to develop priority Objectives and Actions, so that the funding needs become clearer. Some of the Actions involve lobbying and to make progress on these, strategic alliances and making contact with the relevant players will be important.

7. Targets

What are Targets for?

When embarking on a demanding and complex project, it helps to set targets. These targets serve to maintain momentum. As each target is reached, there is a sense of achievement and progress... Breaking the work up into 'bite-sized chunks' makes it easier for other people and organisations to see that progress *is* being made and to help us with the particular job in hand.

How Will Targets Be Developed?

The reorganised North Sutherland Area Advisory Group may wish to set overall targets, in discussion with their partners. In addition, each Strategy Group can set targets for their own work. This will help to make each Strategy Groups' needs clear to the staff and the North Sutherland Area Advisory Group. The Strategy Groups have already done this for their Demonstration Actions.

As we move ahead the Strategy Groups will be setting new targets for their own topic. This is best done through meetings so that everyone can be confident that they can carry out their roles in achieving meeting the targets. Often the most practical type of targets are dates: we will do x, y and z by a certain date. Mapping out the year like this helps everyone involved and helps keep people involved, because it is clear what the Group workload for each year is going to be.

8. Measuring Impacts: Area Sustainability

Why Do Impacts need to be Measured?

In order to determine what trends are occurring over time with respect to the sustainability of North Sutherland, it is necessary to establish current circumstances - or in other words the "baseline situation". If the right decisions are to be made to improve the long term sustainability of the area (improve on this baseline), reliable information about the current situation is needed.

How Are Impacts Measured?

This task requires a set of "Area Status Indicators" or measures, which in practical terms are facts and figures which help to explain and describe the current circumstances. These Status Indicators provide a way of measuring change – and hence a way of meauring our progress towards a sustainable North Sutherland. The impacts achieved through Actions can be measured in this way. In the long term this will help to guide progress and define direction.

There are five basic steps:
1. Agree development Actions
2. Agree those features which may be affected either positively or negatively
3. Undertake baseline monitoring e.g no of croft entrants; no of breeding corncrakes; no of young people leaving etc.
4. Deliver the Action
5. Repeat Monitoring

Each group will have 2 key status indicators. These indicators will be carefully chosen so that their relevance to the circumstances in North Sutherland and to the Actions which are being taken is not in doubt.. It is important to choose indicators which can be measured realistically

Who Will Do This Measuring?

This work will be closely linked to the implementation work being done by North Sutherland Area Advisory Group and guided by that Group. The monitoring and measuring will be done on behalf of the Group by either, or both, Farr Secondary School or the University of the Highlands and Islands Millenium Institute in collaboration with local agencies. Particular Area Status Indicators may be measured by a number of local agencies, which are already collecting relevant information on an ongoing basis. Interested individuals from North Sutherland who wish to help with this measuring and monitoring will be welcomed and encouraged.

9. Gathering Speed

The contents of the Action Plan will change as progress is made. This current Draft sketches out plans to date. There are many gaps and more work still to be done. However, a good start has been made due to the great effort and commitment of all those who have played a part. This Draft Action Plan is another step on the road towards a sustainable North Sutherland. In the next two years, hopefully, more steps will be taken, and as ideas grow and develop so too will The Strategy and The Action Plan.