



**WE CAN MAKE IT HAPPEN
OUR VISION FOR NORTH SUTHERLAND**

For there to be:

- Sustainable employment
- Improved services
- Vibrant confident communities
- Resource utilisation for local benefit
- Young people returning to the area
- Understanding and care of natural and cultural heritage

ABOUT OUR COMMUNITY

Every community is unique but some are more unique than others. In geographical terms, our community enfolds an area greater in size than the city of London. In terms of population, however, it is home for fewer than 2000 people. Our five principal townships Melvich, Bettyhill, Tongue, Melness and Durness, cling to the north coast of mainland UK with a tenacious grip, as they have done for centuries. 'Tenacious' also aptly describes the character of the inhabitants; well tutored in the art of living and working in what is often a challenging environment.

Our love of our land is strong, based upon a belief in cultural and practical continuity. We value and respect our past as much as we strive to make our present and future secure and vibrant. People matter here - we act as a community in every sense of the word.

The strength of our community is rooted in these truths and it is on these that we build for the future. The diversity of our natural and man-made heritage offers outstanding opportunities to do so. These are the opportunities, that we seek to promote and develop through a process of consensus management. We will achieve our aims by working together, by speaking with one voice.

**Co a chi e nach moil e?
Who could see it and not praise it?**

Rob Donn



Pelican Design Consultants 01478 612558
Thanks to all those who kindly contributed photographs

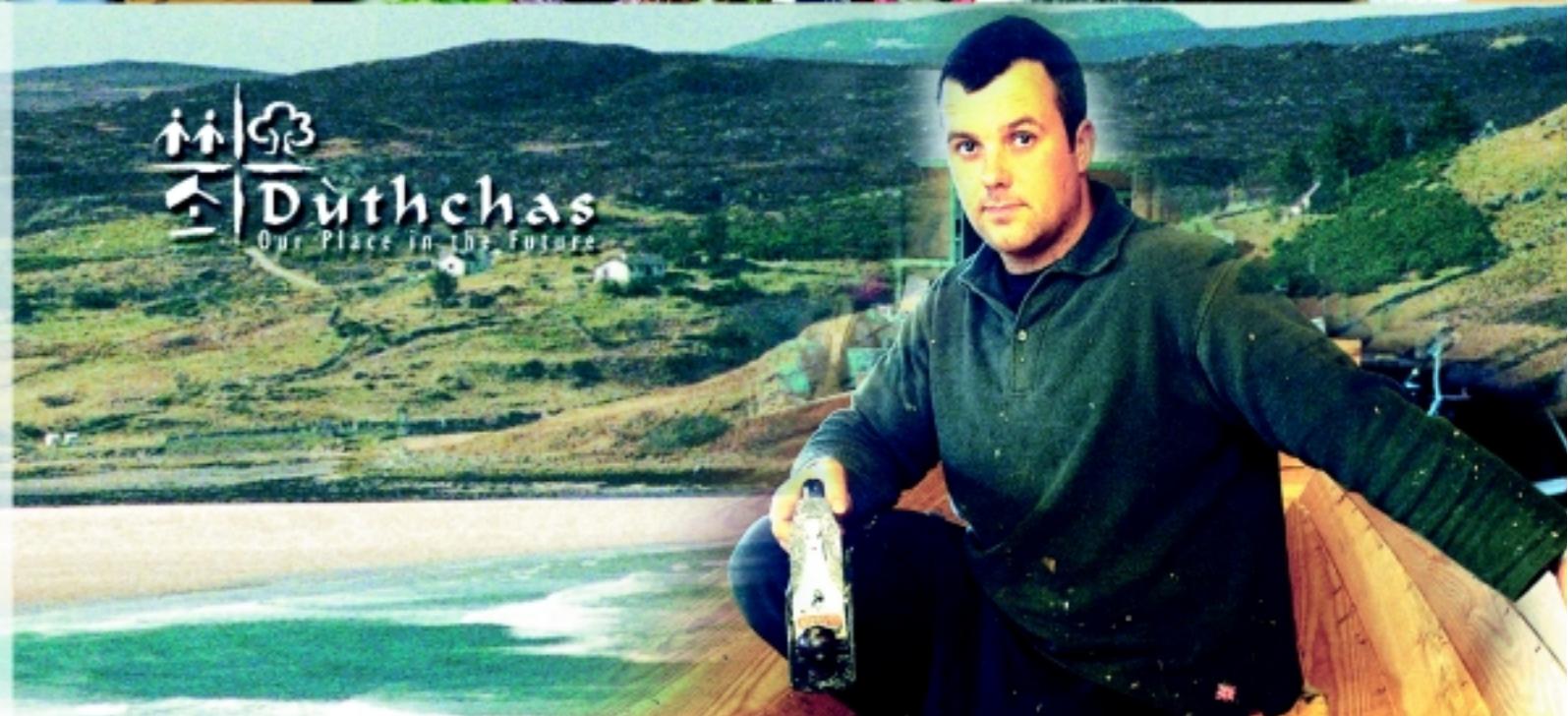
THE DUTHCHAS PROJECT

The Dùthchas Project aimed to achieve grassroots sustainable development through the participation of local communities in planning their own future, and with the support of partner agencies.

The Dùthchas Project was co-funded by the EU LIFE Programme. The Project involved 22 Partner agencies and 3 Pilot Areas - North Sutherland, North Uist, and Trotternish in Skye.

CONTACTS & FURTHER INFORMATION

The complete Strategy or further information is available from:
Dùthchas, Naver Teleservice Centre, Bettyhill, Thurso, KW14 7SS
Telephone: 01641 521858 Fax: 01641 521460



**North Sutherland Area Strategy 2001
Our Land, Our People and Our Place in the Future**



A WORD FROM THE CHAIRMAN

“This leaflet captures the high level of commitment felt by the people of North Sutherland towards this, their special place, and the breadth of vision shared for its development. A bright future is certainly possible for our unique corner of the world, provided that we co-operate enthusiastically towards gaining goals we share. Let us now move forward on that premise.”

Jim A. Johnson, North Sutherland Area Advisory Group Chair

OUR STRATEGY

This leaflet is a summary of the North Sutherland Area Strategy. The Area Strategy puts together, in greater detail, the plans for the future of North Sutherland, which have evolved from the Duthchas process, a Partnership between the communities and agencies. The Strategy is based on the information gathered from the community and agencies in the course of the Duthchas Initial Review and the Sustainability Profile for North Sutherland.

Who is this leaflet for?

The Strategy is for everyone who lives and works in North Sutherland and who cares about its future. It will help community groups, voluntary sector organisations, townships and individuals, as well as public agencies work together for the future. This Strategy will also

show others what we are working towards. If we are all committed to working in partnership we can make it happen.

What is a Sustainability Strategy?

A Sustainability Strategy provides the framework and essential building blocks for the area to take forward sustainable development, both now and in the long term future. It takes into account the social, economic and environmental needs and resources of the area, in relation to every activity. It also takes into account the effects of the things we do in our area on other places and people and on future generations. An essential part of the Strategy is that it brings together the activities of many interest groups and organisations, and links them around a common goal.

Our Sustainability Goals provide the framework for action:

- Making the most of natural and cultural resources without damaging them for the future
- Retaining a viable and empowered community
- Reducing problems of remoteness by delivering local needs locally and reducing dependence on external inputs
- Avoiding harmful effects on other people, places and future generations

SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

Based on an analysis of the key sustainability issues for North Sutherland, five Sustainability Priorities were chosen by the Area Advisory Group and five Groups were formed to create Action Plans for these topics:

Young Returners

A clear area of concern in North Sutherland is the number of young people who leave and do not return. Improved facilities and a wider spectrum of employment possibilities are musts if people are going to stay here or return. We need to involve young people in decision making for their future. The Group is holding a seminar for young people to discuss issues relevant to them.

THE GROUP HOPE TO:

- Encourage a commitment to develop jobs in the area
- Sustain & improve recreation provisions, linking them with transport
- Promote the availability of old housing for renovation as well as new build, to allow young families to rent

Local Produce

With so much potential in our area it is essential that we make full use of our local produce and products. We need to explore the potential markets both locally and further afield. All of us need to be more aware of the benefits of buying local produce. The Group are organising an open competition to design a North Coast logo.

THE GROUP HOPE TO:

- Establish marketing and promote an identity
- Explore potential processing facilities
- Identify, improve and add value to local produce/training

Cultural & Natural Heritage

People in this part of the world pride themselves on their unique natural and cultural heritage. These assets must be utilised for the future, but also be cared for and preserved. Tourism is one of our main industries and more needs to be done to encourage people to visit. The Group are creating a portal website to promote the area.

THE GROUP HOPE TO:

- Create, promote and enhance the high quality of the area and its potential
- Develop a strong and active social culture
- Improve the quality of interpretation with the involvement of the community

Essential Services

In spite of improvements in the level of services available in North Sutherland there is still a long way to go. Causing most concern is the substantial lack of mains sewerage systems in parts of North Sutherland. Together with the North Highland College the Group are investigating sewerage system upgrading options.

THE GROUP HOPE TO:

- Provide sustainable sewerage systems in communities
- Develop regular accessible public transport to link communities
- Provide an integrated telecommunications ICT network
- Provide an adequate child/dependent care infrastructure in order to release community potential

Sustainable Land Use & Renewable Energy

In our landscape we see that cultural and environmental values go hand in hand. Now is the time to think about our ecological assets. We need to know how we can enhance these through the land use and land management practices we choose to pursue now and in the future. There is a need in North Sutherland for integrated sustainable land use. The Group are holding a workshop/seminar involving key players, to form the basis of future action.

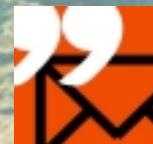
THE GROUP HOPE TO:

- Promote and support a balance of energy/resources conservation and development
- Develop a forest resource that is based on multiple benefits
- Promote and support socially and environmentally beneficial land management practices
- Harmonise sporting management with other land uses

IMPLEMENTING THE STRATEGY

In order to implement the Strategy, the right organisational framework needs to be put in place. This will aim to:

- Retain the partnership links required
- Provide a community-based partnership to manage funds and employ staff, with a view to becoming a constituted body in the future
- Employ project staff to support the work in the community



1. SURVEY

An extensive survey of the community & Partner agencies was carried out



2. SUSTAINABILITY PROFILE

10 Sustainability Issues & 5 immediate priorities were identified



3. SUSTAINABILITY PLANS

Strategy Groups set up for each priority issue & each group developed a plan of action for its topic



4. ACTIONS

First Demonstration Projects started with the help of a Seedcorn grant



5. IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORK

How the Partner Agencies will support the Strategies & how the actions will be taken forward & monitored