



LAND MANAGEMENT PLAN

NOVEMBER 2025



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Knoydart Foundation Land Management plan is centred around a community vision for the land in their care and five objectives, representing the breadth of ambitions, ideas and possibilities that have emerged through the development process.

The Plan aims to:

- i) consolidate the significant achievements made since 1999
- ii) build on this strong track record, developing a new financial model for deer management
- iii) Continue and increase community involvement

The context within which the plan has developed is important, recognising the significant policy, societal, and economic shifts that have occurred since 2007 (the date of the previous Land Management Plan), including the declaration of a 'climate emergency' and 'biodiversity crisis' by the Scottish Government.

Significant opportunities and constraints have been identified during the plan's development. These will require careful consideration to ensure the community's longer-term ambitions can be realised.

Activities are grouped around 5 land management objectives:

- 1. Regenerate habitats, supporting ecosystem function and associated biodiversity**
- 2. Increase and secure the land's sequestration of carbon**
- 3. Help drive community regeneration and resilience**
- 4. Develop economic models that will sustain community driven habitat regeneration**
- 5. Strengthen the connection between people and land**

Two phases for delivery are identified. The first phase will build on successes to date whilst actively exploring and determining the best approach to deer management to inform and underpin phase two.

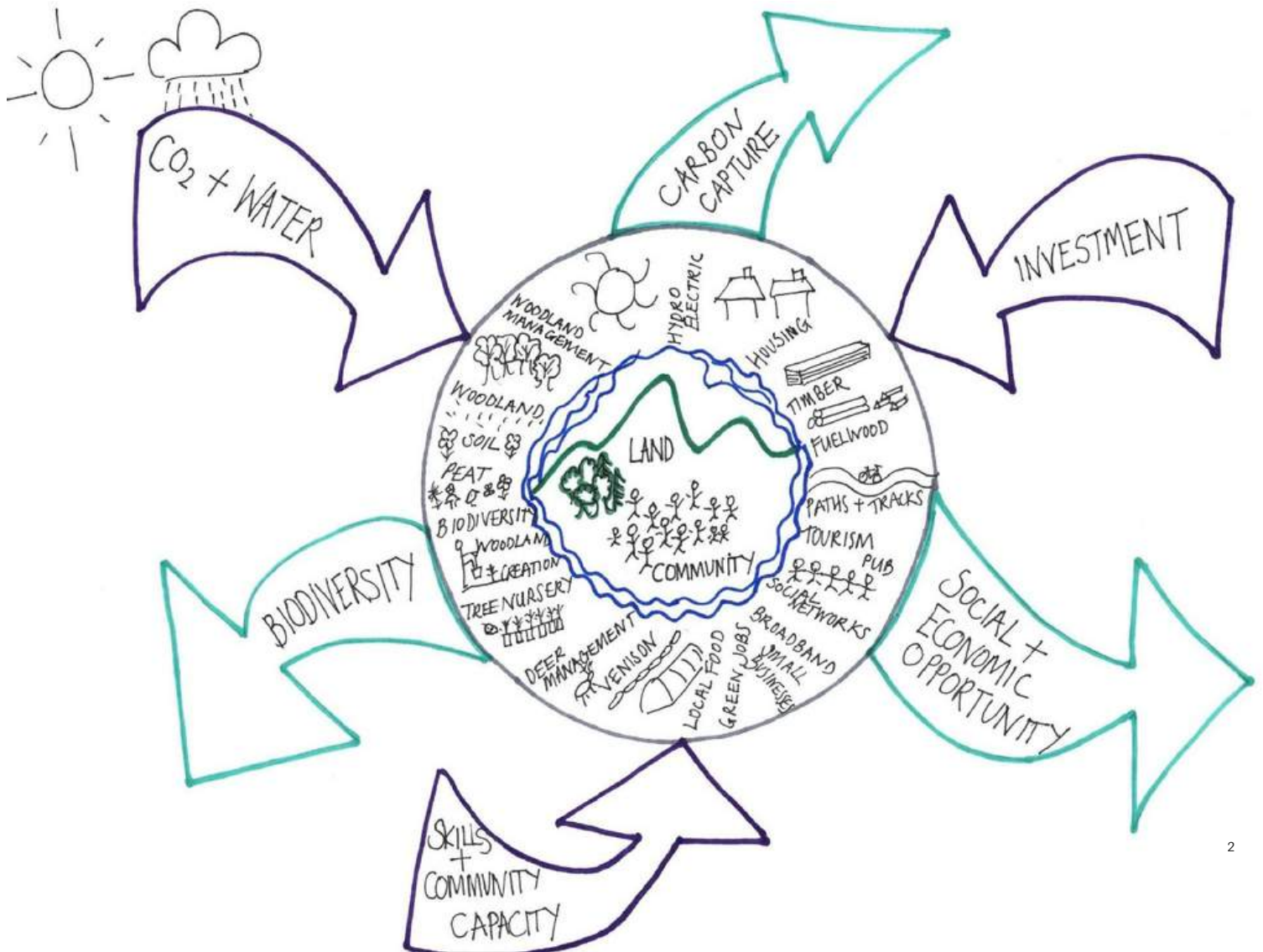
This is all founded by a desire to increase community involvement with and benefit from land management work and to identify and develop economic models with opportunities to contribute towards community development.

The Land Management Plan was produced by the Knoydart Foundation in collaboration with the Knoydart Forest Trust and in consultation with the Knoydart community as part of the Knoydart Credit Project. The Project was made possible by funding from the National Lottery Heritage Fund.



NATURAL CAPITAL VISION

The plan is based on our community's vision of how the people and the land are interconnected.



A circular economy with local people & land at its heart. Regenerating nature and community, and providing benefits for all.

AIMS

The plan has 3 interconnected aims.:

Consolidate the significant land management achievements & gains made since the 1999 community buy out

Expand on these achievements, including a new approach for deer management, underpinned by a sustainable financial model

Continue and increase the community's involvement in discussion and decision making around future opportunities



LAND MANAGEMENT OBJECTIVES

Through community consultation and discussion 5 land management objectives have been developed:

1. **Regenerate habitats, supporting ecosystem function and associated biodiversity**
2. **Increase and secure the land's sequestration of carbon**
3. **Help drive community regeneration and resilience**
4. **Develop economic models that will sustain community driven habitat regeneration**
5. **Strengthen the connection between people and land**

ALIGNMENT

This plan should be considered in conjunction with the Knoydart Forest Trust's Woodland Management Plan which incorporates the 'Forest Plan, 2017-2036' (subject to review in 2027). The outcome of the 2027 review process will be incorporated into an updated version of this plan.

The West Knoydart Deer Management (WKDMG) Group is currently developing a group wide deer management plan (DMP), due for completion Spring 2026. This plan will feed into the DMP development.

CONTEXT

This is the community's first updated land management plan since 2007. It seeks to build on the significant progress made to date and is shaped by global, national and local influences including:

● Policy Context

- In 2019, the Scottish Government declared a climate emergency and committed to net zero by 2045, with land playing a vital role.
- In 2024, a new biodiversity strategy was launched by the Scottish Government to halt nature loss by 2030 and to restore and regenerate biodiversity across the country by 2045.
- Scottish Land Rights & Responsibilities Statement states that the people and organisations that make decisions relating to land should recognise and act in line with their responsibilities, as well as their rights.

● Past Achievements

Since the community buyout in 1999, the Knoydart Foundation and Knoydart Forest Trust have made significant achievements in habitat regeneration. This has been done through woodland creation and management, Rhododendron ponticum eradication and deer management. The Black Hills project marks a new approach to the management of deer. This plan builds on these achievements.

● Thriving Community & Land

Long term local employment on the land has enabled a valuable resource of skills, experience, knowledge and connection to the land which is integral to the successful work on the land. Building on this is key to future delivery.



● Funding Challenges

To date land management work has been funded through grants (mainly Scottish Forestry and NatureScot), deer stalking income, Knoydart Foundation reserves and Knoydart Forest Trust income generation activities. The current deer management finance model is not sustainable and other sources face pressure, therefore a new funding model is required.

● Climate Resilience

Extreme weather events are increasing so proactive measures to mitigate against the effects are essential including fire resilient landscapes and infrastructure to withstand heavy rainfall.

● Circular Economy

The land and its management provide fuel, food and materials and supports the development of land-based enterprises, strengthening the local circular economy and connection between land and people. This plan aims to support and grow these initiatives.

● Community Engagement

Community consultation has shaped this plan and will continue through Phase 1 to inform Phase 2. The plan is a living document, evolving with community ambition and opportunity.



THE KNOYDART LANDSCAPE

The Knoydart peninsula is a striking and distinctive landscape which was designated a **'National Scenic Area'** in 1978 by the Countryside Commission for Scotland, describing the peninsula as:

...one of the most remote inhabited parts of Scotland. This remoteness, together with its extreme ruggedness and fine coastline and sea-lochs, make the Rough Bounds of Knoydart one of the wildest and most beautiful parts of mainland Scotland.

Habitats on the peninsula primarily consist of wet dwarf shrub heath, blanket bogs, grasslands and woodland, in a variety of conditions. Historic records show that Knoydart was previously heavily forested, with declines in forest cover caused by felling for livestock farming, industry and charcoal production.

In the past 150 years the pressures from sheep and deer have impacted the ability of these habitats to regenerate naturally. Particularly important habitats include the remnants of Scotland's temperate rainforest, found around the coast as well as through scattered inland pockets.

HABITAT REGENERATION

The Wild Tree Survey undertaken through summer 2025 identified a considerable opportunity for natural regeneration of native woodland.

Based on existing seedling densities...around 1.5 million native trees and shrubs have potential to establish through natural regeneration across the survey area.

(Ref Wild Trees Survey Report 3.4 P.29)

These seedlings have the potential to establish through natural regeneration across the survey areas, if grazing were substantially reduced. Around 880,000 of these are within deer fence areas, with around 670,000 outside of fenced areas.

Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) have been identified as a secondary threat, and whilst considerable progress has been made to control their extent and spread these remain an ongoing threat to successful natural regeneration.

HABITAT REGENERATION

OPPORTUNITIES & CONSTRAINTS

It is recognised that there are a range of views within the community on the subject of deer management and how habitat regeneration might be best achieved. Therefore, how to reduce grazing pressure, over what timeframe, and over which specific areas all require careful consideration.

The importance of collaboration around deer management with neighbouring landholders should also be noted, if the best conditions for landscape scale habitat restoration are to be achieved.

An options appraisal to consider the different means, scales and speeds available to achieve the desired outcomes offers a good basis to enable further community discussion:

OPPORTUNITIES

- Widespread regeneration of native woodland (Ref WTS Report), halting the decline of existing native woodland, safeguarding and enhancing nationally significant rainforest habitat, and enabling regeneration of other habitats and species
- Delivery of Scottish Government targets for nature restoration and biodiversity
- Reducing carbon emissions from damaged peatland and securing carbon sequestration through further establishment and ongoing management of woodland
- Working collaboratively with neighbouring landowners to achieve common objectives, through developing a progressive and ambitious Deer Management Plan (process underway, due for completion in June 2026)
- Regeneration of riparian habitats, working at a catchment scale to deliver multiple benefits across different ownerships
- Developing a new model for deer stalking which places a premium on delivery of ecological and community objectives
- To work with associated business such as Knoydart Wild Venison and local hospitality businesses to ensure a supply of high-quality venison and income from stalking and other land management related guests
- Building capacity, growing the land management team, investing in infrastructure and equipment, to allow for greater ambition in the future

CONSTRAINTS

- Deer densities are currently too high to allow for natural woodland regeneration, thus fencing and planting is required
- Deer management objectives differ through the West Knoydart Deer Management Group (WKDMG) with some landowners pursuing a more ecologically focused approach and others focused on delivering a sport shooting experience for guests
- Fencing costs are high and increasing. Forest Grant Scheme funding has not risen in line with costs and there are signs that Scottish Government funds may be reprioritised from fencing to deer reduction
- Fencing has a relatively high carbon footprint, negative visual impact and restricts public access. It is also ecologically less beneficial for habitats than natural regeneration under a low herbivore density regime
- The Foundation's deer management is reliant on income from sporting guests and supplemented by other Foundation income sources. This model is fragile and unsustainable with a reducing deer population. Therefore, a new business model is needed to fund ongoing and future deer management
- Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS) while most *Rhododendron ponticum* and Japanese knotweed has been eradicated, there are still widespread INNS species present with approximately 200,000 INNS seedlings recorded as part of the Wild Trees Survey findings





DELIVERY

PHASES

The intention is to deliver this plan over two phases.

It is anticipated that Phase 1 activities may take up to 5 years, however if decisions on deer management can be made sooner this would allow earlier scaling up of habitat regeneration work.

PHASE 1

To build on the significant achievements and gains to date, whilst determining the best approach for Phase 2.

Phase 1 will include work to facilitate community discussion and decision making to identify the scale and extent of habitat regeneration to be delivered in Phase 2 and inform the deer management approach to achieve this.

PHASE 2

To scale up habitat regeneration, as determined through the processes planned within Phase 1.

The key criteria to enable scaling up of habitat regeneration are:

- i) Endorsement from the Community
- ii) Collaboration with neighbouring landowners
- iii) Securing sustainable and diversified income streams.

Objective 1: Regenerate habitats, supporting healthy ecosystem function and associated biodiversity

Regeneration of habitats across the community's landholding has been one of the key driving principles of land management since the community buyout of the Knoydart Estate in 1999. Healthy, thriving, diverse habitats are the cornerstone for supporting a recovery of biodiversity, which in turn enables ecosystems to function to their full potential, providing multiple benefits for nature, the community, and society as a whole. On Knoydart, herbivore impacts (primarily from deer) are the main constraint to achieving this.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- Expansion of native woodland, with over 580 hectares of new woodland established on community land and a similar area on neighbouring land, through a combination of fencing, planting and natural regeneration.
- Harvesting and restocking of compartments within the conifer plantations in Inverie Woods, to convert to continuous cover forestry and increase biodiversity while providing fuel wood and timber for the local and wider community,
- Extensive and successful eradication of *Rhododendron ponticum* across different ownership boundaries, this work is now in an ongoing maintenance phase
- The Black Hills project, connecting fenced new native woodland areas with a strategic deer fence from Inverie to Inverguiserain, to form an enclosure of c. 3,000 ha creating the opportunity for habitat regeneration through a different deer management approach and collaboration with neighbouring landowners
- Steady reduction in deer densities across the open range, to the point where herbivore impact assessment surveys on dwarf shrub heath and blanket bog habitats demonstrates mainly low impacts

PHASE 1 - ACTIVITIES (further detail in LMP Activity Table - see appendices)

- Deer Management - continue open range deer cull and woodland deer management inside fenced enclosures
- Black Hills new woodland creation; three further planting and regeneration phases
- Delivery and review (2027) of the Woodland Management Plan including key decisions on the Guiserein and Folach Plantations
- Maintenance (and when appropriate removal) of fences
- Develop a strategy for the management of Invasive Non-Native Species (INNS)
- Baseline surveys and annual monitoring of species and habitats
- Instigate more detailed research and surveys, and collaborate with neighbours to develop a plan for managed grazing of livestock (e.g. cattle, pigs, sheep)
- Community engagement and dialogue to inform Phase 2 deer management approach

PHASE 2

Phase 2 aspires to build on the achievements of Phase 1 to deliver regeneration of a wider range of habitats at a **landscape scale**.

Objective 2: Increase and secure the land's sequestration of carbon

The community's land has the capacity to sequester and store carbon through the establishment and management of woodlands and restoration and maintenance of peatland habitats. Aiding the land's ability to absorb and store more carbon is a key contribution the community can make to helping tackle climate change, whilst also having positive benefits for biodiversity, ecosystem function and flood mitigation, as well as potentially enabling access to emerging sources of income.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

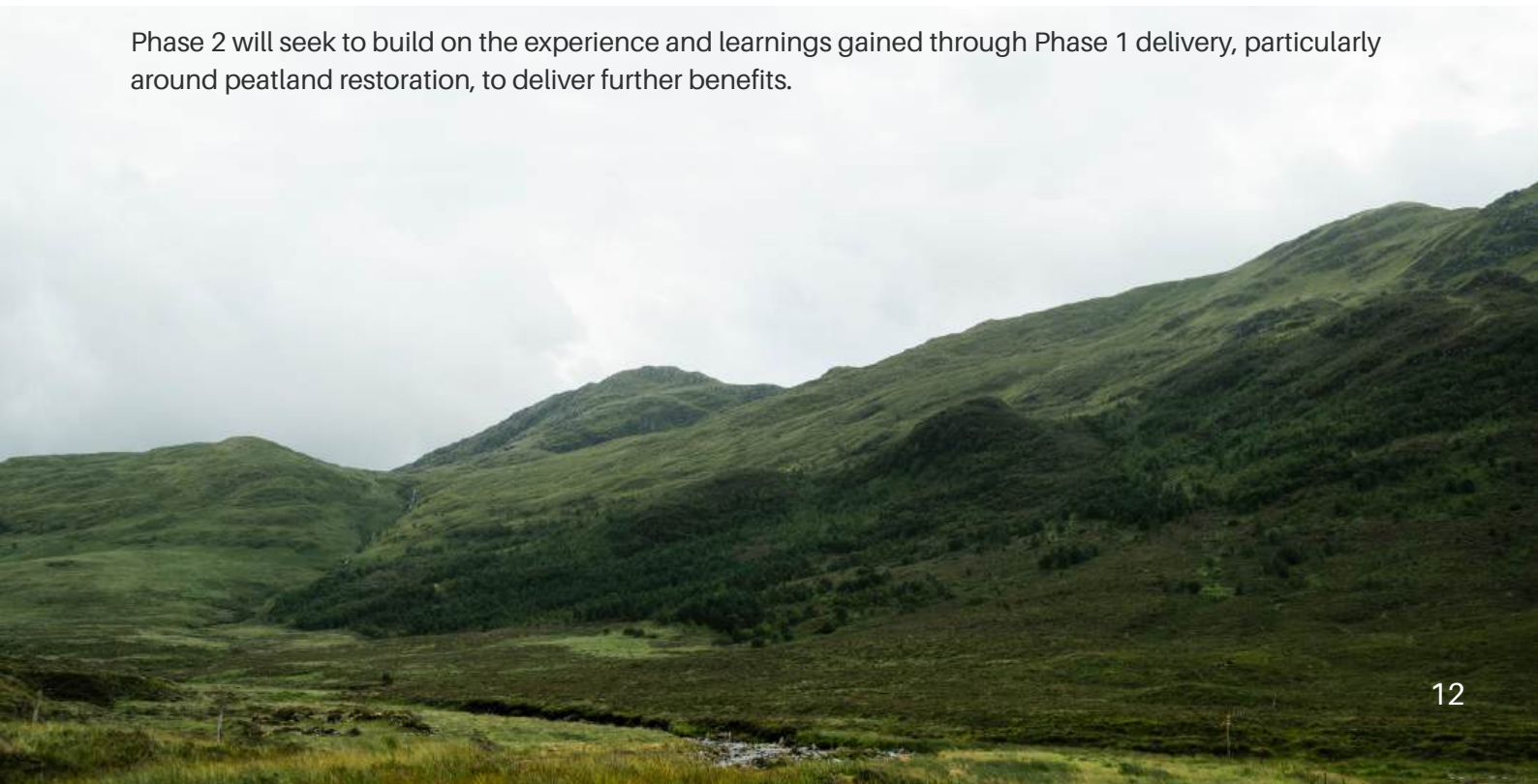
- Significant increase in woodland habitat, with all new woodland areas established since 2020, including natural regeneration within the Black Hills, registered with the Woodland Carbon Code
- This allows the opportunity in the future for the community (if so desired) to sell these woodland carbon credits to generate income
- Surveyed areas of peatland to identify approximately 850ha deemed to be in need of restoration, and started the process of securing funding to deliver this work

PHASE 1 - ACTIVITIES (further detail in LMP Activity Table - see appendices)

- Undertake further **survey work to determine** the exact areas for **peatland restoration**, the most appropriate techniques and anticipated outcomes (reduced carbon emissions, future carbon storage potential and biodiversity benefits)
- **Deliver three phases of peatland restoration** work, supported by funding from Peatland Action, totalling approximately 850ha
- The restoration work will entail a combination of drain blocking and hag re-profiling, to prevent further loss of peat, raise the water table and allow for ongoing natural recovery
- Development and implementation of associated **management and monitoring regimes**
- **Deer management** - continue open range deer reduction cull to ensure that restoration works are safeguarded and natural processes successful
- **Woodland creation and management** to safeguard and increase woodland carbon storage

PHASE 2

Phase 2 will seek to build on the experience and learnings gained through Phase 1 delivery, particularly around peatland restoration, to deliver further benefits.



Objective 3: Help drive community regeneration and resilience

Since taking ownership in 1999, the Knoydart community have been able to determine how best the land is used and managed to achieve a range of environmental, social and economic benefits. This model has attracted considerable interest from other communities in Scotland.

A significant part of the local economy is tourism dependent. The community have sought to develop a strong and diverse local economy to minimise the effect of external factors outwith it's control. The movement restrictions enforced during the Covid-19 pandemic and associated knock-on impacts highlighted the importance of this approach. The community will continue to take opportunities to further develop a strong local circular economy, providing a range of benefits.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- Provision of stable long term, year round employment, along with a variety of seasonal employment / contract opportunities
- Establishment of a circular economy, seeking to meet some of the community's needs, whilst retaining spend locally (fuel wood, building timber, wood products, venison, saplings)
- Developing community capacity; skills, knowledge, experience, plant & equipment, facilities (eg. venison processing, firewood processing, sawmill, timber drying kiln, small wood product workshop)
- Enabling the development of community enterprises (Knoydart Tree Nursery, Knoydart Wild Venison, Knoydart Farm)
- Maintain and upgrade of infrastructure (paths, tracks, housing)



PHASE 1 - ACTIVITIES (further detail in LMP Activity Table - see appendices)

- Restructuring of Inverie Woods to continue **provision of fuel wood and building timber**
- Maintenance of the existing **path and track network**
- **Scoping the development of an expanded network** of paths, including along coastal areas, and track upgrades to enable ongoing land management (including; timber harvesting and deer management)
- Promotion of a variety of **volunteering opportunities**, for the local community and visitors
- Work with local businesses and community enterprises to strengthen local supply chains
- Deliver a **programme of events, talks, and guided walks** for the local community

PHASE 2

Phase 2 aspires to to further build on these successes.

Objective 4: Develop economic models that will sustain community driven habitat regeneration

Identifying and securing sustainable, diverse and long term income sources to enable delivery of land management work, whilst contributing positively to other areas of community life, is vital. To date income has come from; deer stalking guests, the Foundation's own reserves, grant support (primarily Scottish Forestry and NatureScot) and revenue generated by the Forest Trust's fuel wood and timber sales, along with contract work delivered by Wood Knoydart for local landowners. Income from deer stalking guests and Scottish Government grants are now under pressure in different ways, thus a new model needs to be identified and developed to allow for delivery of bolder, longer-term ambitions.



ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- Provision of stable long term, year round employment, along with a variety of seasonal employment / contract opportunities
- Establishment of a circular economy, seeking to meet some of the community's needs, whilst retaining spend locally (fuel wood, building timber, wood products, venison, saplings)
- Developing a strong track record with various funding bodies through successful delivery of multiple projects, including woodland creation
- Securing funding for various projects which have sought to advance the community's land management ambitions, whilst also seeking to diversifying income streams
- Enabling the development of community enterprises (Knoydart Tree Nursery, Knoydart Wild Venison, Knoydart Farm)

PHASE 1 - ACTIVITIES (further detail in LMP Activity Table - see appendices)

- Upgrade and expand venison processing facilities (Knoydart Trading)
- Sustain existing income generating activities and support new initiatives
- Develop a new financial model for deer management
- Collaborate with neighbouring landowners to maximise impact and achieve mutual benefits
- Further develop the Knoydart Credit Project as a potential model to deliver future income streams

PHASE 2

Phase 2 seeks to further support enterprise development to help sustain longer term delivery.

Objective 5: Strengthen the connection between people and land

Community ownership of the land is an important part of life on Knoydart. Since the community took ownership in 1999, local people have become more actively involved in: living and working on the land, in both paid and volunteer roles; shaping decisions about land use; taking part in land based training courses and workshops, and guided walks; individual exploration and daily enjoyment.

This strengthened connection between people, the land and Knoydart's sense of place has been mutually beneficial, allowing for ecological regeneration, as well as improving wellbeing. It has helped cultivate a sense of belonging and autonomy, along with a responsibility and motivation to care for and support the land and each other. There is potential to continue and further these connections.

ACHIEVEMENTS TO DATE

- Creation of a rural housing burden scheme, allowing many local residents to purchase building plots at an affordable rate and to build their own homes
- Attracting people to Knoydart, as visitors, volunteers or contract / seasonal workers, many of whom have put down roots and remained longer term
- Improved access to land and nature for residents and visitors through the creation and ongoing maintenance of a network of paths and tracks.
- Providing opportunities for wider community involvement through a programme of guided events, walks, talks, volunteering opportunities and training courses

PHASE 1 - ACTIVITIES (further detail in LMP Activity Table - see appendices)

- Explore the **feasibility around the creation of new crofts** (or other appropriate tenures)
- Continue with the programme of **track and path maintenance and upgrades**
- **Refine the Ranger Service's offering**, with a focus on 'intentional tourism' and developing opportunities to tell Knoydart's story, promoting the positive work underway
- Delivery of a **range of activities and events** through the Ranger Service
- Upgrade of **signage and information**
- Deliver a programme of **training courses, arts and creative events and opportunities**
- Encourage and **support initiatives to manage the green spaces** along Inverie's shorefront

PHASE 2

Activity in phase 2 will be in part contingent upon the research undertaken through phase 1



APPENDICES

- Land Management Plan Activity Table & Draft Budget
- Land Management Plan Consultation Responses
- Wild Tree Survey
- Peatland Action Feasibility and Map
- The Value of Community & Nature - Workshop Report