

OFFICIAL

Growing Our Future

Draft Community Food Growing Strategy September 2020 -2025



Highland Council September 2020

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1. Introduction

The Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 aims to help empower communities across Scotland and improve access to land for those wanting to grow their own food. The Highland Council recognises the wide ranging benefits of community growing and through this strategy seeks to inspire, promote and support community growing across the Highlands.

The benefits of growing your own (GYO) are endless, from improved mental health to reduced carbon footprints and saving money to meeting new friends. Food is one thing that unites us all and improving our relationship with food can be transformative.

Health

Those involved in growing their own food eat more vegetables and this has a direct impact on physical health. At a time when vegetable consumption is in decline it is even more important to support people and communities to connect to the land and their food.

GYO and gardening also give a wonderful opportunity for people of all ages and abilities to engage in low-impact exercise and thus improve physical and mental health.

Green spaces and gardens offer a calm place for people to unwind from the stresses in other parts of their lives and is increasingly being prescribed as a therapy option for those suffering from mild to moderate mental illness, to assist with rehabilitation and recovery, to alleviate symptoms of dementia and to help reduce physical pain.

Environmental

Community growing spaces provide a fantastic opportunity to increase biodiversity, especially if native hedging is planted rather than fencing and companion planting and wild flowers are incorporated into plans. Food growing shouldn't just be about producing for human consumption, it can also support pollinators and provide a nourishing habitat for a range of flora and fauna.

An organic approach to community growing can help to reverse soil degradation and help to address the loss of organic matter from the soil, reduce soil compaction and erosion.

Community growing also provides opportunities to reduce our carbon footprint through reduced air miles for food transportation, reduced plastic packaging, and absorbing carbon emissions through planting orchards and soil management.

Economic

Growing your own food is a fantastic way to save money and take pressure off the most vulnerable families. Community growing projects tend to spend grant money on local goods and services and employ local people, thereby bringing money and employment into the local area.

Growing spaces also provide a fantastic opportunity for volunteers to develop a wide range of skills and therefore increase employability and individual opportunities.

Social

Community growing provides opportunities for people to volunteer within their community and connect with those they live beside. Through events, festivals and celebrations social isolation can be reduced and sense of place developed. When people work together in their community towards a shared goal there is increased pride and feeling of belonging.

Education

Community growing can contribute to learning, offering both practical skills development and a therapeutic environment. Food growing is for all ages and encompasses a broad range of learning areas including biodiversity, horticulture, climate literacy, recycling, cookery, and health and wellbeing.

Food growing programmes in schools can have positive impacts on pupil nutrition and attitudes toward healthy eating and allows pupils to learn about their natural environment, how to grow and harvest food, and to be less wasteful of natural resources.



2. Aim of Strategy

The aim of this strategy is to inspire, empower and support anyone in the Highlands who wants to grow their own food, through existing growing opportunities and new approaches to growing.

Strategy Objectives

The key objectives of the Highland Community Food Growing Strategy are:

- To raise awareness of community growing in the Highlands

- To inspire communities to start growing or expand their growing
- To signpost communities to growing information, resources and networks
- To help identify potential allotment and growing spaces
- To support communities to become more resilient

Our Vision

“By 2025 Highland communities are resilient, empowered and supported to grown their own food.”



3. Resilient Empowered Communities

Growing food together within a community helps build resilience, knowledge and confidence. A changing climate will impact communities across the Highlands, so it is of paramount importance that communities have the capacity to come together to respond to, withstand and recover from adverse situations.

Community food growing brings people together and helps enhance social connections. Connecting to each other and to our local natural environment makes us stronger and more resilient. Furthermore, working collectively enhances where we live, whilst also increasing our sense of belonging and pride in place.

Additionally, community growing helps us support the more vulnerable people in our communities. With initiatives such as community orchards, edible villages and community fridges all members of the community have access to free food and therefore these initiatives can be part of the solution in tackling food poverty.

Communal care is an imperative part of being a resilient community and the true measure of any society can be found in how it treats its most vulnerable members.

Community growing offers a wonderful platform for developing carbon literacy within communities. It creates opportunities to discuss low carbon food choices, soil management and carbon sequestration. Increased carbon literacy results in people having an understanding of the environmental impacts of our activities, and being able to make informed choices about the most energy, resource efficient and low carbon options available to us.

Studies show that people are less likely to waste food that they grow and thus further reduce their carbon emissions. Also, they are more likely to put GYO waste in compost, thereby returning nutrients to the soil. Effectively managing our soils not only helps take CO₂ out of the atmosphere, it also provides protection against the effects of climate change – increasingly common incidences of intense flooding and storms as well as droughts.



4.Culture Change

In order to adapt to a changing world, we as individuals and communities need to shift what is normal. A common reason people do not grow their own food is because they don't have time. We all lead such busy lives and often opt for the convenient option out of necessity rather than choice. Community growing offers the opportunity to work in a team; a group of people working together to share the workload and thus reduce individual commitment. Once people start to realise that GYO saves money, is good for the planet, connects you to your community and is good for your own mental and physical health then we will see a culture shift towards GYO becoming the norm.

Another common barrier to GYO is not having access to land. To overcome this challenge the Highland Council will work with key partners to identify suitable land within communities. Communal green space within all new developments will have assigned GYO spaces. The Highland Council also encourages communities to consider potential within existing play parks to include GYO spaces. It is important to look at all the needs within a community when designing green space and as we continue to have an ageing population it is important to allocate outdoor space for all members of the community to enjoy and be active. Community growing can be enjoyed by all, no matter of age, ethnicity, experience or level of fitness.

Developing a culture that prioritises values such as sharing, kindness and supporting, moves individuals and communities towards helping each other. Community growing is a wonderful



way to practice and embed these values.

5. Who was involved with developing this strategy?

A key priority in developing this strategy was to include the communities of Highland from the outset and to develop this strategy together. In order to achieve this, we took several approaches, including;

Community Engagement Events

We worked in partnership with nine community growing groups across the Highlands to host community engagement events from November 2019 to February 2020. These events were attended by interested individuals, local landowners, representatives from various groups and local food businesses.

Attendees shared their aspirations, challenges and together we highlighted opportunities and potential solutions.

These events helped us to:

- stimulate interest in GYO
- connected interested people within communities and facilitate conversations
- design a strategy that reflects local needs and aspirations
- identify various exemplar GYO projects and a wide range of community activity

Community Food Growing Survey

For those who couldn't attend events there was an opportunity to contribute through completing an online survey from November 2019 to February 2020. This was promoted through social media, local newspapers and BBC Alba.

Site Visits

To get an accurate feel for what was happening on the ground we visited several different types of Grow Your Own sites. These included, TBI Culbokie Community Allotments, Ullapool Allotments, Helmsdale Kitchen Garden, MOO Food and Caiplich Farm (a small holding).

Highland Council Officer Workshops

As the subject of food touches all aspects of public policy from education to planning and from communities to finance we facilitated multi-disciplinary workshops with officers from 14

Highland Council departments. This afforded the opportunity to come up with Council-wide priorities and agreed actions.

6. Community Growing in the Highlands

There is a wide range of community growing models present across the Highlands, with communities designing projects in-line with local needs and opportunities. Below is a summary of the various models and further information on each can be found in Appendix 4. The Highland Grow Your Activity Map ([Link](#)) list current projects across the region.

Allotments

Allotments are plots of land made available for non-commercial gardening and food growing, leased out by an individual or community group for that sole purpose. If you are interested in having an allotment, then search the Highland Grow Your Own Activity map ([link](#)) for locations near you. If you are on a waiting list, there are other growing opportunities you might want to consider in the meantime, such as community orchards and community gardens.

Loch Broom and Ullapool Growing Group (LUGG) - Community Allotments

LUGG was started by some active members of the Ullapool community in 2010 with an aim to provide space for growing food for local people. Grant funding provided money for a beautiful tool shed, compost toilet, polytunnel and materials for outdoor raised beds. Since this there has been further development, including, a deer fence, water system and solar panels in polytunnel to charge water pump.



Community Gardens

A community garden is a joint effort amongst interested parties to create a green space where all people involved share part of the upkeep and garden rewards. There are lots of different kinds of community gardens from therapeutic gardens to public beds for growing vegetables, fruits, herbs and flowers. There are many inspiring examples across the Highlands.

Raasay Walled Garden

The long-neglected community owned garden is slowly being restored and now grows local produce for residents, businesses and visitors using polytunnels, outside beds and an orchard. It has also opened the garden up as an amenity space for locals and visitors. It has created employment and volunteering opportunities. Future plans include the restoration of the derelict greenhouses, improving the sustainability of the project and continuing to promote the benefits of locally grown seasonal produce.



Badenoch and Strathspey Therapeutic Gardens

This is a small charity which provides social and therapeutic horticultural activities at growing spaces within a local allotment site, beside a Medical Centre and at table top gardening sessions at three Care Homes/Day Centres across the area. Elderly people, many of whom have dementia really relate to the gardening and associated craft work that is completed at the sessions. People who have learning disabilities attend the gardening sessions at the allotment site and growing spaces at Medical Centre, where they grow a variety of flowers, fruit, herbs and vegetables with produce being taken home for them to enjoy.

Helmsdale Kitchen Garden

The Helmsdale Kitchen Garden project commenced in January 2014 with the aims of stimulating interest and the encouragement of participation in horticulture both at home and on site. This also addresses a desire to educate and advocate the benefits of environmentally sustainable gardening. The project also aims to advance a retail, educational and health facility for the community and visitors by establishing community led horticultural activities, including and not restricted to allotments, orchard, health benefiting gardens, exercise trails and art installations.



Thurso Grows

Thurso Grows is operated by Thurso Community Development Trust and includes running a community garden space of 1000m² and associated workshops on composting, gardening and food waste minimisation. The project promotes local produce and encourages people to grow at home while taking a community aspect to sharing food. Recently the project was awarded Town Centre Regeneration Funding to install low level planters for fruit and vegetables in Thurso Town Centre for everyone in the community to harvest and enjoy.

The Grow Project - Inverness Botanics

The GROW project is a therapeutic garden, created by and for people with additional support needs - mainly learning disabilities. It is a healthy, positive and beautiful educational and working environment, enabling people to work meaningfully and enjoyably towards reaching their potential. There is a large vegetable plot, a fruit cage, polytunnels, a wildflower meadow and wildlife gardens and ponds. The project is open to the public, through the Botanic Gardens. The team work with the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society offering trainees an individual-centred course – ‘Grow and Learn’.

Community Orchards

A community orchard is a collection of fruit trees shared by communities which grow in publicly accessible areas. As well as being a source of delicious, tasty & nutritious fruit for many generations, orchards also provide a place to learn, exchange knowledge, hold celebrations or seek quiet contemplation.

MOO Food - Community Orchard

In 2018 MOO Food was funded by the Highland Council Carbon Clever Fund to plant an orchard of 50 mixed fruit trees in an underused green space in Muir of Ord. The trees were planted for the community by the community and the space is now used for workshops, village gatherings and festivals.



Pocket Orchards - Wester Ross

This is a project to plant community fruit trees in Wester Ross townships from Kinlochewe to Dundonnell. These will be accessible to all ages and abilities and provide small public spaces with spring blossom, summer shade and shelter, and free autumn fruit for all. We aim to transform our environment and build and empower local communities. Everyone can help!

Edible towns/villages

Edible villages is a simple idea; take over underused or unattractive bits of public land to plant food to feed the community. The food growing could be fruit trees or bushes, raised beds, herb gardens or planters. Everyone in the community has the opportunity to benefit from this style of growing initiative, as anyone can harvest produce and enjoy the tasty delights.

MOO Incredible Edible

MOO Food is a community led charity in Muir of Ord that facilitates community food growing all over the village through the MOO Incredible Edible project, with 25 growing boxes in various locations filled with seasonal fruit, herbs and vegetables as well as a large orchard and several pocket orchards. A diverse mix of groups are involved in the planting, maintaining and loving these growing spaces.



School Growing Projects

Growing projects in schools have numerous benefits; not only is it a wonderful opportunity to up-skill the next generation and connect young people to their environment but through schools a significant section of the community can be targeted, with parents and wider family members becoming involved. Schools also provide an onsite pool of willing, enthusiastic volunteers. Growing food permeates all areas of the curriculum, though it is specifically beneficial to health and wellbeing. Having a school garden links to the science experiences and outcomes of biodiversity and interdependence, the processes of the planet and investigations into the role of microorganisms through composting

Inverness High School - School Farm

Inverness High School has operated a school farm for 12 years, with 3 polytunnels, 8 planting beds and an outdoor classroom. The school staff deliver various food related workshops and classes with a range of pupils making links to different areas of the curriculum, including geography, biology and HFT. At the height of this project it operated as social enterprise selling the produce grown but unfortunately this function had to cease due to lack of funding causing it to become unsustainable. The school farm has great potential but is limited due to staff availability and funding.

The Farmer Jones Academy

The Farmer Jones Academy works closely with schools to build relationships with pupils and teachers, creating growing spaces to give students hands-on experience through to practical business skills such as market research, brand awareness and web-design. The Academy also delivers Food and Drink Technologies Foundation Apprenticeships which is equivalent to 2 Higher qualifications or more.

Tarradale Primary School - MOO Food

Tarradale Primary School works in partnership with MOO Food to deliver a food education program that involves all 250 pupils, staff and parents. Here the children cover topics such as farm to fork, food preparation, safety and nutrition. Since starting children have said they want more time outdoors to plant and learn. Staff confidence has, and is continuing, to increase. All staff across the school are now onboard with growing and are keen to learn more from those experienced in gardening. The parents are interested in growing and want more, both for their children and sessions which they could be part of to learn for themselves.



Plot to Plate

Based at Invergordon Academy, Plot to Plate, is a community garden, where volunteers are encouraged to grow their own vegetables in raised beds and the polytunnel. Regular cooking sessions are held throughout the summer months where the produce is harvested and then transformed into healthy, low cost, tasty meals. The project is open to anyone although the most disadvantaged members of the community are targeted. Qualifications are offered alongside, such

as SQA working with others or SQA communication. This encourages people to get out of their house, meet other people and to lead a healthier lifestyle without costing any money.

Inverness College ABC Garden

The Active Botanic Community (ABC) garden aims to transform underused to transform disused space within campus grounds to develop a community & educational garden project, alongside an outdoor gym and recreational play facilities. The project will be accessible to all, with a focus on children and young people that have experienced or are currently experiencing challenges in their lives.

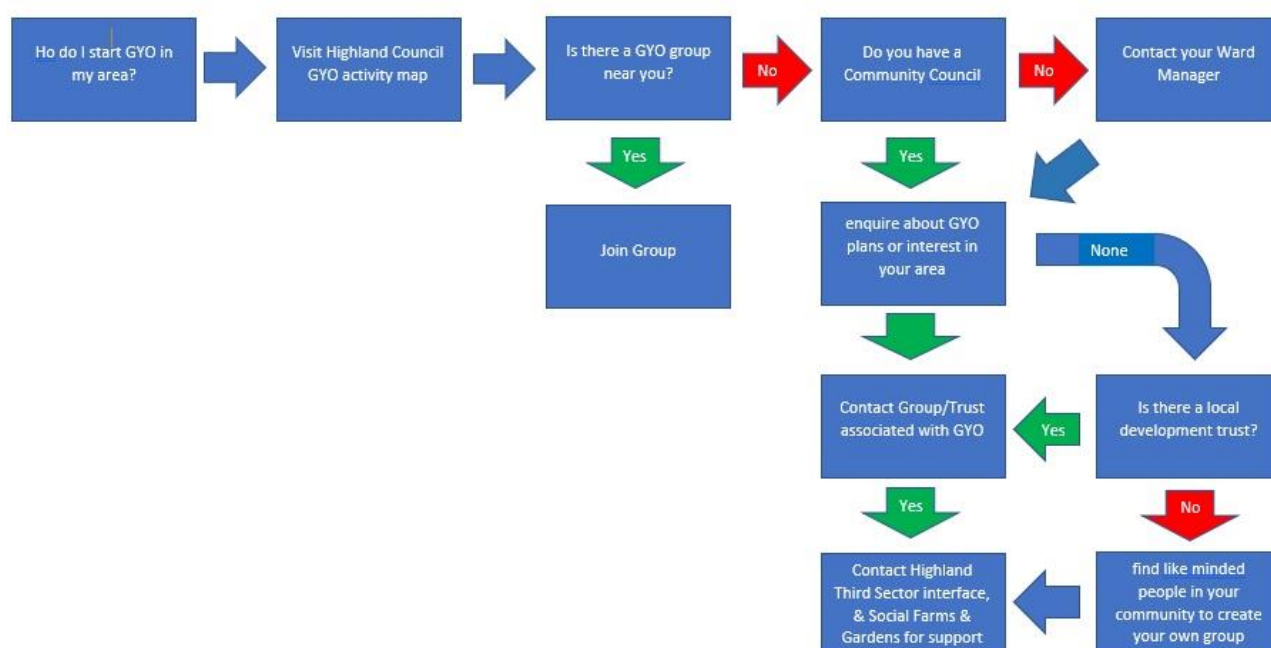
Through 'drop-in' and interactive sessions held within the garden, the project aims to act as a sustainable resource to improve the lives of our community by improving individuals' health and wellbeing.

7. Available Support

There is a wealth of knowledge, guidance, resources and support available to help communities throughout their GYO journey.

Assistance with setting up a group and managing volunteers

If you would like to start growing in your community it is best to first consider joining an existing group where possible. Follow flowchart below to help you work out what the first steps are for



you.

To set up a new group takes a lot of work and willing volunteers but there is help out there and a good place to start for advice is Highland Third Sector Interface. Social Farms and Gardens have resources specific to starting up a community growing project.

Who Can Help?	Support Available	Website
Highland Third Sector Interface	Setting group purpose, developing constitution, volunteer development	https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk
Social Farms and Gardens	Resources for getting started	https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/your-area/scotland
Highland Community Food Growing Network	Link you to other groups	link to GYO Activity Map

Development Trust Association Scotland	Link you to local development trust	https://dtascot.org.uk
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Assistance with Support and Training

Developing and implementing a community growing project can be a steep learning curve but there is help available. It is a good idea to join organisations that are there to help and work with them to develop your project.

Who Can Help?	Support Available	Website
Scottish Allotments and Garden Society	Advice on setting up your allotment group	http://www.sags.org.uk/
Scottish Orchards	Advice on orchard growing	http://www.scottishorchards.com/new_scottish_Orchards/Welcome.html
Trellis Scotland	Skills sharing, help setting up your site	https://www.trellisscotland.org.uk/
Social Farms and Gardens	Support for communities to farm, garden and grow.	https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/your-area/scotland
Scottish Community Alliance	Community Learning Exchange	https://scottishcommunityalliance.org.uk
Men's Shed	Support with practical help in your community	https://menssheds.org.uk
Community Ownership Support Services	Community support for taking on an asset	https://dtascommunityownership.org.uk

Assistance With Funding

A great way to keep on top of what funding is available in Scotland is to sign up to Funding Scotland's Fund Finder. This provides the most current and up to date information on most community funds available in Scotland. Funding is becoming more competitive so it is good to make sure your project is community led and where possible collaborate and partner up with other groups and organisations to strengthen applications.

Who Can Help?	Support Available	Website
Funding Scotland	Online Fund Finder	https://fundingscotland.com
Keep Scotland Beautiful - Climate Challenge Fund	Funding and Sustainability Advice	https://www.keepsotlandbeautiful.org/sustainability-climate-change/climatechallenge-fund/
Highland Third Sector Interface	Signpost to local funds available and provide social enterprise support	https://www.highlandtsi.org.uk
Scottish Land Fund	Community support to purchase land and land assets	https://www.tnlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/scottish-land-fund

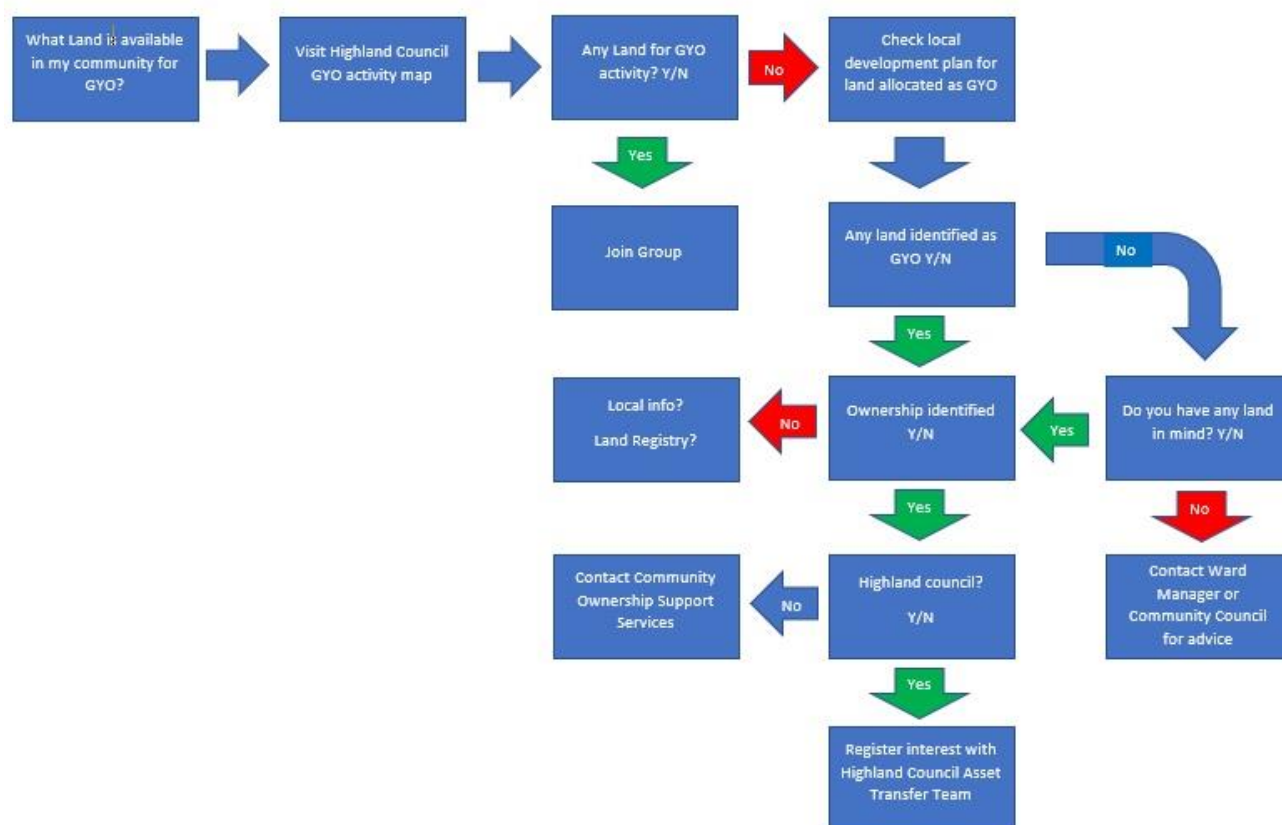
Assistance With Working With Schools and Young People

Partnering up with a local school is both exciting and rewarding. It is a great opportunity to engage the next generation and bring a community together.

Who can help?	Support Available	Website
Highland One World Global Learning Centre	Support with sustainability projects in schools	http://highlandoneworld.org.uk
HiHope	Opportunities for youth work experience across the Highlands	https://hi-hope.org
Farmer Jones Academy	Delivering Food Education in Schools	https://farmerjones.co.uk/academy/
Highlife Highland	Young Leadership Programme provides a fantastic resource of volunteers across the Highlands	https://www.highlifehighland.com
MOO Food	Share their primary school programme that is fully linked to curriculum	www.moofood.org

Assistance With Finding and Securing Suitable Land

There is no single solution that fits all for identifying suitable GYO land. However, there are people and organisations who can help, give advice and support communities along the way. A good starting point is to speak to local people, ask around and connect with your local community council and Councillors to tap into local knowledge and wider networks. As the Local Plans are reviewed land suitable for GYO will be identified through green space audits.



What land is available in my community for GYO?

Early discussions with landowners and the Planning department about any community growing project is advised – they will explain what consents you may need and what information they need from you to help you get your project moving forward.

When you have identified your potential food growing site you should liaise with the Highland Council Contaminated Land Team to establish if land contaminations presents a potential constraint which requires further consideration and for guidance.

Who can help	Support Available	Website
Community Councils	Local knowledge and wider links to community	https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/772/politicians_elections_and_democracy/364/community_councils

Community Planning Partnerships	Opportunity to identify land owned by public bodies, including NHS Highland, Highland Council, Police Scotland, Scottish Fire and Rescue Service and third sector organisations	https://www.highlandcpp.org.uk
Community Land Advisory Service	Information on making land more available for community use	https://sc.communitylandadvice.org.uk
Local Councillors	Local knowledge, network and support	https://www.highland.gov.uk/councillors
Highland Council Community Asset Transfer Team	Advice on community asset transfer	https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/20010/community_planning/726/community_asset_transfer
Highland Council Contaminated Land Team	Advice on growing on contaminated land	https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/1281/pollution/76/contaminated_land/2
Ward Managers	Local knowledge, network and links to relevant HC service	https://www.highland.gov.uk/info/695/council_information_performance_and_statistics/394/ward_managers
Scottish Land Registry	Confirm land ownership	https://www.scotlandlandregistry.co.uk
Social Farms and Gardens	Advice for all community food growing, including contaminated land	https://www.farmgarden.org.uk/your-area/scotland

8. Action Plan

The outcomes of the community engagement exercise coupled with meetings and workshops with officers has resulted in a series of actions being identified to address the main challenges and opportunities for GYO across the Highlands.

Knowledge, confidence and connection

One of the biggest challenges identified, which is experienced across the whole region, is the gap in knowledge, confidence and the feeling of being isolated in respect of GYO. To support our GYO community it is imperative to engender a culture of working together, promoting joint funding applications, supporting and adding value to existing groups rather than starting up new entities.

There is a wealth of knowledge, ideas and enthusiasm out there, it just needs to be brought together and shared.

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Resources Required
Support the development and delivery of a Highland Community Food Growing Network	Highland Council in partnership with the third sector	2020- ongoing	Option 1) £15,000 per year to fund third sector to deliver Option 2) recruit a member of staff to lead
Develop and maintain GYO map highlight all activity across the region	Highland Council	2020- ongoing	GIS and admin support within HC to keep up to date or work through proposed Highland Food Growing Network
Pilot community learning and development GYP project	Highlife Highland	2020-2021	Staff time
Signpost communities and individuals to online resources and available funds	Highland Council	2020- ongoing	Admin support within HC to keep up to date or work through proposed Highland Food Growing Network

Access to Land

Several communities throughout the region reported difficulty in accessing suitable land for GYO, many also felt overwhelmed and didn't know where to find out about land availability or who to ask. It is important to ensure everyone across the Highlands feels supported and empowered to access land for GYO.

As well as supporting communities, the Highland Council will actively promote GYO opportunities.

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Resources Required
Carry out a green space audit and safeguard valued greenspace (including where there is potential for GYO) with each Local Plan review	Highland Council	2020-2025	Planning Service staff.
Identify land with Community Planning Partnerships	Highland Council Planning Service	2020-ongoing	Someone to go to all 9 Community Planning Partnerships - could be an additional function of Highland Food Growing Network
Identify a fund to support communities apply for Title Investigations	Highland Council	2020-ongoing	A small 'seed' budget will be required
Amendments to Community Asset Transfer online register of interest	Highland Council CAT team	2020	Small amount of CAT team time
Co-location of services - promoting GYO opportunities beside libraries, community centres and sport centres	Highlife Highland	2020	Staff training to support enquiries from public.

Promote GYO as an alternative to play park space as this brings a wider range of community together in an outdoor activity	Highland Council	2020	Staff briefing and guidance required
Promote and produce GYO guidance on contaminated land	Highland Council - Contaminated Land Team	2020	Staff time
Review Provision and Management of Allotments	Highland Council	2020-2025	Staff time
Develop GYO Activity Map to include land that has been identified as suitable for GYO	Highland Council	2020-2025	Staff time

Improved Access to Tools & Resources

Several communities highlighted the opportunity to share resources and tools. Developing a platform for sharing and shifting what is normal, will not only help communities save money but will also bring people together and reduce excessive consumption.

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Resources Required
Work with communities to set up Tool Libraries	Highlife Highland	pilot 2020	Library staff trained and onboard. Educate community groups through Highland Community Food Network
Signpost group to various online resources and other organisations	Highland Council	2020	Staff to develop online resources or could be additional function of Highland Food Growing Network
Encourage groups and individuals to work together and share resources	Highland Council	2020	Through Highland Food Growing Network

People Power

Having enough volunteers, with the right skills and enough available time was a challenge across all areas. The presence of staff was a key resource for driving successful projects forward. There are opportunities going forward for projects to link up and perhaps share staff resources. Sharing volunteer expertise also presents as a great opportunity.

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Resources Required
Encourage individuals to join existing groups	Highland Council	2020-ongoing	develop GYO HC webpage and develop through Highland Community Growing Network
Work with communities to develop GYO projects in schools	Highland Council	2021-ongoing	Support for Education staff. Committed community imperative

Green Young Leadership Programme	Pilot by Highlife Highland	2020/2021	Staff to drive pilot in HLH
Support the development and delivery of a Highland Community Growing Network	Highland Council	2020-ongoing	Option 1) £15,000 per year to fund third sector to deliver Option 2) recruit a member of staff to lead
Signpost group to various online resources and other organisations	Highland Council	2020-ongoing	Admin support within HC to keep up to date or work through proposed Highland Food Growing Network

Additional Actions

Other actions that don't fit into the four key categories were identified through the community engagement process and each one will contribute significantly to promoting and enabling community GYO projects in the Highlands.

Action	Lead	Timeframe	Resources Required
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Develop GYO projects in all schools	Highland Council in partnership with community groups	2020 - ongoing	Guidance for teachers and drive from third sector
Develop guidance for cooking and eating GYO in schools	Highland Council	2021 onwards	Staff time
Review guidance for community groups growing in school grounds to make it easier and less prohibitive	Highland Council	2020	Staff time
Review contract with PPI schools to seek to remove charge to school for growing food on land	Highland Council	2020	Staff time
Waive planning application cost for GYO projects	Highland Council	2020- ongoing	None
Encourage communities and individuals to plant orchards	All partners	2020-ongoing	Community interest
Review Highland Food Growing Strategy	Highland Council	2025	Staff time or resource to commission a consultant.

Appendix 1

Stakeholders Involved in shaping this strategy

Representatives from the following organisations have helped to shape the Highland Council's first Community Food Growing Strategy:

- Badenoch and Strathspey Therapeutic Gardens
- Green Hive Nairn
- Helmsdale Kitchen Garden
- Highland Third Sector Interface
- Highlife Highland
- Inverness College UHI
- Lochaber Environment Group
- MOO Food
- Planet Sutherland
- Raasay Development Trust
- Social Farms and Gardens
- Transition Black isle
- Thurso Grows
- Ullapool Community Trust
- Viewfield Garden Collective

LOCHBROOM & ULLAPOOL GROWING GROUP



LUGG Community Allotment

LUGG was started by some active members of the Ullapool community in 2010 with an aim to provide space for growing food for local people. There was significant opposition towards the development of the allotments by other community members. Grant funding provided money for a beautiful tool shed, compost toilet, polytunnel and materials for outdoor raised beds. Since this there has been further

development, including, a deer fence, water system and solar panels in polytunnel to charge water pump.

The ground is leased annually from the Highland Council.

In 2017/18 we had repeated vandalism of the polytunnel by people who slashed the plastic.

Some plot holders are also part of the chicken group and currently keep six hens of varying breeds on site. Their droppings go into the compost system on site.

LUGG has been used by community groups for various projects including mental health and children's groups and we hope that in the future more people can use the allotments.

Over recent years we have made it more friendly for wildlife with wildflower beds, a pond, insect hotel and bird feeders. As far as I am aware most plot holders are organic gardeners.

What is your proudest project achievement?

Getting it started and keeping it going is a major achievement.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

That it takes a collective effort to keep it going and to make improvements. It seems we are always lacking volunteers as people are already so busy making it difficult to make progress. We have plans to replace the polytunnel skin and make the pathways more accessible to all, including wheelchair users.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

0 - it is all voluntary. It would be amazing to have someone employed to work there.

How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

There are 6 members on the committee and additional plot holders come along for monthly volunteer days.

How are you funded?

Through plot fees



RAASAY WALLED GARDEN

Community Garden

The long neglected community owned garden is slowly being restored and now grows local produce for residents, businesses and visitors using polytunnels, outside beds and an orchard. It has also opened the garden up as an amenity space for locals and visitors and we have created mini allotment style plots for island residents to take on. It has created a job and volunteering opportunities. Future plans include the restoration of the derelict greenhouses, improving the sustainability of the project and continuing to promote the benefits of locally grown seasonal produce.

What is your proudest project achievement?

Opening up the garden and creating a space for the community to enjoy after 30 years of the gates being closed whilst growing food, herbs and flowers which are enjoyed at such a local level.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

Be realistic and don't over estimate how much you can do with the resources you have! We're still learning to abide by this ourselves.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

0.6 FTE

How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

7 volunteers are on the steering group, although only 3 are regular volunteers in the garden. Other visitors and locals will volunteer sometimes in the warmer months! However our average volunteer hours exceed the gardeners paid 20 hours per week and the project would not be possible without this contribution.

How are you funded?

During 2017/18 we received £61,000 funding from the Climate Challenge Fund which purchased 3 polytunnels, seeds and equipment as well as funding a full time gardener for a year to set the project up. Match funding of £7900 was provided by Raasay House Community Company.

In 2018/19 we received £4900 from The Mushroom Trust which allowed us to plant an orchard in one quadrant of the garden. Match funding of £1000 was raised by us through offering sponsorship of the trees to the community and visitors.



Raasay House Community Company own the Walled Garden and Raasay House on behalf of the community. They receive an income from leasing Raasay House to a private business who operate it as a hotel and outdoor centre. Some of this money is used to fund the part time Gardeners wages since the CCF funding ceased and it also covers annual insurance costs etc. Purchases of small equipment, seeds etc and other smaller costs are paid for using income from the sale of produce, donations and fundraising events.

BADENOCH & STRATHSPEY THERAPEUTIC GARDENS

Therapeutic Gardening

We are a small charity which provides social and therapeutic horticultural activities at our Growing Spaces within a local allotment site, beside a Medical Centre and at table top gardening sessions at three Care Homes/Day Centres across the area. Elderly people, many of whom have dementia really relate to the gardening and associated craft work that is completed at the sessions. People in our communities who have learning disabilities attend our Growing Spaces and our Medical Centre Garden, where they grow a variety of flowers, fruit, herbs and vegetables with produce being taken home for them to enjoy.



What is your proudest project achievement?

Receiving a significant amount of money a few years ago from Tesco Bags of Help which allowed us to redesign our Growing Spaces and make them DDA compliant, and much easier to maintain for all concerned, and more accessible for many people.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

The positive impact it has on those who attend our sessions from the elderly lady who said 'this is the best thing I have done' when making seed bombs for Christmas presents at one of our table top sessions, to those who 'just love' coming to our Growing Spaces and enjoying the social time while gardening.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

One member of staff who has a contract with us.

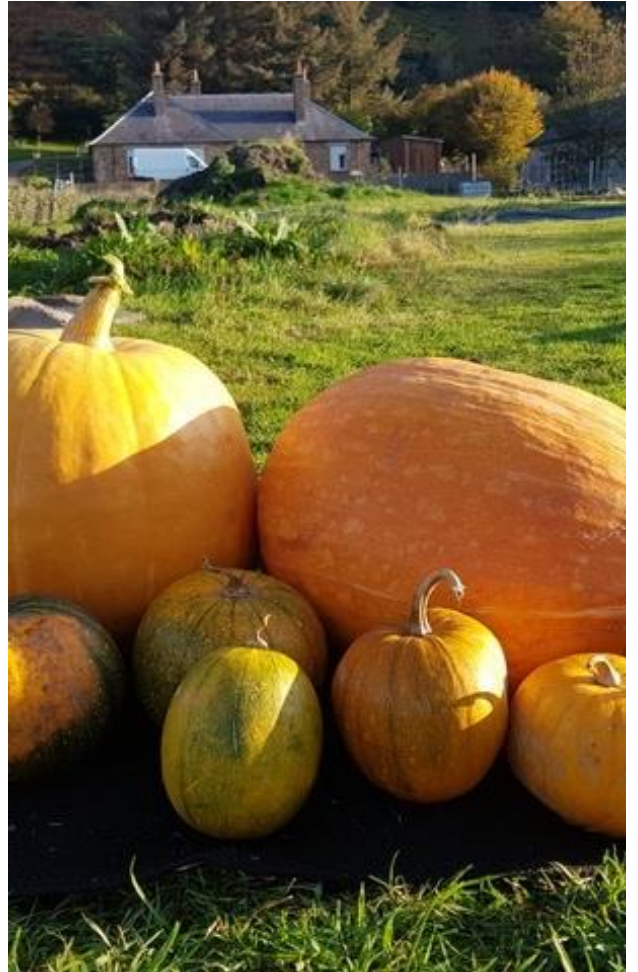
How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

All the Trustees are volunteers, and others who work in our Growing Spaces, plus others who carry out pieces of work from time to time – probably 10 – 15



How are you funded?

We are funded by a variety of Trusts, and have support from Tesco Bags of help and the Co-operative Community Fund.



HELMSDALE KITCHEN GARDEN

Community Growing

Helmsdale Kitchen Garden project commenced in January 2014 with the aims of stimulating interest and the encouragement of participation in horticulture both at home and on site, this also addresses a desire to educate and advocate the benefits of environmentally sustainable gardening.

The project also aims to advance a retail, educational and health facility for the community and visitors by establishing community led horticultural activities, including and not restricted to allotments, orchard, health benefiting gardens, exercise trails and art installations.

What is your proudest project achievement?

In January 2019 we were awarded Community Led funding and this helped us recruit two part time staff who enabled the project to move forward at great speed and the project managed to sell its first year of produce thanks to the hard work of the staff.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

We have had many frustrating times trying to keep the project going i.e. purchase of the land took a long time, loss of first polytunnel cover but these have all been overcome by patience and determination by the volunteers to keep the project moving forward.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

We have 2 part time staff who both work 21 hours per week which is 1.05 FTE

How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

We currently have approximately 12 regular volunteers.

How are you funded?

SSE Gordonbush
Pebble Trust
George & Ena Baxter Foundation
Community Led Funding (Lottery)
Spar
Community Council Ward Funding
Action Earth
Private donations

THURSO GROWS

Community Growing

Thurso Grows is run by Thurso Community Development Trust and includes running a community garden space of 1000m² and associated workshops on composting, gardening and food waste minimisation. We also aim to promote local produce and encourage people to grow at home while taking a community aspect to sharing food. We were recently awarded Town Centre Regeneration Funding to install low level planters for fruit and vegetables in Thurso Town Centre with the encouragement for people to help themselves to produce when ready to harvest. We take a holistic approach including key themes of growing, community, food, sharing and health.

What is your proudest project achievement?

Our project only commenced in April 2019 with staff in place a month later in May. Our Community Garden site was hugely neglected having been run by a previous organisation who had failed to recruit voluntary effort and had been in abeyance for the previous two years. We had no raised beds or space for growing at the point of commencing the project as all of the garden space was completely overgrown. In addition to this the focus previously had been wild flowers so the ground was not fully suitable for growing produce. We commenced very quickly a full redesign of the space and created raised beds which enabled us by July to actually have salad vegetables growing in the garden space. The skills of our gardener and project co-ordinator meant that regularly from August/September volunteers were able to take produce home and the garden was ripe with produce. Our harvest festival in October saw over 50 attend and all of the food provided was grown in the garden. It is a myth in Caithness that nothing grows, so our proudest achievement is that if you are determined enough it most definitely grows!

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

We were very fortunate to receive core funding towards running our project without it we would not be able to have made as great an impact as we have. The community garden space we inherited is testament to that, without the funding which has been made available to us if having to run on voluntary effort our garden space would still be under development. With funding we have been able to install a Polycrub, which in Caithness conditions vastly improves our chances of success in growing. Caithness is notoriously difficult to grow in and our season starts at least a month following normal growing guides.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

1.8 FTE

How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

We hold regular garden sessions weekly which bring 20-30 volunteers each week. In addition to this we run community meal sessions with around 20 weekly volunteers.

How are you funded?

Thurso Grows is funded by the Climate Challenge Fund. We have also received smaller grant awards from Tesco Bags of Help and most recently Green Health Partnership funding and Town Centre Regeneration Funding.

THE GROW PROJECT



The Grow Project - a therapeutic garden, created by and for people with additional support needs - mainly learning disabilities. It is a healthy, positive and beautiful educational and working environment, enabling people to work meaningfully and enjoyably towards reaching their potential.

We have a large vegetable plot, a fruit cage, polytunnels, a wildflower meadow and wildlife gardens and ponds. The project is open to the public, through the Botanic Gardens. We have reduced and reused waste since 2002. We work with the Royal Caledonian Horticultural Society offering trainees an individual-centred course – ‘Grow and Learn’. And it’s a friendly place!

What is your proudest project achievement?

The ethos of the place: most of the trainees have been here for years, because they enjoy it so much. We’ve received the Green Apple Award several times because of our organic-inspired and minimum waste approach to growing food and supporting wildlife. Also we sold £3000 of produce from our Grow Project to the wider public.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

Not to set targets! Be patient and the jobs will be done when they are done. The important thing is to support the trainees.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

One full-time member of staff, assisted by occasional relief staff.

How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

It varies. Sometimes just one a day and sometimes it is 4. It's a lovely place to volunteer. Occasionally we get participants from the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and we are starting to become involved in High Life Highland's Leadership programme.

How are you funded?

Funded by NHS Scotland and the generous support from individuals, including the Sutherland Family Trust. We also raise money from selling our plants and vegetables to Botanic Garden visitors.

PLOT TO PLATE

Our project is a community garden, run from Invergordon Academy, where we encourage volunteers to come along and grow their own vegetables in our beds and our polytunnel. We then have regular cooking sessions throughout the summer months where we first harvest and then transform our crops into healthy, low cost, tasty meals. Our project is open to anyone although we do try to target the most disadvantaged members of our community. We also offer qualifications alongside, such as SQA working with others or SQA communication. It encourages people to get out of their house, meet other people and to lead a healthier lifestyle without costing any money.

What is your proudest project achievement?

I think our cooking sessions last year where we had so many boxes of produce. It was wonderful to lay it all out at the front of the kitchen and to see people choosing from vegetables that they had just dug or picked.

It was also great to see our women's multicultural cooking project taking home lots of fresh vegetables for their family and using the salad produce at their Middle Eastern food market stall in Invergordon in September.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

I have learned how hard it is to engage the community, people ask for things to do and then cannot be bothered to turn up when events are organized. This lethargy is very hard to combat and can be very dispiriting and demotivating.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

We have 1 sessional tutor that works part time on the project and 2 full time staff that help out when needed.

How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

We have one volunteer who we hope will return this year to work on the project.

How are you funded?

We are funded through Highlife Highland.



ABC GARDEN

Active Botanic Community Garden - Inverness College

The ABC garden aims to transform underused to transform disused space within campus grounds to develop a community & educational garden project, alongside an outdoor gym and recreational play facilities. Our project will be accessible to all, with a focus on children and young people that have experienced or are currently experiencing challenges in their lives.

Through 'drop-in' and interactive sessions held within the garden, the project aims to act as a sustainable resource to improve the lives of our community by improving individuals' health and wellbeing.

What is your proudest project achievement?

Collaborating closely with our graduate architect students, we have been able to develop and produce plans for the project which have been vital when communicating the project to our stakeholders, prospective project participants and funders.

What is the biggest lesson you have learned through delivering your project?

Whilst the project is still in its infancy, we have learned through ongoing surveys and focus groups that there is a continued demand for **sustainable** resources that provide consistent change for project participants.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

1 FTE

How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

8

How are you funded?

We are continuing to submit applications to funders whose aims align with our project's strategic objectives.

MOO FOOD



MOO Food is a community food company located in Muir of Ord. It builds community resilience by bringing people together to grow food, knowledge and confidence.

Community Fridge and Grow Boxes – MOO Food set up the Muir of Ord Community Fridge and vegetable growing boxes, in partnership with other village stakeholders. These improve residents' access to good food, and reduces good food being sent to landfill.

Community Orchard – MOO Food volunteers have planted and maintained 50 fruit trees in a public park. We have also planted 3 pocket orchards.

School Programme – MOO Food works with Tarradale Primary to teach the pupils and staff about growing and cooking seasonal food, and looking at their impact on the environment and reducing their carbon footprint.

Back to Work – MOO Food staff mentor job seekers from Job Centre Plus in Dingwall, on an 8 week work experience programme. This helps them build confidence and skills to help them get back into work.

Flourish Group – This programme is delivered in partnership between MOO Food and the Mid-Ross Mental Health team. Participants do gardening, cooking and environmental activities to aid them in mental health recovery and management.

Dingwall Academy Market – MOO Food worked in partnership with Dingwall Academy to deliver a farmers and producers market for the general public to have better access to local food.

What is your proudest achievement?

We have had lots of highlights but our proudest achievement was Education Scotland identifying our school programme as best practice.

What is the biggest lesson learned through delivering this project?

It takes a lot of energy and passion to keep driving a community food project forward. It is really important to pace the project, to prevent staff and volunteers burning out.

How many staff work on your project (FTE)?

We have 1.6FTE staff at MOO Food.



How many volunteers are involved in delivering your project?

At MOO Food we have about 30 volunteers. We also provide weekly volunteering opportunities for the general public with our Give it Grow sessions.

How are you funded?

MOO Food has received grant funding from the Highland Council, the Pebble Trust and the Scottish Government's Climate Challenge Fund.

Appendix 3

A National Strategic Context – meeting national aspirations through community growing

Community growing projects will help us fulfil our obligations under the Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015 and help deliver a range of strategic priorities across the Council area:

Good Food Nation Bill

The Scottish Government launched its 12-week consultation for the Good Food Nation Bill in 2019. This will inform the content of the bill which aims to promote Scotland as a good food nation where

Community Empowerment (Scotland) Act 2015

Section 119 of the Community Empowerment Act places a duty on every local authority to prepare a food growing strategy for its area. This must:

- Identify land that may be used as allotment sites;
- Identify other areas of land that could be used for community growing; and
- Describe how the authority intends to increase provision, in particular in areas which experience socio-economic disadvantage.

National Planning Framework 3 (NPF3)

This sets more localised food distribution networks. The Central Scotland Green Network is a national development in NPF3 with community growing identified as one of the priority themes for action.

Scottish Planning Policy

The Scottish Government has stated that Scottish Planning Policy should be used to routinely incorporate new growing space into new development plans.

Appendix 4

Consultation Questions

Q1. Do you agree with Growing Our Future's strategy objectives and vision? If not, what should these be?

Q2. Have we picked the right priority actions and approach to encourage and support more community growing in Highland? If not, what should we be doing instead?

Q3. Have we clearly set out the steps you can take to grow your own in Highland, if you don't do so already? If not, how can this guidance be improved?

Q4. Are you aware of any other support for groups interested in community growing which isn't detailed within the draft strategy?

Q5. Does the draft strategy clearly set out how to find and secure suitable land for food growing?

Q6. Where do you live?

Q7. What is your gender?

Q8. What is your age?